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PERSONALITY, PREJUDICE, AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND HOMOSEXUALS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of several personality traits on prejudice and discrimination against women and homosexuals for 383 students (80% white and 20% nonwhite) by estimating two path models. Those higher in right-wing authoritarianism and those with a greater social dominance orientation expressed more prejudice against both groups. Those higher in humanitarianism-egalitarianism expressed less prejudice against both groups. Although personality influenced prejudice against women and homosexuals in similar ways, personality traits and prejudice appear to affect these two types of discrimination differently.

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to examine the effects of several personality traits on prejudice and discrimination towards women and homosexuals. We assess these effects by including several personality traits in a path model with prejudice and discrimination against women as dependent variables. A comparative path model illustrates the impact of personality traits on prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals.

Personality, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Altemeyer's *Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale* (1996) has been linked with ethnocentrism, prejudice against African Americans, homosexual prejudice, prejudice against AIDS victims, and sexism. Duckitt and Farre (1994) found RWA to be positively correlated with anti-black views and negatively correlated with anti-white views in South Africa. Several additional studies found a moderately strong positive relationship between RWA and racial prejudice (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Altemeyer & Kamenshikov, 1991; Duckitt, 1993; Duck & Hunsberger, 1999). Research also suggests a moderately strong positive link between right-wing authoritarianism and prejudice against homosexuals and AIDS victims (Duck & Hunsberger, 1999; Haddock & Zanna, 1998; Wylie & Forest, 1992). The findings of Hunsberger, Owusu, & Duck (1999) provide some evidence of RWA's relationship with sexism. In predicting prejudice, RWA holds up as one of the strongest personality traits studied to date (Duckitt, 2005).

Although extensive research revealed the positive relationship between authoritarianism and prejudice, Altemeyer's (1996) scale of right-wing authoritarianism contains items confounded with elements of sexism, heterosexism, and religious fundamentalism. Perhaps the strong correlations between RWA and prejudice surfaced because of the overlap in content rather than the existence of an independent relationship. Some RWA items include heterosexist content (after reverse scoring) such as "Gays and lesbians are just as healthy and moral as anybody else." Other items include sexist content such as "A woman's place should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly in the past" (Altemeyer, 1996). These items and others create correlations between prejudice and authoritarianism that are difficult to interpret. Independent of these complications, will authoritarianism predict prejudice and discrimination against women and homosexuals?

Whitley (1999) examined the relationship between social dominance orientation, or SDO (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) and prejudice and found a positive correlation with both racial and homosexual prejudice. Other researchers reported positive relationships between SDO and ethnocentrism, racial superiority, support of the police officers who beat Rodney King, and denial of racial discrimination (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Sidanius & Liu, 1992; Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 1996, Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Pratto et al. (1994) also studied several constructs in relation to social dominance orientation and found it had positive relationships with anti-Arab racism, modern racism, and sexism. Heaven (1999) reported a negative link between SDO and men's support for women's rights. Similar to authoritarianism, SDO predicts prejudice beyond other individual-difference variables such as cognitive style or personality traits (Duckitt, 2005).

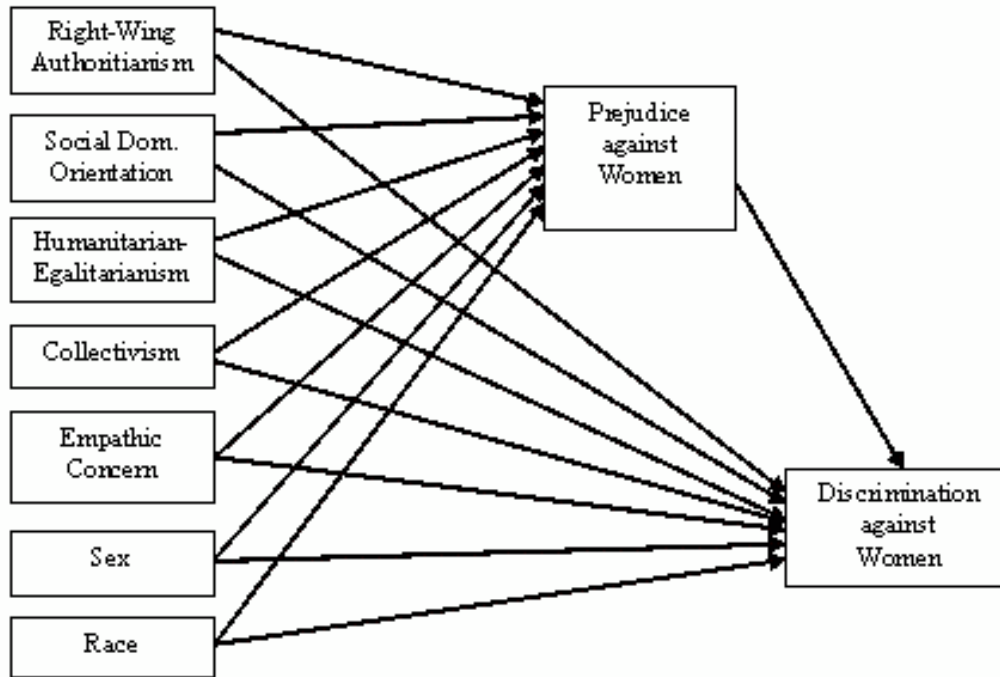
High scores of humanitarianism-egalitarianism reflect an egalitarian view of humanity inconsistent with both prejudice and discrimination. Research by Katz and Hass (1988) indicates a positive relationship between pro-Black sentiment and humanitarianism-egalitarianism. Glover (1994) also found that higher levels of humanitarianism-egalitarianism are associated with favorable attitudes toward minorities and lower levels of old-fashioned and modern racism. Lower levels of humanitarianism-egalitarianism have also been linked with anti-illegal immigrant views and negative attitudes toward legal Mexican Americans (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola, 1997).

Finding a higher order factor of prejudice and a higher order factor of discrimination for several types of each, Case, Fishbein, and Ritchey (2006) reported that those scoring higher in collectivism expressed less prejudice and engaged in fewer discriminatory behaviors than those scoring lower. In their discussion of this larger scale, Triandis and Gelfand (1998) suggest that the ideology of collectivism calls for equal status for women and men. In relation to other personality traits, collectivism correlates positively with humanitarianism-egalitarianism and negatively with social dominance orientation (Strunk & Chang, 1999). Empathic concern (Davis, 1996) also correlates with tolerance for out-groups. Sheehan, Lennon, and McDevitt (1989) found empathic concern to be associated with more favorable attitudes towards homosexuals and AIDS sufferers. With regard to other personality traits, Pratto et al. (1994) found a negative relationship between empathic concern and social dominance orientation.

Although many studies address the link between personality and prejudice, the link to discrimination remains unclear. Investigating actual discrimination presents a challenge for researchers, but self-report measures offer an avenue for collecting data on past behaviors. Reports of discriminatory behaviors provide new information about participants' willingness to act out prejudiced attitudes. Case, Fishbein, and Ritchey (2006) introduced scales assessing past discriminatory behaviors against women and homosexuals. Participants disclosed how often they had committed each of the discriminatory acts against homosexuals and women. Discrimination against women included telling sexist jokes, using insulting names for women, and treating women as less intelligent than men. Participants also admitted to telling gays and lesbians their lifestyle is wrong, cutting off a friendship after learning the friend was gay, and verbally attacking homosexuals with derogatory slurs. A stronger relationship between homosexual prejudice and discrimination emerged compared with prejudice and discrimination against women (Case, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2006).

The current study examines prejudice and self-reported discrimination against women and homosexuals as predicted by right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, humanitarianism-egalitarianism, collectivism, and empathic concern. In the present study, one model includes prejudice and discrimination against women, and the other estimates paths to prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals. We expected higher authoritarianism and social dominance orientation to lead to higher prejudice and discrimination against women and homosexuals. We also predicted higher humanitarianism-egalitarianism, collectivism, and empathic concern to lead to lower prejudice and discrimination against women and homosexuals.

Figure 1: Path Model of Personality, Prejudice, and Discrimination against Women.*



*The parallel path model for homosexuals includes the same paths to prejudice and discrimination.

METHODS

We recruited 383 (53% female) participants from introductory psychology courses at a large Midwestern university. Approximately 80% of the respondents identified themselves as White, 13% as Black, and 7% as Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or other. Participants reported a mean age of 20 years with a standard deviation of 2.05. Participants also identified themselves as 91% heterosexual and 9% homosexual or bisexual.

Response options ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) through 4 (strongly agree) so that a higher score indicates greater amounts of the concept being measured. For each of the discrimination measures constructed by the authors, respondents indicated whether they had performed, in the last five years, a specific behavior: never, 1-2 times, 3-4 times, or 5 or more times. See Appendix A for scale items.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (Altemeyer, 1996): Subjects completed 7 items from the original RWA Scale without content confounded by religion or prejudice against women or homosexuals. Confirmatory factor analysis supported a good fitting single factor model with item loadings ranging from .40 to .62 (Cronbach’s alpha = .71).

Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto et al., 1994): All 7 items loaded on a single factor. Confirmatory factor analysis supported a good fitting single factor model with item loadings ranging from .41 to .67 (Cronbach's alpha = .76).

Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism (Katz & Hass, 1988): Participants responded to 7 items assessing values of kindness, equality, and obligation to others (Cronbach's alpha = .79).

Collectivism (Triandis, 1995): Subjects completed 6 items of the horizontal collectivism subscale from Triandis's *Subjective Individualism and Collectivism Scale* (Cronbach's alpha = .76).

Empathic Concern (Davis, 1996): This scale consisted of 6 items from the Davis's Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Cronbach's alpha = .75).

Sex Prejudice: Seven items from the *Modern Sexism Scale* (Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) measured prejudice against women (Cronbach's alpha = .82).

Homosexual Prejudice (O'Bryan, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 1999): Participants completed 8 items taken from the *Homosexual Prejudice Scale* (Cronbach's alpha = .87).

Sex Discrimination (Case, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2006): This 8-item behavior scale requested information about participants' acts of sexual discrimination (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

Homosexual Discrimination (Case, Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2006): This 9-item measure collected information about participants' behaviors of discrimination against homosexuals (Cronbach's alpha = .85).

Controls: Race (white= 1; nonwhite= 0), sex (females=1; males=0), and sexual orientation (heterosexual= 1; homosexual/bisexual= 0) served as control variables.

Procedure of Analysis

Each path model estimated the effects of five personality traits and three controls on prejudice and discrimination. The models also estimated the path from prejudice to discrimination and the direct paths from each exogenous variable to discrimination. Both models allowed for personality traits and controls to affect discrimination both indirectly through prejudice and directly, independent of prejudice.

RESULTS

Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for all study variables. Average prejudice scores indicated mild disagreement with items; but some participants strongly agreed. Participants' discriminatory behaviors varied with some obtaining the maximum score of five or more discriminatory acts against a target group. Appendix B contains the correlations among variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N=383)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Prejudice Against:				
Women	2.05	0.60	1.00	4.00
Homosexuals	1.78	0.69	1.00	4.00
Discrimination Against:				
Women	1.18	0.94	0.00	4.00
Homosexuals	1.02	0.79	0.00	4.00
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	2.33	0.53	1.00	3.71
Social Dominance Orientation	1.83	0.56	1.00	4.00
Humanitarian-Egalitarianism	3.33	0.50	1.14	4.00
Collectivism	3.29	0.46	1.00	4.00
Empathic Concern	3.23	0.49	1.00	4.00
Sex (1 female, 0 male)	0.53	--	0.00	1.00
Race (1 white, 0 nonwhite)	0.80	--	0.00	1.00
Sexual Orientation* (1 heterosexual, 0 homosexual/bisexual)	0.91	--	0.00	1.00

*In the final analyses, we dropped sexual orientation as a control because there were no significant paths from sexual orientation to any of the four dependent variables.

Prejudice and Discrimination against Women

Figure 2 and Table 2 show the statistically significant path coefficients from regressions of prejudice on personality traits and controls, and of discrimination on prejudice, personality traits, and controls. Three of the five personality traits directly effected prejudice against women. Those greater in right-wing authoritarian personality reported more prejudice against women ($\beta = .177$). Those with greater social dominance orientation expressed more prejudice ($\beta = .237$), and those higher in humanitarianism-egalitarianism expressed less prejudiced against women ($\beta = -.140$). Social dominance orientation also directly influenced discrimination against women ($\beta = .154$). Collectivism and empathic concern failed to predict either prejudice or discrimination against women. Although prejudice against women failed to influence discrimination against women, the two variables had a correlation of .33 ($p < .01$).

Figure 2: Path Model with Significant Standardized Path Coefficients for Personality, Prejudice, and Discrimination against Women.

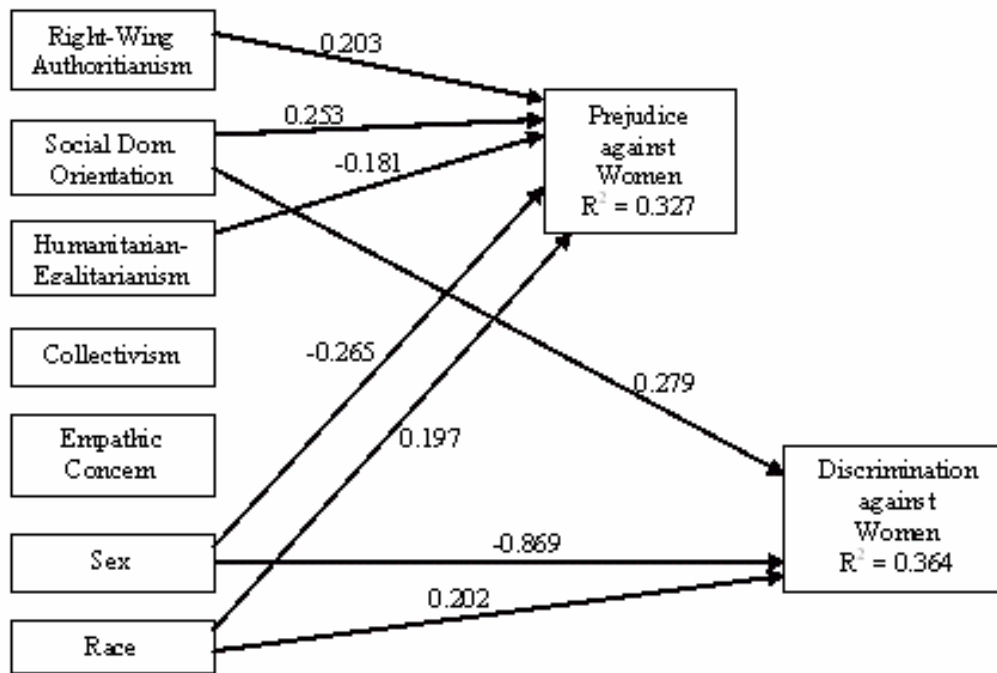


Table 2: Standardized Path Coefficients for Personality Attributes, Controls, Prejudice and Discrimination against Women (N=383)

Variables	Prejudice	Discrimination
Prejudice		ns
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	0.203	ns
Social Dominance Orientation	0.253	0.279
Humanitarian-Egalitarianism	-0.181	ns
Collectivism	ns	ns
Empathic Concern	ns	ns
Sex (1 female, 0 male)	-0.265	-0.869
Race (1 white, 0 nonwhite)	0.197	0.202
R squared	0.327	0.364

ns = nonsignificant at $p < .05$

Prejudice and Discrimination against Homosexuals

Figure 3 and Table 3 provide the statistically significant path coefficients from regressions of prejudice on personality traits and controls, and of discrimination on prejudice, personality traits, and controls. Findings support the idea that prejudice against homosexuals operates similarly to prejudice against women. The same three personality traits of the original five also had a direct effect on prejudice against homosexuals. Right-wing authoritarianism ($\beta = .245$) and social

dominance orientation ($\beta = .235$) predicted higher prejudice against homosexuals. Those higher in humanitarianism-egalitarianism expressed less prejudiced against homosexuals ($\beta = -.153$).

Figure 3: Path Model with Significant Standardized Path Coefficients for Personality, Prejudice, and Discrimination against Homosexuals.

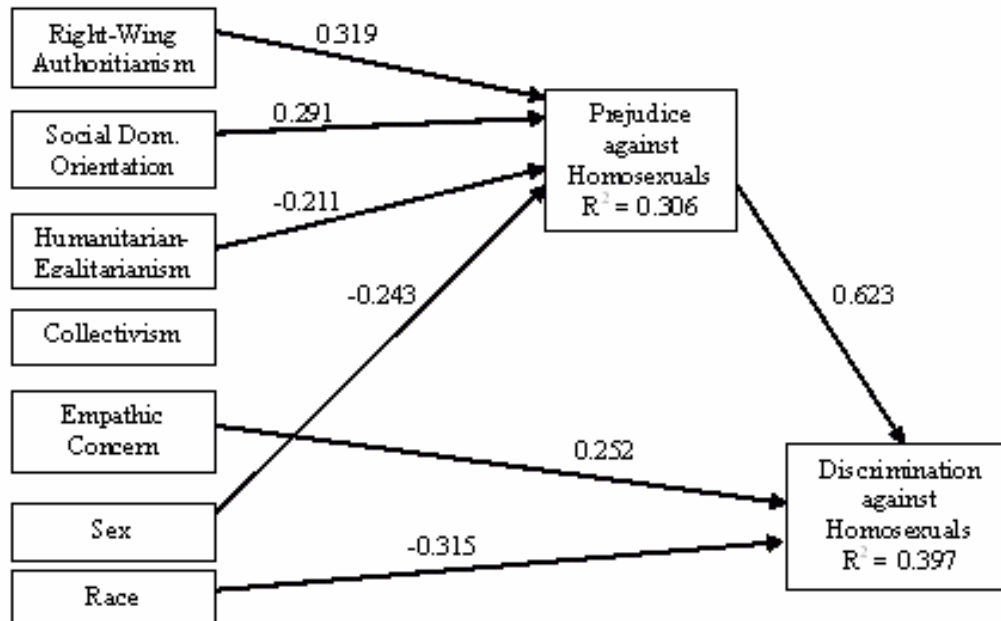


Table 3: Standardized Path Coefficients for Personality Attributes, Controls, Prejudice and Discrimination against Homosexuals (N=383)

Variables	Prejudice	Discrimination
Prejudice		0.623
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	0.319	ns
Social Dominance Orientation	0.291	ns
Humanitarian-Egalitarianism	-0.211	ns
Collectivism	ns	ns
Empathic Concern	ns	0.252
Sex (1 female, 0 male)	-0.243	-0.315
Race (1 white, 0 nonwhite)	ns	ns
R squared	0.306	0.397

ns = nonsignificant at $p < .05$

Prejudice against homosexuals substantially influenced discrimination against homosexuals ($\beta = .634$). Empathic concern directly predicted discrimination against homosexuals ($\beta = .163$). We predicted empathic concern would negatively influence discrimination. In addition, simple correlations suggested an inverse relationship between empathic concern and discrimination against homosexuals ($r = -.11, p < .05$).

Additional Analyses

Using only the 4 discrimination items that contained similar wording for both women and homosexuals, we examined comparison models of discrimination. Within these models, the R-squared decreased for both discrimination against women ($R^2 = 0.26$) and against homosexuals ($R^2 = 0.33$). Although social dominance orientation directly influenced discrimination against women in the original model, this variable failed to do so in this restricted model. In addition, empathic concern did not directly impact discrimination against homosexuals in the model with only comparably worded items.

Additional models estimated interaction effects among personality variables for prejudice and discrimination against women and homosexuals. For prejudice against women, social dominance orientation (SDO) and humanitarian-egalitarianism had a significant interaction effect ($\beta = 0.265$). With this interaction in the model, right-wing authoritarianism maintained a significant main effect ($\beta = 0.203$). The model for discrimination against women revealed no significant interaction effects among the personality variables. The model for prejudice against homosexuals showed three significant interaction effects: right-wing authoritarianism X collectivism ($\beta = -0.494$); right-wing authoritarianism X empathic concern ($\beta = 0.509$); social dominance orientation X empathic concern ($\beta = -0.477$). With these interactions in the model, right-wing authoritarianism and humanitarian-egalitarianism no longer predicted prejudice against homosexuals. The model for discrimination against homosexuals also revealed three significant interaction effects: right-wing authoritarianism X collectivism ($\beta = -0.394$); right-wing authoritarianism X empathic concern ($\beta = 0.444$); social dominance orientation X collectivism ($\beta = 0.348$). In addition, empathic concern no longer predicted discrimination against homosexuals with interactions in the model.

DISCUSSION

For both target groups, right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation led to more prejudice, and humanitarianism-egalitarianism led to lower prejudice. In addition, social dominance orientation increased discrimination against women, and empathic concern increased discrimination against homosexuals.

Right-wing authoritarianism had a weaker effect on prejudice than found in previous research (Altemeyer, 1996; Duck & Hunsberger, 1999; Hunsberger, Owusu, & Duck, 1999). Traditionally, right-wing authoritarianism contained items that could be used to measure prejudice against women and homosexuals and religious fundamentalism. Without those confounding items, this personality trait's influence on prejudice drops substantially.

The positive effect of empathic concern on discrimination against homosexuals may result from feeling empathy for only dominant groups or for groups that society views as helpless instead of homosexuals. Some empathic people may be unable to empathize with homosexuals because they view homosexuality as voluntarily immoral.

Although prejudice against both women and homosexuals seems to be affected in similar ways by the personality traits studied here, they may influence interpersonal behaviors of sexism and heterosexism differently. The consistent influence of personality on prejudice disappears for discrimination against these two groups. Perhaps the influences of personality traits and prejudice are unique for each type of discrimination because the actual behaviors used to discriminate against women versus homosexuals are very different. The ways in which people discriminate against women often involve subtle references to women's subordinate gender roles or to inappropriate gender role violation, while discrimination against homosexuals often involves overt disapproval of the defiance of traditional gender roles.

This difference in the influence on discrimination may also result from the wide range of influence on discriminatory behavior that includes not only personality and prejudice, but also cultural norms and specific situational factors. In a culture with federal legislation prohibiting discrimination against women but not homosexuals, one could reasonably conclude that cultural messages about who deserves protection constrain discrimination against women more than discrimination against homosexuals. Those who express prejudices may be unwilling to discriminate against women due to their perception that such acts would be met with disapproval. These results point to the differences between institutional or systematic levels of discrimination against women and homosexuals based on cultural norms about the standards of treatment for the two target groups.

The fact that prejudice against women failed to influence discrimination may also be explained as a result of the specific operation of prejudice. Perhaps prejudice against women explains and justifies observable differences in treatment of men and women in society, but does not rationalize one's own discriminatory behaviors. Prejudice against homosexuals, on the other hand, may simultaneously explain those differences in treatment and rationalize one's individual acts of discrimination.

Limitations and Conclusions

Given the modest overall levels of prejudice expressed and discrimination reported by respondents, our results may not apply to those with high levels of prejudice or people who discriminate more often than out participants. We also used self-reports of previous discriminatory behavior in the measures of discrimination. Current socio-cultural standards with regard to open expression of discrimination may have influenced the results. Although social norms discourage discrimination against women, norms opposing discriminatory treatment of homosexuals are much less prevalent. In addition, such cultural norms may influence participant self-report of discrimination. Future studies including additional measures of discrimination, such as field experiments that provide the opportunity for discriminatory behavior, would help assess the strengths and weaknesses of the measures used here. Removal of RWA items confounded with prejudice and religion would also aid in discovering the pure effects of right-wing authoritarianism on prejudice and discrimination.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of those who are ruining everything.

It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in society than to listen to the noisy rebels who are trying to create doubt in people's minds.

Obedience and respect for authority are two of the most important virtues children should learn. What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush our enemies and take us back to our true path.

The real keys to the "good life" are obedience, discipline, and sticking to the straight and narrow. Some of the best people in our country are those challenging our government, criticizing those in power and ignoring the "normal way" things are supposed to be done. (reversed)

The facts on crime and public disorder show that we have to crack down harder on deviant groups and troublemakers if we are going to save our moral standards and preserve law and order.

Social Dominance Orientation

Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.

No one group should dominate in society. (reversed)

It's okay if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.

To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.

We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups. (reversed)

If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.

We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally. (reversed)

Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism

A person should be concerned about the well-being of others.

One should be kind to all people.

One should find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself.

There should be equality for everyone because we are all human beings.

Everyone should have an equal chance and an equal say in most things.

Protecting the rights and interests of other members of the community is not the responsibility of all people. (reversed)

Prosperous nations do not have a moral obligation to share some of their wealth with poorer nations. (reversed)

Collectivism

It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.

I like sharing little things with my neighbors.

The wellbeing of my co-workers is important to me.

If a co-worker gets a prize, I feel proud.

To me, pleasure is spending time with others.

I feel good when I cooperate with others.

Empathic Concern

When I see people being taken advantage of, I feel protective towards them.
When I see someone being treated badly, I don't feel very much pity for him or her. (reversed)
Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (reversed)
I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (reversed)
I am often quite touched by the things that I see happen.
I often have feelings of concern for people less fortunate than me.

Sex Prejudice

Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.
Women often miss out on good jobs due to sexual discrimination. (reversed)
It is rare to see women treated in a sexist manner on television.
On average, people in our society treat husbands and wives equally.
Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
It is easy to understand the anger of women's groups in America. (reversed)
It is easy to understand why women's groups are still concerned about societal limitations of women's opportunities. (reversed)

Homosexual Prejudice

I would avoid sitting at a location in the library if I knew lesbians or gays sometimes sat there together.
The increasing openness and acceptance of homosexuality is undermining our society.
I feel safe around gays and lesbians. (reversed)
I would try to be nice to a gay or lesbian if they were new in school and had few friends. (reversed)
I would not mind being employed by a lesbian or gay individual. (reversed)
I would not ask for a new study partner just because I found out mine was gay or lesbian. (reversed)
I feel nervous around lesbian women and gay men.
I feel that it is okay if lesbians and gays are treated badly by others.

Sex Discrimination

I laughed at or told a joke which made fun of the characteristics of females or put females down in some way.
In general, I have given more weight to a male's opinion than a female's opinion.
I have treated females as if they were less intelligent than males.
I complained to friends or coworkers that a female got a job or promotion because of affirmative action.
To her face, I called a female a "bitch" for being too bossy.
In talking with peers, I used insulting names when referring to females.
I told a female, joking or not, that she belongs in the kitchen.
In group situations, I generally have supported having a male as a leader instead of a female.

Homosexual Discrimination

I stopped hanging out with someone after I found out he/she was homosexual.

I told a homosexual that his/her lifestyle is wrong.

To his/her face, I called a homosexual a fag or a dyke, or some other derogatory name.

In talking with peers, I used terms which put homosexuals down.

In general, I have given more weight to a heterosexual's opinion than a homosexual's opinion.

I complained to friends that homosexuals do not deserve the same protection against discrimination that others deserve.

I laughed at or told a joke which was funny because it made fun of the characteristics of homosexuals.

I avoided an area where I knew homosexuals hung out.

I have accused friends of being gay (or lesbian) because they were acting too much like a woman (or a man).

APPENDIX B: CORRELATION MATRIX

Variables	N	RWA	SDO	H-E	Collect	EC	SP	HP
Right-Wing Authoritarian	383	1.00						
Social Dominance	383	0.26**	1.00					
Humanitarian- Egalitarianism	383	-0.11*	-0.56**	1.00				
Collectivism	383	0.07	-0.32**	0.52**	1.00			
Empathic Concern	383	-0.10	-0.41**	0.60**	0.61**	1.00		
Sex Prejudice	383	0.28**	0.44**	-0.36**	-0.15**	-0.31**	1.00	
Homosexual Prejudice	383	0.35**	0.43**	-0.36**	-0.20**	-0.32**	0.34**	1.00
Sex Discrimination	383	0.14**	0.34**	-0.26**	-0.19**	-0.25**	0.34**	0.30**
Homosexual Discrimination	383	0.23**	0.30**	-0.20**	-0.10*	-0.14*	0.24**	0.60**
Sex Race	383	-0.09	-0.19**	0.14**	0.13*	0.30**	-0.34**	-0.27**
Race	383	-0.04	0.12*	-0.06	0.11*	0.09	0.19**	-0.01

Variables	SD	HD	Sex	Race
Sexual Discrimination	1.00			
Homosexual Discrimination	0.51**	1.00		
Sex	-0.53**	-0.31**	1.00	
Race	0.18**	-0.00	-0.14**	1.00

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

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