THE COMPOSITION OF WORLDVIEWS: THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
CONSERVATISM, RELIGIOSITY, EMPATHY, DOGMATISM, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
FLEXIBILITY

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Given the ideological divide in the United States, it has become increasingly important to study variables that impact how one views the world. This study sought to examine the correlations between crucial social and psychological variables that potentially influence one's worldview. These variables include political ideology, religiosity, prejudice, empathy, perspective taking, dogmatism, psychological flexibility, and spiritual & religious flexibility. Researchers also utilized a measure of social desirability to correct correlation coefficients for overt and covert faking in responses. This study utilized self-report data from 281 American Amazon Turk users ranging in age from 18-82. Key results indicate that conservatism was found to be positively correlated with prejudice, dogmatism, and religiosity but negatively correlated with empathy and perspective taking. Furthermore, prejudice and religiosity were both found to be significant predictors of conservatism. Overall, these findings extend previous literature by studying crucial ideological variables in a single study. Although inconclusive, these results may

demonstrate that researchers and clinicians may be able to influence prejudice by increasing

one's empathy.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Given the ever-increasing polarizing climate of the 2016 American presidential election, it is of great benefit that each political party's ideological identity be better understood by the opposing party. However, the American political landscape is primarily composed of vehement bipartisan disagreements, which inherently separates American citizens across political party lines. In fact, 29% of Americans view themselves as Democrat, 26% as Republican, and 40% as Independent (Jones, 2016). With this ever-dividing gap among Americans, it has become increasingly important to understand how individuals arrive at certain sets of political and interrelated religious beliefs while others may conclude the "truth" of completely different sets of beliefs.

The composition of worldviews is a very complex subject that is continuously evolving within an individual's cultural milieu. As a result, worldviews cannot easily be dissected or wholly tested in one study given the number of variables. There are a myriad of factors and variables that play various roles in this equation, ranging anywhere from historical to personal factors. Even though this puzzle is not easily solved, it is incumbent upon researchers to examine potential variables that may lead to an understanding of the development of these perspectives.

I. Ideologies and Prejudice

Ideologies are "sets of beliefs about the political, economic, social, and cultural affairs held by the majority of people within a society" ("Politics and Law- Political Ideologies", n.d.). There are different types of ideologies often referred to as orientations. Political and religious convictions generally influence all areas of doctrinal thought and shall be the focus of this present study. For example, socially conservative individuals tend to also be fiscally

conservative. American politics are primarily divided into liberal (Left-wing) and conservative (Right-wing) ideologies. Although there are more than two political parties (e.g. Tea Party and Green Party), politicians are generally categorized as a Democrat or a Republican, respectively. To examine this liberal-conservative distinction, Wetherell and Colleagues (2013) conducted a study examining liberal and conservative individual differences on discrimination, measured as willingness to deny basic rights to others. This study revealed that liberal individuals were more likely to promote egalitarian and universalistic principles whereas conservatism predicted higher levels of discrimination. Moreover, Meertens and Pettigrew (1997) found that blatant prejudice was positively correlated with conservatism, and those that scored higher on prejudice scales preferred harsher immigration policies. A recent meta-analysis of 67 studies discovered that right-wing ideologies and greater prejudice (greater effect sizes for ethnocentrism and authoritarianism) is linked to lower cognitive abilities (Onraet, Van Hiel, Dhont, Hodson, Schittekatte, & De Pauw, 2015). Lower cognitive abilities hinder emotion recognition abilities (Launay, Pearce, Wlodarski, van Duijn, Carney, & Dunbar, 2015), which may inhibit the ability to view an event from another person's perspective.

Other researchers tend to analyze potential personality factors that may contribute to prejudicial or discriminatory behaviors. Researchers have commonly turned to measure Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). RWA contains three attitudinal clusters within its definition including authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism (Altemeyer, 1994). Authoritarian submission is a "high degree of submission to authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives", and authoritarian aggression is "a general aggressiveness, directed against various persons, that is sanctioned by established authorities." Conventionalism is viewed as "a

high degree of adherence to the social conventions that are perceived." These three attitudinal perspectives combine to create a personality factor that is often viewed as problematic given what these views entail. SDO is "the extent to which one desires that one's in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups" (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 2001). From its definition alone, SDO is problematic because it entails discrimination against an out-group. Thus, SDO often entails prejudice. RWA and SDO have both been shown to predict economic and social conservatism (Harnish, Bridges, & Gump, 2017).

In-groups and out-groups can be perceived through racial, cultural, gender, sexual orientation, and religious barriers. These types of attitudinal factors are fairly easy to discern why researchers examine these variables in relation to prejudice and discrimination. Thus, many researchers have demonstrated that SDO and RWA can predict prejudice (Duckitt, & Sibley, 2010; Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004; Van Hiel, & Mervielde, 2005). The further significance of these personality variables will be discussed in greater detail when empathy is taken into consideration. Overall, this body of evidence suggests that liberals and conservatives hold dissimilar social attitudes and behave differently with conservatives signifying more antisocial attitudes and behaviors towards perceived out-groups. Thus, political conservatism will be the central focus in this discussion. However, political conservatism is not the only important ideology to consider.

Religiosity is the second major ideological category that may lend towards an understanding of the development of bipartisan issues because of the interwoven nature of these constructs. Even though religiosity and spirituality are concepts that are used interchangeably in every day settings, these two constructs are not identical ideas (Sessanna, Finnell, Underhill, Chang, & Peng, 2011). Bergan and McConatha (2000) define religiosity as "various dimensions

associated with religious beliefs and involvement." These dimensions usually include subjective, cognitive, behavioral, and cultural dimensions but have been categorized differently by researchers. On the other hand, spirituality is defined as having a "meaningful connection with something bigger than yourself" (What Is Spirituality? Taking Charge of Your Health & Wellbeing, n.d.). Spirituality is about searching for existential meaning and having universal human experiences, which can elicit positive emotions such as contentment, gratitude, and acceptance. Since religiosity shares a closer connection with political conservatism than spirituality (e.g. non-theists can be spiritual;) (Chaves, 2011), religiosity will be central to this discussion of worldviews. Additionally, religiosity has been shown to be positively associated with prejudice (Brambilla, Manzi, Regalia, & Verkuyten, 2013). Conservatism and religiosity are often interwoven ideologies. Thus, both are important constructs to consider when exploring the makeup of worldviews.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

I.   **Empathy**

A second variable that is often overlooked but may be of importance in analyzing and understanding ideological differences is empathy. Empathy is defined as an "emotional response that is congruent with another person's welfare" (Batson, 1991). Researchers have shown that empathy is beneficial across several different domains of research. Higher levels of empathy have been shown to positively correlate with spousal support (Collins, Kane, Metz, Cleveland, Khan, & Winczewski, 2014; Verhofstadt, Devoldre, Buysse, Stevens, Hinnekens, Ickes, & Davis, 2016) and is linked to social functioning (Bailey, Henry, & Von Hippel, 2008; Khanjani, Jeddi, Hekmati, Khalilzade, Etemadi & Nia, 2015). Broadly speaking, empathy is beneficial to the self and others, which is why it is of interest in ideological concerns.

Empathy has been found to reduce stigma and discrimination against marginalized groups. Gloor and Puhl (2016) found that an empathy-induced intervention significantly reduced stigma against obese individuals when compared to a control group (no intervention). It has also been discovered that empathy (composed of empathic concern and perspective taking) can predict generalized prejudice even when SDO and RWA are controlled for (Bäckström, & Björklund, 2007). These researchers also concluded that empathy had a direct effect on generalized prejudice, meaning that not empathizing with another person's situation led to "anti-egalitarian" views. Overall, prejudice has been notably linked to a lack of empathy in individuals through numerous studies, which validates these two variables as crucial in how an individual views the world.

Beyond the scope of prejudice, there is evidence from two studies that utilized an EEG to demonstrate that there is greater prefrontal right alpha asymmetry in the brain when intragroup members are seen as sad or upset (Eres, & Molenberghs, 2013; Gutsell, & Inzlicht, 2012). However, this same neurological activation did not occur when out-group members were seen as upset. Additionally, a lack of prefrontal right alpha asymmetry was indicative of prejudice. The implications of these studies demonstrate that individuals empathize with who they perceive as close or alike to themselves (intragroup) but experience less empathy for those that they perceive as not close to themselves (out-group), thus, making out-groups potential targets for inadvertent discrimination. Once viewed from a cultural perspective, it is not hard to see that normative standards of society begin to marginalize "out-groups" because "intragroups" tend to have difficulty in taking their perspectives. In sum, empathy has been demonstrated to reduce stigma and discrimination of stigmatized groups, and has been able to predict generalized prejudice. These results exemplify the social utility of empathic abilities and the clinical obligation to research and teach empathy to the general public.

It is well established that empathy is linked to social functioning (Bailey et al., 2014; Khanjani et al., 2015) and can decrease stigmatization (Gloor et al., 2016), but these results alone do not yield complete answers as to what may contribute to the development and maintenance of worldviews. To examine this connection further, ideological differences need to be examined more closely in order to determine whether empathic differences exist across ideological lines.

II.   **Empathy and Conservatism**

Political ideology can be examined even further within the context of empathy. McFarland (2010) found that self-reported empathy and SDO are negatively correlated. It stands to reason that since SDO can partially predict political conservatism (Duckitt et al., 2010), then,

conservatism would be negatively related to empathy. To further elaborate on this relationship, it has been previously demonstrated that SDO and RWA are good predictors of prejudice (Duckitt et al., 2010; et al., 2004; Van Hiel et al., 2005). This takes on additional significance because SDO and RWA have been found to predict political conservatism (Wilson & Sibley, 2013). If RWA and SDO can predict prejudice and political conservatism, prejudice may be higher in politically conservative groups, and empathy would be significantly lower.

In addition to these results, a study conducted on libertarianism found that libertarians often have lower social relatedness than liberals and conservatives because of their emphasis on individual liberty over other moral domains (Iyer, Koleva, Graham, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012). It was also found that libertarians scored moderately lower than conservatives and substantially lower than liberals on empathic concern measures, and scored moderately lower than liberals on perspective-taking measures. At face value, this study appears somewhat unrelated to the present problem due to the binary method of viewing American politics. However, upon further review, it has been demonstrated through a 2010 poll that Tea Party members, which often express social and fiscal libertarian ideologies (Kirby & Ekins, 2012). typically describe themselves as "very conservative" and President Obama as "very liberal" (Zernike & Three-Brenan, 2010). Not all libertarians are Tea Party members, but this study demonstrates that as political conservatism becomes greater (certain libertarians fall within this group), perspective taking and empathic concern decreases. This demonstrates that libertarianism can be viewed in context with its commonalities with traditional conservatism including lower social relatedness and empathic abilities.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the differences between conservatism and liberalism are significantly distinctive within the psychological literature with liberalism

supporting more egalitarian stances and conservatism, involving generalized prejudice with RWA and SDO, contributing to predict prejudice and political conservatism. These findings generally demonstrate that there are social differences between liberal and conservative individuals. This difference becomes increasingly distinct when examining conservatism and empathy. Of course, this is not the full ideological picture. Political conservatism is only one area to consider in discussion of worldviews. The next section will explore another area that may influence worldviews as much as one's political orientation.

III.   Empathy and Religiosity

Religiosity and empathy have been subject to social psychologists' works for decades because of the key role religion plays in American lives. In children, religiosity and empathy have been found to not be significantly related (Duriez, 2004; Miles, 2014). Vonk and Pitzen (2016) found that while empathy may correlate with certain aspects of religiosity (intrinsic religiosity and emotion-based religiosity) empathy could not predict religiosity in two samples of college students.

However, further research with adults has not replicated the same results as with children. There is evidence to suggest religious beliefs may positively correlate with empathy (Łowicki & Zajenkowski, 2016). Conversely, Procter (2013) conducted research on unlicensed counseling master's level therapists' attitudes about gay and lesbian individuals within the therapeutic context. Results of this investigation demonstrate that religious fundamentalism and empathy share no relationship, but as expected, fundamentalism can predict attitudes about lesbian and gay individuals. Taking Lowicki et al., (2016) and Procter (2013) into consideration, these combined data may demonstrate that when religious views are held as a dogmatic extreme (as found in fundamentalism), there is no relationship with empathy, but religiosity may be

positively associated with empathy when less extreme. Given this complex relationship, there is a need to reassess this relationship in the present study. In addition to this, the cognitive component of empathy can be explored as a separate construct that may yield an explanation for the previous conflicting data.

IV.   Perspective Taking

Researchers generally reduce empathy into two main components, namely empathic concern and perspective taking (Levin, Luoma, Vilardaga, Lillis, Nobles, & Hayes, 2016). Empathic concern is thought of as a "visceral, emotional reaction" whereas perspective-taking has been defined as an individual's "ability to simply understand the other person's perspective" (Davis (1980). Thus, this inherently categorizes perspective taking as the cognitive component of empathy.

Perspective taking has been shown to positively correlate with self-esteem and social competence (Davis, 1983). It is believed perspective taking can reduce prejudice because taking another person's perspective alters the cognitive representation and modifies the object/event as more self-like to the observer (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996). In other words, the target object/event becomes more relatable to the observer. Galper (1976) goes on to explain that the observer is likely to attribute a causal inference for the behavior of the target that is similar to the observer's own behaviors. Once the observer can relate to the behavior, it follows that the observer can "put themselves in the other person's shoes". Since perspective taking is rarely analyzed as a separate component of empathy, research into this area may shed some light on the cognitive processes behind the ability to empathize with groups and individuals.

The perspective-taking component of empathy has been shown to predict prejudice against marginalized groups (Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000; Levin et al., 2016; Paluck &

Green, 2009; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011). Conversely, perspective-taking has been demonstrated to lead to more positive evaluations of intragroup members as well as the outer-group's members (Batson, Polycarpou, Harmon-Jones, Imhoff, Mitchener, 1997; Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995; Galinsky, 2002; Galinsky, & Ku, 2004). Thus, perspective taking appears to function as a prosocial behavior and may decrease prejudice among groups of people. Since prejudice and political conservatism are positively correlated (Meertens et al., 1997; Onraet, et al., 2015; Wetherell et al., 2013), perspective taking and conservatism shall need further exploring.

V.   Perspective Taking and Conservatism

As previously noted, empathy in relation to political/religious orientation has been studied relatively extensively. The relationships between political/religious orientation and perspective-taking have been examined less frequently due to its relatively recent formulation. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that mimicry of participants by a trained researcher affects people's voting behaviors by influencing that individual to engage in arguably more broadly prosocial voting behaviors (i.e. voting for left-wing parties over right-wing parties) (Stel & Harinck, 2011) and being mimicked is even found to increase prosocial behaviors in 18-month old infants (Carpenter, Uebel, & Tomasello, 2013). The act of mimicking allows the participants to view themselves in a more relatable fashion to others and helps them take on the perspective of others (Stel et al., 2011).

Furthermore, ideological differences in political doctrine and perspective taking may lead to discrepancies in prejudicial behaviors. Sparkman and Eidelman (2016) examined liberal and conservative differences in prejudice, stereotyping, and perspective taking on self-report instruments among a sample of 264 subjects. They discovered three main findings; liberals were

less likely to endorse stereotyping and prejudice, liberals were more likely to endorse perspective taking of ethnic minorities, and perspective taking of other ethnicities partially mediated the relationship between prejudice, stereotyping, and perspective taking. These findings suggest that individuals who self-identify as liberal may be more likely to take the perspective of a minority, and this taking of another's perspective is related to decreased prejudice and stereotyping of minorities.

It has already been established that political conservatism and discrimination/prejudice share a positive relationship (Meertens et al., 1997; Wetherell et al., 2013). It can reasonably be stated that this relationship should be further explored within the context of perspective taking. A very recent study analyzed predictors of generalized prejudice (Levin et al., 2016). Three main predictors were found: empathic concern, perspective-taking and psychological inflexibility. That is, each of these three predictors was found to significantly and independently predict generalized prejudice. Another study demonstrated similar results in that perspective taking was found to improve out-group liking of those members (Shih, Wang, Trahan, Bucher, & Stotzer, 2009). The implication of this study furthers the evidence that perspective taking can reduce prejudice by allowing the intragroup member to view the out-group member in a more likeable fashion. Thus, perspective taking has been found to be substantially greater in liberals than conservatives, and has been found to be able to independently predict generalized prejudice. Since these relationships exist, perspective taking and religiosity should be analyzed, given the interwoven nature of these variables.

VI.   Perspective Taking and Religiosity

Relatively few studies have explored the relationship between perspective taking and religiosity. However, some studies have yielded interesting results. A study conducted on

homophobia found that empathic concern and perspective taking were both negatively correlated with homophobia (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997). However, religiosity was positively related to homophobia. One possible interpretation of this result is that those individuals that score high in religiosity measures may have lower perspective-taking abilities. The empirical research on perspective taking and political/religious orientation has been quite limited because empathy is usually measured as a unitary construct. Since the research is quite sparse, other variables that affect this relationship are of interest such as how beliefs are held by the individual.

VII.   Dogmatism

It should be evident by now that religiosity, political ideology, and perspective taking share significant relationships with one another. Since these correlations exist, it is ideal to examine other variables that might be included in worldviews. One such variable is dogmatism. Dogmatism is defined as "an unjustified certainty and conviction that is resilient against opposing beliefs and is not specific to any subject area" (Altemeyer, 1996). In essence, dogmatism is a conclusive belief when no conclusive belief can be reasonably drawn.

Dogmatic views can be held in any domain where human judgment can be made. Dogmatism has been shown to share a positive relationship with prejudice. In a recent study using Amazon Mechanical Turk, dogmatism was shown to be a significant predictor of prejudice (Bronstein, Dovidio, & Cannon, 2017). In an older study, researchers found that dogmatism accounted for approximately 40% of the variance in prejudice towards African Americans (Strickland & Weddell, 1972). Another older study demonstrated similar results, showing that dogmatism and status concern were the best predictors of prejudice among Presbyterian and Methodist church-goers (Hoge & Carroll, 1973).

In the realm of political orientation, this becomes more apparent. An interesting study that analyzed nuclear weapons attitudes found that those individuals who oppose nuclear weapons use scored lower in dogmatism and higher in empathy (Herr & Lapidus, 1998). A relatively recent study sought to test whether conservatism and liberalism could be tested as separate constructs rather than viewed as a political continuum. These researchers found that conservatism was positively associated with dogmatism, but liberalism was found to be positively related to creativity and universal orientation (Choma, Hafer, Dywan, Segalowitz, & Busseri, 2012). This seems to suggest that at least in some ways liberal individuals prefer creating new ideas, but conservative individuals tend to prefer older "more certain" ideas. Furthermore, perspective taking and dogmatism have been shown to be negatively correlated (Friedman & Jack, 2017).

Another study examined the constructs of intolerance, political self-identification and dogmatism. There were two notable results. First, conservatives were significantly more intolerant and dogmatic than liberal individuals. Secondly, intolerance and dogmatism were both significant predictors of political self-identification (White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2011). This study's results seem to suggest that intolerance and dogmatism are related constructs and may both play a motivating role in political identification. A third related study found that dogmatism, cultural conservatism, and economic conservatism were related constructs as well (Crowson, 2009).

Since political conservatism and dogmatism appear to be related constructs, religiosity in relation to dogmatism will be another ideological category to explore. It has been demonstrated that dogmatism is lower in graduates from mental health counseling than those that are beginning the program (Hunter, Harris, & Trusty, 1998). This could be due to many factors, but a potential implication is that graduates from the program become less dogmatic in their thinking as they

progress through the program. Considering that this study is a correlational study, more research would need to be conducted in order to determine whether this inference has validity. Within religious studies, Di Giuseppe (1971) found that religious conviction and dogmatism are positively associated. Another early study conducted with differing denominational religious undergraduates found that moral judgment development was lower in those individuals with greater dogmatic beliefs (Wahrman, 1981). Additionally, an individual's commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy tends to exemplify more dogmatism (McNeel, & Thorsen, 1985).

Newer research has been quite limited but has shown very similar results. Like early studies, Eisenstein (2005) replicated similar results in that increased religious commitment correlates with increased levels of dogmatism. The lack of recent research in this area indicates that these variables may need re-exploring.

Since dogmatism shares relationships with both political conservatism, and religiosity, it is reasonable to think that dogmatism and empathy would be related to one another. This hypothesis has been supported by past research. It has been previously established that therapists who demonstrate bias toward their clients score higher on dogmatism measures (Harris & Rosenthal, 1986; Wright, 1975), which demonstrates that these therapists may already have assumptions about their clients before they arrive for therapy. Wright (1975) also suggested that those counselors that score higher in dogmatism lack the psychological insight that lower dogmatic counselors have.

Furthermore, it has been established that dogmatism shares an inverse relationship with empathy, but empathy is positively related to creativity (Carozzi, Bull, Eells, & Hurlbur, 1995). This suggests that that those higher in dogmatism fail to imagine what it is like to be in another person's role. So far, it's been established that those higher in dogmatism are often lower in

empathy. However, this is not the full picture of these related ideas. The issue of religion and spirituality and dogmatism shall need further exploring within a psychological flexibility model.

VIII.   Spiritual & Religious Flexibility and Dogmatism

Psychological flexibility refers to the "capacity to engage in valued patterns of activity independent of the internal experiences that may arise" (Levin et al., 2016). Psychological inflexibility refers to the opposite or the "patterns which are rigidly guided by internal experiences (i.e., thoughts, feelings, and urges), rather than by personal values or direct contingencies." Psychological inflexibility has been shown to predict prejudice when RWA and SDO are controlled for (Levin et al., 2016). Increases in psychological flexibility have been shown to account for reductions in prejudice (Hayes, Bissett, Roget, Padilla, Kohlenberg, & Fisher, 2004; Lillis & Hayes, 2007). Since psychological inflexibility and flexibility represent a continuum, these results demonstrate that increases in psychological flexibility can lead to reductions in prejudice. A question one might have is how worldviews and psychological flexibility are related. If certain populations have greater psychological inflexibility (those higher in prejudice), then it's worth exploring why these differences in psychological flexibility occur.

Religiosity has been previously discussed in various contexts. Throughout this discussion, religiosity has largely been examined as a unitary construct. However, it is well known that it cannot be a single absolute idea because it exists in a variety of forms. A recent census reported that Christianity can be reduced to numerous different theological orientations including Southern Baptist (1,513 counties), United Methodist Church (641 counties), Lutheran Church (99 counties), and a multitude of other doctrines ("Religious statistics & demographics," 2012). This list does not even include other religions that are commonly exercised in the United States. Moreover, there are a small percentage of Americans who identify as nonreligious but

find solace in believing in something greater than themselves, which aligns with spirituality (Sessanna et al., 2011). Since religiosity and spirituality are both multidimensional, it stands to reason that the area needs further excavating to analyze these ideological differences.

Psychological flexibility and religiosity have not been subject to researchers' interests. However, the concept of spiritual and religious flexibility integrates these concepts into one measure. Spiritual and religious flexibility is the "application of the construct of psychological flexibility to situations when the sacred is a relevant contingency" (Schmalz, 2014).   The differences in religiosity have been alluded to previously, but this area of research has not been fleshed out. Religious groups differ in how their beliefs are held. One such grouping called religious fundamentalism can be defined in several ways depending on the researchers, but Hill and Hood (1999) state that typical definitions include dogmatic beliefs and rigidity towards a specific tradition or text such as the Bible. Religious fundamentalism has been linked to homophobia and prejudicial attitudes (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004; Wulff, 1996). This implies that fundamentalist religions are by nature less psychologically flexible because inflexibility is linked to prejudice (Hayes et al., 2004; Lillis & Hayes, 2007). Since fundamentalism includes dogmatism within its definition, a dogmatic individual has higher levels of intolerance (White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2011) and should be less psychologically flexible on average.

Religious fundamentalism can be hashed out even further into two separate constructs, namely orthodoxy and RWA. This distinction is based on orthodoxy being the contents of beliefs and RWA being how one practices those beliefs (Laythe, Finkel, Bringle, & Kirkpatrick, 2002). This same study demonstrated that racial prejudice is positively related to RWA but orthodoxy is

actually inversely related. This implies that it may not be the contents of one's beliefs that lead to prejudicial acts but rather how these views are practiced and held.

Of course like any worldview, there is more than one way of viewing the same constructs especially when it comes to spiritual and religious issues. Most religious or spiritual individuals do not prescribe to a fundamentalist view and should be more psychologically flexible than their fundamentalist counterparts. Since there are many ways to view sacred issues, there should be differences in psychological flexibility because dogmatic, tenaciously-held views (as found in fundamentalism) are inflexible while other religious views function quite effectively in the lives of those individuals. Thus, more open views should correspond with greater psychological flexibility and less prejudicial ideas and behaviors.

IX.   Social Desirability

Thus far, a multitude of variables have been discussed with the implication that they impact the formulation of worldviews. However, evidence suggests that socially desirable responding often impacts how participants answer self-report questionnaires. Social Desirability is defined as "participants' tendency to give 'desirable' answers in response to attitudinal questionnaires in order to put forward a more socially acceptable self-image" (Haghighat, 2007). Socially desirable responding entails that participants often over-report "positive" beliefs and behaviors but often underreport "negative" beliefs and behaviors. In fact, there is evidence that suggests that socially-desirable response bias plays a significant role in how individuals answer personality questionnaires (Dunkel, van der Linden, Brown, & Mathes, 2016). In addition to this result, further research supports that self-reported religiosity is influenced by socially desirable responding dependent on the cultural emphasis of religiosity (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010). This indicates that individuals are more likely to respond in a socially desirable way if their culture emphasizes religiosity more.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the need to measure socially desirable responding due to the nature of the present variables. In doing so, this will help researchers understand how these variables are affected by socially desirable responding.

Chapter 3

Current Study and Hypotheses

Overall, the data suggest complex interrelations between this set of variables and demonstrates the challenges of dissecting the correlations among differences in worldviews. So far, it has been demonstrated that ideological differences among political and religious views can be quite distinct, but the entire ideological landscape is murky. Ideological differences between conservatives and liberals have been found to be distinguished in several different ways. Conservatives have been found to score higher on prejudice and discrimination measures and can actually predict prejudice in conjunction with measures of SDO and RWA. Conversely, empathy can reduce prejudice. This makes sense when considering conservatism because conservatism has been shown to be negatively associated with empathy, especially when pushed to the ideological extreme. Religiosity and empathy have a similar relationship in that the correlation becomes negative when religious views are held as fundamentalist extremes. A key component of empathy is perspective taking. Perspective taking has been less prevalently researched than empathy, but the data reveal similar results with regards to ideological concerns. Perspective taking shall need further research in order to understand the underlying cognitive processes of empathy.

The concept of religious fundamentalism is inherently connected to dogmatism. Dogmatism is positively correlated with political conservatism and religiosity. In conjunction with newer research on psychological flexibility, dogmatism and prejudice are found in the psychologically inflexible. This set of interrelated variables poses an empirical problem. Firstly, there are many religious viewpoints that do not include psychologically inflexible or dogmatic tenants. This poses an empirical problem because it is not entirely transparent as to how these

individuals view politics and religion and what their corresponding empathy might be. Moreover, spiritual & religious flexibility will lend a better understanding to the differences between religious groups because the psychologically flexible individual's religious beliefs will appear different compared to the fundamentalist. Secondly, most of these variables can be logically connected through induction. For example, those lower in empathy have more prejudices, and those high in political conservatism are often more dogmatic. Therefore, dogmatism must have an inverse relation to empathy. This sounds reasonable, but this does not actually demonstrate what a certain individual would score empirically on these measures.

In addition to this exploration of correlations, there have been consistent empirical findings that prejudice is a predictor of conservatism (Wilson & Sibley, 2013). Additionally, religiosity has been shown to be positively correlated with aspects of conservatism (Laythe et al., 2002). Therefore, this study will also explore prejudice and religiosity as predictors of conservatism.

Given the complex nature of these interrelated variables and the empirical problems associated with them, it is imperative to analyze how these variables are related to one another in a single study. The present study seeks to measure empathy, perspective taking, dogmatism, religiosity, political orientation, prejudice, social desirability and spiritual & religious flexibility in an attempt to better understand how worldviews potentially form and what their compositions resemble. The results will add to the psychological literature in that previous studies have not combined these measures to understand the complex relationships among these variables.

I. Hypotheses

The present study is concerned with many relationships among these current variables. Several hypotheses can be reasonably inferred from the previous empirical literature.

Hypothesis 1: Conservatism

a. Conservatism will be positively associated with religiosity.

b. Conservatism will be positively associated with prejudice.

c. Conservatism will be positively associated with dogmatism.

d. Conservatism will be inversely related to empathy.

e. Conservatism will be inversely related to perspective taking.

Hypothesis 2: Religiosity

a. Religiosity will be positively correlated with dogmatism.

b. Religiosity will be positively correlated with prejudice.

Hypothesis 3: Empathy

a. Empathy will be negatively associated with prejudice.

b. Empathy will be negatively associated with dogmatism.

Hypothesis 4: Perspective taking

a. Perspective taking will be negatively associated with prejudice.

b. Perspective taking will be negatively associated with dogmatism.

Hypothesis 5: Dogmatism

a. Dogmatism will be positively correlated with prejudice.

Hypothesis 6: Religious & Spiritual Flexibility (Note: higher scores indicate greater religious & spiritual inflexibility)

a. Religious & Spiritual Flexibility will be inversely related to dogmatism.

b. Religious & Spiritual Flexibility will be inversely related to prejudice.

Hypothesis 7: Psychological Flexibility (Note: higher scores indicate greater psychological inflexibility)

a. Psychological Flexibility will be negatively correlated with prejudice.

b. Psychological Flexibility will be positively correlated with empathy.

c. Psychological Flexibility will be positively correlated with perspective taking.

Hypothesis 8: Religiosity and prejudice will emerge as significant predictors of

conservatism.

Chapter 4

Methods

I.   Study Design

This study was designed using self-report instruments. As an attempt to sample

individuals from across the United States, Amazon Mechanical Turk was used to quickly gather

data. The self-report instruments were used to create an online survey that could be completed in

approximately 20 minutes to an hour.

II.   Participants

The initial sample included 304 Amazon Mechanical Turk members who received $0.20

for completing the survey. All participants must have completed all items of the survey and must

pass three decoy questions to ensure that participants were not randomly responding to the

survey. These decoy questions were strategically placed throughout the survey and are listed in

Appendix K. Due to the nature of the prejudice scale, African American participant data was

removed. This left a final sample of 281 participants. Participants ranged in age from 18-82 with

a mean age of 39.85 and a standard deviation of 13.53 years. Participant sample consisted of 165

females (58.7%) and 116 males (41.3%). Other demographic data including religious preference

and ethnicity are reported in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively.

III.   Measures

Interpersonal Reactivity Inventory (IRI)

The Interpersonal Reactivity Inventory (IRI) is a self-report questionnaire that examines

an individual's tendency to express an empathic response (Davis, 1980). The IRI consists of 28

items on a Likert response scale with questions such as, "I often have tender, concerned feelings

for people less fortunate than me." Responses range from 0 (Does not describe me well) to 4 (Describes me very well). This inventory is composed of four subscales including perspective taking (PT), fantasy scale (FS), empathic concern (EC), and personal distress (PD) scales. In this study, the IRI will be utilized to measure both empathy and perspective taking. Empathy will be measured using the FS, EC, and PD subscales, whereas perspective taking will be measured using the PT subscale. Higher scores indicate more empathy and perspective taking. The IRI demonstrates strong reliability and excellent convergent and discriminant validity (Pulos, Elison, & Lennon, 2004).

Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II)

The AAQ-II measures acceptance, experiential avoidance, and psychological inflexibility (Bond, and colleagues 2011). The questionnaire consists of 7 items such as "My painful experiences and memories make it difficult for me to live a life that I would value" scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never true) to 7 (Always true). Higher scores indicate greater levels of psychological inflexibility. The AAQ- II has a 12-month test-retest reliability of .79 and has appropriate discriminant validity.

Dogmatism (DOG) Scale

The DOG scale is a measure of an individual's level of unjustified and unchangeability in one's beliefs (Altemeyer, 1996). This scale consists of 22 items with questions such as "The things I believe in are so completely true, I could never doubt them" (reverse coded). Higher scores indicate greater levels of dogmatism. Evidence supports the construct and discriminant validity of this scale (Crowson, DeBacker, & Davis, 2008; Crowson, 2009).

Social & Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS)

The SECS is a 12-item scale that measures conservatism. The scale consists of two subscales, namely economic and social conservatism (Everett, 2013). Each item is rated on a 0-100 scale with 0 indicating greater negativity and 100 indicating greater positivity towards the item. This questionnaire consists of items such as Patriotism and The Family Unit. Other items such as Abortion and Welfare Benefits are reverse-scored. Thus, higher scores indicate greater conservatism. The SECS has a Cronbach's alpha of .88.

Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)

The CRS measures the centrality and importance of religious meaning in an individual's personal life (Huber & Huber, 2012). This scale consists of five dimensions of religiosity including ideology, intellect, religious experience, private practice, and public practice. Each dimension contains 3 items for a total of 15 items. The CRS has been utilized effectively across several different cultural and religious backgrounds. The CRS consists of items such as, "In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists?" This questionnaire consists of a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often). Higher scores demonstrate higher levels of religiosity. Construct validity of the CRS ranges from .73 to .83 depending on the sample. Cronbach's alpha for the CRS is .84.

Measure of Religious & Spiritual Flexibility (MRSF)

This measure assesses the concept of psychological flexibility through a spiritual and religious lens and attempts to analyze these "sacred" constructs through a functional approach that is clinically and empirically useful (Schmalz, 2014). The MRSF consists of 6 items (e.g. My views limit my day-to-day life) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Higher scores indicate greater religious and spiritual inflexibility. This

measure demonstrates adequate test-retest reliability and internal consistency. Additionally, the MRSF has good construct validity.

Symbolic Racism 2000 Scale (SR2K)

The SR2K measures new forms of prejudice typically held by White individuals towards African Americans that entails a sense that Black individuals violate American values in some way (Henry & Sears, 2002). The scale incorporates items such as "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites" on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree) and consists of 8 items. Other items include questions such as "Some say that black leaders have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven't pushed fast enough. What do you think?" on a three-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Trying to push too fast) and 3 (Moving too slowly) and is reverse-scored. Higher scores indicate more racism and prejudice. This scale has been shown to have excellent internal consistency and reliability and has predictive validity.

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR-40)

The BIDR-40 is a measure of self-deceptive positivity and impression management. The scale consists of 20 self-deception questions and 20 impression management questions (Paulhus, 1991). The questions are keyed by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not true) to 7 (Very true) and contain questions such as, "I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught." The BIDR-40 has a dichotomous scoring system (see Appendix H for more details). Thus, there is a maximum score of 40. Higher scores are indicative of socially desirable responding. The BIDR-40 has an internal consistency of .83 and a concurrent validity of .71. Discriminant validity has been shown to be strong as well.

IV.   Procedures

Data collection took place on March 20, 2017 through March 27, 2017. The instruments were administered in the following order for all participants: SR2K, IRI, CRS, AAQ-II, MRSF, SECS, DOG scale, BIDR-40.

Chapter 5

Results

All variables were calculated and coded in SPSS. Hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson r correlations. To reduce the likelihood of a spurious relationship among variables, a P value of ($p = 0.01$) will be utilized. One major issue with self-report questionnaires is the likelihood of socially desirable response bias. In order to account for this problem, a method from Sjöberg (2015) was utilized to correct survey scores through the use of the BIDR-40 for covert and overt faking on questionnaires. As a result, the reported correlation coefficients are corrected for socially desirable response bias.

Table 3 provides means and standard deviations for all variables: Conservatism, Religiosity, Empathy, Perspective Taking, Dogmatism, Religious and Spiritual Flexibility, Prejudice, Psychological Flexibility, and Social Desirability. Table 4 provides the correlational results between variables.

Hypothesis 1 examined the relationships between conservatism and the following variables: religiosity, prejudice, dogmatism, empathy, and perspective taking. A significant correlation was found between conservatism and religiosity ($r = .572$, $p < .001$), conservatism and prejudice ($r = .673$, $p < .001$), conservatism and dogmatism ($r = .303$, $p < .001$), conservatism and empathy ($r = -.182$, $p = .007$), and conservatism and perspective taking ($r = -.166$, $p = .005$). Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 examined the relationships between religiosity and the following variables: dogmatism and prejudice. A significant relationship was found between religiosity and dogmatism ($r = .353$, $p < .001$) and religiosity and prejudice ($r = .272$, $p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 examined the relationships between empathy and the following variables: prejudice and dogmatism. A significant relationship between empathy and prejudice was found ($r = -.290, p < .001$). However, there was no significant correlation between empathy and dogmatism ($r = 0.25, p = .644$). Hypothesis 3 is not entirely supported.

Hypothesis 4 analyzed the relationships between perspective taking and the following variables: prejudice and dogmatism. A significant negative relationship between perspective taking and prejudice ($r = -.324, p < .001$) and perspective taking and dogmatism ($r = -.261, p < .001$). Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5 examined the relationship between dogmatism and prejudice. A positive and significant relationship was found ($r = .272, p < .001$). Thus, hypothesis 5 is supported.

Hypothesis 6 analyzed the relationships between Religious & Spiritual Flexibility and the following variables: dogmatism and prejudice. Religious & Spiritual Flexibility and dogmatism had a significant relationship ($r = .316, p < .001$). This means that religious & spiritual inflexibility is positively associated with dogmatism. Religious and Spiritual flexibility was not found to be significantly correlated with prejudice ($r = .149, p = .013$). Hypothesis 6b is unsupported.

Hypothesis 7 analyzed the relationships between psychological flexibility and the following variables: prejudice, empathy, and perspective taking. Psychological flexibility and prejudice do not have a significant relationship ($r = .019, p = .756$). Psychological flexibility and empathy was found to have a positive relationship ($r = .372, p < .001$). This means that there was a positive relationship between empathy and psychological inflexibility. Lastly, psychological flexibility and perspective taking did not have a significant relationship ($r = -.003, p = .958$). Thus, hypothesis 7 is unsupported.

Utilizing multiple regression analysis, Hypothesis 8 demonstrated that the religiosity and prejudice explained 61.6% of the variance in conservatism; $R^2 = .616$, $F (2, 278) = 222.749$, $p < .001$. It was found that religiosity significantly predicted conservatism ($\beta = .420$, $p < .001$), as did prejudice ($\beta = .558$, $p < .001$). This indicates that prejudice is a better predictor of conservatism than religiosity.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Given the present ideological divide that exists in the United States, psychological research involving variables related to worldviews appears to be of importance. The current study sought to understand the relationships between conservatism, religiosity, empathy, perspective taking, dogmatism, prejudice, and religious & spiritual flexibility with socially desirable response bias taken into consideration. This study was designed to build on previous empirical literature by more thoroughly exploring the nature of these variables. While this study reveals several important findings, there are also several important limitations as well.

The first hypothesis led to several interesting findings. As expected, conservatism shared a positive relationship with religiosity, prejudice, and dogmatism. Additionally, conservatism was negatively associated with both empathy and perspective taking. One possible but tentative interpretation of these results is that prejudice and dogmatism are partial functions of low degrees of empathy and perspective taking abilities. In other words, when the observer is unable to take the perspective of another, the observer is unable to make objective causal inferences about the individual's behavior, which means the observer is unable to relate to the individual being observed. This inability to take another's perspective may lead to rigid patterns of thinking about others' behaviors. This interpretation would make sense because dogmatism has consistently been shown to be an excellent predictor of prejudice. (Bronstein et al., 2017; Hoge & Carroll, 1973; Strickland & Weddell, 1972). In addition to this, empathy has been shown to be able to predict level of prejudice (Bäckström, & Björklund, 2007) and has been shown to decrease stigma (Gloor and Puhl, 2016), while perspective taking has been shown to reduce prejudice (Davis et al., 1996). Lastly, Empathy has also been shown to be negatively correlated

with dogmatism (Herr & Lapidus, 1998). Since these variables overlap, it makes sense that conservatism has significant correlations with these variables when considering its connection to dogmatism (Choma et al., 2012; Crowson, 2009; White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2011) and prejudice (Meertens and Pettigrew, 1997; Wetherell et al., 2012) in the previous literature.

 The second hypothesis examined religiosity's correlations with dogmatism and prejudice. As expected, religiosity has a positive relationship with both. The first two hypotheses clearly connect conservatism, religiosity, dogmatism, and prejudice together, indicating that a conservative with deeply-held religious convictions may also be prone to exemplifying prejudicial behaviors and committing to dogmatic beliefs. As discussed in conjunction with dogmatism, religious views appear to become highly problematic when they are considered fundamentalist because fundamentalism is often correlated with homophobia and prejudicial attitudes (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004; Wulff, 1996). It is important to note that while dogmatism, fundamentalism, and religiosity appear to be connected, they are not considered to be the same construct, but are overlapping constructs. Previous research indicates that religiosity and fundamentalism have a positive and moderate correlation (Heiser, 2005). Furthermore, dogmatism has been found to be positively correlated with authoritarianism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Heiser, 2005; Westman, Willink, & McHoskey, 2000), whereas fundamentalism has been shown to have a positive correlation with authoritarianism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Heiser, 2005). These studies demonstrate that while dogmatism, religiosity, and fundamentalism are related constructs, they are not a unitary construct. Overall, hypothesis 1 and 2 seem to indicate that the more religious and conservative a person is, the more likely he/she is to hold dogmatic and prejudicial beliefs.

The third hypothesis was concerned with empathy's correlations with prejudice and dogmatism. Empathy and prejudice had a significant and negative correlation, while there was not a significant correlation between empathy and dogmatism. This result may indicate that the observer, who is unable to take the perspective of others, may not relate to the observed individual. Because of this, the observer sees the observed individual as part of an out-group. In past research, perceived out-groups have been shown to be more likely to be marginalized (Eres, & Molenberghs, 2013; Gutsell, & Inzlicht, 2012). Additionally, empathy has been shown to predict prejudice (Bäckström, & Björklund, 2007). Thus, an individual who lacks empathy is more likely to hold prejudicial beliefs. Hypothesis 3b may indicate that empathy and dogmatism are not related constructs despite previous literature demonstrating their negative correlation (Herr & Lapidus, 1998). A possible but tentative explanation for this result is that dogmatism entails that someone holds an unjustified position with conviction against opposing beliefs. Although dogmatism has been shown to predict prejudice (Bronstein et al., 2017; Hoge & Carroll, 1973; Strickland & Weddell, 1972), dogmatism entails strict adherence to a particular belief or set of beliefs. This means that one does not necessarily have to be dogmatic in order to hold a prejudicial view. On the other hand, Hypothesis 3a may demonstrate that prejudice may entail a lack of empathy for an individual or group. Additionally, it is worth noting that Herr et al., (1998) used the Blatt Object Representation Scale which consists of five developmental levels. One of these levels called Internal Iconic is said to measure empathy. Given these different ways of measuring empathy, it is possible that the correlation between empathy and dogmatism may be a product of how empathy is measured.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that perspective taking would be negatively correlated with both prejudice and dogmatism. Both hypotheses were supported by the results. The negative

correlation between perspective taking and dogmatism is intriguing because empathy and dogmatism were not significantly related. Given that perspective taking is a component of empathy, this seems to demonstrate that perspective taking may be the reason previous research has found significant correlations between empathy and dogmatism. To support this reasoning, the Interpersonal Reactivity Inventory was totaled and correlated with empathy. The results were statistically insignificant ($r = -.072$, $p = .229$). However, when perspective taking is included in the Interpersonal Reactivity Inventory total scale, the correlation is closer to becoming significant. This result may indicate that perspective taking is the "active ingredient" when it comes to this relationship, which may be supported by past research demonstrating that perspective taking is negatively correlated with dogmatism (Friedman & Jack, 2017). It could also be the case that measures of empathy other than the one used in this study might correlate significantly with the Dogmatism (DOG) Scale.

The fifth hypothesis tested the relationship between dogmatism and prejudice, which was significant and positive. Based on this finding and previous literature, this correlation makes perfect sense considering that dogmatism is correlated with intolerance (White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2011). Dogmatism is viewed as a very rigid belief system in which one unjustifiably maintains their beliefs while staunchly opposing other beliefs. This assimilates perfectly with prejudice because prejudice entails that one generalizes a preconceived idea about a group of people or idea that is not justifiable.

The sixth hypothesis predicted that religious and spiritual flexibility would be negatively correlated with both dogmatism and prejudice. Hypothesis 6a was supported. Considering that dogmatism and religiosity have a positive correlation, this may suggest that one can be religious while still maintaining a psychologically flexible disposition. This is further evidenced by

hypothesis 6b - the relationship between religious & spiritual flexibility and prejudice. Although not significant at (p = .01), the relationship is nearly significant, indicating that inflexibility may be associated with prejudice. Furthermore, religious and spiritual flexibility was found to be unrelated to religiosity (r = .084, p =.161). This may indicate that psychological flexibility in the "sacred" disciplines of life has little to do with degree of religiosity.

The seventh hypothesis predicted that psychological flexibility would be significantly associated with the following variables: prejudice, empathy, and perspective taking. All three parts of this hypothesis were unsupported. Psychological flexibility and prejudice did not have a significant relationship. This finding is quite surprising given that hypothesis 6b was supported. It is not entirely clear as to why this occurred because religious and spiritual flexibility is a measure of psychological flexibility from a religious or spiritual perspective. One potential reason is the susceptibility of the AAQ-II to faking. This will be discussed further in the following paragraph. Hypothesis 7b analyzed the relationship between psychological flexibility and empathy. The correlation demonstrates a connection between psychological inflexibility and empathy. Hypothesis 7c predicted that psychological flexibility would correlate with perspective taking, but no significant correlation was found. One interesting finding from further investigation was that when the full IRI scale was utilized (including perspective taking) the correlation between psychological flexibility and empathy decreased (r = .312, n =281, p =.000). Although still significant, this may tentatively indicate that perspective taking reduces psychological inflexibility.

Hypotheses were not the only purpose of these expansive data. A second major intention of this study was to further what is empirically understood about these variables in how they relate to one another. So far, there have been numerous studies on most of these variables, but

psychological flexibility and religious & spiritual flexibility have not been thoroughly studied in this context. Psychological flexibility was not significantly correlated with either conservatism or dogmatism as suspected. These results need further investigation to determine whether psychological flexibility was comprehensively measured using, the more recently validated Comprehensive assessment of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy processes (CompACT), with items that more explicitly represent the multiple facets of the construct due to the counterintuitive findings (Francis, Dawson, & Golijani-Moghaddam, 2016).

Beyond the hypotheses, religious and spiritual flexibility had notable results. Religious and spiritual flexibility was found to be positively correlated with dogmatism. This result is consistent with past studies that demonstrated that psychological flexibility is correlated with lower levels of dogmatism (White-Ajmani & Bursik, 2011). Secondly, perspective taking was significantly and negatively correlated with religious and spiritual flexibility. This result is important because there is limited data on the relationship between these two constructs. However, there was no relationship between religious & spiritual flexibility and empathy, potentially indicating the importance of perspective taking in one's worldview. The relationship between religious & spiritual flexibility and psychological flexibility was a moderate correlation. This result is not surprising because religious and spiritual flexibility only measures a subset of psychological flexibility.

Multiple regression analysis found that religiosity and prejudice were both significant predictors of conservatism. As a whole, these two variables accounted for approximately 61.6% of the total variance. Based on previous research, both of these predictors make sense given that these variables often go hand-in-hand. A possible reason for this finding is that conservatives are often on average more religious and prejudice as demonstrated by this study. Thus, it would

make sense that religiosity and prejudice are predictive of how conservative an individual may be.

I. Limitations

There are several notable limitations to this study. These limitations should be considered in future research when looking at these or similar variables.

Firstly, this study utilized Amazon Mechanical Turk. This program is an online format for researchers to quickly gather data for a relatively small price. However, the researchers have limited control of their sample in that survey takers can be anyone with an Amazon Mechanical Turk account. Additionally, an online format eliminates other individuals who have no or limited access to the internet, which completely eliminates them from the sample. Given this problem, future research should attempt to find other ways to gather data to see if the results are similar. A second limitation regarding the sample is that all African American data was removed due to the nature of the prejudice scale. Future researchers should use different measures of prejudice to avoid this problem.

Secondly, as noted in the introduction, it is important for researchers (and lay individuals) to understand how worldviews develop. This study contributes to that understanding. However, given the nature of the study, this study only identifies constructs that are associated with one another. Consequently, there can be no causal inference from this data, which means it is still unclear what "causes" these beliefs to occur or which variable "causes" the other variable to occur. In this realm of research, it is most likely impossible to develop a method of finding a causal link due to the complex nature of developing views. Instead, correlational data gives researchers an inkling into what views cohere to forming beliefs about the world.

II. Conclusion

This study attempts to extend findings from previous literature and add to the empirical literature by studying variables that have not been studied in conjunction with one another. Several key findings including prejudice and religiosity as predictors of conservatism emerged. Although psychological flexibility failed to contribute to this model, there is need to continue testing this variable considering that previous research has shown that is an important factor. The results of empathy and perspective taking demonstrate that perspective taking is a very key ingredient to empathy, which shows that clinical interventions should seek to find ways to increase perspective taking such as Relational Frame Theory (Barnes-Holmes, McHugh, & Barnes-Holmes, 2004). Overall, this study appears to have made some strides in finding ways to heal the ideological divide in the United States. Although not conclusive, it appears that increasing empathy may be a way to solve some of the disagreements among people with worldview differences. This study only demonstrated correlational results in regards to empathy. Future studies should examine empathy as a means of intervention to decrease dogmatism and prejudice. Furthermore, future research may consider measuring variables such as RWA and SDO to further understand conservatism, prejudice, and dogmatism.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

<u>Participant Consent Form</u>

Title of Study: The Composition of Worldviews: The Relationships between Political

Orientation, Religiosity, Empathy, Dogmatism, and Psychological Flexibility

Investigators: Kyle Tackett & John T. Blackledge, Ph. D.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Form. The researcher has answered any questions I had to my satisfaction.

I understand that I will be completing computer administered questionnaires that ask me about political views, religious views, prejudice, how I view others, and how I view the world as well as my personal experiences with my thoughts and feelings

I understand that I am free to withdraw from this experiment *at any time and for any reason,* including if I feel a level of discomfort or distress unacceptable to me during the course of the experiment. I can then choose to speak with the experiment's Principal Investigator (a Clinical Psychologist).

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

APPENDIX B

INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter next to the item number. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE: A   B   C   D   E

                    DOES NOT   DESCRIBES VERY

                    DESCRIBE ME   WELL

                    WELL

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me. (FS)

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC)

3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (PT) (-)

4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (-)

5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS)

6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease. (PD)

7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it. (FS) (-)

8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. (PT)

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them. (EC)

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. (PD)

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. (PT)

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (FS) (-)

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (-)

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-)

15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-)

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters. (FS)

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. (PD)

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (-)

20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC)

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT)

22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC)

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character. (FS)

24. I tend to lose control during emergencies. (PD)

25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while. (PT)

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. (FS)

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. (PD)

28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. (PT)

NOTE:

(-) denotes item to be scored in reverse fashion

PT = perspective-taking scale

FS = fantasy scale

EC = empathic concern scale

PD = personal distress scale

  A = 0

  B = 1

  C = 2

  D = 3

  E = 4

Except for reversed-scored items, which are scored:

  A = 4

  B = 3

  C = 2

  D = 1

  E = 0

APPENDIX C

ACCEPTANCE AND ACTION QUESTIONNAIRE (AAQ-II)

Below you will find a list of statements. Please rate how true each statement is for you by circling a number next to it. Use the scale below to make your choice.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
never true	very seldom true	seldom true	sometimes true	frequently true	almost always true	always true

1. My painful experiences and memories make it difficult for me to live a life that I would value.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. I'm afraid of my feelings.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I worry about not being able to control my worries and feelings.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. My painful memories prevent me from having a fulfilling life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Emotions cause problems in my life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. It seems like most people are handling their lives better than I am.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Worries get in the way of my success.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

APPENDIX D

The DOG Scale

X. I may be wrong about some of the little things in life, but I am quite certain I am right about all the BIG issues.

Y. Someday I will probably think that many of my present ideas were wrong.

1. Anyone who is honestly and truly seeking the truth will end up believing what I believe.

2. There are so many things we have not discovered yet, nobody should be absolutely certain his beliefs are right. R

3. The things I believe in are so completely true, I could never doubt them.

4. I have never discovered a system of beliefs that explains everything to my satisfaction. R

5. It is best to be open to all possibilities and ready to reevaluate all your beliefs. R

6. My opinions are right and will stand the test of time.

7. Flexibility is a real virtue in thinking, since you may well be wrong. R

8. My opinions and beliefs fit together perfectly to make a crystal-clear "picture" of things.

9. There are no discoveries or facts that could possibly make me change my mind about the things that matter most in life.

10. I am a long way from reaching final conclusions about the central issues in life. R

11. The person who is absolutely certain she has the truth will probably never find it. R

12. I am absolutely certain that my ideas about the fundamental issues in life are correct.

13. The people who disagree with me may well turn out to be right. R

14. I am so sure I am right about the important things in life, there is no evidence that could convince me otherwise

15. If you are "open-minded" about the most important things in life, you will probably reach the wrong conclusions

16. Twenty years from now, some of my opinions about the important things in life will probably have changed R

17. "Flexibility in thinking" is another name for being "wishy-washy"

18. No one knows all the essential truths about the central issues in life R

19. Someday I will probably realize my present ideas about the BIG issues are wrong. R

20. People who disagree with me are just plain wrong and often evil as well

Note:

The first two statements (X and Y) are not scored. They familiarize the respondent with the content to follow, but they may be omitted. R indicates that the item is worded in the undogmatic direction, for which the scoring key is reversed. Items are answered in a range of –4 to +4 and converted to 1 to 9 (5 = neutral).

APPENDIX E

Social & Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS)

"Please indicate the extent to which you feel positive or negative towards each issue. Scores of 0 indicate greater negativity, and scores of 100 indicate greater positivity. Scores of 50 indicate that you feel neutral about the issue."

1. Abortion (reverse scored). (S)

2. Limited government. (E)

3. Military and national security. (S)

4. Religion. (S)

5. Welfare benefits (reverse scored). (E)

6. Gun ownership. (E)

7. Traditional marriage. (S)

8. Traditional values. (S)

9. Fiscal responsibility. (E)

10. Business. (E)

11. The family unit. (S)

12. Patriotism. (S)

APPENDIX F

Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)

1. How often do you think about religious issues?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

2. To what extent do you believe that God or something divine exists?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

3. How often do you take part in religious services?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

4. How often do you pray?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

5. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

6. How interested are you in learning more about religious topics?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

7. To what extent do you believe in an afterlife? (e.g. immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead or reincarnation?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

8. How important is it to take part in religious services?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

9. How important is personal prayer to you?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

10. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine wants to communicate or to reveal something to you?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

11: How often do you keep yourself informed about religious questions through radio, television, internet, newspapers, or books?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

12: In your opinion, how probable is it that a higher power really exists

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

13: How important is it for you to be connected to a religious community?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

14: How often do you pray spontaneously when inspired by daily situations?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

15: How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that God or something divine is present?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Often	Very Often

APPENDIX G

Measure of Religious and Spiritual Flexibility (MRSF)

We are interested in how you relate to your beliefs and ideas related to religion and spirituality. Whether you identify as religious, spiritual, both, or neither, we believe these items can apply to you in some way. **For the purpose of this measure, your "views" refer to your perspective of, feelings about, and understanding of religion and spirituality.** Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

1. My views limit my day-to-day life.

2. I become angry when I read things that are counter to my views.

3. My views are the only thing I feel good about.

4. Conflicts between day-to-day events and my views mess up my life.

5. I cannot be a good friend when I am feeling conflicted about my views.

6. Other's opinions about religion and spirituality annoy me.

APPENDIX H

Symbolic Racism 2000 Scale (SR2K)

1. It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

a. Strongly agree

b. Somewhat agree

c. Somewhat disagree

d. Strongly disagree

2. Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same.

a. Strongly agree

b. Somewhat agree

c. Somewhat disagree

d. Strongly disagree

3. Some say that black leaders have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven't pushed fast enough. What do you think?

a. Trying to push very much too fast

b. Going too slowly

c. Moving at about the right speed

4. How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think blacks are responsible for creating?

a. All of it

b. Most

c. Some

d. Not much at all

5. How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today,

limiting their chances to get ahead?

a. All of it

b. Most

c. Some

d. Not much at all

6. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for

blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

a. Strongly agree

b. Somewhat agree

c. Somewhat disagree

d. Strongly disagree

7. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

a. Strongly agree

b. Somewhat agree

c. Somewhat disagree

d. Strongly disagree

8. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.

a. Strongly agree

b. Somewhat agree

c. Somewhat disagree

d. Strongly disagree

Instructions

The following is the standard procedure for combining the items into a scale:

After collecting the data, items 1, 2, 4, and 8 need to be recoded so that a 1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, and 4 = 1.

Item 3 needs to be recoded so that 1 = 3, 2 = 1, and 3 = 2.

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APPENDIX I

BIDR Version 6 - Form 40A

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how true it is.

```
+_____+_____+_____+_____+_____+_____+
1          2          3          4          5          6         7
not true                        somewhat                      very true
```

_____ 1. My first impressions of people usually turn out to be right.

_____ 2. It would be hard for me to break any of my bad habits.

_____ 3. I don't care to know what other people really think of me.

_____ 4. I have not always been honest with myself.

_____ 5. I always know why I like things.

_____ 6. When my emotions are aroused, it biases my thinking.

_____ 7. Once I've made up my mind, other people can seldom change my opinion.

_____ 8. I am not a safe driver when I exceed the speed limit.

_____ 9. I am fully in control of my own fate.

_____ 10. It's hard for me to shut off a disturbing thought.

_____ 11. I never regret my decisions.

_____ 12. I sometimes lose out on things because I can't make up my mind soon enough.

_____ 13. The reason I vote is because my vote can make a difference.

_____ 14. My parents were not always fair when they punished me.

_____ 15. I am a completely rational person.

_____ 16. I rarely appreciate criticism.

_____ 17. I am very confident of my judgments

_____ 18. I have sometimes doubted my ability as a lover.

_____ 19. It's all right with me if some people happen to dislike me.

_____ 20. I don't always know the reasons why I do the things I do.

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how true it is.

```
+_____+_____+_____+_____+_____+_____+
1          2          3          4          5          6        7
not true                        somewhat                    very true
```

_____ 21. I sometimes tell lies if I have to.

_____ 22. I never cover up my mistakes.

_____ 23. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.

_____ 24. I never swear.

_____ 25. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.

_____ 26. I always obey laws, even if I'm unlikely to get caught.

_____ 27. I have said something bad about a friend behind his/her back.

_____ 28. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.

_____ 29. I have received too much change from a salesperson without telling him or her.

_____ 30. I always declare everything at customs.

_____ 31. When I was young I sometimes stole things.

_____ 32. I have never dropped litter on the street.

_____ 33. I sometimes drive faster than the speed limit.

_____ 34. I never read sexy books or magazines.

_____ 35. I have done things that I don't tell other people about.

_____ 36. I never take things that don't belong to me.

_____ 37. I have taken sick-leave from work or school even though I wasn't really sick.

_____ 38. I have never damaged a library book or store merchandise without reporting it.

_____ 39. I have some pretty awful habits.

_____ 40. I don't gossip about other people's business.

Scoring key for BIDR Version 6 - Form 40A

Self Deceptive Enhancement (SDE): Items 1 - 20

 Reverse scored items: 2,4,6,8,10,12,14,16,18,20.

Impression Management (IM): Items 21 - 40

 Reverse scored items: 21,23,25,27,29,31,33,35,37,39.

Dichotomous Scoring procedure

1. Reverse the Likert ratings for the items indicated above.

2. For each subscale, add one point for every '6' or '7'. (In the case of 5-point scales, add one point for every '5' on the SDE and one point for every '4' or '5' on the IM scale.)

APPENDIX J

Basic Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

2. What is your gender?

____ Male

____ Female

3. What is your religious preference?

____ Protestant

____ Roman Catholic

____ Judaism

____ Islam

____ Orthodox Christian

____ Mormon

____ None

____ Other

4. What is your race/ethnicity?

____ American Indian or Alaskan Native

____ Asian

____ African American

____ White/Caucasian

____ Hispanic or Latino

____ Non-Hispanic

____ Other

5. How interested are you in national politics?

____ Extremely interested

____ Very interested

____ Moderately interested

____ Slightly interested

____ Not at all interested

6. What is your Amazon Mechanical Turk Worker ID?

APPENDIX K

Decoy Questions

1. What color is the sky?

____ Red

____ Blue

____ Purple

____ Green

____ Yellow

2. I cannot get paid unless I am reading this survey. (Select Strongly agree)

____ 1 Strongly disagree

____ 2

____ 3

____ 4 Neither agree nor disagree

____ 5

____ 6

____ 7 Strongly agree

3. Are you paying attention?

____ Yes

____ No

TABLES

Table 1.

Religion

	Frequency	Percent
Islam	2	.7
Judaism	8	2.8
Mormon	3	1.1
None	92	32.7
Orthodox Christian	7	2.5
Other	39	13.9
Protestant	83	29.5
Roman Catholic	47	16.7
Total	281	100.0

Table 2.

Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	1.1
Asian	24	8.5
Hispanic or Latino	17	6.0
Non-Hispanic	3	1.1
Other	2	.7
White/Caucasian	232	82.6
Total	281	100.0

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations for Variables

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Conservatism	281	50.00	1200.00	722.0285	249.40890
Religiosity	281	15.00	75.00	41.4698	17.97578
Empathy	281	20.00	79.00	48.2598	11.31150
Perspective Taking	281	1.00	28.00	18.6512	5.23376
Dogmatism	281	59.00	174.00	99.1210	23.08462
MRSF	281	6.00	37.00	15.5836	6.22044
Prejudice	281	8.00	31.00	17.0854	5.86696
Psychological Flexibility	281	7.00	49.00	20.4342	9.30342
Social Desirability	281	.00	35.00	12.5409	6.87017
Valid N (listwise)	281				

Table 4

Correlations (N = 281)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Conservatism									
2. Religiosity	.572**								
3. Empathy	-.161**	.118							
4. Perspective Taking	-.166**	-.042	.348**						
5. Dogmatism	.303**	.353**	.025	-.261**					
6. MRSF	.071	.084	.096	-.228**	.316**				
7. Prejudice	.673**	.272**	-.290**	-.324**	.272	.149*			
8. Psychological Flexibility	-.124*	-.029	.372**	-.003	.052	.411**	.019		
9. Empathy (IRI Full scale)	-.191**	.083	.941**	.632**	-.072	.007	.347**	.312*	

*p < .05. **p < .0

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