



Does ideological malleability moderate the effect of self-affirmation on prejudice?

A recommendation by **Anna Elisabeth Fürtjes** ^{ID} based on peer reviews by **Pete Harris** and **Zoltan Dienes** ^{ID} of the STAGE 2 REPORT:

Yara Alnajjar, Constantina Badea and Béatrice Sternberg (2024) Self-Affirmation and Prejudice Against Religious Groups: The Role of Ideological Malleability. OSF, ver. <https://osf.io/st47h>, peer-reviewed and recommended by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://osf.io/st47h>

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Self-affirmation may be an effective tool to reduce prejudice and discrimination against minority groups. Its hypothesised mechanism is that prejudice is a defensive act that can be reduced by reinforcing a positive image of the self. Such a reinforced self-image is meant to weaken perceived threat to one's social identity that may be posed by minority groups, such as Muslims in majority Christian countries. To address mixed evidence for the effectiveness of self-affirmation across the literature, this Registered Report (RR) was designed to elucidate conditions under which self-affirmation may reduce prejudice and discrimination. Whether self-affirmation has the desired effect may be moderated by an individual's internal representation of secularism. That is, as a reaction to self-affirmation, people may flexibly endorse their feelings towards secularism ('ideological malleability') to either reduce prejudice, or maintain and justify it. This study is the first to consider whether this effect depends on a participant's attitude that French citizens should be able to practice their religion in public places ('historical' secularism), or that they should hide it in public ('new' secularism). Alnajjar et al. present a study design (i.e., three-way mixed ANOVA) in which they self-affirmed French participants (N=602) with differing internal representations of secularism. Study results demonstrated that a historical representation of secularism is associated with less effective and behavioural prejudice towards religious groups compared to a new representation of secularism. Participants' prejudiced attitudes were larger against Muslims than against Christians. It was unexpected that new secularism was linked to negative attitudes towards religious minority groups given that the French government mandated by law that religion should not be practiced in public. Across three self-affirmation conditions (i.e., self-affirmation on a threat-related value, a threat-unrelated value, and no self-affirmation), the authors found no evidence that self-affirmation affected prejudice against

religious groups, and there was no evidence that the effectiveness of self-affirmation depended on a participants representation of secularism, which contradicted their pre-registered hypotheses. This paper adds conclusive and sufficiently-powered results to a body of literature with mixed evidence for the effectiveness of self-affirmation. It increased the robustness of this study that the design considered desirability concerns and employed multiple manipulation checks. By considering nuances of public opinion towards secularism in France specifically, the authors identified a unique opportunity to investigate ideological malleability, which can be challenging to conceive and directly measure. The Stage 2 manuscript was evaluated by two experts who performed in-depth peer review across one round of revisions. There were no substantial changes to the introduction or the methods, the analyses were conducted as planned and additional analyses were labelled as exploratory. The revised manuscript was judged to meet the Stage 2 criteria and was awarded a positive recommendation. **URL to the preregistered Stage 1 protocol:** <https://osf.io/f4wm6> **Level of bias control achieved:** Level 6. *No part of the data or evidence that was used to answer the research question was generated until after IPA.* **List of eligible PCI RR-friendly journals:**

- [Collabra Psychology](#)
- [International Review of Social Psychology](#)
- [Peer Community Journal](#)
- [PeerJ](#)
- [Royal Society Open Science](#)
- [Social Psychological Bulletin](#)
- [Studia Psychologica](#)
- [Swiss Psychology Open](#)

References:

1. Alnajjar, Y., Badea, C., & Sternberg, B. (2024). Self-Affirmation and Prejudice Against Religious Groups: The Role of Ideological Malleability [Stage 2]. Acceptance of Version 2 by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://osf.io/st47h>

Reviews

Evaluation round #1

DOI or URL of the preprint: <https://osf.io/prk72>

Version of the preprint: 1

Authors' reply, 28 November 2024

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Decision by [Anna Elisabeth Fürtjes](#) , posted 25 November 2024, validated 25 November 2024

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Dear Yara Alnajjar,

Thank you for submitting your Stage 2 submission of "Self-Affirmation and Prejudice Against Religious Groups: The Role of Ideological Malleability".

I sincerely apologize for the delay on this. It has been exceptionally difficult to secure reviewers over the summer. I have now received responses from two expert reviewers. Out of these two, only one reviewer who originally evaluated your Stage 1 submission, kindly returned. Their feedback was positive and confirmed that the requirements of a Stage 2 submission were met. However, I would like to ask you respond to the remarks by the first returning reviewer who raises some interesting discussion points.

I look forward to receiving your response, and would like to once again apologise for the delay on this.

Best wishes,

Anna Fürtjes

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Reviewed by [Zoltan Dienes](#) , 23 November 2024

I checked the requirements of a Stage 2 were met: There were no substantial changes to the introduction or method, the planned analyses were those conducted, additional analyses were labelled as exploratory, and the discussion is reasonable given the results, focusing on the planned analyses (as does the abstract). This paper makes an important contribution to understanding the role of self affirmation to prejudice reduction in failing to support what sounded like a perfectly reasonable hypothesis concerning mixed findings in the literature.