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.
• Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, 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 ($M = 33$, $SD = 13.043$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18-35</td>
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<td>% Total (%)</td>
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<td>60.9</td>
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</table>
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 SPPS 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

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<td><strong>M</strong></td>
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<td>20.47</td>
<td>24.23</td>
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<td><strong>SD</strong></td>
<td>14.28</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>13.22</td>
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<td><strong>.725</strong></td>
<td><strong>.693</strong></td>
<td><strong>.622</strong></td>
<td><strong>.590</strong></td>
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<td>2. Classical Racism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>.748</strong></td>
<td><strong>.690</strong></td>
<td><strong>.658</strong></td>
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<td>3. Modern Racism</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>.763</strong></td>
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<td>4. Realistic Threat</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><strong>.731</strong></td>
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<td>5. Symbolic Threat</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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**p<.01 (2-tailed)**
**RESULTS: H2 WAS SUPPORTED**

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

<table>
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<td><strong>Paired Differences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
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<td>Modern Racism - Classical Racism</td>
<td>3.76</td>
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**RESULTS: H3 WAS SUPPORTED**

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

### Model Summary

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<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
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<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>R Square Change</th>
<th>F Change</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
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<td>345</td>
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</tbody>
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- **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

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</table>

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

<table>
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<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
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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).
REFERENCES


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