Greetings,

You recently participated in a study about "Values & Attitudes for Australian students at UQ," run by Ashley Heiner under the supervision of Winnifred Louis, and you gave us your e-mail address so that we could send you a summary of the results. We appreciate your help with our research, and we are happy to have the opportunity to tell you about the findings. If you would like to ask questions, to comment on what you read, or to find out more, you can contact project staff by phoning (07) 3365-6406, by e-mailing w.louis@psy.uq.edu.au, or by writing to Dr. Winnifred Louis, School of Psychology, McElwain Building / University of Queensland / St. Lucia, QLD 4072. You can also read about other studies that we've done on political decision-making at http://www.psy.uq.edu.au/~wlouis/.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: ATTITUDES TO AUSTRALIANS AND AMERICANS IN RELATION TO OTHER GROUPS

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WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR

The primary goal of this study was to look at the variables associated with attitudes to Americans in relation to other groups. When studying intergroup attitudes, some researchers focus on individual-level variables, and argue that certain individuals are predisposed to favour their own groups because of their personality. For example, people who have strong needs for dominance, who prefer predictability and simplicity in thinking (needs for cognitive economy), and who have stronger self-enhancement needs have been found to be more likely to have unfavourable attitudes to people who are different. Other researchers in the social identity tradition focus on situational variables associated with specific intergroup relationships. This research argues that groups are evaluated by comparing “ingroups” in which one is a member to specific salient “outgroups” to which one does not belong. A primary motive is argued to be the achievement of a positively distinct ‘social identity’: a sense that one’s “ingroups” are different from and superior to “outgroups”. In this research, the more strongly that people identify with a group, the more likely they are to rate their ingroup as different from, and superior to, salient outgroups. Social identity research shows that unfavourable attitudes intensify when people feel their group is threatened.

In the present study we manipulated two variables. We manipulated time pressure by giving half of you a copy of the questionnaire in which you were asked to record times and urging you to complete the questionnaire as quickly as possible; we thought this would increase needs for cognitive economy and this would increase prejudice. We also manipulated social identity threat by giving half of you a scale about America’s overwhelming military supremacy, whereas the other half received a scale about Australia; we thought this would increase national identification and thus increase prejudice to national outgroups. We measured personality, national identification, and attitudes towards Australians, Americans and other national, religious, and ethnic groups.

SOME DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

During the time period May - August 2003 (i.e., after the official end of the Iraq war), 106 people completed the study. The participants were mostly (n = 102) recruited from first year classes in psychology; a few (n = 4) were acquaintances of the experimenter. Two participants who indicated they were not Australian were excluded from the analyses. In the final sample, ages ranged from 16 to 38 (but 58% were 18 or younger), and most people were female (73%), of European heritage (80%), and Christian (54%) or non-religious (38%).

WHAT WE FOUND

1. OVERALL FINDINGS. When we just look descriptively at the dependent variables, we find that most people were positive to Australia (they
stereotype Australians positively, feel positive emotions about Australians, and see Australia as a great nation to live in). When we looked at other social attitudes, participants were significantly more favourable to national, ethnic, gender and religious ingroups than outgroups, and tended to see outgroups as more homogeneous than ingroups (“all the same”). These seem to exemplify the common tendency to favour your own groups in social evaluations. Views of the US were more complicated, however. On average, respondents stereotyped Americans positively and perceived the US as very powerful relative to Australia, but reported both positive and negative emotions about Americans and opposed the U.S.’s perceived quest for international supremacy. In terms of war attitudes, 56% of respondents opposed the Iraq war, 19% were relatively neutral, and 25% supported the war. When given the opportunity to write letters to the prime minister concerning Australia’s alliance with the US more generally, most people (51%) did not behaviourally express their views; among those who did write letters, 40% wrote letters of support for the alliance and 60% letters of opposition.

PREDICTORS OF INGROUP FAVOURITISM:
1. PERSONALITY MEASURES. A. NEED FOR COGNITIVE ECONOMY. Individual differences in cognitive needs for predictability and simplicity were measured with three scales: a shortened (10-item) need for cognition scale (e.g., “I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems”), the 9-item preference for consistency scale (e.g., “I want to be described as a stable, predictable person”), and the 11-item personal need for structure scale (e.g., “I don’t like situations that are uncertain”). Most participants scored above the midpoint of the scale on need for cognition (58%), but below the midpoint on preference for consistency (59%) and personal need for structure (63%). Correlationally, cognitive economy needs were unrelated to attitudes towards Americans and Australians, on the whole. We did find that people who reported low needs for cognition were more likely to favour other national, religious, and ethnic ingroups and to see social outgroups as relatively homogeneous (“all the same”).

B. NEEDS FOR DOMINANCE. Participants’ dominance needs were measured with two scales: a 23-item Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale (e.g., “Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn”) and a 16-item social dominance orientation scale (e.g., “To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups”). Most participants rejected authoritarian values (75%) and group-based social hierarchies (96%). Correlationally, however, dominance needs were associated with favourable views of Australia and of the US, with positive attitudes to the war, and with behavioural support for the military alliance (writing a letter to support the Australian-US alliance). Dominance needs were also related to likelihood of favouring other national, religious, and ethnic ingroups, as well as seeing social outgroups as more homogeneous (“all the same”).

C. INDIVIDUAL NEEDS FOR SELF-ENHANCEMENT. Individual differences in needs for self-enhancement were measured with scales for self-esteem (10 items, e.g. “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself”) and narcissism (16 items, e.g., “I like to be the center of attention”). Most participants scored below the midpoint of the narcissism scale (58%) but above the midpoint of the self-esteem scale (84%). These variables were unrelated to evaluations of Australians and other social groups, on the whole. However, people with high needs for self-enhancement reported more positive affect to the US and were more willing write letters supporting the Australian-American alliance.

2. GROUP-LEVEL FACTORS. A. NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION. We included a 5-item measure of identification with Australia (e.g., “How important is your nationality to your sense of self?”). Most people (78%) scored above the midpoint on this scale. Identification with Australia was strongly related to positive views of Australia. However, we also found that people who identified more strongly with Australia also perceived US power as better for Australia and supported Australia’s participation in the war in Iraq. People who were more strongly identified with Australia also favoured other national, religious, and
ethnic ingroups over outgroups and perceived social outgroups as more homogeneous than ingroups. So rather than only reflecting factors specific to the international context, the national identity measure was also associated with ingroup-favouring / militarist attitudes more broadly.

B. PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL NORMS TOWARDS US. We had a 5-item measure of perceived norms of Australians towards the US (e.g., “When they think about Americans, the average Australian feels: admiring / contemptuous”). Most people (76%) thought Australians had a negative view of Americans overall, but this variable wasn’t correlated with participants own views of Australians, Americans, or other social groups.

C. GROUP SELF-ESTEEM. We had a 16-item measure of how positively people felt about their social groups in general (e.g., “I feel good about the social groups I belong to”). Almost everyone (98%) scored above the midpoint on this scale. Correlationally, group self-esteem was linked to more positive views of Australians and favourable views of other social ingroups, along with a tendency to see social outgroups as “all the same”. It was not significantly related to views of the US or war attitudes, however.

3. EFFECTS OF THE MANIPULATIONS. We did find some significant effects of the manipulations on ingroup favouritism, but our confidence overall in the findings for our manipulations is low, since the effects were weak and on our manipulation check items at the end of the questionnaire it looked as though the manipulations weren’t very successful.

What we found for TIME PRESSURE was that participants in the time pressure condition showed more positive stereotyping both for Australians and Americans than participants in the low time pressure condition. But there were no differences on other variables.

For the IDENTITY THREAT manipulation, we found that people in the threat condition (who had been led to focus on American military supremacy) rated US power as stronger and more threatening, but also showed _more_ support for the war and the alliance (we thought they would show less). Threatened participants also perceived *other social outgroups to be more homogeneous. Followup analyses suggested that in the threat condition participants actually felt higher dominance needs (they endorsed more authoritarianism and social dominance orientation), and this stronger need for dominance was a variable driving increases in support for the war and the alliance. Participants also reported marginally more identification with Australia when American’s military supremacy was made salient, but national identification wasn’t a key variable in changing war views.

SUMMARY

In this study, dominance needs emerge as a particularly strong influence on social evaluations. People with higher dominance needs had more favourable views of Australians and other ethnic, gender, religious, and cultural ingroups and were more likely to see outgroups as “all the same”. But they also viewed Americans more positively, and were more likely to support the war in Iraq and the American-Australian alliance. Moreover, when we gave half of participants a threat to their national identity, participants showed stronger dominance needs, and their dominance needs were associated with stronger support for the war in the threat condition. Other variables, such as national identification, time pressure and needs for cognitive economy, and needs for self-enhancement, were also associated with stereotyping and social evaluations, but these effects were not always consistent or strong. In future studies, we will focus on the relationship between dominance needs, intergroup threat, and national identification. In this study, the three variables were related, but dominance looks like the most important variable.

THANKS AGAIN....

So that’s a description of what we found in this study: if you have any questions, or would like a copy of the longer write-up when we get that done (in several months) please get in touch. And thank you again for your participation and interest!