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Prejudice and the function of attitudes relating to Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians

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Abstract

We examine prejudice against Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians and the function of those attitudes using previously identified functions, direct experiential schematic and value expressive, and including a new indirect experiential schematic function. Respondents were categorised into two groups: accepting and rejecting. With the Muslim data, there was no difference between accepting and rejecting groups regarding the value expressive function; however, acceptors reported the experiential-schematic function to a greater extent than did rejectors. With the Indigenous data, there was no difference between groups on the value-expressive or the experiential-schematic function. With both target groups, rejectors reported the indirect experiential-schematic function more than acceptors. The value expressive function was higher with the Muslim data and the experiential-schematic function was higher with the Indigenous data. The importance of taking into account the function of respondents’ attitudes, the distinction between source and function of attitudes, as well as specific issues surrounding target groups themselves, is discussed.

Running head: Function and prejudice

Keywords:
Anti-racism, anti-prejudice, Aboriginal, Islam
Indigenous Australians suffer from considerable disadvantage in almost all areas of Western well-being (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2007). These problems are compounded by the fact that many people in the Australian community hold negative attitudes toward Indigenous Australians (Mellor, 2003). Awareness of these attitudes, as well as discrimination, can negatively affect the health and general well-being of Indigenous Australians (Paradies, 2006). It is also the case that many Australians hold negative attitudes toward other perceived “outgroups” such as Muslim people (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004). Media coverage of Muslim people often focuses on conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim people (Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007); similarly, Kabir (2007) writes of the erroneous link between being Muslim and terrorism. As a result of these and other factors, many Muslim Australians feel ‘under siege’ (Aly & Balnaves, 2007).

Before anti-racist strategies are adopted, however, it is essential that strategists have a clear idea as to why people hold their attitudes, and whether the reasons behind holding a prejudiced attitude toward one group are similar or different from the reasons for holding a prejudiced attitude toward another group. This invites a consideration of the functions of attitudes. In this paper, we examine the functions of attitudes toward two marginalised groups in Australia: Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians. We assess two previously identified functions (value expressive and direct experiential schematic) and include a new function - indirect experiential schematic - which taps information garnered from sources such as friends and family as well as the media.

One area of research that may be useful in addressing the problems associated with prejudice against Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians is concerned with
the function of attitudes. It was just over 50 years ago that social psychologists seriously addressed the question, ”Why do we hold attitudes? What psychological functions do they perform?” (Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956). Because of methodological problems and a change in the theoretical emphasis in social psychology, research in this area lapsed until the 1980s. One of the problems with this early research was the lack of a well developed method of measuring functions. In the late 1980s there was a resurgence of interest in attitude function. Researchers such as De Bono (1987), Prentice (1987) and Shavitt (1990) made significant contributions. However, with respect to the measurement of functions, Herek (1987) was the first to develop an attitude function inventory using self-report measures. On the basis of detailed analysis of the content of a large number of essays on homosexuality, he was able to identify three functions.

The first he named the *experiential-schematic* function. This function is the outcome of information, stereotypes and impressions of the attitude object which provide an immediate means of dealing with the attitude object. Basic questions such as ‘is this object good or bad?’ or ‘Should I move physically or psychologically toward or away from this object?’ are determined by the underlying schema. The experiential schematic functions are established by personal interactions with the attitude object. We label this variable “direct experiential-schematic”.

The second function Herek (1987) named “*defensive*” which matched what had been referred to by Katz (1960) as “ego-defensive”. It is argued that unacceptable aspects of one’s self may be projected on to others such that the attitude toward them will be negative. Shavitt (1989) preferred to refer to this function as “self-esteem maintenance”. One’s self-esteem may be maintained or enhanced by perceiving oneself as superior to
others. A negative attitude toward a group or institution may, for some people, be performing a self-esteem maintenance function.

The third Herek named the *self-expressive function* which was a combination of social adjustive (Smith et al. 1956) and value expressive (Katz, 1960). Attitudes whose function is social adjustive enable the person to gain a sense of group belongingness and acceptance by others in significant social groups. Attitudes whose function is value expressive are based on the person’s firmly held beliefs and values that they may identify with their ‘true selves’. The Attitude Function Inventory (AFI) that Herek developed to measure the functions separated the two components of his self expressive function so that it would better reflect the findings of Smith et al. (1956) and Katz (1960). The AFI, therefore, was a measure of four functions: experiential-schematic, defensive, social expressive, and value-expressive.

We have some reservations about the experiential-schematic function. Herek (1987) had found that items relating to personal encounters with the attitude object loaded on one factor. While it certainly may be useful to identify a function in this way, personal encounters are not the only way that schemata relevant to the knowledge and object appraisal functions are developed. Important sources include reports of experiences with the attitude object by others known to the person and information gained from the various forms of the media. We see advantages in retaining the experiential-schematic function and adding an additional function which we name the ‘indirect-experiential function’ which includes both information gained from people respondents know and media-related items. It may be that with respect to certain attitudes such as those toward Muslim people, for example, indirect experience may be more
influential than direct experience. The most effective procedures used for the modification of attitudes whose function is indirect experiential may be different from those used when the function is direct experiential. At least with both functions issues of this sort can be addressed.

Attitudes can serve several functions simultaneously. In applied research, however, it is useful to identify the most important function of the person’s attitude. It should also be noted that some researchers have adopted other approaches to attitude function research. One line of research, for example, classifies functions under two headings: “instrumental” and “symbolic” and prefers to analyse open-ended responses (e.g., Watt, Maio, Rees & Hewstone, 2006). For the purposes of the present paper, however, we use our adaptation of the AFI following on from our previous prejudice/function research (Pedersen, Contos, Griffiths, Bishop, & Walker, 2000).

There is little empirical work linking prejudice with these attitude functions. However, in a Western Australian study (Pedersen et al, 2000), the function of attitudes toward Indigenous Australians was examined in 1997 using four functions of attitude: experiential schematic, value-expressive, social adjustive, and defensive. Respondents were from either Perth (the capital city of Western Australia) or Kalgoorlie (a mining town in Western Australia). Results indicated that few participants reported that either the social-adjustive or defensive functions were of primary importance to them (6.3% and 0% respectively). Attitudes toward Indigenous people primarily served both a value-expressive function and an experiential-schematic function with the experiential-schematic function being more prevalent in Kalgoorlie compared to Perth. There is a considerably larger proportion of Indigenous people living in Kalgoorlie than in Perth so
these results are as expected. These location differences indicate that attitudes toward different cultural groups are at least in part context-specific, and that if we want practical solutions to the problem of prejudice against Indigenous people, we would be well advised to take into account people’s values and their experiences when attempting anti-racism strategies.

In our primary study, we had three main aims - all primarily concerned with the function of attitudes. First, we aimed to identify the major function of respondents’ attitudes. Based on Pedersen et al. (2000), we predicted that the most prevalent function would be the value-expressive function. Second, we aimed to investigate whether accepting or rejecting participants differed in the reporting of their attitude functions. To date, there is no research which examines this question; thus, we give no formal hypothesis. Third, we aimed to compare the functions of attitudes toward Muslim Australians and toward Indigenous Australians. Do the functions of attitudes toward these target groups differ where one of the groups is defined largely in terms of ethnicity and the other largely in terms of religion? In the post-September 11 political climate, with much negative press about Muslim people, it may be that religious threat may in fact be highly influential in the formation of attitudes.

PILOT STUDY: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATTITUDES TOWARD MUSLIM AUSTRALIANS SCALE

Before addressing our key research questions regarding prejudice and the function of attitudes, it was necessary to devise and validate a measure of Attitudes Toward Muslim Australians (the “ATMA”). It is important to use scales relevant to the location;
as noted elsewhere (Forrest & Dunn, 2007; Pedersen et al., 2000), prejudice is context-specific. Muslim people in Australia, for example, do not have exactly the same issues confronting them as in the USA, Britain or elsewhere. In an attempt to validate our scale, we investigated whether the ATMA would correlate with a fear of terrorism scale as, based on previous research such as Kabir (2007), it should. We also included an “attitude thermometer” which should negatively correlate with prejudice, and socio-demographic variables (education, age, sex and political orientation) in a further attempt to validate the scale. In an unpublished review of 13 prejudice studies in Perth (the location of the present study), it was found that less formally educated participants were more prejudiced in all 13 studies and right-wing political orientation positively correlated with prejudice in 9 out of 11 studies (Pedersen & Griffiths, 2008). Furthermore, recent research worldwide finds that prejudiced attitudes toward Muslim people is linked with a lack of education and political right-wing views (Pew Research, 2008). Significant relationships between the ATMA and both political orientation and education would help demonstrate the validity of the scale.

METHOD

Procedure

We began by attempting to gain an insight into the relevant views held by Perth residents. We perused 12 months of Letters to the Editor of the West Australian newspaper using the procedure employed by Pedersen, Attwell and Heveli (2005) in constructing an Attitudes toward Asylum Seekers Scale. We collated both negative and positive items, as well as statements that took into account perceived personal characteristics of Muslim Australians and more societal issues. In total, 24 statements were deemed satisfactory
and covered both positive and negative items (12 positive and 12 negative). We then constructed a questionnaire consisting of those statements and piloted them on a convenience sample of approximately 15 people aged between 18-65 years. Feedback was given regarding wording and ease of understanding. This feedback resulted in a few minor changes, and some ATMA statements were removed leaving a total of 16 items, 7 positive and 9 negative (see Appendix A for scale items).

Measures

*Attitudes toward Muslim Australians scale.* As already mentioned, the scale had 16 items. An example of a negative ATMA item is “Muslims do not respect freedom of speech” and an example of a positive item is “The majority of Muslims are law-abiding citizens”. Items were responded to on a seven-point Likert scale (1= “disagree strongly” to 7 = “agree strongly”). After appropriate recoding, responses to the 16 items were averaged. High scores indicated greater prejudice.

*Validation Measures of Attitudes toward Muslim Australians scale*

*Attitude thermometer.* An attitude thermometer was employed to measure positive or negative attitudes to Muslim Australians. The prefacing question read, “In general how positive or favourable do you feel about Muslim Australians?” and respondents could respond on the thermometer from a base of 1º=Extremely Unfavourable, to a peak of 100º=Extremely Favourable. Past research (e.g., Wolsko, Park, Judd & Bachelor, 2003) finds that attitude thermometers are valid instruments.

*Perceived Threat from Terrorism.* Respondents completed a measure of perceived threat from terrorism (Terrorism-Perceived Threat, or TPT) (Pedersen, Watt, & Griffiths, 2007). The
following are examples of items: ‘Terrorism as it is today does not present a very serious attack on our society’s freedom and democracy’ (positive statement) and ‘I worry that fellow Australians will be hurt by terrorist actions’ (negative statement). Responses were made on a seven-point scale described above; after recoding, the higher the score, the higher the fear of terrorism. This scale has proved to be reliable in past research ($\alpha = .80$ in Pedersen et al., 2007) and proved reliable in the present study ($\alpha = .82$).

**Socio-demographics.** Respondents stated their age in years, their sex, their education level and political orientation. There was a sixth category for political orientation: “don’t care” (15.2% of participants fell into this category). Because we were interested only in those who held some position in respect to political orientation, the “don’t care” (politically apathetic) responses were treated as missing values.

**Participants**

Using snowballing sampling, participants were drawn from the Perth metropolitan area in June/July 2006. Six research assistants targeted two age groups – under or equal to age 45 and over age 45 – of people known to them. No participants were Muslim. A total of 210 questionnaires was returned out of a possible 350, giving a response rate of 60%. There was a wide range of education levels ranging from 15% who had not completed secondary school to 5% with higher degrees. A total of 25% had completed secondary school, 14% had gone on to receive vocational training and the remainder had attended or were attending a tertiary institution. There were approximately equal numbers of males and females (48% females). The mean age was 40 years ($SD = 14.3$). After removing apathetic participants from the political variable, a third of participants (43%) reported
their politics as being “middle” with relatively even numbers on each side (30% on the left and 27% on the right).

Results

The ATMA questions were subjected to a principal axis analysis with varimax rotation. Two factors were extracted, including both positive and negative items, but the scree plot suggested that a one factor solution was appropriate. It was decided, therefore, to combine the two sets of items into one scale accounting for 50.2% of the variance and with a high internal consistency (α=0.92).

The ATMA also showed satisfactory validity in that it correlated with the attitude thermometer ($r = -.80; p < .001$) and the TPT ($r = .46; p < .001$). Respondents who scored higher on the ATMA also reported less formal education ($r = -.16; p = .019$) and more politically right-wing views ($r = .16; p = .029$). We can therefore have some confidence in using the ATMA in the main study given its relationship with the TPT, the attitude thermometer, and the socio-demographics and now move onto our study proper examining prejudice and the function of attitudes.

MAIN STUDY

METHOD

Procedure

Using Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) (ABS) data on socio-economic status (SES), four Perth suburbs were chosen in July 2007. One suburb was low SES, one was high SES, and two were middle SES (more Perth residents are middle SES compared with low or high). A questionnaire and accompanying letter were delivered to 1,000 potential participants, and two weeks later a reminder letter was delivered. Half of the
accompanying letters requested a female to complete the questionnaire if possible, the other half, male. A total of 223 questionnaires was returned, making the response rate 22.3% (more details on participants are given later).

Procedure

Pertinent socio-demographic characteristics are as follows. There was a wide range of education levels, with approximately half the participants having completed secondary education. Of the remaining, half had some form of vocational training and the rest were at university, or had completed university. Regarding political orientation, it was found that 13% of the respondents fell into the 'don't care' category - as occurred in the pilot study, the “don’t care” (politically apathetic) responses were treated as missing values for that variable only. After deletion of those responses, the political viewpoint of the sample was varied with 21% at 'Centre' on a five-point scale from left-wing to right-wing, 33% leaning toward left wing views, and more participants leaning toward the right (46%). There were more females (61% females). The mean age was 55 years ($SD = 17.64$).

Measures

Scales were used to measure prejudice against Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians and the function of those attitudes. The order of the questionnaire was: socio-demographics, an Attitudes toward Indigenous Australians scale (the “ATIA”), Indigenous functions, the ATMA, and Muslim functions. Items on the ATMA and ATIA were responded to on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = “disagree strongly” to 7 = “agree strongly”). After appropriate reversals, high scores on the ATMA and ATIA
indicated greater prejudice. The ATMA scale and socio-demographic variables were the same as the pilot study so will not be described again.

*Attitudes toward Indigenous Australians scale*

This scale was taken from Pedersen, Beven, Walker, & Griffiths (2004) which reports reliabilities of .91 and .92 in the two studies outlined in that paper. An example of a negative ATIA item is “Aboriginal people have no regard for their own or anybody else’s property” and an example of a positive item is "Aboriginal people work as hard as anyone else".

*Function of Attitudes toward Muslim Australians Inventory (FATMA)*

As outlined in Pedersen et al (2000), the Attitude Function Inventory developed by Herek (1987) was used as a model to write items to assess the experiential-schematic and value-expressive functions of attitudes of Perth residents toward Indigenous Australians. As noted, that study showed that the social adjustive and self-esteem maintainance functions were very rarely reported, so these were not included within the present study. Our inventories were also amended to include the indirect experiential schematic function (see Appendix B for a list of items). Responses could vary from:

5 = This is an **extremely important** reason for me holding my views

4 = This is an **important** reason for me holding my views

3 = This is **quite an important** reason for me holding my views

2 = This is **one** of the reasons for me holding my views but not a particularly important one
1 = This is not at all important to me

Respondents’ functions were classified as “direct experiential-schematic” if their score on this function was higher than their scores on the other two functions. Respondents’ functions were similarly classified in the other two categories (value-expressive and indirect experiential-schematic). Only 20 of the respondents could not be so classified.

*Function of Attitudes Toward Indigenous Australians Inventory*

The Function of Attitudes toward Indigenous Australians inventory (“FATIA”) was identical to the previously described inventory with the exception that “Muslim Australian” was replaced by “Aboriginal Australian” in the relevant items. Similar to the FATMA, only a small number of respondents could not be classified on the FATIA (n=21).

**RESULTS**

**Scale Descriptives**

All items in the function scales (Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians separately) were subjected to separate principal component analyses. In both cases, the scree test indicated that a three factor solution was appropriate. In the subsequent analyses it was found that items loaded on the intended factors of the direct experiential schematic function, the value expressive function, and the indirect experiential schematic function without exception. It was also found that the alpha reliability of the indirect experiential schematic function on both the FATMA and FATIA scales was improved by
the removal of one of the items (“Facts and information that I have been able to obtain about Muslim Australians”) and this was done.

Descriptive statistics for the ATMA, ATIA, FATMA and FATIA showing means, standard deviations, range of scores, and alpha coefficients are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, reliability was satisfactory for all scales.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

We then looked at the relationships between the ATMA and socio-demographics to examine whether they could again validate the ATMA. As can be seen in Table 2, respondents who scored higher on the ATMA reported less formal education and more politically right-wing views which are in line with the review by Pedersen and Griffiths (2008). These correlations again give support to the validity of the ATMA.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Categorisation of Scales

Research question 1: Identification of primary function of attitudes toward Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians

With respect to our first research question regarding attitude functions and prejudice, respondents’ scores on the ATMA and the ATIA were allocated to two categories, “accepting” and “rejecting”. In so doing, the participants who fell on the midpoint were excluded but the numbers were not great ($n = 10$ for the Muslim data and $n = 7$ for the Indigenous data). Excluding those data, with respect to prejudice against Muslim

15.
Australians, slightly more respondents were classified as “accepting” (56.3%) compared with “rejecting” (44.7%) with almost identical figures with respect to prejudice against Indigenous Australians (56% acceptors; 44% rejectors).

The function scores were allocated to three categories as described above. The most frequently reported function of attitudes toward Muslim people was value-expressive (83.2%), followed by the experiential-schematic (12.4%) and by the indirect experiential-schematic function (4.5%). The most frequently reported function of attitudes toward Indigenous Australians was value-expressive (68%), followed by experiential-schematic (30%) and by indirect experiential-schematic (2%). Thus, attitudes were reported to be primarily a function of the values participants held, and this was markedly so in respect to attitudes toward Muslim Australians.

Research question 2: Relationship between the ATMA and the ATIA and the function of attitudes

Functions are theoretically independent of the expressed attitude. To know that the function of a given person’s attitude is value expressive, for example, does not provide any information about whether the attitude is positive or negative. Nevertheless, there are very good reasons for identifying the function of attitudes not the least of which is concerned with attitude change and persuasion (for example, see Watt, Maio, Haddock & Johnson, 2008). To change people’s attitudes, it would be most helpful for strategists to know why participants hold the attitudes that they do. In the following analyses, we set out to identify the functions of accepting and rejecting attitudes toward Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians. As mentioned earlier, respondents had been
classified as ‘accepting’ if their score was below the midpoint of the relevant attitude scale and ‘rejecting’ if their score was below the midpoint. We were interested in whether there were any significant difference between these two groups (accepting and rejecting) with respect to the functions of their attitude and their relative importance. Consequently two separate sets of one-way ANOVAs were conducted: one with the Muslim data and one with the Indigenous data. The dependent variables were the value expressive, direct experiential-schematic, and indirect experiential-schematic inventories, and the factors were the two levels of prejudice (accepting; rejecting) based on the ATMA and ATIA scores.

We first turn to an examination of attitudes toward Muslim Australians. There was no significant difference between the groups with respect to the value expressive function (overall \( M = 4.20; \ SD = 0.66 \)). With respect to the direct experiential-schematic function, the accepting group (\( M=3.08; \ SD=1.11 \)) scored significantly higher than the rejecting group (\( M = 2.76; \ SD = 1.00 \)) (\( F(1,205)= 4.55, p = .034 \)). With respect to the indirect experiential-schematic function, the rejecting group scored higher (\( M = 2.86; \ SD = 1.06 \)) than the accepting group (\( M = 2.10; \ SD = 0.84 \)) (\( F(1,205) = 33.54, p < .001 \)).

We now turn to an examination of attitudes toward Indigenous Australians. With respect to the value-expressive function, there was no significant difference between the groups with respect to the value expressive function (overall mean = 4.09; SD = 0.71) (\( F(1,214) = 0.27, p = .60 \)). Nor was there a significant difference with respect to the direct experiential-schematic function (overall mean = 3.43; SD=1.06) (\( F(1,212)= 0.26, p = .87 \)). However, with respect to the indirect experiential-schematic function, the rejecting
group \((M = 2.63\ SD = 0.87)\) scored significantly higher than the accepting group \((M = 2.30\ SD = .90)\) \((F(1,214)= 7.52, p = .007)\).

**Research Question 3. Do the attitude functions differ depending upon the target group?**

Using paired samples t-tests, we found there was a number of significant differences between the function of attitudes toward Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians. There was no significant difference between the two prejudice scales \((t(216)= .75, p = .45)\) but scores were significantly higher on the value-expressive (Muslim) scale \((M = 4.17)\) compared with the value-expressive (Indigenous) scale \((M=4.07)\) \((t(216)=- 2.77, p = .006)\). Scores were significantly higher on the experiential schematic (Indigenous) scale \((M=3.41)\) compared with the experiential-schematic (Muslim) scale \((M=2.92)\) \((t(211)= 6.22, p < .001)\). There was no significant difference between the indirect experiential-schematic scale (Muslim) and the indirect experiential-schematic (Indigenous) scale \((t(215)= 0.24, p = .98)\).

**DISCUSSION**

In line with our prediction, respondents reported that the major function of their attitudes toward Muslim and Indigenous Australians was to give expression to their values (Research Question 1). Similarly, when examining their Perth data, Pedersen et al.(2000) found that the most frequently reported function of attitudes toward Indigenous Australians was value-expressive. It could well be that most respondents will endeavour to justify their attitudes in terms of values unless the attitude object is readily and frequently observable and, even then, the primary function may well still be value-expressive. Eiser (1987) in fact proposed the ‘value-justification hypothesis’ arguing that
people with opposing attitudes will use value judgements to justify their position (as cited in Kristiansen & Zanna, 1988). The values to which they will appeal would, of course, be different but nevertheless they will be values. One might reasonably assume that the values that lead to prejudice in some respondents would be different from the values associated with acceptance. Just what these values might be cannot be determined from this study, but clearly this is an area that is worth exploring in future research.

It should be noted that there is an important distinction between the actual source of an attitude and its perceived function. A person’s Muslim schema, for example, may be largely constructed from acquaintances and the media (indirect experience). Certainly, media coverage of Muslim Australians often concentrates on conflict (Dunn et al., 2007) and a recent study has found that there is a strong relationship between prejudice against Muslim Australians and negative media-related beliefs (Pedersen, Aly, Hartley, & McGarty, 2008). Indeed, Gale (2004) writes of some immigrant cultures being represented in the media as a “threat to whiteness, and western, core values or democracy itself” (p. 323). Thus, it may well be that for many people, attitudes toward Muslim people is determined by, or at least exacebated by, the media. However, the viewer may firmly believe that Muslim values are very different to non-Muslim values because of information garnered indirectly, and report his or her primary function as being value-expressive. Similarly, it is not uncommon to see images on TV of unemployed Indigenous people living in derelect houses with abandoned vehicles in the background. As Meadows (2001) notes in this regard, the overall emphasis of the media focuses on difference and conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. While the intention of the journalists producing the programme may well be to draw the
attention of other Australians to the plight of Indigenous people, the viewer may firmly believe that self reliance and hard work will solve these sorts of problems. Although the attitude schema was formed by indirect experience, it is most unlikely that the viewer would report that his or her attitude function was indirect experiential-schematic. The perceived function would almost certainly be value expressive. Given the relatively small number of Muslim people in Perth (approximately 1.5%; ABS, 2006a) and Indigenous Australians in Perth (approximately 1.5%; ABS, 2006b), we would be surprised if, for most of our respondents, their information about these groups was not obtained from, or at least strongly influenced by, the various forms of the media. We acknowledge that the present measuring instruments do not permit the actual source of the attitude and its perceived function to be separately assessed. Future research should examine this interesting line of inquiry.

However, many respondents did acknowledge the role of indirect experience. When we examine the means for the rejecting respondents, it can be seen that for both the FATIA and the FATMA, respondents report that indirect knowledge is close to the level of “3. This is quite an important reason for me holding my views”. Clearly, many of these respondents recognise that indirect experience is one noteworthy source of their attitudes. Likewise, when examining the data from Table 1, it can be seen that the experiential-schematic score is above the midpoint for both groups (especially for the Indigenous data; Research Question 3). Therefore, even though values were reported to be the most important function with respect to both out-groups, this does not mean that the other two functions were unimportant. What our analysis indicates is that the values function was comparatively most important. It may also be that indirect experience may
be more influential than direct experience even though it is less prevalent. The importance of the indirect function is supported by the correlations set out in Table 2 – the only significant prejudice/function correlations were between prejudice and the indirect experience functions (both Muslim and Indigenous). Thus, even though respondents may score relatively low in indirect experience as a dominant function, this function may in fact be more influential. The most effective procedures used for the modification of attitudes whose function is indirect experiential may be different from those used when the function is direct experiential. If anti-prejudice strategists take into account both functions, issues of this sort can be addressed.

Although the indirect function is a new addition to the function literature, work has been done on similar topics. For example, one study examined the extended contact hypothesis (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe & Ropp, 1997). In four studies with disparate groups, these authors found that when a person had knowledge of cross-group friendships, this resulted in more positive attitudes toward that outgroup. Another study found that direct friendships were more effective in reducing prejudice than indirect friendships (Paolini, Hewstone & Cairns, 2007). Although this makes intuitive sense, as noted by Wright et al. (1997), it is not always possible to have a large number of ingroup members having positive contact experiences with an outgroup. Thus, indirect knowledge or experience is important to many respondents, even if effects are not as large as occurred with the other two functions as occurred in the present study, or their effect was more complex.

Now we discuss Research Question 2: the relationship between prejudice and attitude function. Regarding both target groups, there was no significant difference between
acceptors and rejectors with respect to the value expressive function, as might have been expected from Eiser’s (1987) value-justification hypothesis (as cited in Kristiansen & Zanna, 1988). Especially given the prominence given to values by our participants, we believe that it is of considerable importance that the operative values held by those with positive and with negative attitudes toward marginalised groups be identified. Only when these values have been identified could any attempt be made to reduce prejudiced attitudes by giving alternative value-related views (see Guerin, 2003, on the point of alternate views) or by showing that that aspect of the group being evaluated is in fact misperceived (e.g., acceptance of misinformation leading to a perceived value violation).

Rejectors reported the function of their attitudes to be indirect experiential to a greater extent than did acceptors. We suggest that this reflects the generally unfavourable media reports on both these groups. The media-related element of this certainly indicate the power of structural bases in prejudice and racism: anti-prejudice strategists could go into some detail about the strength, and often inaccurate accounts, of the media. With respect to the “friends” component of the indirect experience function, there may be a flow-on effect from the media component: individuals generally are affected by indirect experience, including one’s friends. Finally, there was no significant difference between accepting and rejecting participants with respect to the direct experiential function of attitude toward Indigenous Australians, but those with a positive attitude toward Muslim Australians scored higher on this function than did those with a negative attitude. Obviously for some of our respondents their personal experience with Indigenous people has been positive; however, for others it has not been so. It would seem that those who have had personal encounters with Muslim people were more likely to find these
encounters positive (we have insufficient information from our respondents about their encounters to justify any speculation about the apparent differences between their experiences with Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians).

We now turn to the third aim of the present study which was to address the question of whether the attitude functions differed depending upon the target group. There was no difference in indirect experience. However, the function of our respondents’ attitude toward Muslim people in Australia was significantly more value expressive than was the case with attitudes toward Indigenous people. Why this is the case cannot be ascertained by our data; however, it could well be that a religion-related target group such as Muslim Australians (especially when, as previously discussed, Muslim people are linked with a fear of terrorism) is a more value-laden target than an ethnic-related target group such as Indigenous Australians at the present time. In fact, as argued previously (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), the perception of symbolic threat – which is inherently value driven - is likely to produce prejudice against other cultural groups especially when symbolic threats are salient (as is the case with respect to Muslim Australians). Stephan and Stephan further argue that this is more likely to be the case for people who identify strongly with their ingroup, and those who have had negative contact with members of the outgroup. Furthermore, Feather and McKee (2008) found when examining prejudice against Aboriginal Australians that the value placed on ‘security’ significantly predicted prejudice. One could argue, given the current negative view of Muslim people presented in the media, that this would be more likely to relate to Muslim Australians as opposed to Indigenous Australians. Future research should take this interesting finding further.

Conclusions
To conclude, the present study adds to the previous prejudice literature by presenting what we believe is a reliable and valid Attitudes toward Muslim Australians scale and by arguing for the inclusion of an “indirect experiential-schematic function” among those already included in the AFI. Our data indicate that the three functions are not mutually exclusive. While the value-expressive function was clearly the most frequently reported, the other two functions (especially the experiential-schemata function) were reported by participants to be clearly important in making their judgments. We have also made the point that it is important to distinguish between the source of an attitude and its function. Our speculation that attitudes formed as a result of indirect exposure may be reported as having a primarily value expressive function has very important implications in the area of attitude change and warrants future research. Should one direct one’s efforts to changing the schema through more positive experiences (direct or indirect) with the target group, or should one base one’s approach on the expressed values by showing for example that a negative attitude is not compatible with some of the important values that are held by the individual? We argue that a successful anti-prejudice strategy may need to incorporate all functions and to consider the context in which the attitude was formed. Functions can differ depending upon location (Pedersen et al., 2000) and target group (this paper); any such strategy would need to be fine-tuned to take these factors into account.
REFERENCES


1. We removed one item relating to terrorism from the ATMA scale (“all Muslims are potentially terrorists”) beforehand; thus, for this analysis, only 15 ATMA items were used.
Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics Of Scales

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* p < .05  ** p < .01 (all two-tailed)
Appendix A: The Attitudes toward Muslim Australians scale

1. ______ The average Muslim is as reasonable as everyone else ®
2. ______ Islamic schools should not be allowed in this country
3. ______ Muslims do not respect freedom of speech
4. ______ Islam is no threat to Australia’s freedom®
5. ______ All Muslims are potentially terrorists
6. ______ The majority of Muslims are law abiding citizens ®
7. ______ The Muslims are a peace loving community ®
8. ______ Islam is threatening Australia’s freedom
9. ______ Muslims are respectful and sensitive toward other religions within Australia®
10. ______ Muslims have a hatred of western values
11. ______ Islam is a dangerous religion and should be banned in Australia
12. ______ As a multi-cultural nation, Australians should accept that Muslims are entitled to express their religious identity freely. ®
13. ______ Islamic beliefs and customs are not compatible with multicultural Australia
14. ______ I do not want my family mixing with Muslim families
15. ______ Muslims do not want to obey our laws
16. ______ Muslims are just as friendly as other Australians ®
Appendix B: The three function scales

Value Expressive

1. My moral beliefs about the way things should be
2. My concern for the cultural well being of Australia
3. My beliefs about how people should behave toward one another
4. My concern that we uphold principles of justice in Australia
5. My firmly held beliefs about right and wrong
6. My belief that we should have concern for the well being of all people
7. I believe that ethical principles should guide our relations with other people

Direct Experiential-Schemata

1. My acquaintance with Muslim Australians
2. My own experiences with Muslim Australians
3. My own observation of Muslim Australians
4. What I have been able to see for myself about Muslim Australians
5. My own interactions with Muslim Australians

Indirect Experiential-Schemata

1. The things other people have told me about their experiences with Muslim Australians
2. Comments about Muslim issues that I have heard from people I know
3. Things I have seen on TV about Muslim Australians
4. What I have read about Muslim Australians in the paper
5. The impression I have gained of Muslim Australians from what I have read or seen on TV