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### Citation for published version

Van Assche, Jasper and Dhont, Kristof and Pettigrew, Thomas F. (2019) The Social-Psychological Bases of Far-Right Support in Europe and the United States. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*. ISSN 1052-9284. (In press)

### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2407>

### Link to record in KAR

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### Document Version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

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**THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF  
FAR-RIGHT SUPPORT IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES**

Jasper van Assche<sup>1</sup>, Kristof Dhont<sup>2</sup>, & Thomas F. Pettigrew<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology, Ghent  
University, Belgium

<sup>2</sup> School of Psychology, University of Kent, Canterbury, U.K.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Psychology, University of California, Santa Cruz, U.S.

Corresponding author:

Jasper Van Assche

Department of Developmental, Personality and Social Psychology  
Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ghent University  
Henri Dunantlaan 2, B-9000 Ghent (Belgium)

E-mail: [Jasper.VanAssche@UGent.be](mailto:Jasper.VanAssche@UGent.be)

Telephone: +329 264 64 24

Fax: +329 264 64 99

Word count: 7,900

**Running head: Far-Right Support Correlates**

## **Abstract**

The roles of authoritarianism, social dominance orientation (SDO), and prejudice in the prediction of far-right support were examined in Europe and the United States (U.S.). A meta-analysis shows remarkably similar, positive and strong associations of far-right support with these three variables in previous studies conducted in Europe, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and the United States. Results from two cross-sectional studies in the U.S. further indicated that higher levels of authoritarianism and SDO related to higher voting intentions and support for Trump, via increased prejudice. In a three-wave longitudinal study in the U.K., authoritarianism and SDO predicted pro-Brexit attitudes and support for the United Kingdom Independence Party, again via prejudice. These results shed a new light on the widely-held beliefs in “American and British exceptionalism”, as Trump and Brexit adherents share the same social-psychological underpinnings as far-right supporters observed in several European countries.

*Key words:* Trump; Brexit; authoritarianism; social dominance orientation; ethnic prejudice

## **THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF FAR-RIGHT SUPPORT IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES**

All nations, their elections, and their political decisions can be regarded as “exceptional” given each nation’s unique history. Yet “American exceptionalism” has long been an especially powerful and persistent conviction of American thought (Lipset, 1996). The term has historically referred to the belief that the United States (U.S.) differs qualitatively from other developed nations because of its national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions. In particular, French political scientist and historian Alexis de Tocqueville (1835) coined the American economic-political system of peaceful capitalism as being *sui generis*.

Similarly, the United Kingdom (U.K.) has often been seen as “the odd one out” in European politics. This led scholars and policy makers to use the label “British exceptionalism” (Eatwell, 2000). Theoretically, comparisons between political party support in the U.S., the U.K., and other European countries have largely been discouraged due to the fact that American and British exceptionalism were taken for granted and the political systems differed sharply (Hoffmann, 2011). However, the unanticipated presidential victory of Donald Trump and the decision of the British people to leave the European Union (i.e., the Brexit referendum) call into question these deeply-held American and British beliefs. Did similar social-psychological

mechanisms drive Trump and Brexit adherents? Were the underpinnings of recent far-right support comparable to previous elections in other European democracies? This paper addresses these questions.

First, we conducted a meta-analysis examining the correlates of far-right support in previous studies on Trump, Brexit, and European far-right parties with three important social-psychological predictors: outgroup prejudice and two indicators of right-wing ideologies - resistance to change and support for social conservatism, indicated by right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981), and preferences for group-based dominance and inequality, indicated by social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Indeed, in Western contexts, stronger endorsement of right-wing ideological attitudes is usually expressed by higher levels of these two related dimensions, as measured with the RWA and SDO scales. We focus on these ideological dimensions as they typically reflect attitudes regarding the traditional left/right alignment on which political parties, politicians and issues can be located, and they are generally considered to be strong predictors of support for left-wing (i.e. lower RWA and SDO scores) versus right-wing (i.e. higher RWA and SDO scores) parties (Duckitt, 2001).

Second, we administered the same variables to two samples of adult Americans (one collected before and one after the 2016 election), testing a mediation model with RWA and SDO relating to Trump support via prejudice.

Finally, we applied our model to another recent victory of the far-right. Specifically, we collected a unique, large three-wave longitudinal sample of British adults that examined the predictors of pro-Brexit attitudes and support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). In total, we shed light on the attitudinal composition of far-right supporters, both with earlier and more recent electoral events and in both American and European political contexts.

### **The social-psychological bases of Trump and Brexit support**

Far-right politics are politics further on the right of the left-right spectrum than the “standard” political right, particularly in terms of ultraconservative, ultranationalist, and xenophobic tendencies (Ivarsflaten, 2008; McClosky & Chong, 1985). Far-right political parties and politicians often advocate authoritarian ideologies alongside oppression of outgroups based on their perceived threat to the majority ethnic-cultural group, or the nation as a whole (see Golder, 2016).

Since his appearance on the political stage, various studies have investigated the psycho-political profile of Donald Trump and his adherents, examining whether these share similar characteristics with those of far-right politic(ian)s. These investigations concluded consistently that authoritarian and anti-egalitarian attitudes are potent predictors of Trump support. Eight months prior to the election, MacWilliams (2016) correctly predicted that routine election surveys were underestimating Trump’s support; he relied on his survey

finding that high authoritarians were strongly in favor of Trump. During the presidential primaries in February 2016, Feldman (2017) also found a positive relation between authoritarianism and favorable evaluations of Trump among Republican primary voters. None of the evaluations of the other primary candidates revealed such a strong connection.

Following Duckitt's (2001) Dual Process Model, Trump appeals to high authoritarians because they seek politicians that protect law and order, defend traditional and religious values, and react negatively and even aggressively towards norm violators. On the other hand, Trump's rhetoric also attracts people high in SDO, as they particularly favor competition-based social inequality and group dominance (e.g., free market capitalism and anti-welfare policies). Later studies replicated these findings. For instance, Choma and Hanoch (2017) and Crowson and Brandes (2017) found that RWA and SDO correlated highly with the intention to vote for Trump. The remarkable consistency across these studies is noteworthy because they employed different measures of the key variables. The first two studies cited above employed Feldman's political science measure of authoritarianism (Feldman & Stenner, 1997), while the Choma-Hanoch and Crowson-Brandes studies used standard social-psychological items. All these studies also employed somewhat different SDO items, and tapped into mere Trump support as well as intentions to vote for him.

We conclude that Trump's rhetoric particularly appeals to those with higher levels of RWA, SDO, and prejudice. Indeed, by defending traditional American values, emphasizing concerns about national security, and portraying immigrants as a threat to the dominant economic position of the U.S., he strongly appeals to the motives of those with right-wing authoritarian and socially dominant attitudes (Womick, Rothmund, Azevedo, King, & Jost, 2018). Moreover, his prejudicial views and statements also attract a fair share of voters that have negative views on immigration, immigrants, and other outgroups alike (Kellner, 2016). Moreover, such negative outgroup attitudes have been shown to mediate the link between right-wing ideologies and far-right support (Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015). In other words, ethnic prejudice can be considered one of the vital processes that explains why individuals high in RWA and SDO are attracted by far-right political alternatives.

As such, voting intentions for Trump represent a behavioral expression of underlying prejudicial attitudes, which have their roots in two underlying types of right-wing ideologies (Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Therefore, we hypothesize that prejudice serves as a mediating process through which RWA and SDO are positively related to Trump support. An overview of research findings linking RWA, SDO, and prejudice to Trump support is provided in the upper panel of Table 1.

Turning to the U.K. context, only a few studies have investigated the associations of RWA and SDO with Brexit support (see Table 1, middle panel).



Across two cross-sectional samples, de Zavala, Guerra, and Simão (2017) found strong and positive correlations of these ideological attitudes with support for the outcome of the referendum. Similarly, Peitz, Dhont, and Seyd (2018) revealed positive associations of RWA and SDO with preferences for harsh laws on immigration and control during the Brexit negotiations. One study (Meleady, Seger, & Vermue, 2017) identified a link between anti-immigrant stances and “Leave” voting intentions.

Via ethnic prejudice, authoritarianism and social dominance orientation likely played a similar role in the extent to which British citizens supported the UKIP party. Indeed, similar to Trump’s discourse (Reicher & Haslam, 2016), UKIP’s manifesto embraces nationalist beliefs and nativist, reactionary views, and is characterized by a strong anti-immigrant platform (UKIP, 2013). One can assume this party program attracts voters with right-wing ideologies (i.e., high RWA and/or SDO) and high levels of prejudice (see Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015; Tournier-Sol, 2015).

Taken together, we propose that common psychological factors rooted in right-wing ideologies and prejudiced attitudes underpin both Trump and Brexit support in ways that have been observed previously in studies on far-right support across the European continent. Before addressing the assumption of American and British exceptionalism, we start with summarizing prior research that has investigated right-wing ideologies, prejudice, and support for the political far-right.

## **Comparable European results for far-right followers**

As the lower panel of Table 1 indicates, the joint power of RWA and SDO to predict far-right voting has also been repeatedly found in European research: in Belgium and France (e.g., Lubbers & Scheepers, 2002; Swyngedouw & Giles, 2007; Van Hiel, 2012; Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002), the Netherlands (e.g., Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015; Van Assche, Dhont, Van Hiel, & Roets, 2018), Poland and Germany (e.g., Schmidt, Darowska, & Fischer, 2017), and Italy (e.g., Leone, Desimoni & Chirumbolo, 2014). Notably, such positive associations have also been found in other countries around the world, such as Taiwan (Kuomintang support; Liu, Huang, & McFedries, 2008), Israel (Likud support; Duckitt, Bizumic, Krauss, & Heled, 2010), and New Zealand (NZ First support; Duckitt et al., 2010; Sibley & Wilson, 2007).

The social-cultural and economic-hierarchical dimensions of right-wing thought thus constitute the core social-attitudinal bases for far-right voting. European far-right politicians and parties tend to propagate a range of similar right-wing values, expressing fears over the protection of the ingroup's traditional culture, and its current economic, competitive position within society (Meloan, Van der Linden, & De Witte, 1996; Van Hiel, Cornelis, Roets, & De Clercq, 2007). As such, they tend to attract most support from people who strongly resist cultural changes and endorse inequality - the ones scoring high on RWA and SDO (see Duckitt, 2001).

In addition, those holding authoritarian and socially dominant belief systems are also mobilized by the far-right through fierce anti-immigrant rhetoric together with outspoken negativity towards ethnic outgroups (Ivarsflaten, 2008). Indeed, prejudice has been highlighted as one of the key processes through which right-wing individuals become supportive of far-right political parties in Western Europe (Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015). This recurrent result invites a meta-analysis that estimates the magnitude of these effect sizes of RWA, SDO, and prejudice in far-right support in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe.

## **Study 1**

### **Method**

We used a variety of search strategies to garner studies for our meta-analysis. First, we searched the databases ISI Web of Knowledge and Google Scholar for studies published until January 2019, employing a large array of key words in various combinations.<sup>1</sup> Studies had to meet four inclusion criteria. (1) They had to comprise heterogeneous samples of non-immigrant citizens, and (2) assess at least one of our three predictor variables. (3) In addition, voting intentions or support for the far-right politician or political party had to be administered on a Likert-scale rather than coded as a categorical variable (see e.g., Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2015). (4) A final inclusion criterion was that samples had to be statistically independent; that is, participants in one study could not be part of another study.<sup>2</sup> The twenty studies included in the meta-analysis

reported data from  $k = 27$  samples with a total of  $N = 15,252$  participants (and are highlighted by a "+" sign in the reference list). We tested a random effects model using the Open Psychometric Meta-analysis software (Version 1.0b9) by Wiernik (2017). We corrected for statistical artifacts using the artifact distribution method and freely estimated the true residual variance ( $SD_{res}$ ).

## **Results**

Table 2 portrays all effect sizes with their observed and true standard deviations, and their confidence and credibility<sup>3</sup> intervals. The meta-analytic results reveal a similar pattern of results in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe: RWA, SDO, and prejudice are all strongly and positively related to far-right support across both continents. For all variables, the confidence intervals for the effect sizes in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe overlap, so we can conclude that effect sizes did not substantially differ between those contexts.

Although the association of RWA with far-right support tends to be slightly larger in the British than European samples, the relation between SDO and far-right support tends to be slightly larger in the American compared to the British samples, and the prejudice-far-right link tends to be slightly larger in Europe as opposed to the U.S., these differences are small and not significant.

## **Preliminary conclusion**

It could thus be concluded that our three key predictors show comparable associations with far-right support, both in past and recent

studies and in Europe as well as the U.S. and U.K. These strong and highly consistent relations arise in spite of markedly different political histories, cultures and systems across these various nations.

## **Study 2**

Bringing together various pieces of the puzzle, Cornelis and Van Hiel (2015) revealed earlier that prejudice and anti-immigration attitudes partly mediated the relationships of authoritarianism and SDO with far-right voting behavior. We tested in Studies 2 and 3 whether this model holds for the more recent far-right victories in the U.S. and U.K. In particular, we hypothesized that prejudice partly explains the positive associations of both RWA and SDO with intentions to vote for Trump before the U.S. 2016 elections (Study 2a), support for Trump after the elections (Study 2b), and support for UKIP and Brexit (Study 3).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

As it is vital to test our hypothesized model both before and after the U.S. elections, and it is valuable to replicate our findings, we collected data at two time points. Data for Study 2a were collected online via Mechanical Turk (MTurk) during September 2016 (6 weeks before the presidential elections) and data for Study 2b were collected via the same platform during March 2017 (4 months after the elections). In Study 2a, the sample comprised 160 American citizens, with a mean age of 36 years ( $SD =$

11.30). Forty-two percent of the participants were women; 9% had completed primary school, 38% had completed high school and 53% had a college or university degree. Ninety percent of the sample had a White/European ethnic background, 7% was Asian American, 2% was Native American, and 1% of the respondents indicated an “other” background. Participants with a Black/African background ( $N = 6$ ) were excluded from the analyses, as our measure of prejudice comprised an anti-Black modern racism scale.

In Study 2b, the sample comprised 252 American citizens, with a mean age of 37 years ( $SD = 12.42$ ), and 45% women. Seventy-seven percent of the sample had a White/European ethnic background, 9% was Asian American, 7% was Hispanic/Latino American, 5% was Black/African American, and 2% of the respondents identified themselves as “other” background. Participants with a Black/African background were not excluded here, as our prejudice measure comprised a general anti-immigrant affect scale. Across both studies, all participants completed the full questionnaire, yielding no missing data. Based on the meta-analytic estimates of Study 1, both sample sizes give us a power of  $> .95$  to detect the hypothesized effects.

## **Measures**

All items were rated on seven-point Likert scales anchored by one (*totally disagree*) and seven (*totally agree*).

**Right-Wing Authoritarianism.** In both Studies 2a and 2b, a 9-item RWA-scale was administered, tapping into the three authoritarianism-facets (Duckitt et al., 2010). A sample item is: "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn." Cronbach's alpha was .93 in Study 2a and .95 in Study 2b, with  $M_{2A} = 3.27$  ( $SD_{2A} = 1.58$ ) and  $M_{2B} = 3.58$  ( $SD_{2B} = 1.76$ ).

**Social Dominance Orientation.** In both Studies 2a and 2b, a short four-item version of the SDO-7 scale was included (Ho et al., 2015). A sample item is: "An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom." Cronbach's alpha was .89 in both Study 2a and 2b, with  $M_{2A} = 2.71$  ( $SD_{2A} = 1.69$ ) and  $M_{2B} = 2.82$  ( $SD_{2B} = 1.66$ ).

**Prejudice.** In Study 2a, we administered a 7-item Modern Racism scale (McConahay, 1986). A sample item reads: "Discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States." Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .92, with  $M = 2.80$  ( $SD = 1.51$ ). In Study 2b, we tapped into anti-immigrant attitudes with a modified version of the General Evaluation Scale (e.g., Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). This scale asked participants to describe their overall feelings towards immigrants on four differential scales: cold-warm, negative-positive, hostile-friendly and contemptuous-respectful (see also Van Assche, Roets, Dhont, & Van Hiel, 2014). The items were coded so that higher scores indicated more negative attitudes, resulting in a reliable index ( $\alpha = .96$ ), with  $M = 3.16$  ( $SD = 1.72$ ).

**Far-right support.** In Study 2a, respondents indicated to what extent they agreed with the statement: "In the upcoming election, I will likely vote for Donald Trump" ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 2.36$ ). In Study 2b, the far-right support item read "I support the program and/or ideas of Donald Trump" ( $M = 2.92$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ).

## Results

The first two rows of Table 1 provide the correlations of all study variables with intentions to vote for Trump (row 1) and support for Trump (row 2). Across both samples, Americans' intentions to vote for and support Trump were positively related to RWA, SDO, modern racism, and anti-immigrant attitudes.

Second, we estimated the indirect effects of RWA and SDO via prejudice on voting intentions (Study 2a) and on support for Trump (Study 2b). To do so, we employed path analyses with maximum likelihood (ML) estimation using MPlus (version 7.1; Muthén & Muthén, 2012). Standard errors were computed using bootstrapping ( $N = 50,000$  bootstrap samples).

Summarized in Figures 1a and 1b, the results reveal that RWA and SDO are both strongly related to prejudice, and prejudice is further related to voting intentions and support for Trump. Most importantly, the bootstrap analyses indicated that outgroup prejudice mediates both the relationship between RWA and intentions to vote for Trump (indirect effect:  $b = 0.17$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.07; 0.31]$ ;  $p = .02$ ), and the relationship between SDO and



intentions to vote for Trump (indirect effect:  $b = 0.40$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.22; 0.60]$ ;  $p < .001$ ) before the elections. Similarly, anti-immigrant attitudes mediated both the associations between RWA and Trump support (indirect effect:  $b = 0.09$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.04; 0.15]$ ;  $p = .02$ ), and between SDO and Trump support (indirect effect:  $b = 0.08$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.02; 0.15]$ ;  $p = .04$ ) after the elections. The direct paths from RWA to voting intentions and support for Trump remained significant ( $b = 0.43$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.16; 0.69]$ ;  $p = .009$  in Study 2a and  $b = 0.58$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.44; 0.71]$ ;  $p < .001$  in Study 2b), while the direct paths from SDO to these outcomes were not significant.

These cross-sectional results provide preliminary and tentative evidence for a potential mediation effect. Longitudinal designs are needed to clarify the specific processes at play.

### **Study 3**

Study 3 extends Study 2 in two ways. First, the predictive value of our model was tested in another recent far-right political debate - the U.K.'s Brexit referendum. We tapped into two outcomes - both pro-Brexit attitudes and support for the UKIP party. Second, so as to examine the underlying processes over time, we collected a three-wave longitudinal sample and applied a longitudinal cross-lagged panel design with three measurement points as well as a random intercept multilevel design with changes nested within individuals.

### **Method**

## Participants

We used a nationally heterogeneous sample of non-immigrant English citizens using the online crowd sourcing platform Prolific Academic. The data were collected three months before the Brexit referendum (March 2016), in the weeks after the Brexit (end of June – beginning of July 2016), and six months after the Brexit referendum (December 2016) - henceforth referred to as time 1 (T1), time 2 (T2) and time 3 (T3) respectively<sup>4</sup>. Respondents at T1 were 603 adults, with a mean age of 34 years ( $SD = 11.43$ ), and 38% men. Of the T1 respondents, 432 (72%) participated in the next wave (T2), and 341 (57%) in the final wave (T3) of data-collection.

## Measures

All items were rated on seven-point scales anchored by one (*totally disagree*) and seven (*totally agree*). All measures relevant for our study were part of a longer survey on social and political issues.

***Right-Wing Authoritarianism.*** A 9-item RWA-scale was administered (Duckitt et al., 2010). A reverse-coded sample item reads: “It’s great that many young people today are prepared to defy authority.” Cronbach’s alpha of this scale was .85 at T1, .87 at T2, and .88 at T3, with  $M_{T1} = 3.56$  ( $SD_{T1} = 1.09$ ),  $M_{T2} = 3.54$  ( $SD_{T2} = 1.13$ ), and  $M_{T3} = 3.56$  ( $SD_{T3} = 1.13$ ).

***Social Dominance Orientation.*** An eight-item SDO scale was included (Ho et al., 2015). A sample item reads: “Some groups of people are

simply inferior to other groups." Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .86 at T1, .87 at T2, and .90 at T3, with  $M_{T1} = 2.83$  ( $SD_{T1} = 1.10$ ),  $M_{T2} = 2.76$  ( $SD_{T2} = 1.08$ ), and  $M_{T3} = 2.83$  ( $SD_{T3} = 1.16$ ).

**Prejudice.** We assessed the same scale as in Study 2b. The items were coded so that higher scores indicated more anti-immigrant attitudes, resulting in a reliable index ( $\alpha_{T1} = .93$ ;  $\alpha_{T2}$  and  $\alpha_{T3} = .95$ ), with  $M_{T1} = 3.09$  ( $SD_{T1} = 1.34$ ),  $M_{T2} = 2.78$  ( $SD_{T2} = 1.36$ ), and  $M_{T3} = 2.84$  ( $SD_{T3} = 1.27$ ).

**Far-right support.** To assess respondents' support for the far-right party in the U.K., the following question was posed: "To what extent do you support the program and/or manifesto of the U.K. Independence Party" (UKIP;  $M_{T1} = 2.49$ ,  $SD_{T1} = 1.73$ ;  $M_{T2} = 2.34$ ,  $SD_{T2} = 1.74$ ; and  $M_{T3} = 2.44$ ,  $SD_{T3} = 1.70$ ). To assess pro-Brexit attitudes, respondents indicated to what extent they agreed with the statement: "I think the United Kingdom should remain a member of the European Union.". This item was reverse coded, with  $M_{T1} = 3.14$  ( $SD_{T1} = 2.13$ ),  $M_{T2} = 3.05$  ( $SD_{T2} = 2.53$ ), and  $M_{T3} = 3.26$  ( $SD_{T3} = 2.57$ ).

## Results

### Preliminary analyses

We conducted multivariate analyses of variance to test whether T1 scores of RWA, SDO, anti-immigrant attitudes, and UKIP and Brexit support differed between the respondents who completed the survey at T2 and T3, those who also completed T2 but not T3, and those who only completed the T1

questionnaire. We found no multivariate differences between the groups (all  $F_s < 2.80$ , all  $p_s > .06$ ). Therefore, all respondents who participated at Time 1 ( $N = 603$ ) were included in the subsequent analyses.

### **Longitudinal analyses**

*Cross-lagged analyses.* First, we performed longitudinal cross-lagged analyses with latent variables in MPlus (version 7.1; Muthén & Muthén, 2012) using the MLR likelihood estimator, and FIML to deal with missing data. Item subsets were averaged into parcels to smooth measurement error and maintain an adequate ratio of cases-to-parameters. We created three parcels each for RWA and SDO and two for prejudice, held constant over time.

We tested two models, one focusing on UKIP support (Model 1) and the other focusing on pro-Brexit attitudes (Model 2). In both models we included all paths from the T1 scores to T2 scores and from T2 scores to T3 scores. This allowed us to test the hypothesized indirect effects of T1 scores of RWA and SDO on the T3 scores of UKIP support (Model 1) and pro-Brexit attitudes (Model 2) via the T2 scores of prejudice. In both models we controlled for the stability effects of all variables over time (i.e., including the autoregressive paths) as well as for the associations between the variables within each wave (i.e., including the cross-sectional associations). Furthermore, we constrained the paths from T2 to T3 to be equal to the paths from T1 to T2 (i.e., the stationarity assumption; Cole & Maxwell,

2003). The model fits were acceptable for both models ( $\chi^2_{(318)} = 1122.00$  and 1131.03, both  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .078 and .078, CFI = .901 and .902 for Model 1 and 2, respectively). Figures 2a and 2b present the standardized estimates of the models examining UKIP support and pro-Brexit attitudes, respectively.

In line with our expectations, we found longitudinal relations of RWA and SDO at T1 and T2 with, respectively, anti-immigrant attitudes at T2 and T3, demonstrating the hypothesized paths from the predictors to the mediator. Furthermore, anti-immigrant attitudes at T1 and T2 showed a strong association with, respectively, far-right support at T2 and T3, demonstrating the hypothesized paths from the mediator to the criterion variables.

Importantly, longitudinal mediation analyses revealed an indirect effect of RWA and SDO at T1 on UKIP support at T3, through anti-immigrant attitudes at T2 (indirect effect of RWA:  $b = 0.02$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.004; 0.04]$ ;  $p = .04$ ; indirect effect of SDO:  $b = 0.02$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.003; 0.04]$ ;  $p = .05$ ). Furthermore, similar indirect effects were obtained for Brexit support (indirect effect of RWA,  $b = 0.01$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.002; 0.02]$ ;  $p = .03$ ; indirect effect of SDO:  $b = 0.01$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.001; 0.02]$ ;  $p = .04$ ).

*Growth curve analyses.* A second, complementary analytic strategy involved testing a random intercept multilevel model with respondent as level-2 grouping identifier (see Preacher, Zhang, & Zyphur, 2011). Evidence for correlated slopes (i.e., change associated with change) indicates a common

underlying growth (Berry & Willoughby, 2016). In other words, we tested whether the slopes from RWA and SDO to prejudice were positively associated with the slopes from prejudice to far-right support. At the within-level, we regressed (a) prejudice on RWA or SDO; (b) UKIP or Brexit support on prejudice, and (c) UKIP or Brexit support on RWA or SDO. We defined the respective random slopes and estimated their means at the between-level. Furthermore, we estimated the level-2 correlation of slopes "a" (from predictor to mediator) and "b" (from mediator to outcome) as a first indicator of common underlying growth. Finally, we computed the indirect effect by multiplying the means of the slopes "a" and "b" and adding their correlation, as such providing additional information concerning our mediation hypotheses.

We found significant slopes from RWA to prejudice ( $b = 0.40$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.33; 0.47]$ ;  $p < .001$ ), from SDO to prejudice ( $b = 0.32$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.25; 0.39]$ ;  $p < .001$ ), from prejudice to UKIP support ( $b = 0.19$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.09; 0.30]$ ;  $p = .003$ ), and from prejudice to Brexit support ( $b = 0.18$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.07; 0.30]$ ;  $p = .01$ ). Most importantly, we found positive correlations between the "a" and "b" slopes, together with indirect effects of right-wing attitudes on far-right support through prejudice. Specifically, the covariances between the RWA-prejudice and prejudice-UKIP slope ( $r = .02$ ;  $p = .04$ ; indirect effect:  $b = 0.10$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.05; 0.15]$ ;  $p = .002$ ), between the SDO-prejudice and prejudice-UKIP slope ( $r = .04$ ;  $p = .003$ ; indirect effect:  $b = 0.10$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.06; 0.13]$ ;  $p < .001$ ), between the RWA-prejudice and prejudice-Brexit slope ( $r = .02$ ;  $p = .15$ ;

indirect effect:  $b = 0.09$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.03; 0.15]$ ;  $p = .01$ ), and between the SDO-prejudice and prejudice-Brexit slope ( $r = .03$ ;  $p = .03$ ; indirect effect:  $b = 0.08$ ;  $CI_{95} = [0.03; 0.12]$ ;  $p = .003$ ) all indicated a common underlying growth.

In sum, RWA and SDO were associated with higher levels of prejudice over time, which in turn, were longitudinally associated with stronger support for UKIP and Brexit. Interestingly, we also found longitudinal relations of far-right support with right-wing attitudes and prejudice. In particular, UKIP and Brexit support also related to higher RWA and prejudice scores over time.

## **Discussion**

### **Putting American and British exceptionalism into perspective**

First, we have seen that the results of multiple studies of Europe's far-right-wing voters are strikingly similar to American and British data on the 2016 election. Authoritarianism, social dominance attitudes, and prejudice have been routinely found to correlate with far-right voting in nations throughout Europe. These voters share with Trump supporters similar views on social-cultural issues, anti-egalitarian societal structures, and immigrants. Indeed, the three major grievances of Europe's far-right also arise from threats to traditional norms and values, economic changes, and immigration – with immigration the most intense issue (Swyngedouw, & Giles, 2001). Our meta-analytic findings (Study 1) suggest that the same can be said about the Trump and Brexit movements.

These close similarities put into perspective the widespread beliefs in American and British exceptionalism. Indeed, the parallels between the European support of far-right politicians, American support for Trump, and British support for UKIP pose serious questions: Just how different are American or British beliefs in democracy from those of Europeans and the rest of the world at large? Just how different are the nationalistic and populist adherents of Trump and Farage's UKIP from those supporting Le Pen's National Front in France, Wilder's Freedom Party in the Netherlands, or Meuthen's Alternative for Germany? Such questions would never have even been asked prior to the 2016 elections in the U.K. and U.S.

### **Authoritarianism and SDO and far-right support**

Our findings in Study 2 and Study 3 further lead to two firm conclusions. First, individuals' voting intentions and support for either Trump or UKIP are similarly entrenched in their ideological beliefs and their attitudes towards other ethnic groups. In particular, applying Duckitt's (2001) Dual Process Model to these far-right successes, high authoritarians support and vote for Trump and UKIP because they believe this politician/party can protect law and order and defend traditional norms and values, and high social dominators particularly favor those options because they want to protect the (economic) dominance and higher status of the majority ingroup. Second, we can conclude that prejudicial attitudes to a large extent explain the relationships of authoritarianism and SDO with such far-right support. Indeed, the reason that



individuals high in RWA and SDO choose far-right is (at least in part) because these far-right alternatives also propagate tough anti-immigrant stances.

Our results concerning the role of these three variables in voting intentions for Trump are not too surprising, as Trump's speeches contain many classic authoritarian and SDO statements. Furthermore, these speeches often disseminate nationalistic "America First" messages (Kellner, 2016) along with negative comments about outgroups ranging from "dangerous" Muslim immigrants to Mexican "rapists" (Pettigrew, 2017). Similar reasoning can be applied to the success of the UKIP party, whose Brexit propaganda also aimed to spread feelings of symbolic and realistic threat and anti-immigrant sentiment (Mudde, 2016).

Cornelis and Van Hiel (2015) showed that prejudice and anti-immigrant attitudes were the key processes through which individuals adhering to right-wing views were inclined to vote for far-right parties in Western Europe. Our primary objective was to shed light on what drives Americans to support Trump and British citizens to support Brexit - two of the most debated and influential political events in recent electoral history (Pettigrew, 2017). Our findings, pointing to the importance of authoritarianism, SDO, and prejudice in the prediction of these recent far-right triumphs, replicate those of Cornelis and Van Hiel (2015).

Our findings also move beyond the Cornelis and Van Hiel (2015) study by providing the first longitudinal empirical evidence supporting the claim that

RWA and SDO over time relate to greater far-right support through increased outgroup prejudice. Remarkably, initial far-right support also related to greater post-referendum right-wing attitudes and prejudice. This result suggests that a reinforcing mechanism likely happened where those endorsing right-wing and prejudiced attitudes become more inclined to support far-right as well as right-wing voters likely becoming more intolerant and bigoted over time. In effect, right-wing victories reinforce right-wingers' views. This important finding is consistent with evidence that racist norms and incidents increased after Marie Le Pen's 2012 race and Trump's 2016 victory (Portelinha & Elcheroth, 2016). This also points to possible polarization processes that occurred after the Brexit referendum, where adherents and opponents actively seek news confirming their own views, while minimalizing and even ignoring contradictory information. This phenomenon has also been observed after the victory of Trump; reports conflicting with the Trump worldview are typically rejected as "fake news" (Martinelli, 2017). We encourage future studies to delineate further these dynamics in other electoral contexts (e.g., Bolsonaro's victory in Brazil).

Finally, our results add a crucial piece of the puzzle that goes beyond previous research unraveling the complex and multifaceted factors explaining far-right support. By providing new insights into the simultaneous longitudinal effects of RWA, SDO and prejudice, we avoid "the single factor fallacy" (Pettigrew & Hewstone, 2017) by including critical individual difference variables into one coherent and comprehensive model. Additionally, we applied

longitudinal analyses, a necessary strategy for tentative claims of causal connections over time. Future studies could extend the current framework by including other social-psychological underpinnings of far-right support, such as perceived relative deprivation (e.g., Meuleman, Abts, Pettigrew, & Davidov, 2019; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984), collective narcissism (de Zavala et al., 2017; Marchlewska, Cichocka, Panayiotou, Castellanos, & Batayneh, 2018), restricted intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 2017; Knowles & Tropp, 2018), and political cynicism (e.g., Van Assche et al., 2018; Van Assche, Van Hiel, Dhont, & Roets, 2019), and by examining the unique effects of these predictors in a single, unified model.

A limitation of the current contribution involves our necessary use of short scales - particularly for our outcomes of interest. Moreover, the use of MTurk participants as in Studies 2a and 2b has been debated, especially with regards to research on political ideology (see Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Nonetheless, liberals and conservatives in MTurk samples closely mirror the psychological divisions of liberals and conservatives in the mass public (Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2015). Hence, this research will hopefully encourage future research to develop further the interesting theoretical framework of personality syndromes, intergroup processes and attitudes, and far-right adherence.

**Notes**

<sup>[1]</sup> Keywords used for right-wing attitudes were (right-wing) authoritarianism, social dominance (orientation), their abbreviations RWA/SDO, conservative beliefs, social-cultural attitudes, economic-hierarchical and anti-egalitarian (social-ideological) attitudes. Keywords for intergroup prejudice were (subtle/blatant/modern) racism, ethnocentrism, (ethnic/racial) prejudice, (outgroup) bias, intolerance, discrimination, outgroup attitudes, and anti-immigrant attitudes. Keywords for far-right support were (Donald) Trump, extremist(s), populist(s), political preference, support, extreme (right-wing) party/parties, far-right, populism, and voting (behavior/intentions). We also checked the reference list of each relevant article for additional relevant studies and contacted key researchers to share relevant unpublished data.

<sup>[2]</sup> Though informative and with findings consistent with other research, studies by Feldman (2017) and Van Hiel (2012) were excluded from this analysis because they do not meet the condition of a general sample. Specifically, Feldman (2017) used a Republican-only sample during the primaries of the 2016 U.S. election, and Van Hiel (2012) sampled only Flemish party members. Analyses that include these two studies yield virtually identical results and are available upon request from the first author.

<sup>[3]</sup> Credibility intervals represent a range of values that includes the true effect size with 80% probability.

<sup>[4]</sup> Wave 3 measures of RWA and SDO were also used in Study 2 of Peitz and colleagues (2018).

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## Tables and figures

**Table 1**

***RWA, SDO and prejudice correlations with far-right support across different countries***

Study	<i>N</i>	Country	Far-right indicator	RWA	SDO	Prejudice
Current Study 2a	154	U.S.	Trump voting intentions	.46 <sup>***</sup>	.33 <sup>***</sup>	.49 <sup>***</sup>
Current Study 2b	252	U.S.	Trump support	.61 <sup>***</sup>	.42 <sup>***</sup>	.51 <sup>***</sup>
Choma & Hanoch, 2017	406	U.S.	Trump voting intentions	.46 <sup>***</sup>	.48 <sup>***</sup>	
Crowson & Brandes, 2017	261	U.S.	Trump voting intentions	.54 <sup>***</sup>	.45 <sup>***</sup>	
Ludeke et al., 2018	1444	U.S.	Trump support	.34 <sup>***</sup>	.38 <sup>***</sup>	
Martens et al., 2018	260	U.S.	Positive perceptions about Trump	.62 <sup>***</sup>	.41 <sup>***</sup>	
Federico & de Zavala, 2018	1730	U.S.	Trump thermometer rating	.18 <sup>***</sup>		.42 <sup>***</sup>
Feldman, 2017	1741	U.S.	Trump support	.24 <sup>***</sup>		
Conway III & McFarland, 2019	1115	U.S.	Trump support	.50 <sup>***</sup>		
Wright & Esses, 2019	435	U.S.	Trump support		.40 <sup>***</sup>	
Current Study 3	603	U.K.	UKIP support	.46 <sup>***</sup>	.34 <sup>***</sup>	.49 <sup>***</sup>
Current Study 3	603	U.K.	Pro-Brexit attitudes	.47 <sup>***</sup>	.27 <sup>***</sup>	.46 <sup>***</sup>
de Zavala et al., 2017, Study 1	280	U.K.	Support for the Brexit outcome	.45 <sup>***</sup>	.34 <sup>***</sup>	
de Zavala et al., 2017, Study 2	226	U.K.	Support for the Brexit outcome	.37 <sup>***</sup>	.36 <sup>***</sup>	
Peitz et al., 2018, Study 2	400	U.K.	Post-Brexit preferences	.61 <sup>***</sup>	.38 <sup>***</sup>	
Zmigrod et al., 2018	332	U.K.	Pro-Brexit attitudes	.45 <sup>***</sup>		



Meleady et al., 2017	448	U.K.	"Leave" voting intentions			.51 <sup>***</sup>
Leone et al., 2014, Study 1a	390	Italy	House of Freedoms preference	.35 <sup>***</sup>	.29 <sup>***</sup>	
Leone et al., 2014, Study 1b	483	Italy	House of Freedoms preference	.36 <sup>***</sup>	.31 <sup>***</sup>	
Leone et al., 2014, Study 2	721	Italy	House of Freedoms preference	.47 <sup>***</sup>	.39 <sup>***</sup>	
Van Assche et al., 2018a	628	the Netherlands	Freedom Party support	.45 <sup>***</sup>	.31 <sup>***</sup>	.49 <sup>***</sup>
Van Assche et al., 2018b	509	Belgium	Flemish Block support	.27 <sup>***</sup>	.35 <sup>***</sup>	.52 <sup>***</sup>
Van Hiel, 2012	69	Belgium	Flemish Block support	.58 <sup>***</sup>	.55 <sup>***</sup>	.84 <sup>***</sup>
Van Hiel et al., 2007	480	Belgium	Flemish Block support	.42 <sup>***</sup>	.44 <sup>***</sup>	.60 <sup>***</sup>
Van Hiel & Mervielde, 2002	381	Belgium	Flemish Block voting preference	.34 <sup>***</sup>	.51 <sup>***</sup>	
Meloen et al., 1996	901	Belgium	Flemish Block sympathy rating	.35 <sup>***</sup>		

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 2*****Meta-analytic effect size estimates of RWA, SDO and prejudice with far-right support in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe***

Region	Predictor	<i>r</i>	SD <sub>r</sub>	SD <sub>res</sub>	95% Conf. Int.	80% Cred. Int.
U.S.	RWA	.37	.15	.15	[.27; .47]	[.18; .55]
	SDO	.40	.04	<.01	[.37; .43]	[.40; .40]
	Prejudice	.44	.03	.01	[.41; .47]	[.42; .45]
U.K.	RWA	.48	.07	.06	[.42; .54]	[.40; .56]
	SDO	.35	.02	<.01	[.33; .37]	[.35; .35]
	Prejudice	.48	.02	<.01	[.46; .50]	[.48; .48]
Europe	RWA	.38	.06	.05	[.34; .42]	[.32; .45]
	SDO	.37	.07	.06	[.32; .42]	[.30; .44]
	Prejudice	.53	.05	.03	[.47; .59]	[.49; .58]
Total	RWA	.39	.12	.11	[.34; .44]	[.25; .54]
	SDO	.38	.06	.04	[.35; .41]	[.33; .43]
	Prejudice	.48	.05	.04	[.45; .51]	[.43; .53]

Note: *r* = mean uncorrected effect size; SD<sub>r</sub> = observed standard deviation of the effect size; SD<sub>res</sub> = true residual variance; Conf. Int. = confidence interval; Cred. Int. = credibility interval

Figure 1

**Standardized results of the models testing the cross-sectional associations of RWA and SDO with voting intentions for Trump (Figure 1a) and support for Trump (Figure 1b), via outgroup prejudice**

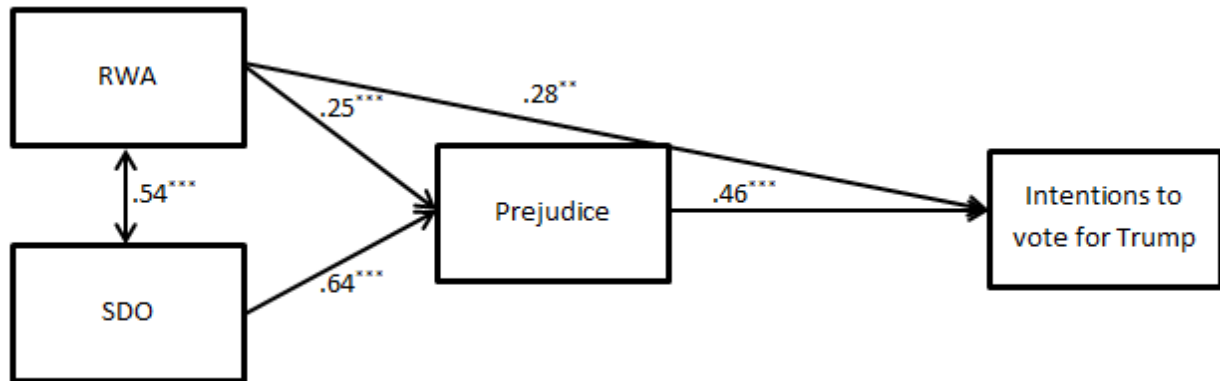


Figure 1a.

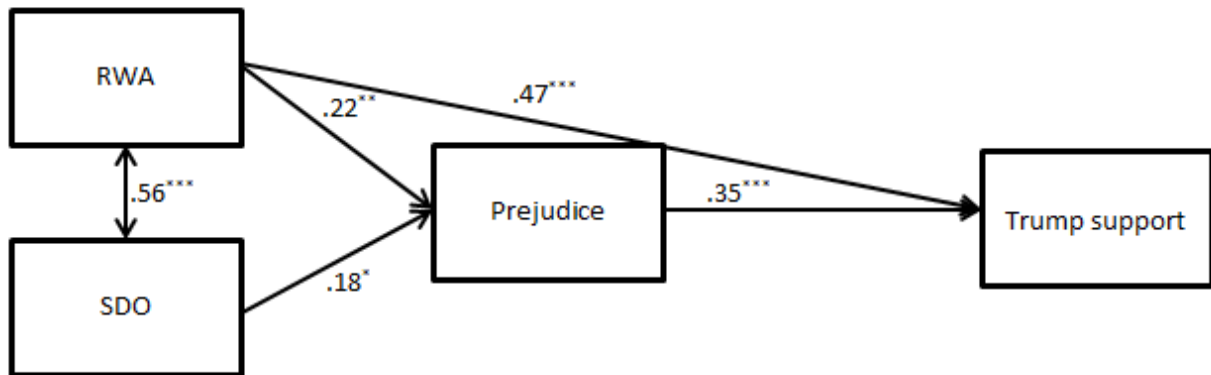


Figure 1b.

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Figure 2

**Standardized results of the models testing the longitudinal associations of RWA and SDO with support for UKIP (Figure 2a) and pro-Brexit attitudes (Figure 2b), via outgroup prejudice**

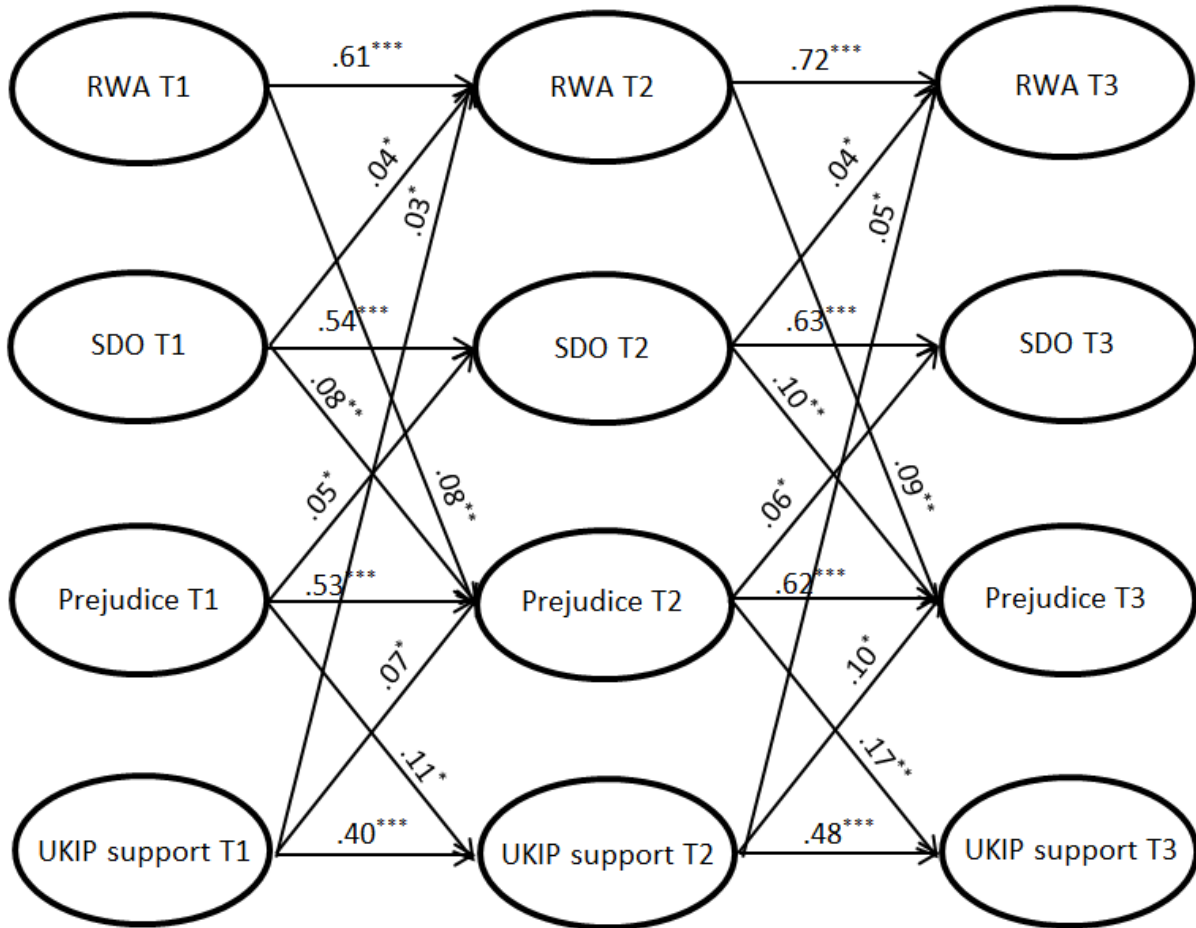


Figure 2a.

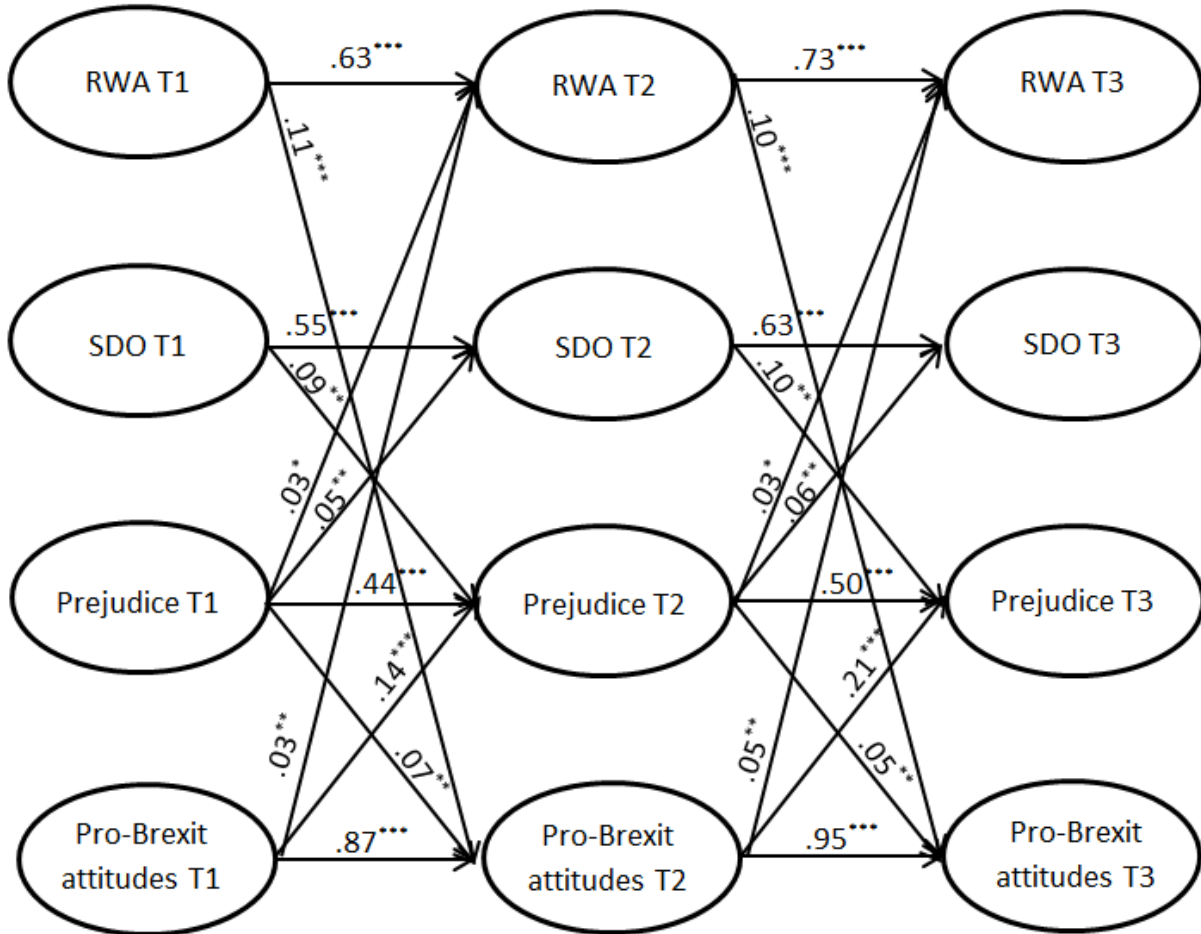


Figure 2b.

Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

For the sake of parsimony, only significant longitudinal paths are portrayed. Full results are available upon request with the first author.