



# College Student Perceptions of Minority Target Groups

William Goff and Meghan Kajca-Nelson  
Pacific Lutheran University



## Introduction

- Previous research has shown that Atheists are viewed as being more immoral than other groups (Edgell, Gerteis, & Hartman, 2006)
- Present study was conducted in one of the most non-religious areas of the United States (Norman, 2018)
- Fundamentalist Christians were added as a target group as they have been viewed as having strong religious beliefs (Kerr, 2003)

## Hypotheses

- 1) Higher degree of prejudice when in threat condition
- 2) Atheists will be viewed as the largest threat
- 3) Fundamentalist Christians will pose a high threat but not as high as Atheists

## Methods

### Participants

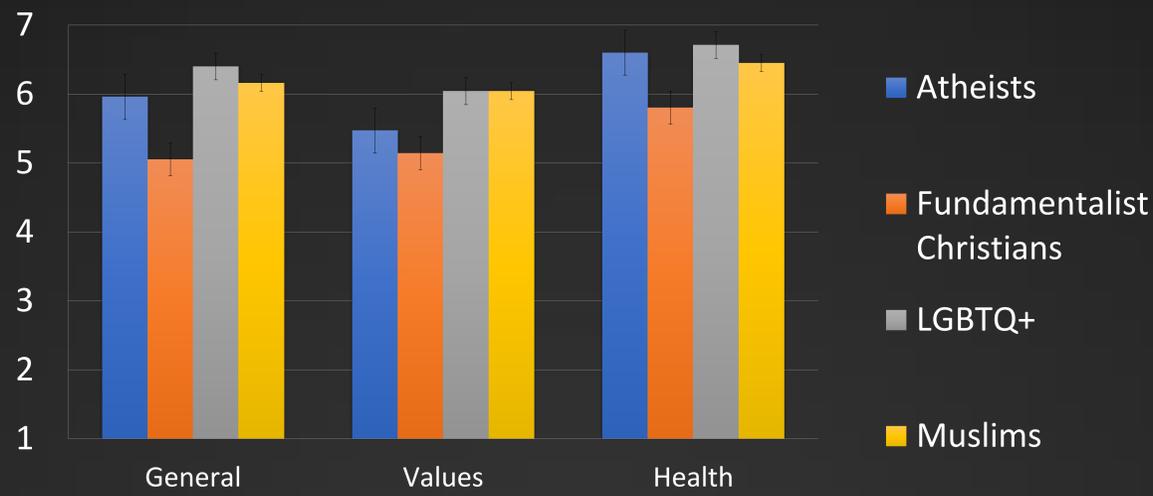
- 71 undergraduate respondents (48 female, 19 male, and 4 other), mean age = 19.6 years ( $SD = 1.91$ ). 33.8% identified as “other” for religion, 26.8 % Christian, 18.3% Atheist, 16.9 % Catholic, and 4.2% Muslim

### Threat Manipulation

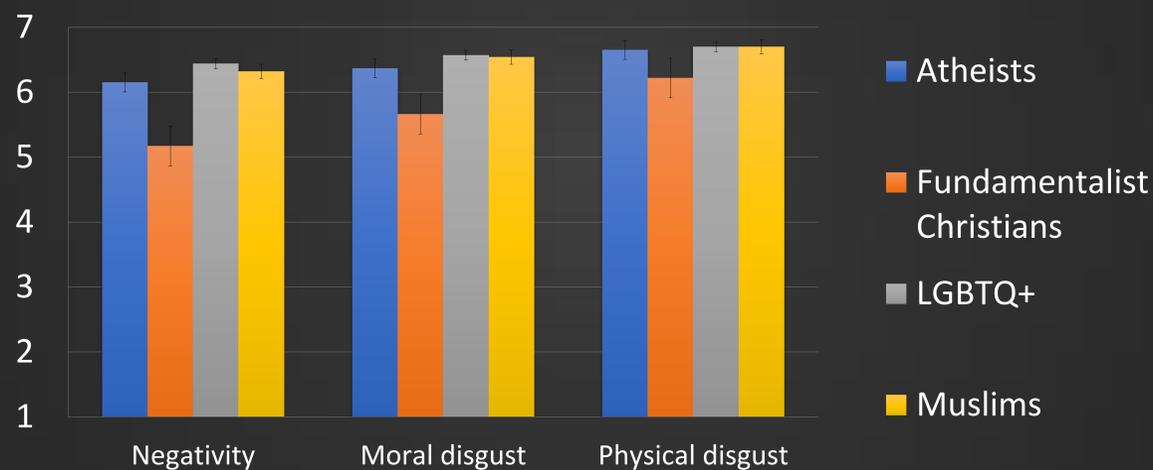
- Control: threat-irrelevant news story
- Experimental: threat-relevant news story

### Materials and Procedure

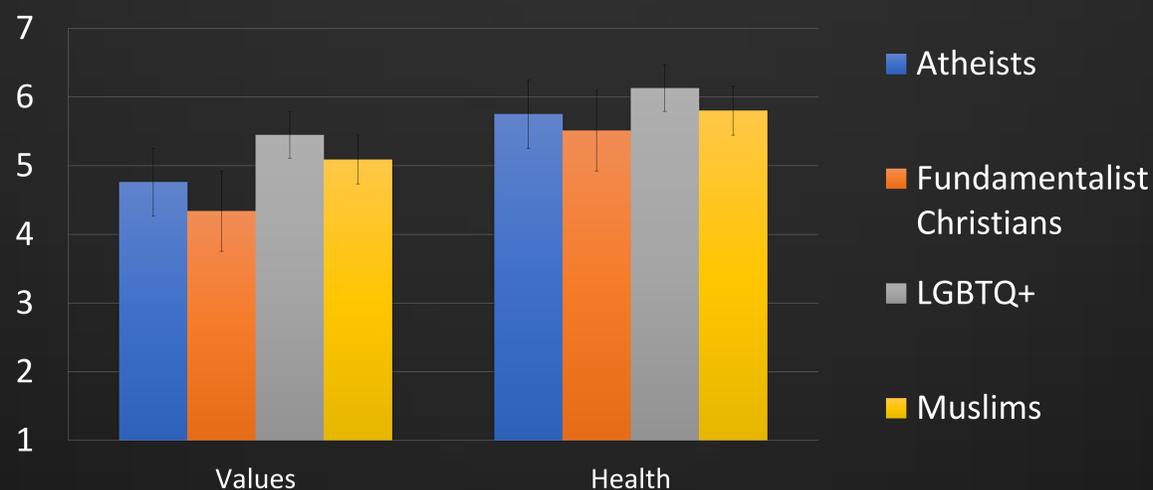
- Target groups: Atheists, Fundamentalist Christians, Muslims, LGBTQ+ people
- Perception of threat, emotional reactions, and discriminatory intentions of each group were assessed through an online survey



Threat Perceptions



Emotional Reactions



Threat-relevant Discriminatory Intentions

## Results

- 1) No differences between the control and threat conditions were found
- 2) LGBTQ+ people found to be viewed as the greatest threat to values
- 3) Fundamentalist Christians found to be viewed as the lowest threat to values

## Discussion

- Manipulation using news stories was not confirmed by data as being an effective way to induce threat to values
- LGBTQ+ people were perceived to pose a significantly greater general threat and threat to values, while Fundamentalist Christians were perceived to pose a significantly lower threat to health
- Respondents reported significantly less negative affect, moral disgust, and physical disgust towards Fundamentalist Christians

### Limitations

- Social, political, and global health influences of the COVID-19 pandemic were unforeseen and were not accounted for in the present study
- Control not included within target groups

### Future Directions

- Should include data from both religious and non-religious samples as well as a control target group

## References

- Edgell, P., Gerteis, J., & Harmann, D. (2006). Atheists as “other”: Moral boundaries and cultural membership in American society. *American Sociological Review*, 71, 211-234.
- Kerr, P. (2003). The framing of fundamentalist Christians: Network television news, 1980- 2000. *Journal of Media & Religion*, 2(4), 203- 235.
- Norman, J. (2018, April 6). The Religious Regions of the U.S. Retrieved March 10, 2020, from <https://news.gallup.com/poll/232223/religious-regions.aspx>