

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION WITHIN THE
CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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DEDICATION

For my family who has listened to hours of psychological babble and never asked me to stop talking.

ABSTRACT

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Religion and politics are two controversial topics that are deeply rooted in the identity of an individual, and have caused a number of online arguments across different social networking sites (SNS). Research has been conducted looking at how these variables are related, but no such studies have looked at potential impact on religious intolerance and political polarization. Therefore, the current study aims to examine how religious factors, moral foundations, and SNS related factors affect religious intolerance and political polarization. This was done by having participants complete a series of scales before being exposed to one of three mock Facebook posts containing either political content or neutral content, as well as either a civil or an uncivil discourse. The independent variables measured using surveys were religious commitment (RCI-10), religious fundamental belief (RF Scale), and moral foundations (MFQ). The remaining two independent variables were the post content variable and the civility of the comment section variable. The Interfaith Intolerance Scale (II) was used to measure religious intolerance while a political thermometer was used to measure political polarization. Two multiple linear regressions were conducted for the dependent variables to determine if the independent variables predicted intolerance and polarization scores. Results for intolerance found that religious commitment, religious fundamental beliefs and the purity/sanctity subscale of the MFQ each positively predicted intolerance while the harm/care subscale negatively predicted intolerance. The multiple regression for political polarization was not found to be significant. The current study found similar results to

past research that indicates religious factors such as commitment and fundamentalism are predictive of intolerance, and found that two of the moral foundations differed in their impact on intolerance.

Implications of this study highlight different factors that contribute to the level of intolerance that is observed in our world. Both religious factors and moral foundations affect the way that we view others. These findings should lead to more research related to these variables as to illuminate the relationship between them. In addition, this research should lead to a degree of self-awareness when it comes to how religion and moral foundations are viewed to affect intolerance.

KEY WORDS: Religion, Politics, Social media, Intolerance, Polarization, Social networking site, Moral foundations, Religious commitment, Religious fundamentalism.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Religion and politics are two hot button topics of conversation often considered inappropriate for polite company. These two subjects are oftentimes connected to deeply rooted and emotionally charged beliefs that are central to an individual's identity; disagreements over these beliefs can become heated rapidly leading to undesired interpersonal conflict. Although these topics are widely considered taboo in many situations, the proliferation of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has brought about the widespread practice of publishing politically and/or religiously fueled posts that tend to incite online arguments that devolve into the uncivil discourse for which the internet is infamously known.

Data from the Pew Research Center shows that in the USA 76.5% of the population are religious, with 70.6% identifying as Christian ("Religion in America", 2015). Approximately twice as many Americans (53%) reported religion as 'extremely important' in everyday life as compared to Australia (18%), Canada (27%) and Germany (21%) ("Religion in America", 2015). With such a large percentage of Americans both identifying as religious and expressing the impact that it has on their daily life, the United States is a hotbed for these types of religiously fueled online conflicts to take place.

In another study conducted by the Pew Research Center on party affiliation, 37% of registered voters identified as independents, 33% as Democrats, and 26% as Republicans ("1. Trends", 2018). When forced to pick which direction the independents were leaning, 50% of registered voters identified as Democrats or leaned Democratic, and 42% identified as Republicans or leaned Republican ("1. Trends", 2018). When breaking

down the demographic information of registered voters, the partisan divide has grown as wide or wider than in Pew Research Center surveys going back two decades in the demographic categories of gender, generation, geographic region and educational history (“1. Trends”, 2018). With the partisan divide growing as wide as it has, it can also be said that the United States is a hotbed for politically fueled online conflicts to take place like the ones previously described.

Politics and Religion

Gandhi once said, “Those who believe religion and politics aren’t connected don’t understand either.”(Gandhi, n.d.) The relationship between these two subjects is widely understood to be both intimate and long standing. Just taking a look at data collected from exit polls during the 2012 presidential election show clear correlations between religious tradition and partisan leaning (Lipka, 2016). In this research, Latter Day Saints (70%) and evangelical Protestants (Church of the Nazarene [63%], Southern Baptist Convention [64%], Presbyterian Church in America [60%]) leaned toward or identified with the Republican party, while historically Black churches (Church of God in Christ [75%], National Baptist Convention [87%], African Methodist Episcopal Church [92%]), Buddhists (69%), Hindus (61%), Muslims (62%), Jews (64%), agnostics (64%), and atheists (69%) leaned or identified with the Democratic party (Lipka, 2016). Mainline Christian traditions (Episcopal [49%], Presbyterian [47%]), Catholics (44%), and Orthodox Christians (44%) tended to lean slightly Democratic as well, while Jehovah’s Witnesses (75%) were largely unaffiliated (Lipka, 2016). This research indicates that religious traditions tend to lean in particular directions when looking at political party affiliation.

Although religious traditions may tend to lean in particular directions along party lines, some research has indicated that White Christians are making up less of the voter base (“In U.S.”, 2019). Researchers found White Christians make up two-thirds of the Republican party, but they only make up one-fourth of the Democratic party (“In U.S.”, 2019). Minority Christians and unaffiliated individuals both make up bigger portions of the Democratic party than White Christians (“In U.S.”, 2019). With the share of American citizens who identify as White Christians shrinking from over half in 2009 to around two-fifths today, these findings are significant for predicting the political direction the country is moving in (“In U.S.”, 2019).

In addition to the divide along political party lines, there is also a divide between White evangelical Christians and those unaffiliated with religion in their evaluations of Donald Trump’s performance as president; three-fourths of unaffiliated individuals believe Trump has encouraged White supremacy, while 70% of White evangelicals believe he has not (“Fractured Nation”, 2019). This same research also indicated that White Christians believe that the Democratic party has been taken over by socialism (“Fractured Nation”, 2019).

Additionally, research conducted by Abrahamson, Baker, and Caspi (2002) indicates there are gender differences in relation to conservative attitudes and attitudes toward religion. Their research indicated that males consistently scored higher on conservatism scales when compared to females across ages, and females consistently scored higher on religious attitude scales when compared to males across ages (Abrahamson et al., 2002).

The relationship between religion and political orientation has also been more directly studied. Lee, Ashton, Griep and Edmonds (2018) found that religiosity was correlated with right wing political orientation using a sample from 33 different countries; furthermore, they found that the correlation in the U.S. sample was greater than that of the total sample. They also found that the degree of importance that religion played in each country partially accounted for the correlation between religiosity and right wing political orientation (Lee et al., 2018). This correlation further implicates that religion and politics are connected, and that this connection trends in the conservative direction.

Many factors can impact an individual's religiosity and political orientation. Two studies looked into what factors were most important in the formulation of these two qualities of an individual, and they both found that social and environmental factors were stronger in adolescence, while biological factors gained strength as individuals age (Abrahamson et al., 2002; Koenig, McGue, Krueger, Bouchard, 2005). Therefore, although biological factors do begin to impact both political orientation and religiosity, social and environmental factors play a large role in the development of both these qualities in an individual.

Religion and Tolerance

Diversity is central to the identity of the U.S. as a nation. People from different religions, races, creeds, and affiliations come together to create a country widely identified as a melting pot of humanity. In a nation where diversity is one of its central identifying qualities, it is important that diversity in many forms is accepted and tolerated. In research conducted by Merino (2010), the study found that 90% of the

country believed religious diversity to be a good thing for the country. However, the study also revealed that only 64% of individuals would not be bothered by a Hindu temple being built in their community, and 57% were comfortable with a Mosque being built in their community (Merino, 2010). These results indicate a clear disconnect between the philosophical ideals of the country and the reality of being confronted with diversity. The collision of the two reveal a much less tolerant country than would be desired.

Along with these findings, Merion's (2010) research found that Christian exclusivism, the belief that Christianity is the only true religion, and the belief that America is a Christian nation are both common among the American people. Both these beliefs were correlated with each other, and, additionally, they were negatively correlated with contact with non-Christians (Merino, 2010). Although contact with non-Christians was negatively correlated with these factors, contact with non-Christians was not common among those in the study; the study found that about half the sample had little to no contact with Muslims, and two-thirds had little to no contact with Buddhists and Hindus (Merion, 2010). Many believe that exposure is the greatest of all combatants to tolerance (Habermas, 1989; Mill, 1956). However, research conducted by Mutz (2002) found that exposure to differing world views did not increase tolerance, but did increase understanding of alternative views. He also found that civility increases the benefits of exposure to alternative world views (Mutz, 2002). Additionally, Merion's study, and others, found that males, those who were more formally educated, those who were younger, and non-southern Americans valued diversity more than other demographic groupings (Katnik, 2002; Merion, 2010). Diversity may be valued as a core tenant of

America's identity, but it seems that in practice this value fails to lead Americans to more tolerant and accepting views directed at diverse belief systems.

There are several factors related to religion that have been found to contribute to intolerant and exclusive views. A common term in the literature studying these factors is political tolerance. This can best be defined as, "a willingness to put up with those things that one rejects," (Sullivan, James & George, 1979, p. 784). Using this definition as a basis for research, Katnik (2002) found that religiosity, church attendance and religious denomination all had a significant negative effect on political tolerance. Beatty (1984) similarly found that religious attendance related to greater intolerance, and Ellison and Musick (1993) found that theological conservative beliefs were also related to lower levels of tolerance. When it comes to exclusivist beliefs among adolescents, higher levels of religious involvement and parental religious involvement both predict more exclusivist beliefs (Trintiapoli, 2007). If an adolescent has a dense peer network that is religious, then it is also more likely that they will hold more exclusivist beliefs (Trintiapoli, 2007).

Despite much research indicating that religion is related to intolerance and exclusion, there is some research that shows a more general movement toward inclusion and tolerance. Research looking at the use of the term Judeo-Christian, a common term referring to the Jewish and Christian traditions, examined its use and meaning throughout time (Hartmann, Zhang, Windschadt, 2005). This study found that a term that was originally used to indicate superiority has since evolved to widely be considered a term unfit and no longer indicative of the American culture. Through the study of this term the authors of the article reveals that there has been a movement toward religious inclusion and tolerance in regards to the changing definition of what it means to be American.

Judeo-Christian is no longer viewed as a sufficient term to describe a diverse nation, and has fallen out of its traditional use for the sake of the inclusion of a more diverse population.

Politics and Polarization

There are several competing theories behind what factors lead to political polarization. On one end of the spectrum, many believe that political parties are becoming more ideologically distinct with clearer positions, which leads to polarization along a platform based and philosophical divide (e.g., Bafumi & Shapiro, 2009; Hetherington, 2001; Levendusky, 2009). The opposite side of the spectrum views polarization more as a result of social identification and affectual attachment (e.g., Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes, 1960; Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002; Greene, 2004; Huddy, Mason, & Aarøe, 2015). Groenedyk in his book *Competing Motives in the Partisan Mind* (2013) describes an integrated model in which individuals try to balance their role as both a good team member in reference to their party and a good citizen in regards to their country. The team member duty captures the social responsibility one may feel towards their party, while the citizen duty captures the reason based responsibility towards the country as a whole.

Research has indicated that partisans tend to feel warmer towards their own party than opposing parties. However, research also indicates that over time feelings toward one's own party have been cooling meaning that despite having a political leaning, individuals are evaluating their own political party more harshly as time goes on (Groenedyke, 2018). This decline in one's own party evaluations is largely attributed to either not feeling as though one's party represents an individual adequately, or rising

levels of frustration due to a gridlocked political system. Although cooling feelings towards one's party have been consistent over many years, greater variability within ratings of one's feelings toward their own party have also been found in more recent data (Groenendyke, 2018). In the same way that it has been suggested that cooling attitudes are related to feeling inadequately represented, greater variability is possibly due to other partisans feeling more adequately represented by their party. Ambivalence toward the party has also been found to be on the rise, with Republicans showing greater ambivalence than Democrats (Groenendyke, 2018). Individuals seem to be growing more dissatisfied with both political parties, but continue to support the party they socially identify with more.

Psychologists have also studied different factors that contribute to political polarization. Simon, Reininger, Schaefer, Zitsmann, and Kryz (2018) found that politicization predicted both affective and cognitive polarization, however, polarization did not have the reverse effect. In a second study conducted by the same researchers, politicization was still predictive of both affective and cognitive polarization, but affective polarization did have some reverse causation on politicization (Simon et al., 2018). In other studies, researchers found that when confronted with arguments for or against an individual's own beliefs on a topic, strength of prior beliefs and sophistication of those beliefs were both more biased toward congruent arguments versus incongruent arguments (Taber & Lodge, 2006). When choosing to read articles either congruent or incongruent with an individual's beliefs, individuals with sophisticated beliefs were significantly biased toward reading articles affirming their position (Taber & Lodge, 2006). Taber & Lodge (2006) also found that biased readers, those with sophisticated

prior beliefs, and those with strong prior beliefs were all found to be significantly polarized, while those with unsophisticated and weak prior beliefs were not. This indicates that polarization is in defense of belief from both a commitment and alignment standpoint, which would be congruent with the model of competing motives previously mentioned.

Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (SNS) are a fairly new phenomenon, and due to their relatively young status there is some debate over how to properly define the term. One definition is that they are “virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real-life friends, and meet other people based on shared interest” (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Another definition states that SNS are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 15). Both of these definitions emphasize that SNS are online hubs in which personalized profiles are constructed and used to interact with other individuals. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), using their definition, the first SNS website titled Sixdegrees.com was created in 1997; however, the social media craze that is experienced today did not begin until 2003. With SNS being so young in their existence, there is a lot that is unknown about how these websites shape and impact the individuals using their services.

There are several major SNS that have broken into the mainstream of the American culture. Websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have become

household names. Each of these SNS are connected to entertainment, politics, and education along with its intended social function. Some of the most used SNS for adult Americans are YouTube (73%), Facebook (69%), Instagram (37%), Pinterest (28%), LinkedIn(27%), Snapchat (24%), and Twitter (22%) (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Overall, 72% of adults used at least one SNS on a regular basis with 90% of 18-29 year olds using one on a regular basis (“Demographics”, 2019). Individuals differed on how often they used SNS based on several demographic factors. White (73%) individuals were most likely to use at least one SNS on a regular basis followed by Hispanic (70%) and black (69%) individuals (“Demographics”, 2019). The Pew Research Center also found that women, those with higher income, those with more education, and those from urban areas were more likely to use SNS on a regular basis (“Demographics”, 2019).

As social networking sites have become more prominent, researchers have begun to examine how SNS affect individuals in regards to a variety of topics. Some researchers have found connections between social media use and depression (Aalbers, McNally, Heeren, de Wit, & Fried, 2019; Brunborg & Burdzovic, 2019; Parent, Gobble & Rochlen, 2019), while others have found that social media can decrease depression (Lee & Cho, 2019). Several studies have looked at SNS use for business and marketing (Langaro, Rita & Salgueiro 2018; Toler, 2018), while others have looked at factors related to SNS and intimate relationships (Adams, 2018; Martin, 2018; Parker, 2018). Research looking at SNS has increased greatly over time, but there is still much more to be done in order to understand the impact they are having on their users.

Religion and Social Networking Sites

In addition to the research previously mentioned, researchers have begun to explore the relationship between religiosity and SNS usage. Miller, Munday and Hill (2013) found that individuals who read their Bible on a regular basis used SNS less often than those who did not. They also found variability among religious tradition and SNS membership; Catholics were seen to be more likely than non-religious individuals to use SNS, while non-Christian and non-Jewish traditions were less likely to belong to any SNS (Miller et al., 2013). McClure (2016) found that those who abstained from SNS were more likely to attend religious functions, and those who used SNS saw religious attendance drop over time.

Other researchers have studied how religious individuals use and are affected by SNS. One study found that 62.1% of all individuals display their religious identity on their profiles, and 58% chose the “Christian-other” religious identity for their online profiles (Bobkowski, 2011). They also found that religiosity was correlated with both religious identification online and quantity of religious disclosures on an individual's profile (Bobkowski, 2011). Evangelicals disclosed at higher rates than any other Christian denomination, while positive views of religion was related to disclosure and agreeing that religion is private decreased the likelihood to disclose on SNS (Bobkowski & Pearce, 2011). A study conducted by Wood, Center, and Parenteau (2016) found that depression, anxiety, and stress were all correlated with social media intrusion, the interference that social media has on an individual's daily life; however, intrusion, depression, anxiety and stress were each negatively correlated with spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being partially mediated the relationship between social media intrusion

and stress (Wood et al., 2016). Studies like these show that religion impacts the way we use and are affected by SNS in many ways.

SNS may also impact an individual's religious beliefs. Increases in time spent on SNS had a significant effect on one's likelihood of endorsing syncretistic religious beliefs (McClure, 2016). Researchers found that SNS users were 49% more likely to pick and choose their beliefs from several different religious traditions, sects, and denominations than those who refrained from using SNS, and this only dropped to 35% when controlling for religious attendance (McClure, 2016). In another study by McClure (2017), greater internet use was correlated with more religiously pluralistic views, or views that diverse religious beliefs are valid and acceptable. Although there has been some research examining factors relating SNS use to religion, there is far more study required in order to understand how these two variables interact.

Political Polarization and Social Networking Sites

In more recent history, the relationship between politics and social networking sites has been a topic of much concern. Many have claimed that SNS have contributed to the growing political polarization among the American people. Research conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 34% of adults have taken part in an online group that shares an interest in an issue or cause, and that 32% have encouraged others to take action on political issues using social media ("Political Engagement", 2018). Further, among U.S. SNS users 42% found it important to find others who share their views online, 39% endorsed that SNS were important for getting involved in political or social issues, and 37% agreed that it was an important place to share their political opinions ("Political Engagement", 2018). Although many U.S. adults found SNS to be useful

places to get elected officials to pay attention to issues (68%), and to influence policy decisions (58%), more found that SNS distracted from the important issues (77%) and makes people feel like they are making a difference when they are not (71%) according to this research (“Political Engagement”, 2018).

The extant literature is mixed on how the internet contributes to polarization. Some research indicates that exposure to opposing views online increases conservative views among previously conservative individuals while not altering the views of liberal individuals (Bail et al., 2018). Other research indicates that polarization is increasing most among the age groups least likely to use the internet (65+) (Boxell, Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2017). These differing findings make it unclear how SNS are impacting political polarization.

As previously mentioned, exposure to alternative views is theorized to increase tolerance and therefore decrease polarization. However, exposure requires coming into contact with those opposing or alternative views, and some researchers have found that individuals may not expose themselves to alternative views online. Garrett (2009) found that participants were more likely to read articles that support their position, and that they spend more time reading those articles than articles with opposing views. If a participant began reading an opinion challenging article, then they would spend more time reading this option than the reinforcing article; however, participants were more likely to initially choose the opinion reinforcing article at the onset, thus not reading the challenging article very long if at all (Garrett, 2009). These studies indicate that exposure may not often be sought out by individuals, but that once exposed there may be an interest in exploring alternative views deeper.

It is commonly understood that online debate tends to evolve into uncivil discourse rather quickly. Kim and Kim (2019) found that uncivil comments made on Facebook made it less likely for an individual to read more comments and caused greater polarization. In another study, researchers found that uncivil comments also caused individuals to perceive the other as more polarized than in civil debate (Hwang, Kim & Huh, 2014). Uncivil debate also had a negative impact on expectations about public debate (Hwang et al., 2014). Kim and Kim (2019) additionally examined how evidence based comments affected individuals, and they found that they had little impact on how individuals reacted. The key factor was if the comments were civil or uncivil in nature. These findings indicate that it is not only about exposing individuals to differing views, but requires that exposure is done in a civil and respectful manner.

Current Study

The goal of the current study was to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that social networking sites have on political polarization and religious tolerance. More specifically, this study aimed to quantify the effect political arguments taking place on SNS have on these two factors. Past research has explored SNS impact on political polarization, but none have examined the impact they have on religious tolerance. Thus, this study aimed to understand the impact SNS have on both individual's political and religious attitudes in regards to these two variables. In addition, the current study aimed to understand the impact that religious variables and moral foundations variables have on political polarization and religious intolerance.

CHAPTER II

Hypothesis

There are several specific hypotheses for this study. However, there are no specific hypotheses for the demographic information or several of the systems of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire. The specific hypotheses are as follows.

Hypothesis 1a: Religious fundamentalism will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 1b: Religious fundamentalism will positively predict religious intolerance

Hypothesis 2a: Religious commitment will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 2b: Religious commitment will positively predict religious intolerance.

Hypothesis 3a: The In-group/Loyalty system of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 3b: The In-group/Loyalty system of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire will positively predict religious intolerance.

Hypothesis 4a: The Purity/Sanctity system of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 4b: The Purity/Sanctity system of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire will positively predict religious intolerance.

Hypothesis 5a: Uncivil discourse will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 5b: Uncivil discourse will positively predict religious intolerance.

Hypothesis 6a: Political content in SNS posts that lead to discourse will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 6b: Political content in SNS posts that lead to discourse will positively predict religious intolerance.

Hypothesis 7a: The interaction between uncivil discourse and political content in SNS posts will positively predict political polarization.

Hypothesis 7b: The interaction between uncivil discourse and political content in SNS posts will positively predict religious intolerance.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Participants

Participants came from the Sam Houston State University (SHSU) student population through the Psychological Research Participation (PeRP) System. A sample of 276 participants was collected that mainly consisted of undergraduate students currently enrolled in psychology classes; however, an error in the sampling method resulted in 20 participants being removed from the data due to missing data points. The remaining 256 participants resulted in a power of 1.00. Table 1 contains demographic information of the sample.

Table 1

Sample Demographics

Characteristic	<i>n</i> = 256
Age, years	
Mean	21.67
<i>SD</i>	4.55
Range	18-48
Gender, <i>n</i> (%)	
Male	55 (21.5)
Female	201 (78.5)
Race/Ethnicity, <i>n</i> (%)	
Non-Hispanic White	93 (36.3)
Hispanic Latino	66 (25.8)

Black or African American	59 (23.0)
Bi-racial	18 (7.0)
Asian or Asian American	10 (3.9)
Multi-racial	8 (3.1)
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2 (0.8)
Relationship Status, <i>n</i> (%)	
Never been married (single)	197 (77.0)
A member of an unmarried couple	33 (12.9)
Married	19 (7.4)
Divorced	3 (1.2)
Separated	3 (1.2)
Unreported	1 (0.4)
Classification, <i>n</i> (%)	
Freshman	51 (19.9)
Sophomore	48 (18.8)
Junior	81 (31.6)
Senior	74 (28.9)
Graduate Student	1 (0.4)
Unreported	1 (0.4)
Religion, <i>n</i> (%)	
Agnostic	29 (11.3)
Atheist	8 (3.1)
Baptist	37 (14.5)

Catholic (Roman Catholic)	45 (17.6)
Church of Christ	4 (1.6)
Christian (Non-Denominational)	98 (38.3)
Eastern Orthodox	1 (0.4)
Hindu	2 (0.8)
Islam	2 (0.8)
Jehovah's Witness	1 (0.4)
Latter Day Saints	2 (0.8)
Lutheran	6 (2.3)
Methodist	6 (2.3)
Pentecostal	2 (0.8)
Quaker	1 (0.4)
Seventh Day Adventist	2 (0.8)
Other	10 (3.9)
Religious Activity, <i>n</i> (%)	
Not active at all	32 (12.5)
Not very active	59 (23.0)
Somewhat active	100 (39.1)
Very active	46 (18.0)
Does not apply	16 (6.3)
Unreported	3 (1.2)
Religious Attendance, <i>n</i> (%)	
Never	34 (13.3)

Almost never	31 (12.1)
Once or twice a year	30 (11.7)
3 to 5 times per year	28 (10.9)
Once every two months	25 (9.8)
Once a month	21 (8.2)
More than once per week	17 (6.6)
Daily	1 (0.4)
Not applicable	17 (6.6)
Religious Prayer Activity	
Never	9 (7.4)
Almost never	27 (10.5)
Once or twice a year	6 (2.3)
3 to 5 times per year	16 (6.3)
Once every two months	14 (5.5)
Once a month	16 (6.3)
Once every two weeks	12 (4.7)
Once a week	18 (7.0)
More than once a week	43 (16.8)
Daily	67 (26.2)
Not applicable	15 (5.9)
Unreported	3 (1.2)
Religious Literature Activity, <i>n</i> (%)	
Never	50 (19.5)

Almost never	44 (17.2)
Once or twice a year	27 (10.5)
3 to 5 times per year	18 (7.0)
Once every two months	14 (5.5)
Once a month	21 (8.2)
Every two weeks	10 (3.9)
Once a week	18 (7.0)
More than once a week	21 (8.2)
Daily	16 (6.3)
Not applicable	17 (6.6)
Political Beliefs, <i>n</i> (%)	
Conservative	93 (36.3)
Liberal	116 (45.3)
Centrist	27 (10.5)
Apolitical	17 (6.6)
Unreported	3 (1.2)
Political Engagement, <i>n</i> (%)	
Not active at all	56 (21.9)
Not very active	96 (37.5)
Somewhat active	84 (32.8)
Very active	19 (7.4)
Does not apply	1 (0.4)

The average age of participants was 21.67 years ($SD = 4.55$) ranging from 18-48 with 55 males (21.5%) and 201 females (78.5). In regards to race/ethnicity, 93 identified as non-Hispanic White (36.3%), 66 Hispanic or Latino (25.8%), 59 Black or African American (23.0%), 18 Bi-racial (7.0%), 10 Asian or Asian American (3.9%), 8 Multi-racial (3.1%), and 2 American Indian or Alaska Native (.8%). Approximately 77% of the participants were single and had never been married, 33 reported being in a non-married couple (12.9%), 19 reported being married (7.4%), and 3 reported being divorced (1.2%) and 3 others reported being separated (1.2%). When it comes to the religious demographic information 98 participants identified as Christian non-denominational (38.3%), 45 identified as Catholic (17.6%), 37 identified as Baptist (14.5%), 29 identified as agnostic (11.3%), 8 identified as atheist (3.1%), both the Lutheran and Methodist denominations had a sample of 6 (2.3%), 4 reported belonging to the Church of Christ denomination (1.6%), each of the Hindu, Islam, Latter Day Saints, Pentecostal, Jehovah's Witness and Seventh Day Adventists had 2 individuals (0.8%), and Eastern Orthodox and Quaker each had 1 participant (0.4%). In addition, 10 individuals identified as other (3.9%). Political information was also collected for the sample. There were 116 individuals who identified as liberal (45.3), 93 conservative (36.3%), 27 centrist (10.5%), 17 apolitical (6.6%) and 3 unreported responses (1.2%). Each of the participants were put into one of three groups using random assignment that determined which one of the test conditions they would be placed in.

Procedure

Participants were sampled using the Psychology Research Participation (PeRP) System, as part of the SONA System, an online survey forum for students at Sam

Houston State University. Beginning the study, the participants responded to several demographic questions. Subsequently, they were administered the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale, Religious Commitment Inventory-10, and the Moral Foundations Questionnaire in counterbalance order. Once each of these scales were completed, the participant were exposed to one of three experimental conditions. Each participant was shown a Facebook post and the corresponding comment section. The first condition included a post about abortion (a politically charged post) and the ensuing comment section with a civil discourse between competing political views in regard to the topic of abortion ($n = 103$). The second condition included the same post about abortion, but the comment section had an uncivil discourse between the competing political views in regard to abortion ($n = 86$). The final condition contained a neutral post referencing the tension between Marvel and DC movies (a non-political topic) and the comment section of this post having had a civil discourse between fans of both brands ($n = 67$). After viewing one of the three conditions, the participants then responded to both a political thermometer and the Interfaith Intolerance Scale.

Materials

Demographics Questionnaire. Standard demographic questions regarding age, gender, ethnicity, educational standing, and educational major made up the demographic questionnaire that all participants completed. Additionally, questions regarding religious affiliation and engagement in religious behaviors as well as political affiliation and political engagement were included.

Religious Fundamentalism. The Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale was used to measure the subject's level of "belief that there is one set of religious teachings"

that are fundamentally, or essentially, true (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). This 12-item scale was developed by Altemeyer and Hunsberger in 2004 to refine the previous 20-item version. The result of their efforts was a Likert scale test with answers ranging from “very strongly disagree” to “neutral” to “very strongly agree”. The final score was calculated by adding the individual item scores with greater scores indicating greater fundamentalist beliefs. This shorter version of the scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .91 for college students and .92 for parents of college students (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). Alpha for the current study was .93.

Religious Commitment Inventory-10. Worthington et al. (2003), created the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10) to measure one’s commitment to their religion on two different factors: Intrapersonal Religious Commitment, Interpersonal Religious Commitment. They utilized a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (not at all true to me) to 5 (totally true to me). The original study reported an alpha coefficient of .93 for the total scale (Worthington et al., 2003). Worthington et al. also found that the full-scale RCI-10, Intrapersonal Commitment and Interpersonal Commitment were correlated with single-item measures of religious participation, $r = .70, p \leq .0001$; $r = .60, p \leq .0001$; and $r = .74, p \leq .0001$, respectively (Worthington et al., 2013). Both of these findings suggest reliability and validity of the RCI-10. Only the overall scale will be used in the current study, not the subscales. Alpha for the current study was .95.

Moral Foundations Questionnaire. The Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) measures the degree to which individuals endorse each of five intuitive systems posited by Moral Foundations Theory (MFT). These five intuitive systems are Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, In-group/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, and

Purity/Sanctity (Haidt & Graham, 2007; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, & Park, 1997). Each of the systems have corresponding virtues that better explain what they each measure. Harm/Care is related to kindness, gentleness and nurturance, while Fairness/Reciprocity is related to justice, rights, and autonomy. In-group/Loyalty is related to patriotism and self-sacrifice for the sake of a group, and Authority/Respect is related to leadership and followership. Purity/Sanctity is connected to the virtues of living up to an elevated and more noble manner (Dobolyi, 2019). This 30-item scale uses a 6-point Likert Scale ranging from 0 (not at all relevant) to 5 (extremely relevant). Each of the five subscales had an alpha coefficient ranging from .65 to .84 in the original study conducted by Graham et al. (2011). Alpha for each of the subscales for the current study are as follows: Harm/Care (.60), Fairness/Reciprocity (.60), In-group/Loyalty (.70), Authority/Respect (.66), Purity/Sanctity (.74).

Interfaith Intolerance Scale. Crosby and Varela (2014) developed the Interfaith Intolerance Scale to measure “a general in-group bias for the affiliation of the respondent and a disregard for communion with individuals or aspects of another affiliation” (p. 201). A 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was utilized with overall scores indicating greater intolerance of those with differing religious affiliations. Crosby and Varela (2014) reported an alpha coefficient of .89 indicating high internal consistency. Alpha for the current study was .91.

Political Polarization Thermometer. In order to measure political polarization, a 100-point “thermometer” was used to measure attitudes towards both political parties. Polarization was then calculated by subtracting the two scores from one another to determine the distance between the two scores. The greater the difference between these

two scores, the more polarized an individual is. Similar strategies were used by McLaughlin (2018) in previous research measuring in-group favoritism.

Statistical Analysis

Following preliminary analyses for demographic differences on the dependent variables, a correlational analysis was conducted on the primary variables in the study. To examine the relationship between the independent variables (fundamentalism, commitment, moral foundations, civility, political content) and dependent variables (polarization and intolerance), two multiple linear regressions were run to assess predictability. An additional exploratory multiple linear analysis was conducted for intolerance. Each of the subscales of the Moral Foundations Questionnaire were treated as an individual independent variable for the purpose of statistical analysis. In addition, the bootstrapping technique was utilized to increase the robust nature of the data and address any potential issues related to normality. Multiple linear regressions were selected due to this study having two dependent variables and multiple independent variables, and the goal of assessing how well the independent variables predict the outcomes on the dependent variables.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The data was subjected to two separate multiple linear regressions. One was conducted for both of the independent variables (polarization, intolerance) using each of the independent variables (religious commitment, religious fundamentalism, moral foundations, civility manipulation, post content) as predictors. The Moral Foundations Questionnaire is made up of five subscales; therefore, each was treated as an independent variable for the statistical analysis. In addition, the data was subjected to bootstrapping due to its usefulness in addressing issues with assumption testing and its overall robust nature. First, the results for the intolerance variable will be presented, and then the polarization variable will be discussed. We discuss each of the hypotheses beginning with those that were made for the interfaith intolerance variable.

A multiple linear regression was run to predict scores on the Interfaith Intolerance Scale from scores on the RCI-10, Religious Fundamentalism Scale, each subscale on the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Harm/Care, Fairness/Reciprocity, In-group/Loyalty, Authority/Respect, Purity/Sanctity), as well as for each of the conditions. One regression was run using the neutral/civil condition as the comparison group, and a separate regression was run using the political/uncivil group as the comparison group. There was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.863. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values and there was no

evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1.

Correlations are reported in Table 2.

Table 2*Correlations for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. RCI-10	26.00	11.31	-							
2. RF Scale	59.07	24.20	.69**	-						
3. Harm/ Care	28.14	4.47	.15*	.040	-					
4. Fairness/ Reciprocity	26.66	4.23	.09	-.007	.64**	-				
5. In-group/ Loyalty	21.70	5.43	.24**	.321**	.29**	.25**	-			
6. Authority/ Respect	23.89	4.93	.34**	.43**	.27**	.21**	.65**	-		
7. Purity/ Sanctity	22.36	6.23	.55***	.60**	.34**	.19**	.49**	.59**	-	

8. Interfaith Intolerance	57.89	25.21	.54**	.66**	-.07	-.11	.30**	.34**	.49**	-
9. Political Polarization	40.79	31.01	.12	.04	-.01	.06	.00	.01	-.31	.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than ± 3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and values for Cook's distance above 1. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. All of the assumptions tests for a multiple linear regression were met, thus a multiple linear regression was conducted. The multiple linear regression model statistically significantly predicted Interfaith Intolerance, $F(9, 246) = 27.209$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .499$, $\hat{R}^2 = .481$. Four of the nine independent variables added statistically significantly to the prediction, $p < .05$. These results will be discussed in relation to the specific hypotheses of the study and reported in table 3.

Table 3

Multiple regression Results for Interfaith Intolerance (II)

II	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Model 1						.499	.481**
Constant	31.892**	14.03	49.75	9.07			
RCI-10	.400**	.12	.68	.14	.18**		
RF Scale	.425***	.28	.57	.07	.41***		
Harm/Care	-.797*	-1.49	-.10	.35	-.14*		
Fairness/Reciprocity	-.538	-1.24	.16	.36	-.09		
In-group/Loyalty	.500	-.07	1.07	.29	.11		
Authority/Respect	.016	-.65	.68	.34	.00		
Purity/Sanctity	.625*	.08	1.17	.28	.15*		

Political/Civil vs.	1.503	-4.14	7.14	2.86	.03
Neutral/Civil					
Political/Uncivil vs.	4.314	-1.45	10.18	2.98	.08
Neutral/Civil					

Note. Model = “Enter” method in SPSS Statistics, B = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; $SE B$ = standard error of coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; ΔR^2 = adjusted R^2 .

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

Beginning with hypothesis 1b, the results of the study found that the RCI-10 significantly predicted scores on the Interfaith Intolerance Scale, $p = .006$. The slope coefficient, $B = .400$, indicated that for every one unit change on the RCI-10 a .400 increase would be predicted to occur on the Interfaith Intolerance Scale. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was confirmed. Similar results were found for hypothesis 2b. The results indicated that the RF Scale significantly predicted scores on the Interfaith Intolerance Scale, $p < .000$. A similar slope coefficient was found for this variable as was found for the RCI-10, $B = .425$. The final hypothesis for dependent variable Interfaith Intolerance that was found to be significant was hypothesis 4b, $p = .025$. The Purity/Sanctity subscale on the MFQ was positively predictive, $B = .625$, of the intolerance scores as was predicted. Several of the hypotheses for this analysis were not significant. These included hypotheses 3b, 5b, and 6b. These hypotheses were in relation to the In-group/Loyalty subscale on the MFQ, the civility of the post, and the content of the post, $p > .05$. It should be noted that the In-group/Loyalty subscale was nearly significant, $p = .083$. In addition, hypothesis 7b was unable to be assessed due to collinearity with the post

content condition. It should also be noted that a secondary regression was conducted to compare the political/civil group to the political/uncivil group. This yielded a non-significant result, $B = -2.811$, $p > .30$. There was no formal hypothesis postulated for the Harm/Care subscale on the MFQ; however, the results of the analysis found that this subscale negatively predicted, $B = -.797$, religious intolerance, $p < .025$.

Another multiple linear regression was run to predict political polarization from scores on all the previous variables of the regression run for the Interfaith Intolerance scale. This included running the regression twice with the first using the neutral/civil condition as the comparison group before using the political/uncivil group as the comparison. There was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 2.044, and there was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity for the interaction variable, as assessed by tolerance value greater than 0.1. There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than ± 3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and values for Cook's distance above 1. The assumption of normality was not met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot; however, using the bootstrapping method corrects for this issue. The multiple regression model did not statistically significantly predict polarization scores, $F(9, 246) = 1.157$, $p = .324$, $R^2 = .041$, $\hat{R}^2 = .006$. Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Multiple regression results for Political Polarization (PP)

PP	<i>B</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>		<i>SE B</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>				
Model 1						.041	.006
Constant	40.871*	5.27	76.47	18.08			
RCI-10	.564*	.08	1.05	.25	.21*		
RF Scale	-.037	-.28	.21	.12	-.03		
Harm/Care	-.475	-1.66	.71	.60	-.07		
Fairness/Reciprocity	.752	-.44	1.94	.60	.10		
In-group/Loyalty	.046	-.92	1.01	.49	.01		
Authority/Respect	.132	-1.00	1.26	.57	.02		
Purity/Sanctity	-.695	-1.62	.23	.47	-.14		
Political/Civil vs. Neutral/Civil	6.325	-3.28	15.93	4.88	.10		
Political/Uncivil vs. Neutral/Civil	-.079	-9.08	8.93	4.57	-.00		

Note. Model = “Enter” method in SPSS Statistics, *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; *SE B* = standard error of coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; ΔR^2 = adjusted R^2 .

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

In relation to the hypotheses made for this analysis, none were found to be significant due to the model not being significant. These hypotheses include hypothesis 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 6a, and 7a. That leads to the conclusion that religious commitment, religious fundamentalism, the moral foundations of Authority/Respect and Purity/Sanctity, the civility conditions, post content nor the interaction between civility of

the comment section and the post content significantly predicted political polarization. The secondary linear regression was conducted assessing the relationship between the political/civil group and the political/uncivil group and yielded a non-significant result, $B = 6.404, p > .99$.

A series of post hoc tests were run assessing possible group differences that may exist across the demographic information collected. These results should be viewed as exploratory in nature because no a priori hypotheses were stated in regard to the results of these tests.

However, none of the demographic questions satisfied the assumptions for either of the dependent variables. None of the demographic variables had a normal distribution and several were found to have outliers in the data. It is for this reason that an ANOVA would not be appropriate to run on the data. A separate statistical analysis called an ANOVA-type statistic would be an appropriate alternative for the data. However, the tools needed to conduct this type of analysis are not currently available to the authors of this study.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The primary purpose of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that social networking sites have on religious intolerance and political polarization, as well as the impact that religious commitment, fundamental religious beliefs and moral foundations have on political polarization and religious intolerance. The main conclusions from the current study were that religious commitment, fundamental religious beliefs, and both the Harm/Care and Purity/Sanctity subscales of the MFQ each were found to significantly predict religious intolerance.

Religious commitment, religious fundamentalism, and the purity/sanctity moral foundation each positively predicted the outcomes, which is in alignment with hypotheses 1b, 2b, and 4b. This would indicate a few things. One is that an individual with a higher degree of religious commitment would be more likely to harbor an in-group bias in the realm of religion. Similarly, the more an individual endorses fundamental religious beliefs the more likely they would be to have this same in-group bias. These two findings seem rather intuitive as a stronger religious identity logically would lead to a more defensive and in-group bias display of faith. This is also supported by prior research that indicated that greater religious involvement, attendance and religiosity all were found to be related to intolerance (Beatty, 1984; Katnik, 2002; Trintiapoli, 2007). The fact that the Religious Fundamentalism Scale positively predicted greater intolerance aligns well with previous research that indicated theologically conservative beliefs were related to greater intolerance (Ellison and Musick, 1993). Fundamentalist beliefs often align with a worldview that is defined by what are understood to be essential beliefs about humanity

(Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). This essential nature of these beliefs can create an all or nothing kind of worldview that leads to an intolerance of divergent worldviews. The third finding that the Purity/Sanctity subscale positively predicted intolerance was not surprising as this subscale is defined by a connection to virtues related to living up to an elevated purpose and more noble meaning (Dobolyi, 2019). This aligns well with religiously exclusivist views that are defined by the idea that one particular religion is superior to all other religions. It follows that a high evaluation of this moral foundation would lead to an intolerance of other lifestyles that do not align with this call to live a more noble and elevated life as defined by the individual's own worldview.

The Harm/Care subscale negatively predicted outcomes for religious intolerance, which did not have an associated hypothesis, thus these results should be viewed with a degree of skepticism. However, it does make logical sense that a moral foundation defined by traits such as kindness and nurturance would lead to a greater degree of tolerance and acceptance (Dobolyi, 2019). This was in alignment with previous research that found that the Harm/Care subscale and Fairness/Reciprocity subscale in combination decreased prejudice (Forsberg, Nilsson & Jørgensen, 2019).

It is important to discuss not only significant results, but also the meaning of those results when discussing research. Effect size is another important statistic to consider. The significant a priori model discussed for the intolerance variable yielded what would traditionally be labeled a large effect size with 48.3% of the variance explained, $\text{adj. } R^2 = .483$. However, more modern interpretations based on benchmarks using findings from other research that is already well understood would lead to different conclusions, as presented by Funder and Ozer (2019). When using these methods to assess the current

study, there is a degree of skepticism that should be used when interpreting the results. Gignac & Szodorai (2016) found that the average effect size r of 708 meta-analytically derived correlations was .19 with .11 and .29 falling at the 25th and 75th percentiles, respectively. This would indicate that our r of .71 is far larger than what is typically seen across different areas of research. Effect sizes of this size should be viewed with a degree of skepticism as they are rarely observed and difficult to replicate.

The multiple linear regression for the dependent variable political polarization was not found to be significant. This in combination with the results from the multiple linear regression run for religious intolerance led to the conclusion that hypotheses 1a, 2a, 3a, 3b, 4a, 5a, 5b, 6a, and 6b were all incorrect. Hypotheses 3b, 5b, and 6b each were in relation to the intolerance variable. Hypothesis 3b stated that the In-group/Loyalty subscale would positively predict intolerance. This subscale is defined by characteristics such as patriotism and self-sacrifice for a group (Dobolyi, 2019). Forsberg, Nilsson & Jørgensen (2019) found that a combination of the In-group/Loyalty subscale and the Authority/Respect and Purity/Sanctity subscales resulted in an elevated prejudice. The results of the current study found that In-group/Loyalty was nearly significant, $p = .08$, and may have benefited from a larger sample. Hypotheses 5b and 6b both had to do with the SMS variables of either discourse civility or post content. Both were predicted to increase intolerance, but neither were found to do so. This could be due to a number of things. For both variables, there could be a lack of interest in the topics discussed that resulted in the participants not being affected by the conditions. In addition, there may be a lack of personalization to the topics discussed leading one to feel unattached to post in general. However, researchers have found that internet use increases pluralistic religious

views, so perhaps the age group of the sample and their being more likely to use the internet more often affected the impact of these variables on results (McClure, 2016; McClure 2017).

The results related to the hypotheses made for the dependent variable of political polarization have more to do with the nature of the independent variable than that of the predictor variables. It is plausible that the age and stage of life for the majority of the sample impacted the results. The sample mainly consisted of typical college aged students. Individuals this age can have very decided attitudes toward politics that are not easily altered. It is also possible that the content of the posts was not impactful or important to the participants. In addition, this study was conducted during a time that included a pandemic that led to deep political conversations and debates. The impact of these events cannot truly be known, but must be viewed as a contextual factor in the results. It is possible that a combination of the demographics of the sample, the content of the post, and the contextual variables of the time the study was conducted all contributed to the results that were observed. Additionally, sample size could have played a role in the results. Due to collinearity between the post content variable and the interaction variable, the interaction between uncivil discourse and political content was not assessed in the final statistical analysis meaning that hypotheses 7a and 7b could not be assessed.

In a world where intolerance and prejudice are rampant, the current study helps to illuminate the role that religion may play in proliferating the issue of intolerance. With both religious commitment and fundamental religious beliefs being positive predictors of religious intolerance, religion seems to behave as a tribal factor that can cause division. A commitment to a group such as the religion one belongs to seems to fit intuitively the

idea of a tribe. When adding to this the fact that religion is a deep source of meaning and purpose for many, then one can see that differing opinions on these topics are hard to reconcile. A deep commitment to religion can mean a commitment to oppose differing religious beliefs. This is compounded when fundamental religious beliefs define the religion one belongs to. The essential nature of fundamental beliefs to a religion provide very specific tenants in which individuals may disagree and become tribal over.

In addition to the religious factors, there are also the moral foundation factors to discuss. The Purity/Sanctity variable being a positive predictor of intolerance makes sense. Purity is language that is tied directly to disgust psychology, which is often described as a construct that creates borders (Beck, 2006). If purity language is part of a construct that leads to borders, then it makes sense that purity, as a basis for moral foundations would predict intolerance as a manifestation of those borders. In addition, the Harm/Care subscale for the MFQ negatively predicted the outcomes of intolerance. If purity can be described as causing borders, then care can be described as removing borders. Those who use care as the foundation of their morality are led to be inclusive as opposed to intolerant. These results reveal that the foundations of ethics directly affect the way individuals treat and engage each other. The results of this study can be useful in shaping the way individuals decide to orient their lives in terms of these moral foundations and how they engage in their religious practices.

By gaining a deeper understanding of how these variables influences religious intolerance, we are now able to address some of the issues related to intolerance. In regards to the religious variables, this study can inform the way individuals engage with religion. A mindfulness about how one engages in a worldview and community that can

lead to tribal behavior and intolerance can be a good first step in preventing these negative results from occurring. This is not to say that religion itself is bad, but that it can lead to undesired outcomes. In addition to mindfulness on the part of the individual believer, there is an opportunity for religious leaders to use this research to inform the way they teach and lead as to address intolerance directly. Beyond remedying religious intolerance, this research also highlights the reality that religion can lead to greater intolerance. More specifically, it highlights that particular types of religion, those described by fundamental beliefs, are more likely to be intolerant. This can be helpful for believers when looking for a religion or particular place of worship when they may have particular religious beliefs that do not fully align with any particular religion.

In addition to the religious considerations there are the results related to the moral foundations that lead to several positive outcomes. The results related to the Purity/Sanctity moral foundation is another finding that can be helpful when combined with introspection. Being mindful of the basis for and language related to how one conceptualizes morality can help one to avoid falling into intolerance. By viewing the Care/Harm foundation as a target foundation, one can increase their openness and tolerance. In addition, by paying attention to the language and foundation for others morality one can be more aware of potential intolerance.

Limitations

There were several limitations to the current study. These included problems related to the sample, contextual factors that may have influenced results, and lack of access to statistical software to explore the data. First, the sample had a few different issues. Primarily the sample consisted of traditional college students with ages reflecting

this fact. College students are in a unique period of their life in which political ideals can be quite committed and passionate without the manipulations of the study affecting them very much. Using a more diverse sample in terms of age could lead to different results than were currently found. In addition to the age range of the sample, the sample sizes were smaller than was initially hoped for in the study. Due to time constraints and errors on the part of the research during sampling the sample size did not meet our initial goal of $n = 300$. This could have influenced our ability to find smaller effect sizes for several of the variables included in the study. In addition to the sampling issues, the context in which individuals participated in the study was unique. A pandemic and period of quarantine was present during the duration of the studies availability and may have influenced the results that we found. The pandemic created a context of politicization with many having divergent opinions about the situation, thus the sample may have been affected by these variables while participating. Finally, exploratory analysis for the demographic data was unable to be conducted due to the data not meeting the assumptions of an ANOVA. An ANOVA-type statistic would have been a good alternative; however, this was not available to us due to not having access to resources related to the statistical analysis that are necessary. Data could have yielded information that pointed to further directions of research in relation to these variables. Although this data was not available, this research points towards still other directions.

Future Research

This research opens the door for further research to be conducted. The current study has only scratched the surface of the relationship between these variables. Further research should focus on understanding the relationship between purity language and

intolerance, the ethic of care and its impact of tolerance, and expand on the research looking at religious variables' relationship with intolerance and political polarization. In particular, experimental studies looking at how priming the different moral foundations impacts attitudes toward differing worldviews would expand the understanding of how these moral foundations function in this setting. Further research related to political polarization and religion should look to try studies across different political topics. This could result in a more refined understanding of how these two topics relate to each other.

This current study is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what can be known about the relationship between each of these variables. Religion, politics, social media, moral foundations, and intolerance are each extremely important factors in need of continued investigation. The relationships found in this study go a long way in highlighting a few of these relationships and how they function, but more is needed in order to actively address problems related to political polarization and religious intolerance.

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VITA

Eriksen P. Ravey

CONTACT INFORMATION

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 Sam Houston State University
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OBJECTIVE STATEMENT

Dedicated and motivated individual working to become a Social Psychologist and professor in a university setting. Looking to contribute to the exciting research related to psychology of religion, politics, and metaphor.

EDUCATION

University of Houston Houston, TX
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Psychology Begins August 2019

Sam Houston State University Huntsville, TX
Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology August 2018- Current
 GPA: 4.00
 Thesis: *Religious Tolerance and Political Polarization within the Context of Social Media.*

Abilene Christian University Abilene, TX
Bachelor of Science in Psychology August 2014- May 2018
Minor in Philosophy; Bible, Missions, and Ministry
 GPA: 3.89
Magna Cum Laude

WORK EXPERIENCE

University of Houston: Personality, Emotion, & Social Cognition Lab Houston, TX
 Research Assistant: 2020-Present

- Involved in all phases of research including brainstorming, IRB applications, statistical analysis and manuscript development.
- Managed a team of undergraduate researchers to accomplish research goals.

- ACU Leadership Camps** Abilene, TX
 Head Counselor (Leadership Team): 2017-2018
- Utilized problem solving skills through swift decision-making and collaboration.
 - Applied leadership and management skills through delegation and organizational skills.
 - Created meaningful relationships with both campers and counselors.
- Counselor: Summer 2015; 2017
- Displayed initiative and dependability by doing the unwanted task.
 - Showed resilience and dedication to ensure the quality of camper's experience.

- Northside Church of Christ** San Antonio, TX
 Church Youth Intern Summer 2016
- Established relationships with a variety of people with different cultural backgrounds.
 - Developed and effectively taught lesson plans for a variety of age groups.
 - Planned large events in collaboration with others.

OTHER EXPERIENCE

- Sam Houston State University Counseling Center** Huntsville, TX
 Practicum Student: Fall 2019
- Worked effectively with college students in times of high distress to address psychological difficulties.
 - Gained experience working in a professional setting.
 - Developed positive relationships with clients, supervisors, and staff.

- Michelle Garcia, Psy.D. & Associates** Woodlands, TX
 Practicum Student Placement: Spring 2019
- Worked with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Intellectual Disabilities.
 - Shadowed Dr. Michelle Garcia in therapy, networking, and consultation.
 - Developed and presented a psychoeducational presentation on local resources for relevant populations.

- Men of Trojans Social Club** Abilene, TX
 Vice President (2017-2018); Rush Director (2016-2017): Fall 2015-2018

- Planned multiple events related to pledging and rushing requiring delegation and collaboration with others.
- Effectively communicated goals for the club overall, and built support for those goals.
- Built and maintained positive relationships with club members, club advisors, and administrators connected to social clubs.

Treadaway Kids

Abilene, TX

Mentor:

2015

- Led a group of elementary children in community service volunteer work.
- Mentored a group of elementary and middle school boys from different backgrounds and cultures.
- Worked with other mentors to include and address each child and their needs adequately.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIPS

American Psychological Association, Graduate Student Affiliate	2019-Present
Division 8: Society of Personality and Social Psychology	2019-Present
Division 36: Society of Psychology of Religion and Spirituality	2019-Present
American Psychological Association of Graduate Students	2019-Present
Graduate Student Psychological Organization	2018-Present
Southwestern Psychological Association	2015-2018

AWARDS AND ACADEMIC HONORS

College of Humanities and Social Sciences Scholarship	2018-2019
University Scholar Finalist	2018
Alpha Chi Honor Society	2015-2018
Psi Chi Honor Society	2015-2018
Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society	2015-2018
A.B. Barret Award (Scholarship)	2014-2018
ACU Grant, General Studies	2014-2018
Dean's List	2014-2018

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Knowlton, A. & **Ravey, E.P.** (2016, April) *Internet Intrusion: Who's to Blame When Explicit Photos Get Leaked*. Presented Dallas, TX. April 2016 Southwestern Psychological Association Convention.

Drew, C., Kigh, C. **Ravey, E.P.**, Seawright, R., Team, R., Tyrell, C. & Wadlington, C. (2018, April) *PATHS to Improve Student Behavior*. Presented Houston, TX. April 2018 Southwestern Psychological Association Convention.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Sam Houston State University, Health Behaviors Lab Fall 2019- Present
Graduate Research Assistant (supervisor: Craig Henderson, Ph.D.)

- Assist with the running participants and collecting data.
- Contributor to discussions on research in the field of study.
- Currently working on *Project T.R.E.A.D.*, a study on exercise and alcohol use.

Sam Houston State University, Lab of James Crosby, Ph.D. Fall 2019- Present
Graduate Research Assistant (Supervisor: James Crosby, Ph.D.) • Assist in the design of new studies.

- Contribute to the IRB approval process for new studies.
- Assist in the preparation and facilitation of data collection.

TRAINING/CERTIFICATIONS

- Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Online Course
- 300 hours of practicum experience
- 58 volunteer hours related to psychology
- 60+ hours of clinical supervision

RELEVANT CREDITED COURSEWORK

Advanced Statistics
 Advanced Learning Theory
 Psychometrics
 Thesis I
 Thesis II
 Experimental Design

REFERENCES

Available Upon Request