Social norms and tolerance of deviance: The causal effect of threat on the normative tightness of groups

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Although surprising, the results are consistent with the notion "if it works, don’t fix it" or "Don’t change a winning team." The results suggest that there might be caveats to the previous work correlating historical and ecological threats with higher normative tightness. By manipulating threats individuals experience everyday, we can get a better understanding of why and how the daily experiences of individuals are not the same.

Participants (N=194) were randomly assigned to threat, safety, and control conditions. All participants then responded to indicators of normative tightness.

The effects were not moderated by Group Identification or Political Affiliation

References

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Normative Tightness:
The degree to which social norms are pervasive, clearly defined, and reliably imposed. (Gelfand et al., 2011)

Why do groups differ in normative tightness?

Normative tightness is adaptive to social environments, which include threats. (Gelfand et al., 2011)

Hypothesis:
Manipulation of proximal, everyday threat will lead to increased normative tightness.

Why the United States is Falling:
The United States is depicted as declining in world status and having increasingly high unemployment rates, which may lead to unrest that could threaten national security.

Why the United States is Soaring:
Predicted that the United States would experience economic growth, decreased unemployment rates, and lowered threat to national security.

Threat Article:
“Why the United States is Falling” depicted the United States as declining in world status and having increasingly high unemployment rates, which may lead to unrest that could threaten national security.

Safety Article:
“Why the United States is Soaring” predicted that the United States would experience economic growth, decreased unemployment rates, and lowered threat to national security.

Threat → Decreased Normative Tightness

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