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**DISTINCTIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS AND CONSERVATIVES:  
DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATIONS AMONG IDEOLOGICAL VALUES AND  
RELIGIOUS ORIENTATIONS**

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**Abstract:** In two studies, we examined how various ideological beliefs can distinguish among religious orientations. Ideology was defined as right wing authoritarianism (RWA) – conventional, RWA – aggression and submission, social dominance orientation (SDO), and traditional family values (TFV). Religious orientations were categorized as four common orientations: intrinsic, extrinsic, quest, and orthodoxy. Participants across the two studies ( $n_s = 285$  and  $507$ ) completed self-report measures of demographic information, ideological values, and religious orientation. Personality traits were also assessed in Study 2. Regression analyses revealed that conventional RWA was the most consistent predictor of an individual's religious orientation. RWA aggression and submission, SDO, and TFV also predicted unique variance in religious orientations. These results replicated across both studies, even controlling for personality.

**Key words:** right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, traditional family values, religious orientations.

## 1. Introduction

Of the world's organized religions, Christianity is one of the most predominant; nearly one-in-three people worldwide (an estimated 2.2 billion) identify as Christian (Pew Research Center 2010), making it one of the most adhered to religions in the world. Christianity is a religion centered on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, and while all who identify as Christian share specific faith-based beliefs, the practice of Christianity can be approached in several ways, particularly at the individual level. One way to explore the multiformity of religious practice is through the lens of varying religious orientations (i.e., sets of integrated attitudes and beliefs toward one's faith). Four commonly identified religious orientations include the extrinsic, intrinsic, quest, and orthodox orientations. Because these orientations shape the beliefs and behaviors of individual Christians, empirical work is necessary to better understand how people come to adopt one religious orientation over another.

One possible explanation for the variation in religious orientations is a difference in ideological values – the values, attitudes, and beliefs that a person holds to be true and important (Rowatt and Franklin 2004, 127-28). Ideologies commonly used as predictors of religiosity are the traditional ideologies: right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and traditional family values. In the current study, we were interested in parsing out some of the nuance in religious orientations based on ideological values. In other words, our goal was to distinguish amongst the religious orientations based on the traditional ideologies to which individual Christians ascribe.

## 2. Types of Religious Orientations

Each unique religious orientation (i.e., extrinsic, intrinsic, quest, and orthodox) is associated with specific social outcomes, and determining the distinguishing features of each orientation is important for establishing how they relate to traditional ideological values. The extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientations represent fairly opposite approaches to religion. *Extrinsic religious orientation* is the use of religion as a means to an end (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993, 155). Those with an extrinsic orientation typically seek out religion as a way to gain recognition from others (i.e., "I am religious, so others will see me as a good person"). Though a negative predictor of prejudice (Duck and Hunsberger 1999, 165) and positively associated with helping behaviors (Batson 1976, 39), the extrinsically motivated Christian is motivated by social desirability and self-enhancement (Sedikides and Gebauer 2010, 28). Ultimately, this

suggests that extrinsically-oriented individuals will behave compassionately in front of others in order to gain recognition for their actions.

For individuals with an *intrinsic religious orientation*, religion is not a means to an end; it is a way of life (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993, 155). Outcomes associated with the intrinsic religious orientation include increased compassion (Batson, Floyd, Meyer, and Winner 1999, 446), helping those in need (Batson and Gray 1981, 518), and reduced prejudice (Batson et al. 1986, 179; Bosetti, Voci, and Pagotto 2011, 9). In contrast to highly extrinsic individuals, highly intrinsic individuals possess both private and public values of compassion.

*Religion as quest* has been defined as “openly facing complex, existential questions ... and resisting clear-cut, pat answers” (Batson and Schoenrade, 1991,430). Thus, an integral part of this orientation is asking questions and seeking (perhaps unobtainable) answers. Those who approach religion as quest tend to have greater cognitive complexity when faced with existential concerns (Batson and Raynor-Prince 1983, 47); are more receptive to other perspectives (Beck and Jessup 2004, 289); low in prejudice (Batson et al. 1986, 179); and high in compassion for others (Batson, Eidelman, Higley, and Russell 2001, 40). This is the loosest of the religious orientations, focusing less on conventionality and more on an individualized spiritual journey.

*Orthodox Christianity* is “the acceptance of well-defined, central tenets of the Christian religion” (Fullerton and Hunsberger 1982, 318). Those with an orthodox orientation abide by strict creeds of the religion and base their morality on indoctrinated rules and need for authority (Piazza 2012, 294-95). Scales developed to measure orthodoxy show strong correlations with measures of Christian identification (Johnson, George, and Saine 1993, 538). Additionally, it is positively associated with religious ethnocentrism (Banyasz, Tokar, and Kaut 2016, 29) and derogation of victims (Lea and Hunsberger 1990, 515-16), which is likely because orthodox individuals believe that people get what they deserve. This is the most rigid of the religious orientations, as highly orthodox individuals adhere to a group consensus regarding what to believe and how to behave.

### 3. The Role of Traditional Ideologies

An individual’s ideology serves as an important organizing psychological structure. The ideological values to which one ascribes has powerful implications for political views (Freeden 2006, 13-19), social constructs (e.g., racism (Shelby 2003, 155) and sexism (Van Assche, Koç, and Roets 2019, 193-96)), and religiosity (Rowatt and Franklin 2004, 126). Like the widespread Christian faith, conservative traditional ideologies (i.e., right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and

traditional family values) are present across the world. Furthermore, because ideology has such a powerful, widespread effect on human behavior, and there is evidence of the traditional ideologies in religious settings, we believe that these values can be used to distinguish amongst the various religious orientations.

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is defined as “an enduring predisposition, in all matters political and social, to favor obedience and conformity (oneness and sameness) over freedom and difference” (Stenner, 2009, 12). This definition points to the dominant traits of the orientation, especially as expressed through religious practice: strict obedience to literal doctrine and resistance to change. Some of the outcomes associated with the adoption of RWA include the following: gravitation towards religious fundamentalism and aggression (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992, 118); emphasis of values associated with benevolent sexism (i.e., tradition, conformity, and security; Feather and McKee 2012, 2490); and moral disengagement and approval of war (Jackson and Gaertner 2010, 244). Based on these findings, RWA seems to align itself with the orthodox religious orientation, and this is evidenced explicitly through their defining commonality - a reverence for authority. Reasonably, an individual who values authority, structure, and obedience in their social institutions will also seek these features in their religious practice.

Recently, Mavor, Louis, and Laythe (2011, 29-37) found that RWA can be divided into two subcategories: RWA aggression/submission ( $RWA_{AS}$ ) and conventional RWA ( $RWA_C$ ).  $RWA_{AS}$  is characterized by a general aggression towards outgroup members, submission to authority figures, and is positively associated with religious fundamentalism and prejudice towards racial outgroups (Johnson et al. 2012, 133-35). In contrast,  $RWA_C$  is related to adherence to tradition and established social norms, and it likely explains the positive associations of general RWA with religiosity (Roccatò 2008, 224-26), religious fundamentalism (Danso, Hunsberger, and Pratt 1997, 505), and cognitive rigidity towards individuals of a different religion (Rowatt, Franklin, and Cotton 2005, 39). In the present study, we believe this distinction between of RWA values is important, and we used the two subtypes of RWA as distinct predictors of religious orientation. Because  $RWA_C$  so precisely encompasses the quintessence of the RWA ideology, we believed it would emerge as the strongest predictor of all forms of traditional ideology: positively predicting more rigid forms of religion (i.e., orthodox and intrinsic orientations) and negatively predicting looser orientations (i.e., quest and extrinsic orientations).

Social dominance orientation (SDO) represents a preference for hierarchical order and discrimination of groups within a social system, promoting the dominance of one group over another (Sidanius and Pratto 1999, 31). SDO is positively related to the importance of power and security values (Feather and McKee 2012, 2490), prejudices towards

outgroup members (Malkin and Ari 2013, 819; Miglietta, Gattino, and Esses 2014, 14-19), and relational aggression (Mayeux 2014, 509). SDO also has some known associations with religion. It is positively correlated with an interest in religion and the belief that having a religious identity is important (Dallago et al. 2008, 365). Since Christianity is a dominant world religion, it makes sense that SDO individuals view themselves at the top of the religious hierarchy. The synthesis of this research indicates that many of the beliefs about religion, such as needing to be an obedient disciple and strictly adhering to doctrine, manifest in the religious practices of SDOs. For these reasons, we believed that strong SDO values would be associated with an orthodox orientation, rooted in a desire to establish the authority of the Christianity. Additionally, because SDOs are prone to aggression and dominance, we believed that this ideological perspective would be negatively associated with the more laid-back religious style of questing Christians.

The third ideology is traditional family values (TFV). This traditional ideology can be defined as having “viewpoints which involve [a] hierarchical conception of familial relationships, emphasis on discipline in child-rearing, sharp dichotomization of sex roles, and the like” (Levinson and Huffman 1955, 251). TFV is motivated by a desire to preserve the traditional family, in which the traditional roles of mother (e.g., homemaker), father (e.g., bread-winner), and child (e.g., gender typical) are fulfilled. Individuals high in TFV are more likely to reject egalitarian values (Callahan and Vesico 2011, 255), such as social rights and equal pay (Christie-Mizell 2006, 65-67). TFV is also highly associated with religion: those who prescribe to traditional familial expectations are more likely to be religious than those who do not (Goldscheider and Goldscheider 1988, 534-39). Research has also shown that while TFV is positively correlated with religiosity, a stronger correlation exists between TFV and dogmatism (Hunter, Harris, and Trusty 1998, 73). Because orthodox Christians tend to view the principles of Christianity as incontrovertibly true, we believed they would most readily align themselves with an ideological perspective that supports the traditional Biblical narrative, with males as the dominant figures in the family unit. We also expected TFV to be negatively associated with the quest orientation, as the explicit gender inequality perpetuated by TFV is in discord with the compassion and perspective-taking readily found in questers.

In sum, we suspected that greater alignment with the traditional ideologies would be associated with an orthodox religious orientation. Rigid, dogmatic, and prone to fundamentalism (Danso, Hunsberger, and Pratt 1997, 505), orthodox Christians seem the most likely to fit into a conventional ideological profile. We also suspected that questing Christians would be least likely to fit this profile, based on their loose, question-driven approach to religion.

#### 4. The Role of Personality Traits

In the context of religious orientation and ideological values, another important factor to consider is personality. In the present study, personality is examined using the Big Five personality traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (Costa and McCrae 2008, 213-245). This personality model has been found to have several notable associations with both religious orientation and the traditional ideologies (Barrett and Roesch 2009, 197; Henningsgaard and Arnau 2008, 706). General religiosity amongst Christians has been predicted with the Big Five traits agreeableness, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Saroglou 2002, 21). Mature, open religiosity has been associated with openness to experience (Saroglou 2008, 90-96). Applicable to the current study, the Big Five have also been used in research to determine the likelihood that a person will adopt a particular ideology (Roth and von Collani 2007, 142-46). For example, RWA is associated with low levels of openness and high levels of conscientiousness, especially in situations where a threat is perceived (Dallago and Roccato 2010, 112-14). Additionally, low agreeableness and high neuroticism are related to SDO (Sibley and Duckitt 2010, 546-48). In light of these findings, we considered personality a covariate in the present research, to control for potential confounding associations among ideologies and religious orientations.

#### 5. Overview & Hypotheses

We sought to distinguish amongst the religious orientations based on the profile of one's traditional ideologies. Additionally, in light of recent work concerning the division of RWA into two subscales (Mavor, Louis, and Laythe 2011, 29-37), we sought to investigate the association of  $RWA_C$  with religious orientation, as the two constructs seem to be closely linked. Thus, the contribution of the present study was a more comprehensive examination of the associations among four ideological values and four religious orientations.

We investigated previous findings alluding to the predictive power of  $RWA_C$  in determining an individual's approach to religion. We believed that  $RWA_C$  would be the strongest predictor of religious orientation, predicting all four religious categories. Extending from the predicted role of  $RWA_C$ , we believed that the traditional ideologies (i.e.,  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV) would provide supplemental, more nuanced distinctions among the religious orientations. Additionally, in Study 2, we included personality as a covariate to reduce some ambiguity in the associations between ideological values and religious orientation.

Our hypotheses included the following: 1)  $RWA_C$  would positively predict the more rigid types of religious orientation (i.e., intrinsic and orthodoxy), and negatively predict the looser forms of religious orientation (i.e., quest and extrinsic), 2)  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV would be positively associated with orthodoxy and negatively associated with quest as religion and 3)  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV would have no significant associations with the extrinsic or intrinsic orientations. In Study 2, we maintained the same hypotheses but controlled for personality traits, which had not previously been done in research pertaining to  $RWA_C$  and  $RWA_{AS}$ .

## 6. Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to investigate the role of traditional ideologies as unique predictors of religious orientation. This was done as an attempt to ascertain specific associations between the ideological values and religious orientation.

### 6.1. Method

#### Participants and Procedure

Participants in this study consisted of 285 undergraduate students enrolled in psychology classes at Eastern Kentucky University (225 females and 59 males, 88.4% Caucasian). The majority of the sample identified as denominational Christians (88.4% denominational Christian; 4.2% nondenominational Christian, 2.1% spiritual, 1.1% non-Christian, 1.1% atheist, and 1.8% no religion). Participants volunteered for this study in exchange for course completion credit. They were given an informed consent statement and then instructed to complete an online survey. Upon completion, a debriefing statement was presented as the closing screen.

### 6.2. Materials

Each variable was measured using Likert type scales that consisted of values 1 to 5 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) unless otherwise specified. See Table 1 descriptive and reliability statistics and bivariate correlations among the variables.

**Table 1.** Bivariate Correlations among the Traditional Ideologies and Religious Orientations

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. RWA <sub>agg/sub</sub>	---	.45**	.19**	.51**	.35**	.06	-.28**	.51**
2. RWA <sub>conventional</sub>		---	.35**	.55**	.63**	-.16**	-.30**	.53**
3. SDO			---	.36**	.06	.10	-.09	.09
4. TFV				---	.33**	.12*	-.18**	.30**
5. Intrinsic					---	-.24**	-.06	.73**
6. Extrinsic						---	.31**	-.16**
7. Quest							---	-.17**
8. Orthodox								---
<i>M</i>	3.36	2.61	2.06	2.78	3.30	2.70	2.91	3.65
<i>SD</i>	0.54	0.71	0.67	0.47	0.93	0.66	0.60	0.69
$\alpha$	.84	.77	.89	.77	.89	.79	.77	.93

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ . RWA<sub>agg/sub</sub> = Right-wing authoritarianism aggression/submission; RWA<sub>conventional</sub> = Right-wing authoritarianism conventional; SDO = social dominance order; TFV = traditional family values.

**Intrinsic and Extrinsic Orientations.** Intrinsic and Extrinsic orientations were measured using the Religious Orientation Scale (Allport and Ross 1967, 434). The 9-item intrinsic scale measures the extent of an individual's commitment to their religion, as it reflects the extent to which their religious commitment is the master motive in their life. The 11-item extrinsic subscale measures the extent to which a person acknowledges that they use religion as a way to gain solace or social approval.

**Quest Orientation.** Batson's 12-item Interactional (Quest) scale (Batson and Schoenrade 1991, 440) was used to measure the quest dimension. Quest includes the participant's readiness to face existential questions, positive perception of doubt, and openness to change.

**Orthodox Orientation.** To assess Christian orthodoxy (the degree to which one accepts beliefs central to the Christian religion), we used the 24-item Christian Orthodoxy scale (Fullerton and Hunsberger 1982, 320).

**Right Wing Authoritarianism.** Altemeyer's (1981) 24-item Right Wing Authoritarianism scale was used to assess perceptions of responsibility, obedience and morality. The scale is divided into two subscales: the conventional RWA (RWA<sub>C</sub>) and RWA aggression/submission (RWA<sub>AS</sub>) subscales.



**Social Dominance Orientation.** Pratto et al.’s (1994, 39-59) 16-item Social Dominance Orientation scale was used to assess the degree to which participants showed a preference for inequality among social groups.

**Traditional Family Values.** Levinson and Huffman’s (1955, 11-13) 15-item Traditional Family Ideology scale was used to assess the degree to which participants showed a preference for archetypal views of the family structure (i.e., father as breadwinner, mother as homemaker).

### 6.3. Results

To test the hypothesis that ideologies ( $RWA_C$ ,  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV) differentially predict religious orientations (intrinsic, extrinsic, quest, and orthodox orientations), four linear regression analyses were conducted with the four ideology scores entered as the independent variable and each religious orientation entered separately as the dependent variable (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Multiple Regression Results of Ideological Variables Predicting Religious Orientation Variables, Study 1.

Ideological Variables	Religious Orientation Variables			
	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Quest	Orthodox
$RWA_{agg/sub}$	.14*	.07	-.16*	.40**
$RWA_{conventional}$	.57**	-.31**	-.14*	.36**
SDO	-.19**	.14*	-.04	-.12*
TFV	.03	.29**	.25**	-.09
<i>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></i>	.35**	.11**	.05**	.33**

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ . Regression coefficients are standardized beta weights.  $RWA_{agg/sub}$  = Right-wing authoritarianism aggression/submission;  $RWA_{conventional}$  = Right-wing authoritarianism conventional; SDO = social dominance order; TFV = traditional family values.

Results revealed that  $RWA_C$  was the only ideological variable that significantly predicted all four religious orientations. As expected, it positively predicted intrinsic and orthodoxy orientations, and it negatively predicted extrinsic and quest orientations.  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV were also significant predictors of religious orientations, but only in some instances. We found partial support for our hypothesis that extrinsic and intrinsic orientations would not be predicted by  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV.

Extrinsic religiosity was predicted by SDO and TFV (positively). Intrinsic orientation was predicted by  $RWA_{AS}$  (positively) and SDO (negatively). Quest was predicted by  $RWA_{AS}$  (negatively) and TFV (positively). Finally, we found only partial support for the hypothesis that the orthodoxy orientation would be positively associated with these traditional ideologies. Orthodoxy was predicted by  $RWA_{AS}$  (positively) and SDO (negatively), but not predicted by TFV.

#### **6.4. Discussion**

The goal of this study was to determine if traditional ideologies were associated with religious orientation. Our results suggest that religious orientation is associated with religiosity, although not necessarily in the pattern that we predicted. Additionally, our results identify  $RWA_C$  as a significant predictor of all four religious orientations. Future research is needed to further explore the potential role of  $RWA_C$  in conjunction with  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV in determining an individual's religious profile.

### **7. Study 2**

The purpose of Study 2 was to attempt to replicate the findings from Study 1. In Study 2 we also considered personality traits as potential covariates, in order to examine how accounting for personality would affect the associations between ideological values and religious orientation.

#### **7.1. Method**

##### **Participants and Procedure**

Participants were 507 undergraduate student enrolled in psychology classes at Eastern Kentucky University. There were a total of 119 males and 386 females in the sample, with 89.7% of participants being Caucasian. The age range consisted of eighteen to fifty-eight years old, with 77.1% of participants in the age range of 18 through 23. As in Study 1, the majority of participants identified as denominational Christians (38.9%). The remaining participants identified as either non-denominational Christian (31%), spiritual (1.8%), non-Christian (2.6%), atheist (2%), or having no religion (15.2%). Participants volunteered to complete the measures in exchange for course completion credit. They were instructed to read an informed consent statement then complete an online survey measure. Upon completion, they were given a full debriefing statement.

**7.2. Materials**

This study utilized the same scales from Study 1 to measure the four traditional ideologies and the four religious orientations. See Table 3 for descriptive and reliability statistics and bivariate correlations among the variables.

**Big Five Personality Traits.** The Big Five Personality Traits were assessed using John, Donahue, and Kentle’s (1991) 44-item Big Five Inventory Scale. Participants responded using a 1-5 Likert type response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale assessed for participants levels of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations for these variables are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Bivariate Correlations among the Traditional Ideologies and Big Five Personality Traits*

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. RWA <sub>agg/sub</sub>	---	.36**	.03	.22**	.27**	-.10*	-.27**	.43**	.06	.14**	.22**	-.02	-.08
2. RWA <sub>conventional</sub>		---	.19**	.34**	.61**	-.15**	-.29**	.55**	.09*	.07	.00	-.05	-.14**
3. SDO			---	.36**	-.11*	.17**	.01	-.15**	.00	-.37**	-.22**	-.01	-.15**
4. TFV				---	.16**	.25**	-.05	.11**	.11**	.00	-.02	-.01	-.04
5. Intrinsic					---	-.15**	-.14**	.73**	.09*	.21**	.10*	-.11*	.00
6. Extrinsic						---	.38**	-.24**	-.04	-.07	-.04	-.03	.00
7. Quest							---	-.25**	.00	-.12**	-.09*	.05	.10*
8. Orthodox								---	.08	.25**	.13**	-.06	-.09*
9. Extraversion									---	.24**	.24**	-.32**	.13**
10. Agreeableness										---	.36**	-.23**	.13**
11. Conscientiousness											---	-.30**	.12**
12. Neuroticism												---	-.02
13. Openness													---
<i>M</i>	3.36	2.70	2.25	2.84	3.14	2.78	2.90	3.71	3.23	3.79	3.63	3.00	3.51
<i>SD</i>	0.49	0.60	0.69	0.46	0.90	0.61	0.56	0.44	0.69	0.53	0.53	0.68	0.47
$\alpha$	.79	.68	.91	.70	.91	.78	.75	.82	.84	.77	.76	.81	.77

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ . RWA<sub>agg/sub</sub> = Right-wing authoritarianism aggression/submission; RWA<sub>conventional</sub> = Right-wing authoritarianism conventional; SDO = social dominance order; TFV = traditional family values.

**7.3. Results**

The same method of analysis that was used in Study 1 was also used in Study 2, with a few exceptions. Four hierarchical linear regression analyses were performed with the four traditional ideology scales entered into Block 1, and the five personality variables (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness) entered into Block 2 as the independent variables (see Table 4). Each religious orientation variable was entered separately as the dependent variable.

Table 4

	Religious Orientation Variables			
	<i>Intrinsic</i>	<i>Extrinsic</i>	<i>Quest</i>	<i>Orthodox</i>
Block 1: Ideological Values				
$RWA_{agg/sub}$	.03	-.07	-.20**	.24**
$RWA_{conventional}$	.64**	-.26**	-.24**	.52**
<i>SDO</i>	-.25**	.12**	.05	-.26**
<i>TFV</i>	.03	.32**	.06	-.03
Adjusted $R^2$	.43**	.14**	.12**	.42**
Block 2: Ideological Variables				
$RWA_{agg/sub}$	.03	-.08	-.17**	.23**
$RWA_{conventional}$	.63**	-.25**	-.23**	.50**
<i>SDO</i>	-.19**	.10*	.02	-.22**
<i>TFV</i>	.01	.32**	.05	-.03
Block 2: Big Five Personality				
Traits				
<i>Extraversion</i>	.00	-.07	.04	.00
<i>Agreeableness</i>	.07	.00	-.06	.10**
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	.00	.01	-.03	.00
<i>Neuroticism</i>	-.05	-.06	.03	.00
<i>Openness</i>	.05	.00	.06	-.05
Adjusted $\Delta R^2$	.00	.00	.00	.01*

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ . Regression coefficients are standardized beta weights.  $RWA_{agg/sub}$  = Right-wing authoritarianism aggression/submission;  $RWA_{conventional}$  = Right-wing authoritarianism conventional; *SDO* = social dominance orientation; *TFV* = traditional family values.

As in Study 1, results revealed that  $RWA_C$  was the only ideological variable to predict all four religious orientations. Also consistent with the results of Study 1, we found that  $RWA_C$  positively predicted intrinsic and orthodoxy orientations and negatively predicted quest and extrinsic orientations. The findings regarding  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO and TFV also mostly replicated the findings from Study 1. Extrinsic Religious Orientation was positively predicted by SDO and TFV, and Intrinsic Orientation was negatively predicted by SDO. We did not replicate the finding that  $RWA_{AS}$  predicted Intrinsic Orientation. Study 2 also replicated the results of a negative association between quest orientation and  $RWA_{AS}$ , but did not replicate TFV positively predicting Quest. We also found the same patterns for Orthodoxy; it was positively predicted by  $RWA_{AS}$ , negatively predicted by SDO, and not predicted by TFV.

When controlling for the Big Five traits in Block 2, all of the ideological variables predicted the religious orientation variables the same way. The Big Five variables largely had no association with the religious orientation variables while accounting for traditional ideologies; only agreeableness was a positive predictor of orthodoxy beyond traditional ideologies. No other personality traits were significant predictors of religious orientations.

#### **7.4. Discussion**

The goal of this study was to determine if traditional ideologies (i.e.  $RWA_C$ ,  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV) were associated with religious orientations, while controlling for personality traits. Study 2 mostly replicated the results of Study 1, revealing that  $RWA_C$  was the strongest predictor of religious orientation. Results also suggested that  $RWA_{AS}$ , SDO, and TFV have identifiable patterns within each religious category. Finally, results showed that the traditional ideologies remain unique predictors of religiosity after accounting for personality.

### **8. General Discussion**

We sought to distinguish amongst different approaches to Christianity based on alignment with traditional values. Specifically, we attempted to support previous findings of an association between traditional ideologies (i.e., RWA, SDO, and TFV) and intrinsic, extrinsic, quest, and orthodox religious orientations. Our analyses revealed that traditional ideological values are unique predictors of religious orientation, although this conclusion varies depending on the religious orientation. By closely examining the traditional ideologies together, the present study contributes a thorough examination of the nuanced associations between conservative values and religious orientations.

Notably, our results also clarify the role of  $RWA_c$  as a predictor of religiosity; the construct emerged as a significant predictor of all four religious orientations. Considering recent research on  $RWA_c$  (Mavor et al. 2011, 29-37), the results of the present study provide valuable support for the partitioning of RWA into two subscales.

In Study 2, we predicted religious orientation while controlling for personality. Our findings were consistent with those of Study 1; in most cases, we replicated the direction and significance of the associations between ideology and religiosity, even when considering personality as a covariate. In sum, the partial replication of Study 1 implies that there are direct, identifiable associations between the traditional ideologies and religious orientation, while the additional control of personality variables strengthens the conclusions made in Study 1. The implications of these associations are discussed below.

## 9. Implications

The results of our study reflect the complex and diverse associations between ideology and religion. Across both studies, we found a pattern in the prediction of religious orientation using the traditional ideologies. One of the main results was the emergence of  $RWA_c$  as a significant predictor of all four categories of religious orientation. This result is consistent with previous research concerning the predictive value of  $RWA_c$  (Mavor et al. 2011, 29-37). Our results show that  $RWA_c$  is a useful construct for separating the religious categories based on prominent features, such as the rigidity accompanied with one's approach to religion. For example, it makes sense that  $RWA_c$  positively predicted intrinsic and orthodoxy orientations, as these approaches to Christianity are characterized by an appreciation for established rules and norms. Similarly, the negative association between quest and  $RWA_c$  is a logical one; we would not expect individuals with malleable conceptions of religion to prescribe to conventional standards. Undoubtedly,  $RWA_c$  is evidenced as a valuable predictor of religiosity; however, it is important to note that it was not the only ideology to predict religious orientation. It was the culmination of all traditional ideological values that allowed for the differential identification of the religious orientations.

Based on the results of these studies, we can also extrapolate ideological profiles. Intrinsically oriented Christians, consistently predicted by high levels of  $RWA_c$  and low levels of SDO, seem to believe in following convention but are also concerned with equality and shunning social hierarchies. Extrinsically oriented Christians, negatively predicted by  $RWA_c$  may be less conventional overall but still readily ascribe to social and familial hierarchies, as indicated by their positive associations with SDO and TFV. The profile of the questing Christian, passive and less

conventional, is negatively associated with each of the traditional ideologies, which suggests that questers have little concern for rigid interpretations of doctrine and tradition. Orthodox Christians, positively predicted by  $RWA_C$  and negatively predicted by SDO, depicts a religious person who is dominating and highly conventional but does not ascribe to social hierarchies. This profile is notably similar to that of the intrinsically-oriented Christian. However, the orthodox Christian is also high in in  $RWA_{AS}$ , and this aggressiveness distinguishes them from the other.

Perhaps the most important implication of this research is the evidence it provides for the noted connection between religion and ideology. The present research was conducted in the southern United States, where ideological perspectives tend to lean toward conservative, right-wing attitudes. By better understanding how such ideological values influence religious institutions, social scientists may be better equipped to understand why particular sects of Christianity respond to social issues as they do. For example, political discussion of abortion laws is influenced by ideology (Petterson and Sutton 2018, 245), but these discussions are also commonly supplemented with religious arguments. If we, as social scientists can better predict how ideological profiles contribute to religious beliefs and behaviors, this may give us new insight into how to best communicate and persuade the public on polarizing, ideological issues.

## 10. Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations to the current study must be considered. For one, the study utilized self-report measures. As with all self-report measures, we must trust that our participants were answering honestly, with a developed understanding of their own ideological values and approach to religion. Of concern is the finding that religious individuals tend to respond to self-report measures based on the demands of perceived social desirability (Ludeke and Carey 2015, 45-46). It is important to keep in mind that our results may not reflect participants' true levels of ideological values or religiosity. Instead, they could be indicative of participants' conception of appropriate responses. While it is not possible to completely eradicate demand characteristics, social desirability can be mitigated by ensuring that participants identity will not be attached to their responses (Brenner and DeLamater 2016, 350) and by using clear, succinct survey items to avoid criterion contamination. Still, even if biased, it is important to assess the religious person's assessment of their beliefs and behaviors as they perceive them.

In some respects, another limitation to the study is that our samples were predominately Christian. The religious orientations examined in the

present study were extracted from approaches to the Christian faith; however, examining how non-religious individuals (i.e., agnostics and atheists) are associated with the traditional ideologies could also be beneficial for furthering our understanding of ideology's influence.

Another limitation to the present study is the inability of personality to account unique variance in religious orientation. Agreeableness positively predicted the orthodoxy orientation, but amongst the other religious orientations examined, the Big Five personality traits largely failed to serve as predictors for religiosity. One potential explanation for this could be the use of the Big Five to account for personality in this context. These personality factors could be fundamentally different for religious people. Given the widespread nature of religion, however, and the known validity of the Big Five (Goldberg 1993, 32), this is likely not the case.

## 11. Conclusion

The results of our study help to illuminate some of the associations between traditional ideologies and religious orientation. Here we support the current body of research identifying  $RWA_c$  as an influential factor in an individual's religiosity. Moreover, our results contribute the finding that additional ideologies (most specifically the RWA subscales) allow for further distinctions among the orientations. Discernment of the associations between religion, ideological values, and personality is a crucial step in understanding the wide variety of religious orientations within Christianity.

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