

Values difference does not always equal conflict: Emerging adults'  
judgments across religious identities

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In contemporary society within the United States individuals often utilize their religious convictions to justify conflict with or unfairness toward others whose values, belief systems, or behaviors differ from one's own. For example, on March 20, 2012 in Gainesville, Florida, the Reverend Terry Jones, pastor of the 30-person Christian congregation at Dove World Outreach Center put the Qu'ran on trial and eventually burned it for being a dangerous book and for promoting violence. A video of the burning was streamed live over the internet and was specifically directed toward Arabic countries which then incited violence against Christians in many of those countries (citation). These types of situations and actions have led to the general sentiment in the U.S. that many religious individuals, particularly those who espouse more fundamentalist views of their religion, are hateful, prejudiced, and biased. We know very little, however, about how religious individuals, more generally, manage and coordinate their religious beliefs and their understanding of religious doctrine with other types of social knowledge or information that is perceived to be in conflict with this doctrine. The purpose of this talk will be to shed some light on these issues by exploring both self-identified religious and non-religious individuals' attitudes and beliefs about others whose beliefs systems may be different from their own. Further, based on both qualitative and quantitative data, we will delineate factors that may be related to individuals' use of religious doctrine and conviction to support interpersonal and intergroup prejudice and conflict as well as factors related to religious individuals utilizing a more humanistic or compassionate approach to interacting with others, despite the existence of a values conflict.