Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this study!  We hope you enjoyed the experience. This form provides background about our research to help you learn more about why we are doing this study. Please feel free to ask any questions or to comment on any aspect of the study.

At the beginning of this study, you were informed that purpose of this study was to examine how easily people can assess another person's traits via a brief biographical description and picture of the person and how these assessments might impact subsequent social interactions. You were randomly assigned to one of three groups. As a participant you were exposed to a visual depiction of a person who was Christian, Atheist or Neutral based on the content of the shirts they were wearing and asked to read a scenario involving that person. You were then asked to answer several follow up questions that assessed a wide range of topics.

As you may know, some studies use deception in situations where there is no other way to conduct the experiment without a level of bias. We are very sorry to say that the current study did involve deception. Unfortunately, it was necessary to use deception because, had participants know the true nature of the study, responses would have been likely to change.

The actual purpose of this study is to investigate the effect that religiosity has on an individual’s biases of people of similar and different religious backgrounds while also assessing the appropriateness of the study design variables themselves. ~~We hope to see that individuals rate people belonging to their same religious affiliation in a more positive light than they do individuals who do not belong to their same religious affiliation.~~ This research would extend work on in and out group dynamics to include religiosity. Additionally, we hope the insight gained here helps to further research methodology with respect to research on religion. Applications might include furthering ways to mitigate those in and out group biases within the domain of religion. For cultures that are continually becoming more diverse this would be an important endeavor.

In this study, we asked for you to identify your religious affiliation. You were then visually presented, at random, with a person wearing an atheist themed T-shirt, Christian themed T-shirt or neutral T-shirt and asked to read a description involving that hypothetical person. The scenarios for each visual presentation were exactly the same. The only difference in the three conditions was what T-shirt was being worn by the visual presentation. After seeing the visual presentation and reading the scenario involving that hypothetical person, all participants were asked the same questions in the same order.

The data from this study will be presented in groups in research journals, however we want to assure you that no identifying information will be used. All data will be kept secure, only to be analyzed by trained researchers. Nonetheless, if you feel uncomfortable with this study, your participation in this is still voluntary. If you wish, you may withdraw after reading this debriefing form, at which point all records of your participation will be destroyed. You will not be penalized if you withdraw. You can also feel free to contact the investigator with any further questions.

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If you want more information about your rights as a participant or want to report a research-related harm, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at (734) 487-3090.