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Religious ambivalence: Suppression of pro-social attitudes toward asylum seekers by 
Right-Wing Authoritarianism

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Abstract

A survey of 168 white Australian community members examined whether ambivalence towards certain social groups by some religious individuals constituted a suppression effect in which authoritarian motivated prejudice suppressed more pro-social attitudes toward asylum seekers. Using mediation analysis, it was found that Christian religious identity was not significantly associated with prejudice at a bivariate level. However, when Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) was taken into account, Christians (compared with non-Christians) were less likely to hold negative attitudes towards asylum seekers in Australia. Inclusion of acculturation ideologies (assimilation, multiculturalism and colour-blindness) in the models indicated that the suppression effect was specific to RWA rather than due to other intergroup attitudes. However, findings suggest that multiculturalism may be one proximal indicator of Christian prosociality.
Does Christian religious identity predict prosocial or antisocial attitudes toward members of marginalised social groups? Previous research has found that both attitudes may coexist among people with high levels of Christian religious identity (e.g., Blogowska, Lambert & Saroglou, 2013; Blogowska & Saroglou, 2011; Hall, Matz & Wood, 2010) and points to a number of conditions that determine how religious people will respond toward different groups (Saroglou, 2013). Researchers have in fact identified a paradox in which religions that tend to endorse notions of “brotherhood” are those most associated with prejudice (Hall et al., 2010; Mavor, Louise & Laythe, 2011). It is still unclear what drives such differing responses, although previous research indicates a strong link between Christian religious identity and authoritarianism (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004), and authoritarianism is a key construct that dictates antisocial or prejudicial responses (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2001).

Authoritarianism is a major social attitude construct characterised by an ideological predilection for security, conformity and tradition (Duckitt, 2001; Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002). Evidence supports a strong association between Christian religious identity and authoritarian ideology; however, such a link would also seem to conflict with prosocial norms shared across many, if not all, religions. Prejudice perpetrated by those high in authoritarianism, however, is directed only at those groups seen as threatening to social stability and the security of the ingroup or majority group (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). The present study aims to examine the role of authoritarianism in shaping attitudes of Christian participants towards asylum seekers – specifically proposing a suppression effect in which authoritarian aspects of Christian religious identity cancel out pro-social attitudes toward this group.

**Conceptualising authoritarianism**
The possibility of a link between religion and prejudice has been acknowledged from at least the 1950s (Allport, 1954; Allport & Ross, 1967; Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993), with many studies reporting positive associations between Christian religious identity and measures of prejudice (e.g., Hunsberger, 1996; Mavor, et al., 2011; Wylie & Forest, 1992). Furthermore, priming Christian words has been shown to increase racial prejudice relative to priming neutral words (Johnson, Rowatt & LaBouff, 2010), and still further research finds that fundamentalist Christians are more prejudiced against both gays and lesbians and Muslim Australians compared with other Christians who are more questioning of their belief systems (James, Griffiths & Pedersen, 2011). Researchers, however, have not failed to notice that religions, somewhat paradoxically, tend to actively espouse positive values of love and equality. Among attempts to determine what aspects or types of religion are most likely to determine prejudice, the construct of Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer 1981) has emerged as an ideological determinant of particular importance (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004; Wylie & Forest, 1992).

Duckitt (2001) proposed a model of cognitive-motivational processes underlying generalised prejudice that provides a theoretical framework for understanding why RWA and Christian religious identity might be related in determining prejudice towards certain groups. The Dual Process Model (DPM) of ideology and prejudice suggests that RWA represents one of two principal dimensions of ideological beliefs (the other being Social Dominance Orientation; SDO) that motivates prejudice as a means of maintaining social control and security in response to perceptions of the social world as dangerous (Perry, Sibley & Duckitt, 2013; Sibley, Wilson & Duckitt, 2007). According to the DPM, specific combinations of personality traits and social contexts (including characteristics of target groups) jointly determine the manifestation of both generalized prejudice and more specific political ideology indicators. According to the DPM, RWA and SDO reflect motivational goals
stemming primarily from two distinct aspects of personality – low Openness to Experience (as well as high Conscientiousness) in the case of RWA and low Agreeableness in the case of SDO (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Individuals low in Openness to Experience should value clear and unambiguous moral prescripts and rules that maintain the status quo (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) and people low in Openness to Experience are therefore sensitive to threats to their security and to social stability. Consequently, they should become increasingly motivated to seek group-based social cohesion, control and collective security – motives that are indexed by RWA (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Religion arguably provides an RWA-relevant ideological framework by promoting and maintaining cohesion and security (Hoverd & Sibley, 2010; Robertson, 2006).

**Religious ambivalence**

Religion is certainly linked to authoritarianism, as well as to prejudice (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Hunsberger, Owusu & Duck, 1999; Laythe, Finkel, Bringle & Kirkpatrick, 2002; Laythe, Finkel & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004; Wylie & Forest, 1992). Moulian (1979), for example, discussed the use of religion by authoritarian regimes to rally followers and to justify their actions, and RWA (but not SDO) has been shown to predict support for religious education in public school curriculums (Perry & Sibley, 2013). Fundamentalism has been described as the manifestation of RWA in religious ideology (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005; Hall et al., 2010) with Hall et al. (2010) demonstrating in a recent meta-analysis that RWA fully mediates the association between religious fundamentalism and racist attitudes.

Recent research is beginning to explore more complex associations between religion, authoritarianism and prejudice. Van Pachterbeke, Freyer and Saroglou (2011), for example, showed that priming religion leads authoritarians to favour impersonal social norms to the
detriment of interpersonal and care-based prosociality (see also Clobert & Saroglou, 2013). Pearte, Renk and Negy, 2013 reported that authoritarianism mediates associations of religiosity and conservatism with prejudice toward homosexuals, and this form of prejudice was only perpetrated by religious fundamentalists to the extent that target groups were judged to threaten their personally held values (Jackson & Esses, 1997). Likewise, Brandt and Reyna (2014) showed that authoritarianism mediated religious fundamentalism and prejudice toward African Americans, but only when prejudice was measured as symbolic racism which frames African Americans as violating social values (Brandt & Reyna, 2014). Religion, however, has not been as consistently related to prejudice as might be expected from its close ties with RWA and evidence also suggests Christian religious identity could be associated with reduced prejudice, or pro-social attitudes, once authoritarianism is adjusted for.

Hall et al. (2010) examined associations between racism and social-cognitive motivations related to religion across 55 independent studies. In eight of these studies, the authors reported a negative average association (random $r = -.12, 95\% \text{ CI} = -.19 \text{ to } -.04$) between fundamentalism and prejudice when RWA was adjusted for, compared to a positive association when the effects of RWA were not adjusted for (random $r = .17, 95\% \text{ CI} = .09 \text{ to } .25$). Hall et al. (2010) concluded that fundamentalism is thus the manifestation of RWA in religion because “religious fundamentalism is associated with a rigid, dogmatic cognitive style that preferences one truth and one way of being over others and thereby promotes in-group favouritism and out-group derogation” (p. 134). This is consistent with definitions of RWA, which indexes deference to authorities, and conformity to traditional moral and religious norms and values (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt, 2001).

Hall et al. (2010), however, did not dwell on the implications of fundamentalism and prejudice being negatively correlated when RWA was adjusted for. This was only a weak effect, and only eight of the 55 studies included in the meta-analysis provided adequate data,
and, moreover, Mavor et al. (2011) are dubious that this negative association is meaningful, arguing that some aspects of the RWA scale are too similar to the religious fundamentalism construct. No positive association was found in their own study when using the sub-dimension of RWA that did not overlap with fundamentalism. However, the literature does suggest that Christian religious identity confers ambiguous attitudes toward certain outgroups (Hall et al., 2010; Saroglou, 2013), and the possibility of a prosocial component of Christian religious identity that emerges when the conditions of RWA are met warrants further investigation.

The findings of Hall et al. (2010) suggest a suppression effect of RWA on religious prosocial values, in that religious people hold ambiguous attitudes toward certain social groups with the antisocial component of these attitudes being driven primarily by RWA-related motives for ingroup security and social stability. The present study aims to formally test this suppression effect using mediation analysis. This research will also investigate whether the meta-analytic trend is evident in Australia (compared to the more thoroughly researched USA) by assessing the suppression of prosocial attitudes toward asylum seekers as held by white Christian Australians. The present study will also employ a measure of religious identification rather than fundamentalism, to avoid spurious association with RWA (see Mavor et al., 2011).

Religion may be associated with prejudice or tolerance towards certain groups more so than others, with these distinctions based on religious teachings (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993; Herek, 1987; Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, & Tsang, 2009). In Rowatt et al. (2009) for example, religiosity was strongly positively associated with prejudice toward homosexuals, but negligibly ($\beta = -.07, t = -2.46, p < .02$) associated with general racism toward three historically disadvantaged ethnic groups in the USA. The authors proposed a selective intolerance hypothesis, suggesting that homosexuals are targets of religiously
motivated prejudice because this group violates Christian norms and teachings and are considered sinful (see also Bassett et al., 2000). This is consistent with Duckitt’s (2001) DPM which suggests that RWA-motivated prejudice is directed at groups seen as not only dangerous, but also as deviant and in violation of mainstream social norms and mores (see Duckitt & Sibley, 2007).

Although not central to their study, Rowatt et al. (2009) reported a positive bivariate association between religion and racial prejudice that became negative in a multivariate model including RWA, which is consistent with previous research (Laythe et al., 2001; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004; Tsang & Rowatt, 2007). These findings suggest a suppression effect of RWA on the association between religion and positive racial attitudes. Specifically, religious individuals should be motivated by religious teachings to engage in pro-social behaviour (e.g., Pichon, Boccato & Saroglou, 2007; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007), but also be motivated by authoritarian values to engage in prejudice in order to maintain cohesion and security (Hall et al., 2010; Hoverd & Sibley, 2010).

We argue that acculturation attitudes may be one alternative source of attitudes that mediate Christian prejudice toward immigrant groups. Acculturation ideologies are being increasingly studied internationally (Levin et al., 2012; Plaut, Thomas & Goren, 2009; Rosenthal & Levy, 2010; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011) and three such ideologies common to the literature are multiculturalism, colour-blindness and assimilationist perspectives. Multicultural ideology refers to “a belief that differences among racial and ethnic groups should be recognized and appreciated”, colour-blind ideology refers to a belief that everybody should be “judged as individual human beings – without regard to race or ethnicity”, while assimilationist ideology refers “to the belief that the members of immigrant groups should conform to mainstream society” (Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007, p. 618). Assimilation is expected to be positively associated with prejudice as this
ideology favours prevailing social hierarchies, whereas colour-blindness and multiculturalism should be negatively related with prejudice as these serve to attenuate hierarchy (Levin et al., 2012). By including measures of acculturation the present study aims to examine whether the proposed suppression effect on pro-social Christian attitudes is specific to RWA or whether the effect generalises to other racism-related ideologies.

Present study

The present study tests a hypothesised suppression effect of RWA on pro-social Christian attitudes toward asylum seekers in Australia. First, using multiple regression analysis we examine the hypothesis that Christian identity is associated with less prejudice in a model including RWA but not in a baseline model including only demographic variables. We also include measures of acculturation in the regression model at step two in order to test if RWA explains variance in prejudice independently of that explained by acculturation beliefs. Using mediation models, we will then formally test our suppression hypothesis that Christian religious identity should operate both directly (and negatively) and indirectly (and positively) through RWA on prejudiced attitudes toward marginalised groups. In other words, RWA should suppress the negative effect of Christian religious identity on prejudice (i.e., the pro-social component of Christian religious identity). We further posit that there may a significant indirect effect of Christian identity via multiculturalism as this ideological belief could function as a proximal indicator of pro-social Christian beliefs.

Method

Participants

A total of 168 people from Perth, Western Australia participated in this study. The mean age of the sample was 40 years with a range from 18 to 78 years, and there were more
female (55.7%) than male (44.3%) participants. All participants were from a White European background, with 32.7% holding or currently completing bachelor’s degrees, while a further 15.8% had achieved or were completing higher university degrees. Of those who stated their political orientation, 26.1% were left leaning, 34.8% were right leaning and 33.3% were centre. Just under half of the participants (44%) reported being Christian, 49% reported no religion, and 7.2% reported other religions.

**Procedure**

Using a snowball/convenience sample with six people collecting the data (see Acknowledgements), participants were drawn from the Perth metropolitan area in Western Australia during June and July 2012. Participants read brief information about the study requirements and then completed socio-demographic measures followed by the ideological attitude scales, and prejudice measure.

**Measures**

For all measures, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Items measuring each construct were averaged to derive a scale score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of each construct.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

*Support for assimilation* was measured using seven items devised for the present study based on our reading of previous research (e.g., Berry & Kalin, 1995; Khan, 2009; Paradies & Cunningham, 2008; Turoy-Smith, 2009): E.g., “If immigrants expect to live and work among us, then they are the ones who should change to fit into our culture”. Three items indexing *support for multiculturalism* items were devised for the present study based on previous research (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Klei...
RWA SUPPRESSES RELIGIOUS PRO-SOCIALITY

Smith, 2009): E.g., “Accepting cultural and racial diversity is a fundamental characteristic of Australian society”. Three items indexing support for colour-blindness were devised for the present study based on previous research (e.g., Levin et al., 2012). We note that, in Australia, the term “cultural background” is often used to indicate race, ethnicity and/or religion (Walton et al. 2014).

Prejudice towards asylum seekers was measured using 18 items measuring attitudes toward asylum seekers taken from Pedersen, Attwell & Heveli (2005): E.g. “Asylum seekers are holding Australia to ransom by resorting to violence such as rioting”.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism was measured using a shortened eight-item version of Altemeyer’s (1981) original scale, adapted by Perry and Sibley (2012): E.g. “The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas”.

Reliability for all scales was satisfactory for the RWA (Altemeyer, 1981), assimilation and multicultural scales and for the scales measuring attitudes toward asylum seekers (between $\alpha = 0.78$ to $0.93$). Reliability was low, however, for the colour-blind scale ($\alpha = 0.61$), which is under the usually accepted minimum alpha of 0.70 (Bernardi, 1994). Deleting items would not have increased reliability. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach’s alpha reliability scores are provided in Table 1.

Religious identification. Participants were also asked their religion (if any). Response categories were provided for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and no religion. There was also a box where they could provide information regarding another religion not specified above. These data were coded as $1 = $Christian, $0 = $not Christian.
Socio-demographic information concerning participants’ gender (1 = male; 2 = female), age in years, education level (1 = did not complete secondary school to 6 = higher degree) and their political orientation (1 = strongly left through to 5 = strongly right; 6 = don’t care) was also collected. Previous research has suggested that these socio-demographic variables are related to prejudice. In particular, prejudice has been linked with low levels of education and right-wing/conservative political affiliation (Pedersen & Griffiths, 2012).

Results

As shown in Table 1, there were moderate to high bivariate associations of prejudice with all three acculturation ideologies and with RWA. Participants who scored high on prejudice were more likely to have lower levels of formal education and to be politically right-wing. There was, crucially, no bivariate association between prejudice and Christian religious identity however. Next, political position, education and Christian religious identity were entered in a multivariate regression model predicting prejudice, with RWA and the three acculturation ideologies entered in the model at step two.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

As shown in Table 2, lower levels of education and a conservative political orientation predicted more prejudice toward asylum seekers at step one. At step two, RWA and all three acculturation scales were entered in the full model to examine the extent that these ideology variables explained variance in prejudice beyond Christian religious identity (while adjusting for the other demographic variables). In the full model, education and political orientation were no longer related to prejudice; however, consistent with a suppression effect, Christian religious identity became negatively associated (i.e., Christian religious identity predicted lower prejudice toward asylum seekers). The two-step model also allowed us to examine whether Christian religious identity predicted less prejudice when
RWA was adjusted for, consistent with a suppression effect. In the full model, RWA and assimilation predicted more prejudice toward asylum seekers, whereas multiculturalism predicted less. A significant amount of variance in prejudice towards asylum seekers was explained by the demographic variables ($R^2 = .237$) at step one as well as by the full model at step two ($R^2 = .584$).

**RWA mediates religion**

We formally examined the hypothesised suppression effect of RWA on the association between Christian religious identity and prejudice towards asylum seekers using a bootstrap method for testing mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Suppression is said to occur when the relationship between an independent and dependent variable increases when a third variable is simultaneously entered in the model (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000). Suppression can be examined using techniques for formally testing mediation (MacKinnon et al., 2000), and here we employed a 5,000 bootstrap resampling procedure that does not rely on an assumption of normality, unlike previous approaches for examining mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). If suppression occurs, the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should be larger than the total effect when the indirect effect of the independent variable (through the suppressor variable) is taken into account.

As shown in Figure 1, the total effect (not controlling for RWA) of Christian religious identity on prejudice toward asylum seekers was non-significant ($\beta = -.122$, $se = .156$, $p = .436$). However, the direct effect (i.e., adjusting for RWA) of Christian religious identity on prejudice toward asylum seekers was significant ($\beta = -.484$, $se = .150$, $p = .001$). A significant indirect effect (calculated by multiplying the effect of Christian religious identity on RWA by...
the effect of RWA on prejudice) suggests that RWA is a significant mediator/suppressor of
the relationship between Christian religious identity and prejudice toward asylum seekers ($\beta$
$= .363, se = .100, 95\% CI = .196 to .593). The results supported our hypothesis that pro-
social Christian attitudes toward asylum seekers are countered by opposing effects of RWA
as a negative direct effect of Christian identity on prejudice was only observed once the
indirect effect via RWA was taken into account.

We also examined a multiple mediation model in which RWA and all three
acculturation ideologies were entered simultaneously as mediators. The coefficients in the
RWA pathway did not change substantially suggesting that the component of Christian
prejudice that is motivated by authoritarian ideology is distinct from beliefs about
acculturation. Of the three acculturation ideologies, only multiculturalism produced a
significant indirect effect which was negative and small ($\beta = -.055, se = .034, 95\% CI = -.140
to -.006). Therefore multiculturalism may function as a proximal, albeit inexact, indicator of
pro-social Christian attitudes toward asylum seekers.

**Discussion**

Allport (1954; see also Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950)
described a contradiction between endorsement of pro-social religious norms, including
humanitarianism and equality, with an apparently simultaneous endorsement of prejudice. In
over half a century of research investigating religiously motivated prejudice, particular social-
cognitive constructs have emerged that seem to motivate religious identity, as well as racism.
Such ideological motives include social conformity, dogmatism, and respect for tradition,
which are captured by the broader ideological dimension of RWA (Altemeyer, 1981; Duckitt,
2001). Another set of more pro-social religious motives should mitigate prejudice. Although
research is beginning to explore these more complicated connections between Christian
religious identity and prejudice, the present study is the first to formally test a suppression
effect in which RWA-based prejudice and pro-social attitudes suppress one another at the bivariate level for those identifying as Christian. As summarised below, we showed that suppression occurs because RWA mediates the negative effect of Christian religious identity on prejudice toward asylum seekers in Australia.

In the present study, RWA significantly and consistently predicted prejudice in line with previous research with respect to other social groups seen as dangerous and threatening to the status quo (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; 2010; Pedersen & Walker, 1997). Acculturation ideologies also predicted variance in prejudice towards asylum seekers independently of RWA. While Christian religious identity was not associated with prejudice toward asylum seekers at the bivariate level, Christian participants were less prejudiced toward asylum seekers than non-Christians once the effect of RWA was taken into account using multivariate regression. As we predicted, Christian religious identity does not correlate with prejudice when anti-social (RWA-driven) and pro-social components of Christian religious identity operate in combination.

Mediation models supported our hypothesised suppression effect as Christian religious identity operated both directly on prejudice, and indirectly through RWA in opposing directions. In other words, the anti-social RWA component of Christian religious identity suppressed a pro-social component in determining prejudice. Our findings also indicated that acculturation beliefs characterised by multiculturalism may be one example of these prosocial beliefs as Christian identity was indirectly associated with less prejudice via this construct. As we elaborate below, there is a need for follow-up studies to examine other alternative pro-social attitude variables as mediators that might better capture Christian or religious pro-sociality.

Christians may be motivated by conflicting pro-social and anti-social authoritarian values toward certain social groups. We argue that asylum seekers may constitute such a
group as refugees in Australia are portrayed as vulnerable and in need of help (Hartley, Pedersen, Fleay & Hoffman, 2013) as well as culturally different and perhaps unpredictable and threatening (Suhnan, Pedersen & Hartley, 2012). It is quite possible that Christians hold conflicting opinions about asylum seekers; on the one hand (RWA-driven) that they are dangerous and threatening to social cohesion and security, and on the other hand (pro-social Christian-principles driven) that they should be welcomed and aided (e.g., Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993; Herek, 1987), particularly in accordance with a multiculturalism approach to acculturation.

**Demographic differences and acculturation**

The findings also suggested a number of demographic and acculturation-ideology differences predicting prejudice toward asylum seekers. Politically right-wing participants were more prejudiced toward asylum seekers, consistent with previous research that finds a relationship between prejudice and right-wing political orientation (e.g., Suhnan et al., 2012) and which indicates that the asylum seeker debate is highly politicised (McKay, Thomas, & Kneebone, 2011). This association was no longer significant in the full model adjusting for the effects of RWA (and the acculturation ideologies), however, which suggests that political opposition or support for asylum seekers is divided along an RWA dimension. In other words, conservatives are prejudiced toward asylum seekers because they are higher in RWA (and probably also SDO; see, for example, Perry & Sibley’s 2013 findings regarding attitudes toward immigrants in New Zealand).

The independent associations of multiculturalism and assimilation with prejudice in the present study support the argument that these constructs are not simply opposite ends of a single dimension of acculturation ideology. Indeed, within Berry’s widely utilised acculturation model, integration involves both retaining one’s own migrant culture (i.e.,
multiculturalism) as well as adopting (i.e., assimilating) into a new host culture (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Van de Vijver, Breugelmans, & Schalk-Soekar, 2008).

Limitations and concluding comments

Mavor et al. (2011) have argued that a failure to recognise the complexities of the RWA construct has been problematic for research investigating Christian religious identity and prejudice, arguing that RWA is a composite construct and its components relate differently to aspects of religion and prejudice. They also argued that supposedly independent constructs, including religious fundamentalism, are measured within the RWA scale raising the possibility of spurious variance explained by this overlapping scale content, rather than by a genuine association between religiosity and RWA as independent constructs. In particular, the conventionalism component of RWA is more strongly associated with religious fundamentalism than it is with the aggression/submission component, which in turn is more strongly correlated with racism than with the conventionalism component (Mavor et al., 2011).

As Mavor et al. (2011; see also Mavor, MacLeod, Boal & Louis, 2009) point out, this is particularly problematic in cases where fundamentalism appears to be associated with prosociality when RWA is taken into account because prejudice may be related to one component of RWA whereas fundamentalism is related to another (Mavor et al., 2011). In their own study, fundamentalism was negatively associated with racial prejudice when the full RWA scale was included in the model, but this association was non-significant when only the aggression/submission component of RWA was included. They argued that the prosocial direction of effects observed in Hall et al.’s (2010) meta-analysis are due to content overlap and that “at best this effect is not a significant one but in many cases fundamentalism will be significantly associated with prejudice even after controlling for the component of RWA that is most associated with prejudice” (Mavor et al., 2011, p. 38).
Including this aggression/submission component of RWA reduced the negative association between fundamentalism and racism to non-significance, but did not reverse the effect in Mavor et al.’s (2011) own findings however. Moreover, the present study demonstrated that a small positive effect of Christian religious identity is still apparent when measuring the independent variable as religious identification (Christian or otherwise) rather than fundamentalism. Given that Christian religious identity is a multivalent construct that should ideally be measured with multiple items, future research should seek to replicate this finding with more sophisticated measures. However, asking participants whether they identify as Christian or otherwise is qualitatively distinct from the ideological content of the RWA scale, as identity can be considered a descriptive belief about oneself, which is distinct from prescriptive ideological beliefs (about the way things should be) such as RWA (see Perry & Sibley, 2010). Moreover, identity and ideology are qualitatively distinct because the former does not require a value judgment (as is the case with problematic measures of fundamentalism) – thus the issue of content overlap that Mavor et al. (2011) identified when using indexes of fundamentalism is avoided.

In the present paper, multiculturalism operated as a possible indirect pathway of pro-social Christian attitudes, although this effect was weak and therefore it is important to examine alternative proxies of pro-social Christian attitudes. Religiosity has been associated, for example, with increased empathy, although not across the board. For example, religious participants who believed in a merciful God were higher in empathy and those who believe in a God of justice were lower (Francis, Croft & Pyke, 2012). Duriez (2004) has also shown that empathy and most of its sub-dimensions are associated with symbolic (versus literal) styles of religiosity, but was not associated with simply identifying as religious. A more recent meta-analysis of 75 samples indicated that Christian religiosity is associated with a motivation for self-enhancement (measured as social desirable responding), particularly in cultural contexts
that place a higher value on religion (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010). Presumably, including a precise indicator of pro-social attitudes would fully mediate the direct effect of Christian identity on prejudice.

Pro-social Christian attitudes toward asylum seekers may therefore be mediated by differences in a more general motivational goal for self-enhancement rather than trait differences such as empathy. RWA is also considered an indicator of underlying motivational goals – in this case for security and social stability – and it is possible to see how these differing goals could be conflicted, with Christians motivated, on the one hand, by social threat and, on the other, by high social desirability demands. It is clear that subsequent research should examine self-enhancement as a mediator of the pro-social effect of Christian identity on attitudes toward asylum seekers; however, these studies could further examine competing motivating pathways by manipulating (a) the ostensible value placed on religion in the society and (b) the socially threatening characteristics of a given asylum seeker group. The former should increase the strength of the pro-social self-enhancement pathway and the latter should increase the anti-social RWA pathway.

Another more minor limitation of the study was the use of Australia-specific terminology in our scale items measuring colour-blindness, which may not generalise across contexts or disciplines in which colour-blindness is measured specifically as attitudes toward race or skin colour. Whether cultural background equates race is a vexed question. Some authors (e.g., Main, 2012) maintain that “culture is not race” (p. 662). Yet others argue that cultural background is construed as an intersection of colour, ethnicity and race in Australia (Walton et al., 2014). We measured cultural background rather than specifically referring to race in line with previous research items (e.g., Levin et al., 2012), and while participants are likely to have answered our questions thinking of race, we emphasise the need for future
research to develop and employ standardised measures of acculturation that can be
implemented internationally and will extend our findings across different contexts.

Consistent with recent perspectives on religiously motivated prejudice (e.g., Hall et al., 2010; Saroglou, 2013), religious individuals appear to hold ambivalent attitudes toward certain social groups. The present study suggests that negative attitudes are driven by authoritarian or aspects of Christian religious identity, here captured by RWA. Previous research (Hall et al., 2010) has indicated that religious individuals may also hold higher pro-social attitudes toward marginalised groups relative to non-religious individuals, but that such attitudes are weaker and thus overshadowed by authoritarian motivated prejudice. Using mediation models, this study has demonstrated formally for the first time that white Christian Australians have prosocial attitudes toward asylum seekers that are suppressed by these participants’ high levels of RWA. This pro-sociality may be due to Christian-specific motivations driven by multicultural values, or, as discussed, possibly higher levels of empathy or motivations for self-enhancement.

The present findings have important implications for addressing Christianity-based prejudices. Religious identity consists of ambivalent attitudes toward certain social groups, and pro-social aspects of this identity appear to combat authoritarian motivations that drive prejudice. However, in practice these processes are intertwined and cancel one another out so that Christian identification is not clearly associated with prejudice. The justification-suppression model of prejudice suggests that expressions of prejudice depend on motivations to suppress prejudice, and that ideologies such as RWA facilitate prejudice by reducing the motivation to suppress, therefore justifying the expression of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). In other words, ideologies and other individual differences are not so much causes of prejudice, but “releasers” of existing latent prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Therefore, focussing Christians’ attention on aspects of disadvantaged social groups that do
not conflict with RWA motivations for social security and stability would theoretically facilitate their pro-social suppression of existing prejudices. For example, religious fundamentalists showed tolerance toward African Americans when prejudice toward this group was framed as less justified, but when prejudice was justified (i.e., African Americans were presented as violating values), fundamentalists were more prejudiced (Brandt & Reyna, 2014). Emphasising pro-social motivational goals such as self-enhancement and a multicultural society may also be useful avenues for reducing (or at least redirecting) prejudice.
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Table 1
Bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics for all variables

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Mean
|       | 3.91 | 5.30 | 4.83 | 4.42 | 2.97 | 0.44 | 39.96 | 1.56 | 3.07 | 3.85 |

Standard deviation
|       | 1.21 | 1.38 | 1.33 | 1.35 | 1.10 | 0.51 | 15.26 | 0.50 | 1.03 | 1.66 |

Cronbach’s alpha
|       | 0.91 | 0.82 | 0.61 | 0.89 | 0.78 | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    |

** p < .01 * p < .05
Table 2
Hierarchical regression predicting prejudice toward asylum seekers

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* p<.05  ** p<.01
Figure 1 Standardised regression coefficients for indirect effect analysis (n = 166). The value in parentheses represents the direct effect of Christian religious identity on prejudice toward asylum seekers while adjusting for the indirect effect via RWA (also adjusting for indirect effects via multiculturalism, assimilation and colour-blindness). **p < 0.01
Appendix

Acculturation scale items:

Support for Assimilation

(1) If immigrants expect to live and work among us, then they are the ones who should change to fit into our culture.

(2) I am concerned that Australia is giving away too much to ensure people of all cultures are not offended by our customs, religion, and way of life.

(3) Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their old ways.

(4) Migrants to Australia should dress and behave like Australians rather than trying to change Australian customs, values and our lifestyle.

(5) There are too many people from different cultures who don’t want to fit in to Australian standards and laws.

(6) Ethnic minorities in Australia should be free to maintain their own way of life (reversed).

(7) Recent immigrants should have as much say about the future of Australia as people who were born and raised here (reversed).

Support for Multiculturalism

(1) Accepting cultural and racial diversity is a fundamental characteristic of Australian society.

(2) Over the years, it has been shown that migrant cultures combine with mainstream culture to make Australia a better place.

(3) People of all nationalities have all worked together to create Australia as it is today.

Support for Colour-blindness

(1) People are basically the same, regardless of their cultural background.

(2) I never really notice the cultural background of other people.

(3) Everyone should be treated the same, regardless of their cultural background.