

Dogmatism and Religion:  
When the Need to Be Right Impedes Helping

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### Abstract

In two correlational studies, I examine the relationship between religious dogmatism and helping behaviors. I hypothesize that there is a negative relationship between people's level of dogmatism and their likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward other religious organizations and secular organizations. I also hypothesize that this negative relationship exists between nonreligious people's level of dogmatism and their likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward religious organizations. In Study 1 (N=190), I found a negative correlation between religious people's level of dogmatism and their likelihood of donating to a secular organization. In Study 2 (N=300), I found a similar pattern of results among nonreligious dogmatists: atheist and agnostic participants' level of dogmatism was negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating to a religious organization. The results indicate that religious dogmatism may impact helping behaviors in ways that previous social identity research has not explored. Individual tendencies toward social comparison, preferences for like-minded others, and/or past exposure to diverse worldviews could be explanations for these results, among other explanations. After presenting the following research, I discuss the implications and limitations of the findings and give ideas for future research.

*Keywords:* dogmatism, religious perspectives, prosociality, collective action, organizations, helping behaviors, charity, religiosity, generosity

### Dogmatism and Religion: When the Need to Be Right Impedes Helping

Studies show that religion has a myriad of prosocial benefits. Religion can play a role in promoting health and preventing obesity (Horton, 2015). People who consider themselves to be religious tend to rate themselves as having better physical and mental health (Reyes-Ortiz, Pelaez, Koenig, & Mulligan, 2007). Religion can contribute to increased mental health by promoting positive coping, positive beliefs, and the experience of community and support (Weber & Pargament, 2014). Religion is even positively correlated with happiness (Steiner, Leinert, & Frey, 2010). While some studies find mediating variables in the relationship between religion and health, there is still overwhelming evidence that organizational religious involvement is positively correlated with mental health (McFarland, 2010). Religious organizations and their resources bring security, stability, and vital social experiences (Andrew, 2003). The prosocial benefits of religion are even recognized by scholars of management education, who value respecting and acknowledging religious traits in order for individuals to have a comprehensive and meaningful managerial education (Karanam, Kumar, & Mishra, 2014). It is clear that religion and organizational religious involvement foster a multitude of personal and communal prosocial benefits, and these benefits can go beyond the religious organizations that generate them. However, do those who practice religion themselves tend to extend prosocial benefits or helping behaviors toward those not a part of their own religion? Similarly, do those who do not practice religion or believe in God tend to extend prosocial benefits or helping behaviors toward those who participate in religious organizations?

This thesis explores the hypothesis that there may be a negative relationship between someone thinking their religious perspective is “right” and their likelihood of helping those who are not a part of their worldview identity group. I will explore this hypothesis among practicing

Catholics as well as individuals representing multiple religious perspectives, including atheists and agnostics. However, first I will review the literature on religiosity and generosity, along with the literature on religious dogmatism and generosity. I will then present my studies and results, followed by a discussion.

### **Religiosity and Generosity**

The Golden Rule, which encourages people to treat others the way they would want to be treated, is present in nearly every religious and philosophical tradition. This rule reflects the universal value of hospitality. Research shows that on average, people who are religious give more to the poor than those who are nonreligious (Regnerus, Smith, & Sikkink, 1998). Religious ideas and values often motivate prosocial behaviors toward others (Einolf, 2011). Specifically, in addition to their increased likelihood to give and volunteer, people high in religiosity display more civic responsibility (Monsma, 2007). And the generosity of religious people can be a shared experience; the more religious a married couple is, the more generous they tend to be (Wilcox and Dew, 2016). Each year, the work of congregations is worth billions of dollars and most often serves low-income children and families who are not even affiliated with the faith organizations that serve them (Kuo & DiIulio, 2008). It is clear that charitable giving can cross faith lines.

And the fact that interfaith helping happens has even been captured by the popular press: Richard Driehaus, a wealthy Catholic man, has donated one million dollars to preserve mosques and synagogues because he values their art and design (Bertagnoli, 2012); in a Pakistani town, Muslim villagers donated money to build a church for Christian villagers after the town's previous church was destroyed during riots (Eleftheriou-Smith, 2016); Mormons donate to over 175 different countries, many with few to no Mormons, and they work with Catholic and Islamic

organizations in these countries because the work aligns with their core value to feed the hungry (Interfaith Initiatives, 2017). Thus religious practice is linked to increased giving and volunteering, even when those contributions are directed toward non-religious organizations (Brooks, 2004) or cross faith lines.

But perhaps there is another variable at play in the relationship between religiosity and generosity. In their famous study utilizing the classic Judeo-Christian parable of the Good Samaritan, Darley and Batson (1973) found that the style of religious participants' helping behavior was linked to their type of religiosity. Those who expressed strong doctrinal orthodoxy in their religious beliefs more commonly exhibited a style of helping that assumed the needs of the victim rather than listening to and modifying their type of assistance based on the victim's comments (Darley & Batson, 1973). It is plausible that those more rigid and orthodox could be considered to be more dogmatic, and their helping behaviors were certainly less considerate of the victim (Darley & Batson, 1973). So is hospitality toward individuals who hold different worldview identities as simple as it seems, or is it possible that dogmatism impedes this process?

### **Religious Dogmatism and Generosity**

Religious and nonreligious people practice their worldview in a multitude of ways. Some lean toward a spiritual practice, whereas others are more dogmatic. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines "dogmatism" as "...positiveness in the assertion of opinion, now especially the tendency to lay down principles as undeniably true, without consideration of evidence or the opinions of others." Similar to the latter portion of the OED definition, Altemeyer (2002) defines dogmatism as "relatively unchangeable, unjustified certainty." Research on dogmatism originally explored personality types associated with dogmatic thought; researchers saw a need to separate the content of one's beliefs from one's style and rigidity of

belief (Rokeach, 1960). Although Rokeach developed a scale to measure dogmatism that researchers used for years, a new and improved scale for dogmatism has been empirically validated through several experimental studies (Altemeyer, 2002).

Religion can be an important aspect of “being right” in everyday life, as highly dogmatic individuals exist in every religious group. There may be dangers to this type of belief that give rise to radicalism (Johnson, 2009). Francis August Schaeffer, American Evangelical and pastor, maintained a doctrine of biblical inerrancy and felt that Christianity speaks of “true truth” (Hamilton, 1997). He also felt that his inerrant belief must work in tandem with demonstrative love –or any helping behavior in its most basic form (Hamilton, 1997). However, highly dogmatic religious people receive less favorable reviews than people considered flexible in their way of thinking (Swan et al., 2014). After all, the idea of an individual believing he is absolutely right and completely inerrant presents a threat to harmony and unity. Dogmatic thought, in fact, may even be an obstacle to unity and prosocial behavior. Existing research suggests that greater levels of dogmatism are correlated with lower levels of moral judgment development (Wahrman, 1981). Could it be that highly dogmatic people have lower levels of moral judgment *and* are less likely to extend their helping behaviors beyond the bounds of their own religious group?

Research reveals that people exhibit different helping behaviors toward their ingroup (i.e. the group with which the person shares a social identity) versus their outgroup (i.e. any people who are not a part of the person’s social identity group). People often interpret the meaning of hospitality in relation to their own community before considering hospitality toward other communities (Kirillova, Gilmetdinova, & Lehto, 2014). One study found that the more people believe in their own religion, the greater they donate to their ingroup (Galen, Sharp, & McNulty, 2015). When primed with the words “religion” and “God,” individuals show different acts of

prosociality toward the religious ingroup versus the outgroup (Preston & Ritter, 2013). People are more inclined to help their ingroup when prompted with words like *religion* or *religious*, but they are more inclined to assist religious outgroup members when prompted with the word “God” (Preston & Ritter, 2013). It seems that the principle “love thy neighbor” can be interpreted as helping the ingroup neighbors only (McKay & Whitehouse, 2016). Words like *religion* may trigger a sense of ingroup loyalty, or they may remind people to follow and support their own sense of “truth,” even instilling a desire to preserve that truth to the point of helping only their ingroup.

Although previous literature has observed how people exhibit helping behaviors toward the ingroup versus the outgroup, this research has neglected the role of dogmatism. The following research presents evidence that ingroup-versus-outgroup dynamics alone cannot explain discrepancies in cross-faith helping behaviors; dogmatism plays a role in these discrepancies. If religious and nonreligious individuals value hospitality, yet are stubborn in their openness to working with others because their dogmatic thought gives rise to an unwillingness to work with outgroup members, this could negatively impact society's ability to work together to affect collective positive change. This effect may be present among dogmatic theists and dogmatic atheists and agnostics.

## **Hypotheses**

In the present analysis, I test three hypotheses, each of which has two parts. Here I present them in detail:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a negative correlation between people’s level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward other religious organizations.

**Hypothesis 1a:** People’s level of religious dogmatism is negatively correlated with their

likelihood of donating money to their outgroup religious organization's cause to feed the hungry.

**Hypothesis 1b:** People's level of religious dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of volunteering with their outgroup religious organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is a negative correlation between people's level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward secular organizations.

**Hypothesis 2a:** People's level of religious dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to a secular organization's cause to feed the hungry.

**Hypothesis 2b:** People's level of religious dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of volunteering with a secular organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is a negative correlation between nonreligious people's level of dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward religious organizations.

**Hypothesis 3a:** Nonreligious people's level of dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to a religious organization's cause to feed the hungry.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Nonreligious people's level of dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of volunteering with a religious organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless.

### **Overview of Studies**

I conducted two survey studies to test these hypotheses. In Study 1, I examined the relationship between Catholic churchgoers' helping behaviors and their self-reported opinion about how "right" their religious beliefs are (i.e. their level of dogmatic thought). Study 1 was



conducted in person as participants were leaving Catholic Mass. In Study 2, I surveyed people from a wider range of faith backgrounds and asked the same questions as those asked in Study 1, with a few additional demographic questions. Study 2 was conducted online. Both surveys included questions about the likelihood that participants would donate to three different organizations' causes to feed the hungry—the first being their same religious organization (religious ingroup), the second being a different religious organization (religious outgroup), and the third being a secular organization (secular outgroup). I then asked participants about the likelihood that they would volunteer with those three different types of organizations to feed the hungry or help the homeless. Lastly, I presented statements about dogmatic thought, and participants indicated their level of agreement with these statements.

After completing the studies, I examined the correlations between helping behaviors and dogmatism. I ran bivariate correlations before running partial correlations to control for gender and identity. I controlled for gender in order to rule out the possibility that gender has an effect on an individual's self-reported likelihood of helping others. Perhaps more importantly, I controlled for social identity in order to remove the effect that social identity has on an individual's self-reported helping behaviors. In controlling for social identity, I was able to examine dogmatism as the pivoting factor that influences people's ingroup and outgroup helping behaviors, above and beyond the well-established effects of social identity.

### **Study 1**

In Study 1, I assessed Catholic churchgoers' likelihood to donate money or volunteer time with Catholic organizations, other religious organizations, and secular organizations, and compared these likelihoods to their levels of religious dogmatism. My hypotheses included Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. For Study 1, Hypothesis 1 was that there was a negative

correlation between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward other religious organizations. Specifically, I hypothesized there to be a negative relationship between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood to donate money to another religious organization's cause to feed the hungry, and I hypothesized there to be a negative relationship between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood to volunteer with another religious organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless. Hypothesis 2 was that there was a negative correlation between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward secular organizations. Specifically, I hypothesized that people's level of Catholic dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood to donate money to a secular organization's cause to feed the hungry, and that people's level of Catholic dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood to volunteer with a secular organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless. My prediction is that the Catholics who are more dogmatic will be less likely to help outgroup members.

## **Method**

**Participants.** I recruited 190 adults attending Catholic Mass at St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The sample was 43.2% male and 56.8% female. Ages of participants ranged from 18 to 90, with  $M = 47.8$  and  $SD = 20.563$ . English speaking Mass takes place at St. Mary Student Parish at five different times every Sunday. At the conclusion of each Mass, the priest says announcements. On the day that I distributed my survey, the priest included an announcement asking parishioners to participate in my study for my thesis research. I had the opportunity to deliver the Mass announcement myself following two of the Mass times. Following Mass, the participants entered the atrium, where I was stationed alongside at least two

research assistants joining me in the administration of the surveys. The research assistants and I were there with clipboards and pens, and we administered the survey. Of the 190 participants, 75.8% indicated they attend Mass once a week. Participants came from a wide range of occupations, and included undergraduate students, graduate students, young professionals, working adults, and retirees. I did not collect any other demographic information in an effort to keep the survey short and accessible to parishioners as they were leaving Mass.

### **Procedure**

All participants responded to a short survey that included the following questions.

**Helping Behaviors.** *How likely are you to do the following?* Participants responded to the first six survey questions about the likelihood of engaging in helping behaviors using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “extremely unlikely” to 7= “extremely likely”:

*(1) Donate to a Catholic organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (2) Donate to another religious organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (3) Donate to a secular organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (4) Volunteer with a Catholic organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness? (5) Volunteer with another religious organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness? (6) Volunteer with a secular organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness?*

**Dogmatism.** Participants responded to three statements about dogmatic thought using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 7= “strongly agree”.

Statement two was reverse-coded:

*(1) Anyone who is honestly and truly seeking the truth will end up being Catholic.*  
*(2) There are multiple truths, and Catholicism is just one of them. (3) Catholicism is the one and only truth.*

**Mass Attendance. *How regularly do you attend Mass?***

(a) *More than once a week.* (b) *Once a week.* (c) *Once a month.* (d) *More than once a year.* (e) *Once a year.*

Participants indicated their frequency of attendance to Catholic Mass by circling the letter that best describes their Mass attendance habits (ranging from a=5 to e=0). ( $\bar{x}$ = 4.1,  $s$ = 0.5778).

**Catholic Identity.** Participants indicated their level of agreement with a single statement - *I identify with my Catholic religion* - using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 7= “strongly agree”. ( $\bar{x}$ = 6.163,  $s$ = 1.2257). This one-item measure has been demonstrated to adequately capture social identity (Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2012).

**Results and Discussion**

I analyzed the questions by running bivariate correlations and partial correlations. I combined the results from the questions about dogmatism into one composite score, and conducted both bivariate and partial correlations using SPSS. In the correlations, I examined the relationship between people’s levels of dogmatism (DOGMATISM) and their likelihoods to donate (DONATE) to a Catholic organization, another religious organization, or a secular organization. I also examined the relationship between DOGMATISM and people’s likelihood to volunteer (TIME) with a Catholic organization, another religious organization, or a secular organization. I dropped 25 surveys because they were either incomplete, or the participants indicated that they were not Catholic. Here I present results from the bivariate correlations. I also present results from the partial correlations to control for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID in order to test beyond an identity salience explanation.

*Catholic Organization.* First, there were no correlations between DOGMATISM and DONATE ( $r$  = 0.020,  $p$  = 0.782), not even when controlling for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID

( $r = -.046, p = 0.530$ ). As for volunteering, there was a significant positive correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = 0.172, p = 0.018$ ). However, when controlling for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID, there was no significant relationship ( $r = 0.097, p = 0.183$ ).

*Other Religious Organization.* As for Catholics helping another religious organization, I found that DOGMATISM and DONATE were negatively correlated but only at the threshold of marginal significance ( $r = -0.120, p = 0.100$ ). When controlling for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID, I also observed a negative correlation that was marginally significant ( $r = -0.142, p = 0.051$ ). As for volunteering, there was no significant relationship between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = 0.032, p = 0.662$ ), not even when controlling for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID ( $r = 0.017, p = 0.818$ ).

*Secular Organization.* As for Catholics helping secular organizations, I found that DOGMATISM and DONATE were negatively correlated and statistically significant ( $r = -0.262, p < 0.001$ ). When controlling for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID, the correlation remained statistically significant ( $r = -0.280, p < 0.001$ ). As for volunteering, I observed a negative correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME, but this relationship was only near the threshold of marginal significance ( $r = -0.117, p = 0.109$ ). When controlling for GENDER and CATHOLIC ID, the relationship was still negative and near the threshold of significance ( $r = -0.141, p = 0.054$ ).

I hypothesized that (1) there would be a negative correlation between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward other religious organizations via (a) donating money to their causes to help feed the hungry and/or (b) volunteering time with them to feed the hungry or help the homeless. I also hypothesized that (2) there would be a negative correlation between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their

likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward secular organizations via (a) donating money to their causes to help feed the hungry and/or (b) volunteering time with them to feed the hungry or help the homeless. The findings from Study 1 support Hypothesis 2: there is a negative correlation between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood of exhibiting helping behaviors toward secular organizations, notably not even if those organizations are working on causes of common concern. This result was strengthened when controlling for gender and Catholic identity. There is stronger support for Hypothesis 2a than there is for Hypothesis 2b. Results supporting Hypothesis 2b were at the threshold of significance, which may be due to the sample size. Though it may be logistically easier to donate money than it is to volunteer time to secular organizations, it is possible that people are hesitant to trust outgroups with their monetary donations. People are often hesitant to put their money into organizations if they do not know what the organization is. If the survey had presented the names of specific organizations, then there may have been different results.

These results are consistent with the existing research that high levels of religious dogmatism decrease moral judgment. It is possible that the participants were not able to use moral judgment to help outgroup organizations, despite the fact that they were working on causes of common concern. Before controlling for gender and Catholic identity, the results show a positive correlation between people's level of Catholic dogmatism and their likelihood of volunteering with a Catholic organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness, indicating a preference toward ingroup volunteering which may be influenced by levels of dogmatic thought. These effects could be attributed to the wording in the survey. The questions may have led the participants to feel a sense of attachment to their ingroup. For example, consistent with existing research, the use of the word "Catholic" may have prompted participants

to think of their ingroup as a priority.

St. Mary Student Parish is known for its progressive and liberal-leaning ways. Although liberal thought does not necessitate less-dogmatic thought, it seems that St. Mary's parishioners are more open to working on issues of social justice, and their passion for social justice may overpower the effect of high levels of dogmatic thought. One parishioner was quoted saying, "I think something that St. Mary's pushes and touches on that other parishes are totally missing, is a commitment to social justice." In order to fully address the effects that Catholic dogmatic thought has on helping behaviors, it would be necessary to survey other Catholic parishes, not only in other areas of Ann Arbor, but in other regions as well.

## **Study 2**

In Study 2, I assessed an online sample of participants' likelihood to donate money or volunteer time with their ingroup religious organization, another religious organization, and a secular organization. I then correlated these helping behaviors with levels of religious dogmatism. My hypotheses included Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, and Hypothesis 3. For Study 2, Hypothesis 1 was that there would be a negative correlation between people's level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward secular organizations. Specifically, I hypothesized that people's level of religious dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to their outgroup religious organization's cause to feed the hungry, and that people's level of religious dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood of volunteering with their outgroup religious organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless. Hypothesis 2 was that there would be a negative correlation between people's level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward secular organizations. Specifically, I hypothesized that people's level of religious

dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to a secular organization's cause to feed the hungry, and that people's level of religious dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood of volunteering with a secular organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless. Hypothesis 3 was that there would be a negative correlation between a nonreligious people's (those with indicated religious preferences of "atheist" or "agnostic") level of dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward religious. Specifically, I hypothesized that nonreligious people's level of dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to a religious organization's cause to feed the hungry, and that nonreligious people's level of dogmatism would be negatively correlated with their likelihood of volunteering with a religious organization to feed the hungry or help the homeless. My prediction is that those high in dogmatism will be less willing to help outgroup members.

## **Method**

**Participants.** I recruited 300 adults living in the United States via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online labor market where "requesters" post tasks and "workers" complete these tasks for compensation. As a requester, I posted my survey as a "3-minute survey about religious perspectives," and included the following keywords: "religion, worldview, attitudes, choices, answers, decision making, survey, opinions, religious perspectives." Workers were paid \$0.20 and were allotted 20 minutes to complete the survey. 56.3% of the participants were male, 42.7% were female, 0.3% indicated "other" when prompted to select their gender, and 0.7% selected "prefer not to answer." Ages of workers ranged from 18-73, with a mean age of 34.33 years ( $SD = 11.89985$  years). Participants were 75.7% white, 12% Asian, 5.3% Black or African American, 4.7% Hispanic or Latino, 1% Other (e.g. "mixed" and "multiracial"), 0.7%



American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.7% preferred not to answer.

Most of the participants either completed undergraduate studies or were in the process of doing so; 38.7% had a bachelor's degree, 34.3% had completed some college, 13% were high school graduates, 8.3% had a master's degree, 3.7% completed trade/technical/vocational training, 1% had a professional degree (e.g. MD, JD, etc.), 0.3% had a doctoral degree, 0.3% completed some high school, and 0.3% indicated "other" and entered "Associates" to describe their level of education. Participants came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds; 39.3% identified themselves as "middle middle class," 31% considered themselves "lower middle class," 20.3% classified themselves as "lower class," 9% identified as being a part of the "upper middle class," and 0.3% did not answer. 34% of the participants indicated their political views to be liberal, 30.3% moderate, 15.7% conservative, 15% very liberal, and 4.7% very conservative; 0.3% did not answer. The average time that workers spent on the survey was 3 minutes and 53 seconds.

### **Procedure**

Participants responded to a short survey that included the following questions.

**Religious Preference.** To connect self-reported religious preference to a tailored survey, participants first selected their religious preference (*Agnostic, Atheist, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Other (please specify)*).

Depending on their answer, the text from this first question was piped throughout the survey to personalize the experience for each participant. Additionally, participants who indicated "agnostic" or "atheist" in the first question about religious preference were given a slightly different version of the questions about donations and volunteering; these participants were also not given the question asking about whether or not they consider themselves to be

“practicing” their religion.

**Helping Behaviors.** *How likely are you to do the following?* Participants who indicated religious preferences other than “agnostic” or “atheist” responded to the first six survey questions about their helping behaviors using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “extremely unlikely” to 7= “extremely likely”:

*(1) Donate to a [piped text] organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (2) Donate to another religious organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (3) Donate to a secular organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (4) Volunteer with a [piped text] organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness? (5) Volunteer with another religious organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness? (6) Volunteer with a secular organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness?*

**Helping Behaviors.** *How likely are you to do the following?* Participants who indicated nonreligious preferences of “agnostic” or “atheist” responded to four survey questions about their helping behaviors using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “extremely unlikely” to 7= “extremely likely”:

*(1) Donate to a religious organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (2) Donate to a secular organization’s cause to feed the hungry? (3) Volunteer with a religious organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness? (4) Volunteer with a secular organization to help people struggling with hunger or homelessness?*

**Dogmatism.** All participants responded to six statements about dogmatic thought using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 7= “strongly agree”.

Statements two, four and five were reverse-coded:

*(1) Anyone who is honestly and truly seeking the truth will end up being [piped text]. (2)*

*There are multiple truths, and my [piped text] belief is just one of them. (3) My worldview is the one and only truth. (4) The people who disagree with my [piped text] beliefs may well turn out to be right. (5) I have never discovered a system of beliefs that explains everything to my satisfaction. (6) People who disagree with my [piped text] beliefs are just plain wrong and often evil as well.*

**Religious Practice.** *Do you consider yourself to be someone who practices your [piped text] beliefs?* Participants who indicated a religious preference other than “agnostic” or “atheist” received this single question and were able to respond with “yes”, “no”, or “other (insert text).” (81.9% indicated “yes,” 14.1% indicated “no,” and 4% indicated “other,” which mostly consisted of answers such as “sometimes” or “somewhat”).

**Attendance.** *Did you happen to attend church, synagogue, mosque, or some other religious worship service in the last seven days?* All participants received this question, with the options “yes, did attend” or “no, did not attend.” (20.7% did attend, 79.3% did not attend).

**Worldview Identity.** In order to obtain a social identity variable, participants indicated their level of agreement with this single statement - *I identify with my [piped text] worldview* - using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 7= “strongly agree”. ( $\bar{x}$ = 5.42,  $s$ = 1.217). (Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2012).

## Results and Discussion

I combined the results in the questions about dogmatism into one composite score, and I ran correlations. In the correlations, I divided the participants into two categories: “Believers” and “Non-believers.” The “believers” were all participants who indicated religious preferences other than “agnostic” or “atheist” (N=149). The “non-believers” were all agnostic and atheist participants (N=151). Among the Believers, I examined the relationship between people’s levels

of dogmatism (DOGMATISM) and their likelihoods to donate (DONATE) to their same religious organization, another religious organization, and a secular organization. I also examined the relationship between DOGMATISM and people's likelihoods to volunteer (TIME) with their same religious organization, another religious organization, and a secular organization. Among the Non-believers, I examined the relationship between DOGMATISM and DONATE to a religious organization versus a secular organization. I also examined the relationship between DOGMATISM and TIME with a religious organization and with a secular organization. I did not drop data from any of the respondents. I present results from the bivariate correlations, as well as results from the partial correlations when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID in order to test beyond an identity salience explanation.

### ***Believers***

*Same Religious Organization.* I found that DOGMATISM and DONATE were positively correlated and significant ( $r = 0.193, p = 0.019$ ). However, when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, the correlation disappeared ( $r = 0.068, p = 0.415$ ). As for volunteering, I observed a similar pattern of results: DOGMATISM and TIME had a significant positive relationship ( $r = 0.266, p = 0.001$ ). However, when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, this positive correlation remained but was only marginally significant ( $r = 0.161, p = 0.053$ ).

*Other Religious Organization.* As for Believers helping other Believers, I did not find a correlation between DOGMATISM and DONATE ( $r = -0.059, p = 0.474$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, I observed no correlation ( $r = -0.122, p = 0.144$ ). As for volunteering, there was neither a zero-order correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = 0.002, p = 0.984$ ), nor a partial correlation when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW

ID ( $r = -0.041, p = 0.626$ ).

*Secular Organization.* Among Believers, there was no correlation between DOGMATISM and DONATE ( $r = -0.041, p = 0.479$ ). However, when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, there was a marginally significant negative correlation that emerged ( $r = -0.142, p = 0.088$ ). As for volunteering, there was no correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = 0.009, p = 0.881$ ), not even when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID ( $r = -0.060, p = 0.476$ ).

### ***Non-Believers***

*Religious Organization.* Among non-believers, I found that DOGMATISM and DONATE were negatively correlated and significant ( $r = -0.196, p = 0.016$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, I observed a similar significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.179, p = 0.029$ ). As for volunteering, there was a non-significant correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = -0.096, p = 0.242$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, the results were similar ( $r = -0.087, p = 0.293$ ).

I hypothesized that (1) there would be a negative correlation between people's level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward other religious organizations via (a) donating money to their causes to help feed the hungry and/or (b) volunteering time with them to feed the hungry or help the homeless. I also hypothesized that (2) there would be a negative correlation between people's level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors toward secular organizations via (a) donating money to their causes to help feed the hungry and/or (b) volunteering time with them to feed the hungry or help the homeless. Lastly, I hypothesized that (3) there would be a negative correlation between a nonreligious people's level of dogmatism and their likelihood to exhibit helping behaviors

toward religious organizations via (a) donating money to their causes to help feed the hungry and/or (b) volunteering time with them to feed the hungry or help the homeless. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 3a: that nonreligious people's level of dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to a religious organization's cause to feed the hungry.

Although the results in Study 2 support Hypothesis 3a, this effect could be attributed to other factors. Specifically, similar to a concern in Study 1, the wording in the survey questions may have led participants to feel a sense of attachment to their ingroup. In addition to the fact that the survey began with participants indicating their religious preference, the use of piped text throughout the survey may have reminded them of their ingroup and prompted them to think of their ingroup as a priority. It is also possible that nonreligious participants were concerned that monetary donations toward religious organizations could help contribute to religious proselytizing. If the survey specified that these religious organizations would not proselytize during their efforts, the results may have shown increased openness from dogmatic Non-Believers to donate to religious organizations.

There may not have been significant trends among the Believers because of the variance in their frequency of attendance to religious services. In Study 1, I surveyed Catholics as they were leaving church and found that majority of the participants attend Mass once a week; it is possible that in Study 2, due to its online nature, I was not able to capture a sample of Believers who attend religious services frequently. Specifically, Study 1 participants were leaving church, and there may have been an effect caused by how recent their attendance was. In fact, when examining the population of participants in Study 2 who indicated that they had attended a religious service within the past seven days (I will call these participants "Attenders," N=62),

some significant results emerge. All of those who indicated “yes, did attend” were Believers, and majority of them were Christian. When examining the participants who were Christian, Believers, and Attenders (N=58), I found the following results:

***Believers who are Attenders and Christian***

*Same Religious Organization.* I did not find a correlation between DOGMATISM and DONATE ( $r = 0.095, p = 0.482$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, there was still no correlation ( $r = -0.011, p = 0.938$ ). As for volunteering, I did not observe a correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = 0.168, p = 0.206$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, I observed a similar result ( $r = 0.150, p = 0.280$ ).

*Other Religious Organization.* As for Christian Attenders and Believers helping other Believers, I found a significant negative correlation between DOGMATISM and DONATE ( $r = -0.348, p = 0.007$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, I also observed a similar negative correlation that was significant ( $r = -0.322, p = 0.017$ ). As for volunteering, there was a significant negative correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = -0.320, p = 0.015$ ). However, this went away when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID ( $r = -0.187, p = 0.177$ ).

*Secular Organization.* Among Christian Attenders and Believers, there was a negative correlation between DOGMATISM and DONATE that was marginally significant ( $r = -0.251, p = 0.057$ ). When controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID, this negative correlation became significant ( $r = -0.268, p = 0.050$ ). As for volunteering, there was a marginally significant negative correlation between DOGMATISM and TIME ( $r = -0.230, p = 0.082$ ), and this negative correlation was not significant when controlling for GENDER and WORLDVIEW ID ( $r = -0.160, p = 0.247$ ).

The Believers who are also Attenders and Christian may reveal a broader trend: that how recently an individual has been involved with his/her religious organization may have an impact on the relationship between that individual's level of dogmatism and his/her likelihood of donating to other religious organizations' and secular organizations' causes to feed the hungry. Although I found a relationship between DOGMATISM and DONATE to *secular* organizations in Study 1, the 58 Believers who are Attenders and Christian in Study 2 reveal an additional relationship between DOGMATISM and DONATE to *other* religious organizations. In Study 1, most participants indicated that they attend Mass once a week. Perhaps the negative relationship between dogmatism and outgroup helping behaviors is moderated by how frequently and how recently people have been involved with a religious organization. Or perhaps those who more frequently and/or recently practice their religion tend to also be more dogmatic. In both Study 1 and Study 2, participants' levels of dogmatism had an impact on their likelihood to donate to their outgroup. Perhaps I would find similar effects among other Believers (not just Christian Believers) who have recently attended their place of worship.

### **General Discussion**

The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between religious dogmatism and helping behaviors. It contributes to the fields of organizational and social psychology by examining how people's interest in donating to or volunteering with different types of organizations to feed the hungry or help the homeless may be influenced by their level of dogmatic thought. From an organizational standpoint, some religious organizations subscribe to more dogmatic teachings and can have an influence on their members' way of thinking. From a social standpoint, there is a relationship between people's levels of dogmatism and their willingness to volunteer with certain organizations, suggesting that dogmatism has an effect on



who people interact with. Generally speaking, dogmatism has an impact on ingroup and outgroup aid and interactions.

In Study 1, I surveyed a sample of Catholic churchgoers who participated in the study upon leaving Mass. Results from Study 1 support Hypothesis 2a: that people's level of Catholic dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood to donate money to a secular organization's cause to feed the hungry. In Study 2, I surveyed an online sample of U.S. citizens representing different worldview identities. The results from Study 2 support Hypotheses 3a: that nonreligious people's level of dogmatism is negatively correlated with their likelihood of donating money to a religious organization's cause to feed the hungry. When focusing only on the participants in Study 2 who were Believers, Attenders, and Christian, results support Hypothesis 1a and 2a: that there is a negative relationship between people's level of religious dogmatism and their likelihood to donate money to outgroup organizations' causes to feed the hungry. These results suggest that highly dogmatic people are limiting the potential for society to enact positive change through collective and collaborative action.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The present research contributes to the literature on dogmatism (specifically religious dogmatism) and helping behaviors (specifically monetary donations and volunteered time toward causes to feed the hungry and help the homeless) by examining the correlation between the two. Past research suggests that individuals display prosociality toward members of their ingroup more frequently (Kirillova, Gilmetdinova, & Lehto, 2014). There is even a positive relationship between religiosity and ingroup donations (Galen, Sharp, & McNulty, 2015). In the present research, because I controlled for social identity (i.e. CATHOLIC ID in Study 1 and WORLDVIEW ID in Study 2), I find that dogmatism has an effect on people's likelihood to help

their outgroup members. This suggests that the previous social identity literature may be overlooking dogmatism as an important, or perhaps more explanatory, variable preventing people from outgroup prosociality. While social identity plays a role in how individuals behave within a group and between groups, it turns out that dogmatism is of additional concern.

Theologian Francis Schaeffer claimed that his belief that the Christian Bible is inerrant must be a belief that works in tandem with illustrative love (Hamilton, 1997). However, the findings in these studies show that beliefs of inerrancy - or dogmatic belief - may in fact hinder the ideal mutually reinforcing relationship between such dogmatic belief and helping behaviors. Those who are dogmatic and religious may in fact be more likely to help their own religious group, keeping that “love” in the family. Those who are dogmatic and nonreligious may avoid helping religious groups because of a lack of trust or a fear that those religious groups will proselytize. Likewise, those who are dogmatic and religious may avoid helping secular groups because of a lack of trust. It is important that future research considers levels of dogmatic thought when measuring interfaith and ingroup-outgroup prosociality.

### **Theoretical Concerns**

The present research exposes a larger obstacle that may negatively impact religious and intentionally secular organizations’ attempts to improve their communities. If the need to be right is preventing some forms of prosocial behavior, it may be impacting other collective actions. It is possible that dogmatic church leaders will make decisions in ways that do not represent their members. Dogmatic thinkers are increasing ideological polarization, decreasing interfaith collaboration, creating obstacles to unity, and may even be creating obstacles to dialogue.

Pew Research Center (2014) found that Americans rate certain religious groups lower than others, with atheists and Muslims receiving the lowest ratings. This may help explain why

atheist and agnostic participants were less inclined to donate to religious organizations, as they may assume that members of those organizations do not look upon them favorably. There are obvious concerns with people evaluating certain groups more or less favorably than others. In addition to these concerns is the possibility that dogmatic thought contributes to that active favoritism.

### **Limitations**

In these two correlational studies, I effectively examine the relationship between religious dogmatism and helping behaviors. In Study 1, I was able to collect data from a population that had just attended a church service, which may have impacted the external validity of the findings. In Study 2, attendance to worship services among participants was generally low (only 20.7% of participants attended some religious service within the week prior to taking the survey), presenting a limiting factor. Similar to how individuals show different acts of prosociality toward the ingroup versus the outgroup when prompted with the word “religion” versus the word “God,” (Preston and Ritter, 2013), it is possible that individuals show different acts of prosociality toward the ingroup versus the outgroup when coming from a service with people from their ingroup, versus participating in a study in a neutral environment online. When examining the participants in Study 2 who had attended a religious service in the past seven days, I found significant results that suggest high dogmatism is correlated with decreased outgroup prosociality. It is possible that mere recent exposure to religious organizations and communities primes dogmatic thought, which then negatively impacts outgroup helping behaviors.

The present research does not consider other factors that may affect an individual’s helping behaviors toward outgroup members. For example, one in five US adults are raised in interfaith homes (Pew Research Center, 2016) and many people are in interfaith marriages (Pew

Research Center, 2009). There is also an increasing tendency for Americans to mix multiple faiths when developing their worldview (Pew Research Center, 2009). Being raised in an interfaith home, being married to someone of another faith, or having a mixed-faith worldview may make people more open to helping outgroup members, regardless of their level of religious dogmatism. The present research does not explore these factors.

### **Future Research Directions**

Future research on religious dogmatism and helping behaviors must reach out to a broader population when conducting in-person studies. It would be interesting to replicate Study 1 at other Catholic parishes. Beyond that, research is needed to replicate a similar study at other Christian congregations and at other places of worship in general. While Study 2 attempted to gather results from outside of the Ann Arbor area, further research should survey places of worship that hold diverse worldview identities and that are in diverse locations across the country. Such research could contribute to the current findings on the relationship between religious dogmatism and helping behaviors in a more accurate and inclusive manner.

It could be that the desire to be “right” or the personal need to be “right,” the very thought processes that results in higher levels of dogmatism, are in some ways a competition. Further research should use similar measures for religious dogmatism and helping behaviors, while adding in a measure of social comparison. In order to tie social comparison theory into the present research, studies might include statements such as, “I often compare my religious organization to other religious organizations.” It is possible that “being right” is tied to social comparison theory, and that upward motivation is ancillary to the main drive of religious organizations.

Further research may refine how to measure religious dogmatism. For example, there are

a number of Catholics who are proponents of the “Five Non-Negotiables,” those being, the five moral issues for which the Catholic Church has declared there to be only one “acceptable” way for a practicing Catholic to vote (Uelmen, 2008). Adherents who subscribe to the non-negotiable belief certainly display an attitude that their way is “correct.” One way of measuring dogmatism could be to measure how much people agree that there are non-negotiable aspects of their religious doctrine. Additionally, existing research suggests that people are naturally inclined to be around others who think like them (Bahns et al., 2017). Future research should explore to see if there is an interaction between dogmatism and attraction to like-minded people that has an effect on prosociality. Those who are more attracted to people who think like them may also be among those who score high in dogmatic thought.

### **Conclusion**

The present research shows that regardless of religious organizations’ common value of helping those in need, the more dogmatic people are in their beliefs can impact how effectively they help outgroup members, specifically how religious dogmatists help secular organizations and how nonreligious dogmatists help religious organizations. Dogmatic thought may be a barrier to members of different organizations coming together to work in common purpose based on shared values. At a time in history when ideology is becoming increasingly polarized, it is imperative that people seek to understand diverse opinions, consider the possibility that they may not have a monopoly on the truth, and give thought to the idea that there may be multiple truths or multiple solutions to certain problems. It is crucial that people consider outside the doctrinal norms of the organizations they are a part of - despite the assumptions of disagreements they may have with others - and consider working with outgroup members toward causes of shared importance.

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