Introduction

- Many political debates are focused on whether or not a particular person is racist (Agoustinos, 2019).
- Americans have different perceptions of what constitutes racism, and if/when it is occurring (Sommers & Norton, 2006; Sydell, 2000).
- In this study, we assessed mental representations of racists by asking participants to rate how attributable various beliefs and behaviors were to racists.

Hypotheses:
1) Exploratory: We will examine what beliefs and behaviors are more or less mentally representative of racists.
2) Political ideology will predict differences in how much participants believe items are attributable to racists.
3) Participants will rate a conservative identity as being more likely to be racist compared to a liberal identity.

Methods

Participants
- n = 1759 Project Implicit users
- Age: ranged from 18-113; Gender: Female – 66.8%
- Race/Ethnicity: 57.8% Caucasian, 12.0% African-American, 9.5% Asian, 12.3% Hispanic, & 8.4% other
- Political Ideology: 18.7% Conservative, 32.3% Moderate, 48.9% Liberal

Procedures
- Participants completed a self-report questionnaire answering one of four question types assessing mental representations of racists, followed by a Black-White Implicit Association Test and an explicit attitude questionnaire

Measures
- Mental Representations: Asked participants to rate how attributable items were to racists with one of four question types. Examples:
  - Category Centrality: “Of all racists, what percentage are Conservative?” (0-100 scale)
  - Diagnosticity: “Of all Conservatives, what percentage are racist?” (0-100 scale)
  - Generic Beliefs: “Racists are Conservative.” (Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree)
  - Ease of Imagining: “How easily can you imagine a racist that is Conservative?” (Not at all easily – Very easily)

Item Categories: Political Beliefs, Classic Beliefs, Inmate Differences, Discomfort around Blacks, Unfamiliarity with Blacks, Racial Humor, Downplaying the Problem, Cultural Beliefs, Extrinsic Motivators, and Identity
- Identity questions included items relating to hypothesis 1 (Conservative and Liberal identity) as well as other identity questions (e.g., White, poor).

Results

1) Participants differed in how mentally representative different item categories were of racists across each type of mental representation.
2) Across all types of mental representation and sub-categories, political ideology was a significant predictor of responses. More liberal people rated items as more attributable to racists.
3) Conservative and liberal respondents differed on how mentally representative conservative and liberal identities were of racists.

Conclusions

- There was great variation in what beliefs or behaviors were mentally representative of racists.
- In general, self-identified liberals rated items as more mentally representative of racists than self-identified conservatives.
- Self-identified liberals consistently perceive conservatives to be more mentally representative of racists than self-identified conservatives.

Future Directions

- Future research may look further into why people believe conservatives are more mentally representative of racists, and see if people are considering people who hold other conservative values to be racist (e.g., pro-life).

References


For a copy of the poster & materials, go to:
https://osf.io/rd5an/