

Development and evaluation of a new scale for measuring modern
racism towards Indigenous Australians

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Hypotheses:

It is expected that that the data will reveal four interrelated factors, and that these will reflect the four themes of modern racism outlined as ‘excessive demands’, ‘denial of continuing discrimination’, ‘undeserved advantage’, and ‘work ethic and responsibility for outcomes’.

To ensure the validity of the new measure, several additional hypotheses are put forward. First, modern racism is correlated with both right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Dunwoody & Funke, 2016) and social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994); however, Duckitt and Sibley’s (2009) dual-process model finds SDO to be a better predictor of prejudice grounded in inequity and dominance, while RWA better predicts prejudice based on fear and threat. It is expected, then, that SDO will be more applicable to the present study, with high scores on the new measure (indicating more racist attitudes) hypothesised to correlate with scores for SDO. Such a relationship would support the convergent validity of the new scale.

Meta-analyses also suggest that certain personality traits are indicators of racial prejudice; in particular, low openness to experience and low agreeableness (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008). Recent research, however, has revealed that these traits differently predict prejudiced attitudes, with low openness related to prejudice based on threat and RWA, and low agreeableness related to power and SDO. In light of the SDO orientation used, convergent validity will be evidenced if high scores on the new scale are negatively correlated with the personality factor of agreeableness, as measured by the Five-Factor Model Rating Form (FFMRF; Samuel, Mullins-Sweatt, & Widiger, 2013). Conversely, scores on the new measure are hypothesised to bear little relationship to the RWA trait of openness to experience as measured using the FFMRF, supporting the discriminant validity of the new scale.

Finally, a large body of interdisciplinary work shows that racial prejudice predicts an individual's support or opposition to government spending on minorities (Williams, Jackson, Brown, & Torres, 1999; Wilson & Nielsen, 2011). To confirm the concurrent validity of the new scale, it is further hypothesised that high scores will be accompanied by greater support for a state-government proposal regarding the closure of remote Indigenous communities due to unjustifiable expense.

Method

Participants

Participants were 307 undergraduate psychology students aged 18 to 63 ($M = 30.53$, $SD = 11.07$) from a Melbourne university. The sample comprised 241 women, 65 men, and one participant of undisclosed gender. The majority of participants identified as Australian (77%), a small portion as Indigenous Australian (0.7%), and the remainder as European, Asian, Middle Eastern, African, mixed race, or Latino descent (21%).

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Measures

The preliminary version of the new measure contained forty items spread evenly across four themes: 'Excessive demands', 'Denial of continuing discrimination', 'Undeserved advantage', and 'Work ethic and responsibility for outcomes' (candidate items are included at Appendix 1). Participants were required to rate their agreement or disagreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale, (1=*strongly disagree*, 5= *strongly agree*), with higher values reflecting higher levels of modern racism. A portion of the Likert items were reverse scored to prevent acquiescence bias.

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SDO was measured using a fourteen-item scale developed by Pratto et al. (1994). Participants rated how they felt about each item using a Likert scale from 1 (very negative) to 7 (very positive). Items included statements like 'Some people are just inferior to others' and

‘In an ideal world, all nations would be equal’. Higher scores represented increased preference for inequality between social groups.



Personality traits of agreeableness and openness to experience were measured using the Five-Factor Model Rating Form (Samuel et al., 2013). The FFMRF consists of thirty items in total, with six items representing each of the five personality domains. Each item was scored on a five-point scale from 1 (extremely low on a trait) to 5 (extremely high on a trait). Example descriptors used to assess agreeableness included ‘docile, cooperative’ versus ‘oppositional, combative’, while those for openness included ‘permissive, broad-minded’ versus ‘traditional, inflexible, dogmatic’. Higher scores on an item represent higher levels of the corresponding trait.

Support for racially based policy preferences was measured using a single question: ‘Starting in 2014, the former Western Australian Government stated that they would commence closing up to 150 remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia on the basis that they had become too expensive to sustain. How justifiable do you think this policy was? (1 = not at all justifiable), 10 = very justifiable)’. Higher scores on this item indicated more racist attitudes.

Procedure

Participation was voluntary. Respondents completed an online survey at a time and place of their choosing, and were advised they could withdraw from the study at any point. Anonymity was assured, consent information was provided, and completion of the survey taken as implied consent. Approval for the research was attained from the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee. Data was collected as part of a larger study.

Results

Data were analysed using SPSS and screened for univariate outliers, with the final sample ($N=307$) considered sufficient for obtaining stable solutions (Comrey, 1988; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) and better replicability (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006).

Exploratory factor analyses were conducted on the 40 initial MRS items using maximum likelihood extraction and oblique rotation. Maximum likelihood considered the shared variance between items accounting for error (Costello & Osborne, 2005), while oblique rotation using Direct oblimin allowed for the expected intercorrelations between factors, as suggested by theory (Kahn, 2006). The factorability of the data was confirmed through a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's value of .97 – well above the .60 require for good factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) – along with a Bartlett's test of sphericity result that indicated statistically significant interrelationships between items, $\chi^2(780) = 9931.19$, $p < .05$.

Arrival at the final number of factors was based on achieving approximate simple structure (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), in which each item contributed to only one of the main factors and had little to no correlation with other factors in the solution. Strong data for this sample size are evidenced by communalities of $\geq .30$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), factor loadings of $\geq .35$, and cross-loading on other factors of less than .32 (Hair, Anderson, Babin, & Black, 2014). Of the initial 40 items, ten were removed as they failed to meet this minimum criteria. (See Appendix 1 for deleted items.) Items 31 and 39 were removed due to low communality. Items 32, 33 and 40 were removed due to cross-loading, and items 34 to 38 were removed as they did not load significantly onto any factor. The factor-loading matrix for the final extracted factors is presented in Table 1. Good descriptions and justifications.

The final analysis revealed three distinct factors. Initially, five factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 were found; however, item removal brought this number into line with

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the number of factors suggested by the scree plot. While unexpected, this three-factor solution was selected for its strong model fit, accounting for 62% of the total variance in the scale. Factors clearly represented the proposed modern racism themes of ‘Denial of continuing discrimination’, ‘Work ethic and responsibility’, and ‘Undeserved advantage’; however the hypothesised theme of ‘Excessive demands’ was not well represented in the results.

Cronbach’s alpha for the overall scale and each of the factors/subscales was excellent, with results presented in Table 2. No substantial improvements in alpha would be achieved by removal of more items.

Composite scores were created for each of the three factors, based on the mean of all items with their primary loadings on that factor. Factor scores were also summed to give an overall ‘modern racism’ score, with higher scores in the overall scale and subscales indicating more-racist attitudes. In general, the analyses indicated that modern racism scores for the sample were on the lower end of the scale. Descriptive statistics for the overall scale, factors, and validity measures are presented in Table 3.

Table 1

Modern Racism Scale Pattern Matrix using Maximum Likelihood Extraction with Direct Oblimin Rotation

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1. It is unfair that Indigenous Australians are given more financial assistance than other Australians	.90	-.04	.01
2. Indigenous Australians receive more than their fair share of welfare support	.89	-.06	.06
3. More financial aid should be available to indigenous Australians	.82	-.04	.01
4. Too many Indigenous Australians receive advantages based on their racial background rather than their merit	.79	-.08	.20
5. The Australian government provides Indigenous Australians with too much financial assistance.	.75	.04	.13
6. Indigenous Australians rightfully require more taxpayer support than other Australians	.71	.04	.00
7. It is only fair that Indigenous Australians are given extra help to make up for previous generations of discrimination	.71	.06	-.03
8. Indigenous Australians are entitled to extra support to access higher education	.70	.06	-.12
9. Indigenous Australians expect too much support from the government	.67	-.01	.29
10. This generation of Indigenous Australians should not expect special treatment. They have already been given enough.	.60	.18	.08
11. Indigenous Australians should stop asking for more than they already have	.55	.12	.31
12. Indigenous Australians receive too many advantages.	.55	.07	.22
13. Indigenous Australians need to demand more from society in order to eliminate the discrimination they experience	.53	.01	.04
14. The lower socioeconomic position of many Indigenous Australians compared to other Australians is largely due to the social conditions they face	.49	.14	.02
15. Years of discrimination have created conditions that make it very difficult for Indigenous Australians to work their way toward success	.46	.31	-.05
16. Indigenous Australians are no longer being discriminated against	-.14	.91	-.02
17. Discrimination towards Indigenous Australians no longer exists	-.09	.88	-.05
18. Indigenous Australians continue to struggle against discrimination	.22	.68	-.05
19. Indigenous Australians are treated fairly in today's society	.07	.66	-.02
20. Racism towards Indigenous Australians is a major problem in Australian society	.10	.63	.05
21. Discrimination towards Indigenous Australians continues to limit their opportunities	.17	.55	.05
22. Indigenous Australians might have been treated poorly years ago, but not anymore	.22	.53	.10
23. There is no form of discrimination which makes it more difficult for Indigenous Australians to be successful in comparison to other Australians	.17	.51	.11
24. The Australian Government shows more respect to Indigenous Australians than they deserve	.12	.39	.32
25. Indigenous Australians on average work just as hard as other Australians	.04	-.03	.81
26. Indigenous Australians are willing to work as hard as other Australians	.07	.01	.81
27. Indigenous Australians do not work as hard as other Australians	-.09	.12	.80
28. Indigenous Australians lack initiative	.07	.03	.78
29. Indigenous Australians are unreliable	.17	-.03	.65
30. If, on average, people of various cultural backgrounds have been able to succeed more in Australian society than Indigenous Australians, it must mean that Indigenous Australians have a poor work ethic	.14	.30	.46
Eigenvalues	16.39	1.93	1.36
Extraction SSL	15.97	1.59	0.94
Rotation SSL	14.73	11.48	11.82

Note. SSL = sum of squared loadings (initial SSL are equivalent to the eigenvalues).

Table 2

Item-Level Properties of the Modern Racism Scale Obtained via Exploratory Factor Analysis

Item	Communalities (extraction)	Item response <i>M (SD)</i>	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's α if item deleted
Item 1 (UA)	.77	2.39 (1.30)	.84	.95
Item 2 (UA)	.81	2.48 (1.23)	.86	.95
Item 3 (UA)	.64	2.72 (1.15)	.79	.95
Item 4 (UA)	.78	2.61 (1.34)	.85	.95
Item 5(UA)	.76	2.25 (1.21)	.84	.95
Item 6 (UA)	.54	2.75 (1.26)	.73	.96
Item 7 (UA)	.53	2.15 (1.14)	.72	.96
Item 8 (UA)	.43	2.19 (1.13)	.64	.96
Item 9 (UA)	.82	2.35 (1.19)	.86	.95
Item 10 (UA)	.65	2.13 (1.13)	.78	.95
Item 11 (UA)	.79	2.08 (1.13)	.85	.95
Item 12 (UA)	.60	2.26 (1.21)	.75	.95
Item 13 (UA)	.32	2.90 (1.21)	.56	.96
Item 14 (UA)	.37	2.02 (1.03)	.61	.96
Item 15 (UA)	.46	1.97 (1.08)	.65	.96
Item 16 (D)	.76	1.51 (0.73)	.80	.90
Item 17 (D)	.64	1.40 (0.67)	.71	.90
Item 18 (D)	.67	1.66 (0.75)	.78	.90
Item 19 (D)	.49	2.16 (1.07)	.68	.90
Item 20 (D)	.53	1.97 (1.09)	.69	.90
Item 21 (D)	.50	1.92 (1.00)	.68	.90
Item 22 (D)	.59	2.01 (1.10)	.74	.90
Item 23 (D)	.52	1.83 (0.97)	.67	.90
Item 24 (D)	.53	1.70 (0.92)	.64	.91
Item 25 (WER)	.69	2.24 (1.10)	.79	.90
Item 26 (WER)	.75	2.11 (1.07)	.82	.90
Item 27 (WER)	.64	2.32 (1.14)	.76	.91
Item 28 (WER)	.72	2.11 (1.13)	.82	.90
Item 29 (WER)	.59	1.96 (0.99)	.73	.91
Item 30 (WER)	.62	1.93 (1.14)	.70	.91

Note. UA = Undeserved advantage item, D = Denial of discrimination item, WER = Work ethic & responsibility item. Unfair advantage Cronbach's α = .96, discrimination Cronbach's α = .91, work ethic & responsibility Cronbach's α = .92

Convergent validity for the new scale was supported. There was a strong, positive, linear relationship between the new racism scale and SDO, and a weak negative linear correlation between the new scale and the trait of agreeableness, indicating that higher scores on the new racism measure correlate with increased desire for inequality between groups and lower levels of agreeableness respectively. Concurrent validity of the new scale was also supported, with the new scale showing a strong, positive, linear relationship with support for anti-minority policies; that is, participants who scored high on the new scale also reported

opposition to government spending on minorities. Technically, the discriminant validity of the new scale was not supported. It was hypothesised that the trait of openness would bear little relationship to the new scale; however, results show openness had a weak negative correlation with overall modern racism scores. The implications for this result are discussed presently. Intercorrelations between the new scale and relevant validity measures are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Overall Modern Racism Scale, Subscales, and Validity Measures

	No. of items	Actual range	Potential range	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Skew	Kurtosis
<i>Modern racism</i>						
Overall scale score	30	1–4.40	1–5	2.14 (.80)	.51*	-.60
Unfair advantage	15	1–4.67	1–5	2.35 (.94)	.45	-.68
Discrimination	9	1–4.22	1–5	1.80 (.72)	.89*	.14
Work ethic/resp.	6	1–4.67	1–5	2.11 (.92)	.52*	-.70
<i>Validity measures</i>						
SDO	14	1–5.93	1–7	1.95 (.99)	1.19*	.82
Openness	6	2–5	1–5	3.46 (.52)	.20	.03
Agreeableness	6	1.83–5	1–5	3.51 (.50)	-.14	.56
Policy support	1	1–10	1–10	3.25 (2.31)	.93*	.23

N = 307

Note: * $p < .05$

Table 4

Intercorrelation Between the Modern Racism Scale and Validity Measures

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Modern racism scale	–				
2. SDO	.58**	–			
3. Openness	-.18**	-.21**	–		
4. Agreeableness	-.15**	-.22**	.22**	–	
5. Policy support	.62**	.52**	-.17**	-.09	–

N = 307

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

This aim of the current study was to test the factor structure, reliability and validity of a new scale for measuring attitudes towards Indigenous Australians. It was hypothesised that the data would reveal four interrelated factors reflecting the four themes of modern racism outlined in the literature as ‘Excessive demands’, ‘Denial of continuing discrimination’, ‘Undeserved advantage’, and ‘Work ethic and responsibility for outcomes’ (Henry & Sears, 2002; Tarman & Sears, 2005). To confirm the convergent validity of the new scale, it was predicted that scores would show a significant positive correlation with SDO, and a significant negative correlation with the personality trait of agreeableness. Discriminant validity was tested with the hypothesis that scores on the new scale would not be significantly correlated with the trait of openness. Finally, to test the concurrent validity of the new scale, it was hypothesised that high scores would show a significant positive correlation with support for anti-minority policy decisions.

Although four factors were predicted, analysis yielded a trifactor model representative of three of the themes suggested by theory; namely, ‘Denial of continuing discrimination’, ‘Work ethic and responsibility for outcomes’, and ‘Undeserved advantage’. The theme of ‘Excessive demands’, however, was not well-represented, with the majority of items in this group not loading onto any factor and the remainder combining with the group ‘Undeserved advantage’. Several explanations for the three-factor solution are possible, the most obvious being that modern racism is in reality a three-pronged construct. While this has not been evidenced in US populations (Henry & Sears, 2002; Tarman & Sears, 2005), it is possible that cultural differences exist in how US and Australian samples view relevant minorities; and, subsequently, how they categorise themes of modern racism. Indeed, Pederson et al. (2000; 2006) found the issue of Indigenous ‘special treatment’ to be remarkably salient in Australian samples, with negative attitudes towards Indigenous Australians linked primarily



to excessive concerns about handouts and undeserved assistance. In the current study, the highest internal consistency was indeed evidenced in the ‘Undeserved advantage’ group, in which seven of the nine highest-scoring items referred to financial assistance and Government support. This indicates a strong, clear relationship between the concept of ‘special treatment’ and this factor. It could be, then, that the three-factor result reflects the fact that Australian respondents are less sensitive to what Indigenous Australians *demand* of society, and more sensitive to what they are unquestioningly *given*; or, alternatively, that that they see little distinction between these two concepts. Of course, it is likely that further work is also needed on the items used to represent the theme of ‘Excessive demands’. Upon reinspection, the wording of several items in this group may have been seen as double-barrelled or spanning multiple factors, with items referring jointly to ‘demands’, ‘special treatment’, and ‘discrimination’ (e.g. items 9, 10, 13, 31, 33). Honing the wording of items in this group, therefore, might clarify whether the theme of ‘Excessive demands’ is less applicable to an Australian population or simply inadequately operationalised in the current study.

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The new scale met several criteria for good measures, with results providing evidence of internal consistency, convergent validity and concurrent validity. The concurrent validity of the new scale was confirmed through strong positive correlations between high scores on modern racism and increased support for anti-minority policy decisions. This result sits comfortably with the idea that negative attitudes towards Indigenous Australians are linked to issues of welfare and special treatment. Good convergent validity was shown in the scale’s strong positive correlation with SDO, with higher scores on the new measure correlating, as expected, with an increased preference for inequality between social groups.

The remaining two validity hypotheses around modern racism and personality traits, however, were less conclusive. While the result for the second convergent-validity

hypothesis, linking more-racist attitudes to low agreeableness, was significant, the  relationship between these variables was weak, indicating that further validation is necessary to confirm links between agreeableness and prejudice. Similarly, a weak, negative correlation was also found for the discriminant validity hypothesis, which predicted little to no relationship between the new scale and the RWA-related trait of openness to experience. While a correlation, technically this latter result could still be seen to support the scale's discriminant validity, with Gregory (2015) stating that discriminant validity is demonstrated when constructs “correlate *negligibly*, if at all” (p.130; emphasis added). Taken together, however, weak findings across both personality measures indicate that alternative explanations may be warranted. One possibility is that while there is likely a link between certain personality traits and racist attitudes, the relationship is not overly strong in this sample. Results for the current sample of undergraduate psychology students was significantly skewed toward less-racist responses (see Table 2); therefore, further studies using more-representative samples may herald different personality-related outcomes. A second explanation is that racism in Australia – or against Indigenous Australians, more particularly – may not be driven primarily by the SDO trait of low agreeableness and motivations of self-enhancement, competition and inequality as hypothesised. Rather, it may  also comprise RWA motivations of self-preservation, fear and threat, which are reflected in low levels of openness to experience. In a comparison of SDO and RWA, Van Hiel and Mervielde (2005) found that the power of each to predict prejudiced attitudes was *item-specific*, and did not generalise over complete factors or scales as assumed here. Further analysis of the data using RWA as a discriminant validity measure, then, along with exploration of how individual items in the new scale correlate differently with measures of SDO and RWA, may shed more light on the relationship between ideology, personality traits and racist attitudes.



Overall, the present study provides support for the proposal that modern racism is a multidimensional construct with several distinct themes; further investigation is required, however, into exactly what those themes are, and how they are best characterised in an Australian context. To the author's knowledge, this new scale represents the first multi-factor measure for gauging modern racism in contemporary Australian society. While further discriminant validation and refinement of some scale items is merited, the new scale demonstrates good internal reliability, convergent validity and concurrent validity. Due to the ever-changing nature and expression of racism over time, however, ongoing improvement and validation of the scale should be a principle pursuit.

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Appendix

Item
1. It is unfair that Indigenous Australians are given more financial assistance than other Australians
2. Indigenous Australians receive more than their fair share of welfare support
3. More financial aid should be available to indigenous Australians
4. Too many Indigenous Australians receive advantages based on their racial background rather than their merit
5. The Australian government provides Indigenous Australians with too much financial assistance.
6. Indigenous Australians rightfully require more taxpayer support than other Australians
7. It is only fair that Indigenous Australians are given extra help to make up for previous generations of discrimination
8. Indigenous Australians are entitled to extra support to access higher education
9. Indigenous Australians expect too much support from the government
10. This generation of Indigenous Australians should not expect special treatment. They have already been given enough.
11. Indigenous Australians should stop asking for more than they already have
12. Indigenous Australians receive too many advantages.
13. Indigenous Australians need to demand more from society in order to eliminate the discrimination they experience
14. The lower socioeconomic position of many Indigenous Australians compared to other Australians is largely due to the social conditions they face
15. Years of discrimination have created conditions that make it very difficult for Indigenous Australians to work their way toward success
16. Indigenous Australians are no longer being discriminated against
17. Discrimination towards Indigenous Australians no longer exists
18. Indigenous Australians continue to struggle against discrimination
19. Indigenous Australians are treated fairly in today's society
20. Racism towards Indigenous Australians is a major problem in Australian society
21. Discrimination towards Indigenous Australians continues to limit their opportunities
22. Indigenous Australians might have been treated poorly years ago, but not anymore
23. There is no form of discrimination which makes it more difficult for Indigenous Australians to be successful in comparison to other Australians
24. The Australian Government shows more respect to Indigenous Australians than they deserve
25. Indigenous Australians on average work just as hard as other Australians
26. Indigenous Australians are willing to work as hard as other Australians
27. Indigenous Australians do not work as hard as other Australians
28. Indigenous Australians lack initiative
29. Indigenous Australians are unreliable
30. If, on average, people of various cultural backgrounds have been able to succeed more in Australian society than Indigenous Australians, it must mean that Indigenous Australians have a poor work ethic
31. Indigenous Australians do not speak up enough in their fight for equal rights*
32. Indigenous Australians demand more than they rightfully deserve*
33. No matter what assistance Indigenous Australians are given by others, they will continue to ask for more*
34. Meeting the demands of indigenous Australians so they can maintain their heritage and culture is necessary*
35. Indigenous Australians can only blame themselves for their outcomes in life*
36. Indigenous Australians themselves are to blame for the negative outcomes that they face*
37. If they were motivated enough, Indigenous Australians could find suitable employment*
38. Indigenous Australians should move on from past traditions and integrate into current Australian society*
39. The demand from some Indigenous Australians to move the date of Australia Day is completely reasonable*
40. Indigenous Australians are justified in wanting equal rights*

* denotes deleted items not included in the final factor analysis