

9-1-2022

COVID-19 Mitigating Behaviors: The Role of Percieved Threat and Political Party Affiliation

Megan Reis
Winona State University

Skylar Fedoravicius
Winona State University

Jenna Dale
Winona State University

Taylor Kruse
Winona State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openriver.winona.edu/studentgrants2022>

Recommended Citation

Reis, Megan; Fedoravicius, Skylar; Dale, Jenna; and Kruse, Taylor, "COVID-19 Mitigating Behaviors: The Role of Percieved Threat and Political Party Affiliation" (2022). *Student Research and Creative Projects 2021-2022*. 9.

<https://openriver.winona.edu/studentgrants2022/9>

This Grant is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research & Creative Achievement Projects at OpenRiver. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research and Creative Projects 2021-2022 by an authorized administrator of OpenRiver. For more information, please contact klarson@winona.edu.

**WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY
TRAVEL SUPPORT FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH
& CREATIVE PRESENTATIONS
FINAL REPORT**

Submit this complete form and a copy of the project end product(s) no later than ten (10) days after the conclusion of travel. Submit items as attachments to the [WarriorSpace](#) Travel Support for Undergraduate Student Research & Creative Presentations form that you used to submit your application.

For more information, go to the [Student Grants webpage](#).

Final Report Checklist

The final report **MUST** include this form and the end product(s) (*check to verify inclusion of each component*):

This final report fully completed

A copy of the project end product(s). Indicate the format of your final product(s) (*select all that apply*):

Research Report

Presentation

Poster

Other – Please describe:

Note: A copy of the project end product will be forwarded to Krueger Library for archival purposes.

Project Information

Title of Project:	
Student Name (Lead):	Student Email:
Co-Investigators Names:	
Faculty Sponsor:	Faculty Department:
Date of Presentation:	Location of Conference:
Event Name:	
Was this a capstone, senior thesis, or other degree culminating project?	

Project Abstract

--



COVID-19 Mitigating Behaviors: The Role of Perceived Threat and Political Party Affiliation

Taylor Kruse, Jenna Dale, Megan Reis, and Skylar Fedoravicius, & Amanda M. Brouwer, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 and College Students

- Young adults (18-29) account for 22.3% of all cases, the highest of all age groups.¹
- To slow the spread of COVID-19, the CDC recommends wearing masks, social distancing, good respiratory hygiene, and vaccinations, but such behaviors require motivation.¹

¹ CDC, 2021

COVID-19 Preventative Behaviors and Political Party Affiliation

- Political party significantly predicts mask wearing. Republicans are more likely to doubt the effectiveness of masks.
- 41% of adults are republican, which now make up 60% of the unvaccinated adult population¹⁻³
- Unvaccinated republicans are more likely to believe the news exaggerates the seriousness of the pandemic compared to vaccinated republicans.

CITATION HERE

Perceived Threat (HBM)

- The Health Belief Model (HBM), which includes ones perceived susceptibility and severity, is used to explain and predict individual health behaviors.¹
- Together perceived severity of illness and susceptibility to illness comprise the perceived threat one experiences toward an illness. It also includes the extent to how an individual may feel threatened and therefore take precautions to lower that threat.
- Young adults tend to have a lower vaccination rate and a higher transmission rate possibly on account of feelings of invincibility and a low perceived threat, resulting in less engagement in health behaviors.²

¹Hornstein et al. Psychology 2010

STUDY AIMS and HYPOTHESES

- The aim of the study was to explore how perceived threat effects COVID-19 mitigation behaviors among young adults and whether political affiliation moderates this relationship.
- We hypothesized that political affiliation will moderate the relationship between perceived threat and COVID-19 mitigation behaviors.

METHOD

Participants

- 174 adults
- 21.8% (N=38) Men
- 77.0% (N=134) Women
- 17-35 years (M=19.87, SD=1.86)
- Year in college:
 - 1st – 18.4%
 - 2nd – 37.9%
 - 3rd – 18.4%
 - 4th – 18.4%
 - 5th – 1.7%
- Ethnicity:
 - Asian/Pacific Islander – 4.0%
 - African American – 2.3%
 - Hispanic – 1.7%
 - Caucasian – 90.2%
- Political Party Affiliation:
 - Republican: 30.4% (N = 51)
 - Democrat: 50% (N = 84)
 - Other: 19.6% (N = 33)

Procedures

Participants completed a survey assessing sociodemographics, the self-as-doer identity and attitudes and beliefs about COVID-19 and COVID-19 behavioral practices.

Measures

- Demographics:** Age, gender, education, ethnicity, and political party affiliation.
- Perceived Severity and Susceptibility:** Subscale from the Risk Behavior Diagnosis Scale (Whitte et al., 1996).
 - Participants identified on a 7-point Likert scale the degree to which they felt at risk of getting COVID-19 and whether COVID-19 was a serious threat.
- COVID-19 Behavioral Engagement:** (Lou et al., 2020)
 - Participants identified on a 5-point Likert scale the degree to which their health behaviors included the prevention of COVID-19. Example items include, "Wash hands frequently" and "Wear a mask when going out."
 - Preventative behaviors were categorized as behaviors added to one's environment to reduce risk (e.g., masking, hand washing). Avoidant behaviors were behaviors that were removed to reduce risk (e.g., social distancing, reduce large groups, attend work/school virtually).

Statistical Analyses

- Descriptives and frequencies were calculated for all variables. Moderation analyses using bootstrapping procedures (Hayes, 2018) were conducted to test whether the relationship between perceived threat and COVID-19 preventative and avoidant behaviors were different depending on political party affiliation.

The Effect of Perceived Threat on COVID-19 Behaviors Depends on Political Party Affiliation.

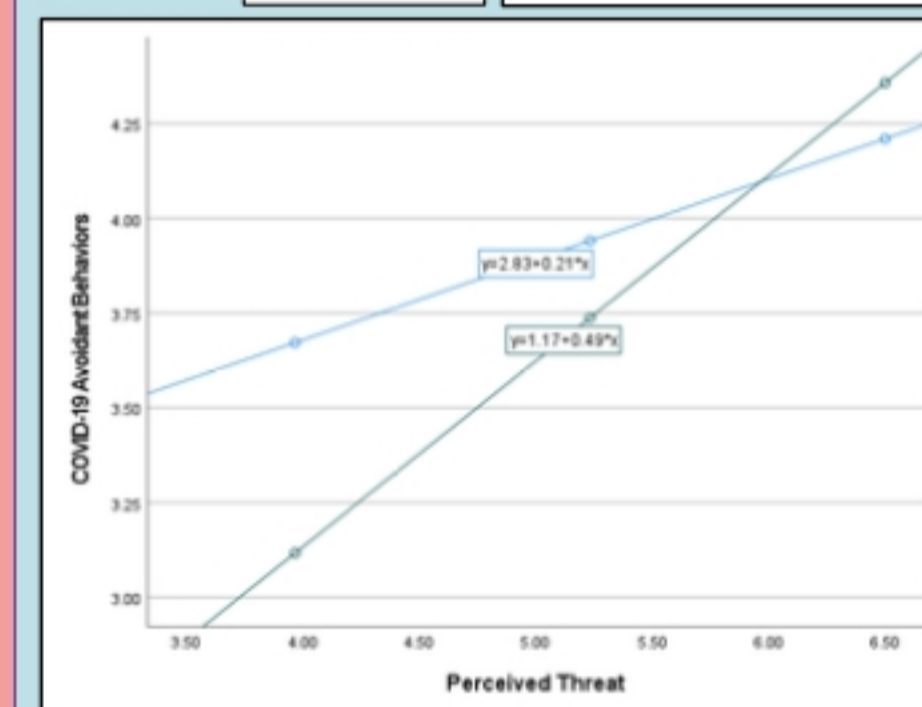
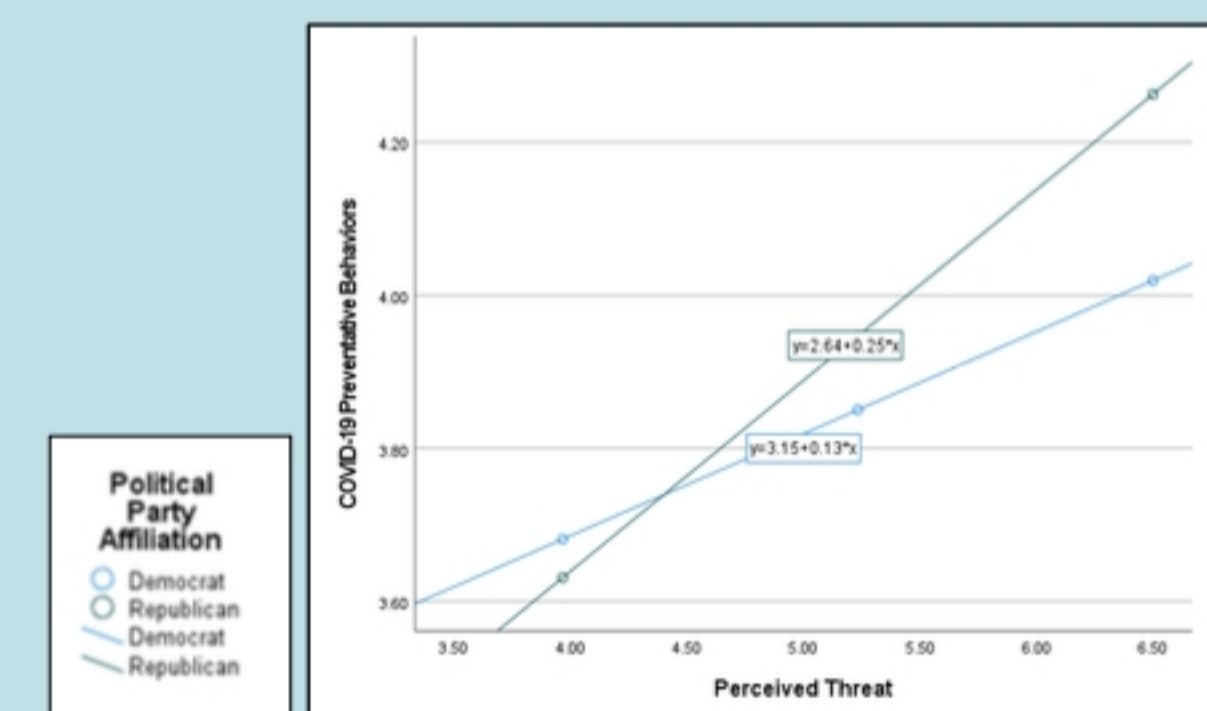
Compared to Democrats, Republicans have a greater increase in avoidant behaviors as perceived threat increases.

RESULTS

- Political party was not a significant moderator between perceived threat and COVID preventative behaviors, $F(1, 123) = 1.77, p = .19$.

- Political party affiliation was a significant moderator between perceived threat and COVID avoidant behaviors. As perceived threat increased, individuals that identify as republican experienced a greater increase in COVID avoidant behaviors compared to democrats, $b = .28, t(123) = 2.13, p = 0.04, 95\% (.006, .418)$.

Political Party	Perceived Threat M (SD)	COVID Preventative Behavior M (SD)	COVID Avoidant Behavior M (SD)
Democrat	5.69 (0.86)	3.92 (0.52)	4.05 (.76)
Republican	4.48(1.47)	3.78 (0.68)	3.41 (1.12)



DISCUSSION

- The relationship between perceived threat and engaging in COVID-19 avoidant behaviors was moderated by political party affiliation.
 - As perceived threat increases, increases in COVID-19 avoidant behaviors was greater for republicans than it was for democrats. Democrats had a higher level of engagement when perceived threat was low.
- This difference was not found for preventative behaviors.
 - Perhaps less effort is required to add a new behavior to a routine than to take one away.
- Republican ideology often embraces greater individualistic views which may result in needing a greater level of threat to themselves to engage in more avoidant behaviors.
- Limitations of this study include:
 - A relatively homogenous sample consisting of mostly white female college students.
 - The data are correlational so causal claims cannot be made.
- Recommendations and COVID-19 information was rapidly changing during data collection. Attitudes and behaviors may have been affected differently across the collection period.
- Future researchers could address these limitations by conducting a study looking at the role age may play in engagement in avoidant behaviors and how the mindset around COVID-19 has evolved since this data was collected.