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Community Attitudes toward Refugees: A Northern Australian Case

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INTRODUCTION

- **Globally**

- By the end of 2012 there were an estimated 15.4 million refugees

- **Within Australia**

- In 2010 over 750,000 refugees had been admitted into the country since nationhood
- In 2010-2011, 13,799 refugees entered Australia (UNHCR, 2013)
- While most refugees are settled in capital cities, a small proportion are resettled in regional and rural areas.
- Despite this, research on attitudes toward refugees among those living in regional and rural Australian towns is sparse

INTRODUCTION

- This study seeks to examine the relationship between realistic threat, symbolic threat and prejudice toward refugees among those living in Townsville
 - **Prejudice** – A negative attitude toward a category of persons, for example, people from refugee background.
 - **Classical racism** – an overt and blatant form of prejudice
 - E.g., “Immigrants do not keep their homes tidy.”
 - **Modern racism** – a more subtle and covert form of prejudice
 - E.g., “Immigrants are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.” (Akrami, Ekehammar & Araya, 2000; Akrami, Ekehammar, Claesson & Sonnander, 2006).
 - Generally speaking expressing classical prejudice is less socially desirable than expressing modern prejudice.

INTRODUCTION

- **Realistic Threat** – Perceived threats to the in-group's (North Queenslanders') political and economic power, social standing and physical well-being posed by the out-group (refugees) (Stephan, Diaz-Loving, Duran, 2000)
 - E.g., “Refugees will be a drain on our welfare system.”
- **Symbolic Threat** – Perceived threats to the in-group's worldview (morals , values, norms, standards, beliefs and attitudes) posed by the out-group (Stephan, Diaz-Loving, Duran, 2000)
 - E.g., “Islamic refugees' values are incompatible with Australian culture.”

INTRODUCTION

- There is a body of empirical research indicating that both **realistic threat and symbolic threat are predictive of prejudice** (Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow & Ryan, 2005; Stephan, Diaz-Loving & Duran, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan, Ybarra, Martinez, Schwarzwald & Tur-Kaspa, 1988)
- Velasco-Gonzalez, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe (2008) found **symbolic**, but not realistic, **threat to influence anti-Islamic sentiments among Dutch teenagers**.

INTRODUCTION

- Schweitzer, Perkoludis, Krome, Ludlow & Ryan (2005) found both realistic and symbolic threat to be significant predictors of prejudice (accounting for 77% of the variance in participants' prejudice scores), with **realistic threat being found to be the stronger predictor** of the two

HYPOTHESES

- The current research also seeks to examine the way realistic threat and symbolic threat differently influence classical, modern and general prejudice
 - H1: Prejudicial attitudes, classical racism, modern racism, realistic threat and symbolic threat would be positively correlated to one another
 - H2: Participants would display modern racism to a greater degree than classical racism
 - H3: Both realistic threat and symbolic threat would be significant predictors of all three types of prejudice measured

METHODS: PARTICIPANTS

- The sample consisted of 348 people, between 18 and 70 years of age ($M = 33$, $SD = 13.043$).

Participants' characteristics (N=348)

	Gender		Age			Education			
	Male	Female	18-35	36-55	55+	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Bachelor+ degrees
N	120	228	212	112	24	15	59	138	136
% Total (%)	34.5	65.5	60.9	32.2	6.9	4.3	17	39.7	39.1
	100		100			100			

METHODS: INSTRUMENTS

- Three types of prejudice were measured by
 - Realistic and Symbolic Threat Scales (Schweizter et al. 2005)
 - Classical and Modern Racial Prejudice Scales (Akrami, Ekehammar & Araya, 2000)
 - Prejudicial Attitudes Survey (Stephan et al., 1998)

METHODS: PROCEDURE

- Ethical approval from the Human Research Committee, JCU
- Online survey (SurveyGizmo)
- Pen & paper
- Analysis: IBM SPSS Statistics 20

RESULTS: H1 WAS SUPPORTED

H1: Prejudicial attitudes, classical racism, modern racism, realistic threat and symbolic threat would be positively correlated to one another

	1	2	3	4	5
M	41.94	20.47	24.23	34.39	42.04
SD	14.28	5.12	5.67	13.22	11.85
1. Prejudicial Attitudes	-	.725**	.693**	.622**	.590**
2. Classical Racism		-	.748**	.690**	.658**
3, Modern Racism			-	.763**	.698**
4. Realistic Threat				-	.731**
5. Symbolic Threat					-

**** p<.01 (2-tailed)**

RESULTS: H2 WAS SUPPORTED

H2: Participants would display modern racism to a greater degree than classical racism

Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences								
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
			Lower	Upper				
Modern Racism - Classical Racism	3.76	3.86	.21	3.35	4.17	18.15	347	.000

RESULTS: H3 WAS SUPPORTED

H3-1: Both realistic threat and symbolic threat would be significant predictors of **prejudicial attitudes**

Model Summary^c

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.62 ^a	.39	.39	11.20	.39	218.41	1	346	.000
2	.65 ^b	.43	.42	10.85	.039	23.61	1	345	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Realistic Threat

b. Predictors: (Constant), Realistic Threat, Symbolic Threat

c. Dependent Variable: Prejudicial Attitudes

RESULTS: H3 WAS SUPPORTED

H3-2: Both realistic threat and symbolic threat would be significant predictors of **classical racism**

Model Summary^c

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.69 ^a	.48	.48	3.71	.48	314.76	1	346	.000
2	.73 ^b	.53	.52	3.53	.05	37.04	1	345	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Realistic Threat

b. Predictors: (Constant), Realistic Threat, Symbolic Threat

c. Dependent Variable: Classical Racism

RESULTS: H3 WAS SUPPORTED

H3-3: Both realistic threat and symbolic threat would be significant predictors of **modern racism**

Model Summary^c

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.76 ^a	.58	.58	3.67	.58	483.12	1	346	.000
2	.79 ^b	.63	.62	3.48	.04	38.86	1	345	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Realistic Threat

b. Predictors: (Constant), Realistic Threat, Symbolic Threat

c. Dependent Variable: Modern Racism

DISCUSSION:

- **H1 was supported:** Prejudicial attitudes, classical racism, modern racism, realistic threat and symbolic threat are positively correlated to one another.
 - Realistic and symbolic threats are significantly related to attitudes towards refugees.
 - Participants who recorded higher scores in prejudicial attitudes were more likely to perceive refugees as representing a realistic threat (resources, economy, job opportunities etc.) and/or symbolic threat (Australian values, way of life etc.).

DISCUSSION:

- **H2 was supported:** Participants display modern racism to a greater degree than classical racism.
 - The participants' racist attitude towards refugees is more subtle and indirect.
 - Direct racist attitudes are not socially desirable.

DISCUSSION:

- **H3 was supported:** Both realistic threat and symbolic threat are significant predictors of prejudicial attitudes, classical racism and modern racism.
 - Realistic threat is a better predictor for modern racism than for classical racism and general prejudicial attitudes (R Square=.58, .48 & .39 for modern racism, classical racism and general prejudicial attitudes respectively).
 - Realistic and symbolic threats as a model is a better predictor for modern racism than for classical racism and general prejudicial attitudes (R Square=.63, .53 & .43 for modern racism, classical racism and general prejudicial attitudes respectively).

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