College Student Perceptions of Minority Target Groups
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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

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


Participant Breakdown:

- 71 undergraduate respondents:
  - 48 females
  - 19 males
  - 4 other (gender unspecified)
- Mean age: 19.6 years ($SD = 1.91$)
- Religious affiliations:
  - 33.8% identified as “other”
  - 26.8% Christian
  - 18.3% Atheist
  - 16.9% Catholic
  - 4.2% Muslim

Threat Perceptions

Emotional Reactions

Threat-relevant Discriminatory Intentions