

Predicting Punitive Attitudes: Racial-Animus towards New Immigrant and Aboriginal Minority Groups as a Mediating Agent upon Public Crime Concerns

Ruth P. Brookman¹ & Karl K. K. Wiener^{2*}

¹ The MARCS Institute and the School of Social Sciences and Psychology, Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia

² School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, Australia

* Karl K. K. Wiener, E-mail: kwiener@csu.edu.au

Received: March 30, 2017

Accepted: May 3, 2017

Online Published: June 2, 2017

doi:10.22158/wjssr.v4n2p140

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjssr.v4n2p140>

Abstract

In English-speaking Western society's punitive attitudes towards the sentencing of criminal offenders is a well-established phenomenon. Two theoretical models; the Crime-distrust model and Racial-animus model are demonstrated predictors of punitive attitudes. However, little is known about how racial prejudice impacts the association between the public's crime concerns and their demand for harsher sentencing outcomes. The present study utilises online survey data obtained from a convenience sample of 566 Australian residents to examine the Racial-animus model as a mediating agent upon the Crime-distrust model and its relationship with punitive attitudes. A significant indirect effect of racial animus is demonstrated upon the perception of increasing crime rates and public confidence in the court system and punitive attitudes, regardless of whether animus is towards new-immigrants or Indigenous Australians. A significant indirect relationship between fear of crime and the demand for harsher sentencing is only demonstrated through negative perceptions of new immigrants. Results lend support for a mediation model whereby the indirect effect of fear of crime is significant when mediated by negative sentiment towards new-immigrants but not towards Indigenous Australians. Future research using a representative sample of the Australian population is indicated to increase the confidence with which findings are interpreted.

Keywords

new immigrants, Aboriginal, Indigenous, punitive attitudes, racial-animus, fear of crime, predicting, crime salience

1. Introduction

Societies' "war on crime" via demands for harsher prison sentences is arguably a universal characteristic of human societies (Boehm, 1986; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997). In the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, for example, different survey studies indicate that approximately two thirds of respondents expressed the desire for harsher sentences for offenders (Mackenzie et al., 2012; Roberts & Indermaur, 2009; Spiranovic, Roberts, & Indermaur, 2009). The public demand for harsher sentencing outcomes, however, has been costly with an unsustainable explosion in the prison population in many Western countries including Australia (Cunneen et al., 2013; Johnson, 2008; Jones & Newburn, 2005). In order to ameliorate this global trend in industrialised countries, many sociologists and criminologists have sought to understand what factors predict the public's demand for harsher sentencing policies and outcomes (Durkheim, 1984).

It is not possible in one study to examine every potential predictor of punitive attitudes (Unnever & Cullen, 2010b). However, the recent literature, points to two prominent theories or models that explain the public's punitive attitudes towards sentencing (Unnever & Cullen, 2010b). These theories are: (a) the Crime-distrust model, and (b) the Racial-animus model. In the current study, the indirect relationship between these two models and punitive attitudes are investigated.

1.1 The Crime-Distrust Model

The Crime-distrust model seeks to operationalize the public's concerns about crime by arguing firstly that punitive attitudes arise from crime salience which is the fear of becoming a victim of crime together with the perception that crime rates are rising. Secondly, the Crime-distrust model proposes that punitive attitudes arise from Institutional distrust, which is public distrust in the government and courts to protect them from dangerous crimes (Unnever & Cullen, 2010b).

Fear of crime has been defined as the fear of having the same objective experience as someone who has been an actual victim of crime (Miller et al., 1986). Prior to 1965 there was very little research or discussion concerning public anxiety about crime (Lee, 2007). Fear of crime as a construct was first identified in the United States in 1967 following three large-scale victim of crime surveys, and has since been linked to punitive attitudes to sentencing. Miller and colleagues (1986) propose that people's proximity to crime influences their different views on punishment. Punitive attitudes to sentencing, for example, may arise from the public's fear of becoming a victim of crime. As the fear of crime relates to a subjective proximity to crime, its measurement and existence as a construct has been debated. Lee (2007), for example, argues that fear of crime is an invented concept within the minds of criminologists, statisticians and policy makers. It is within the context of this debate that fear of crime continues to be measured and examined in relationship to the public demand for harsher sentencing penalties for law breakers.

Earlier research did not always uncover an association between fear of crime and public support for

harsher sentencing options (Kelley & Braithwaite, 1990; Tyler & Boeckmann, 1997). Sprott and Doob (1997), however, did establish a relationship between fear of crime and punitive attitudes which remained significant regardless of gender or prior experience of crime victimization. Despite conflicting finding, the weight of recent empirical evidence favours fear of crime as a significant predictor of punitive attitudes (Applegate, Cullen, & Fisher, 2002; Maruna & King, 2009; Spiranovic et al., 2011). Differences between earlier and recent findings may be influenced, in part, by terrorist events such as 9/11 and the growth of 24 hour-a-day media sources. These changes in society may have increased crime salience and the public's fear of crime and demand for harsher sentencing.

The Crime-distrust model also proposes that punitive attitudes to sentences are influenced by public perception that crime rates are rising despite empirical evidence suggesting the opposite (Indermaur et al., 2005). It has been argued that this perception, common in many Western Countries, is influenced by the public's exposure to selective coverage of crime via the media (Costello et al., 2009). Unrealistic presentation of crime through drama stories, for example, can contribute to a collective perception of rising crime rates (Garland, 2001).

Empirical evidence lends strong support for the hypothesis that those who perceive crime rates as rising will endorse stronger punitive attitudes. Roberts and Indermaur (2007), for example, identified "accurate crime perceptions" as one of five "criminal justice attitudes" that significantly predicted punitive attitudes. Kornhauser (2013) found that those who reported that crime rates had risen in Australia the past two years also indicated support for stiffer sentencing. In addition, a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample of 6005 Australians identified "perception of crime" as a strong predictor of punitive attitudes to sentencing (Spiranovic et al., 2011).

Finally, the Crime-distrust model posits that punitive attitudes arise from public distrust in the government and courts to protect them from the threat of crime (Unnever & Cullen, 2010b). The majority of the literature exploring institutional distrust has produced conflicting findings (Mayhew & Van Kesteren, 2002). Unnever and Cullen (2010b), for example, concluded that there is no relationship between institutional distrust and punitive attitudes, while Cochran and Piquero (2011) identified a significant relationship. In an Australian context, the public's confidence in the court system has been identified as a predictor of punitive attitudes (Brookman & Wiener, 2015; Kornhauser, 2013; Roberts & Indermaur, 2007). These findings suggest that individuals with less confidence in the legal system are more punitive in their attitudes towards sentencing.

1.2 The Racial-Animus Model

The Racial-animus model asserts that a negative perception of cultural minority groups is a significant factor in predicting punitive attitudes (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a, 2010b; Unnever, Cullen, & Fisher, 2005). Racial-animus has been defined as the harbouring of animus and/or negative sentiment to cultural minority groups (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a). The majority of research examining the

Racial-animus model demonstrates a strong relationship between punitive attitudes and negative sentiment towards non-English speaking immigrants and African Americans (Chiricos, Welch, & Gertz, 2004; Hogan et al., 2005; Unnever & Cullen, 2010b). Racial animus is the strongest predictor of punitive attitudes in white sample groups in the USA (Johnson, 2008; Unnever et al., 2005).

One of the theoretical foundations of the Racial-animus model is the minority group threat hypothesis. This hypothesis proposes that perceived threats to the in-group's power and privileges increases conflict between "in" and "out" groups (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a). The "in-group" will seek to maintain their power through the use of crime control in order to suppress cultural minority "out-groups" and address the perceived threat to resources such as employment and welfare (Wheelock et al., 2011). While the minority group threat hypothesis was initially developed as a theory of discrimination, it has also informed a wealth of criminological research (Wheelock, Semukhina, & Demidov, 2011). The racial typification of crime is another theoretical foundation underpinning the Racial-animus model. Racial typification of crime involves the association of a cultural minority group with criminality which may serve to identify the out-group as "criminal-other". It hypothesises that this association of crime with racial "other" in turn increases the drive for harsher criminal justice policies to solidify the "in-groups" status, power and privileges (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).

In comparison with research in the USA and Western Europe, Australian research on "racial" typification of crime and its link with punitive attitudes to sentencing, is scant (Snowball & Weatherburn, 2007). This is despite Australia having a long history of immigration and strained relationships between different cultural minority groups (Turoy-Smith, Kane, & Pedersen, 2013). Recent immigrants and refugees, for example, experience ethnic and racial intolerance in Australian society (Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005; Tilbury & Colic-Peisker, 2006). Such negativity in the community can undermine social cohesion in society through identification of different minority cultures as "out-groups" (Pedersen et al., 2005).

1.2.1 New Immigrants

Research in Western Europe suggests that new immigrants are perceived as the most consistent minority group threat (Jones & Newburn, 2005) and there is evidence of an increasing public association of crime with "immigrant others" (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a). Current international research suggests that the relationship between a negative perception of cultural minority groups and punitive attitudes may be present in several western societies (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a, 2010b). For example, measures of racial prejudice predicted public support for punitive attitudes in Canada as well as the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Germany and Denmark (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a).

The Racial-animus model has been explored in the Australian context in a limited capacity (Robert & Indermaur, 2007). Kelley and Braithwaite (1990) found that resentment towards Indigenous Australians and non-English speaking migrants predicted support for the death penalty. However, they

attributed this finding to a “general intolerance toward out groups” rather than a negative perception of minority cultural groups. Kornhauser (2013) examined data obtained from a sample of 998 respondents who completed the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) (2005) (Wilson, Gibson, Meagher, Denmark, & Western, 2006). Kornhauser’s results support international findings that racial animus towards immigrants, significantly predicts support for punitive attitudes (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a).

1.2.2 Indigenous Australians

Research exploring the relationship between punitive attitudes and negative perception of Indigenous Australians is also scarce. This is despite the empirical evidence supporting a relationship between community prejudice and incarceration rates amongst Indigenous Australians (Larson, Gillies, Howard, & Coffin, 2007). Following the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in custody in 1990s, criminal justice reforms were introduced to reduce prison sentences for Indigenous Australians. Regardless of these reforms, Indigenous Australians continue to be over-represented at every stage of the criminal justice process, and the gap between the incarceration rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is widening (Anthony, 2013; Blagg, 2008; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). This disparity has exceeded that between African-American and White-American incarceration rates in the USA. While Indigenous Australians account for less than 5% of the Australian population, they comprise over 25% of the adult prison population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). A detailed examination of the historical difference between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians is beyond the scope of the current article. However, historical considerations such as post-colonial segregation and institutional differences in the application of non-indigenous law for Indigenous versus non-Indigenous Australians are noted (Cunneen et al., 2013). These considerations illustrate the importance of cultural minority group differences when considering how racial-animus may influence the public’s crime concerns and their punitive attitudes. In fact, recent research findings suggest that public perception of Indigenous Australians predicts the demand for harsher sentencing outcomes for people who break the law (Brookman & Wiener, 2015).

1.3 Mediation

One of the limitations of international and national research to date, is the failure to report a main effect, without assessing whether the relationship is influenced by other variables (Kornhauser, 2013; Unnever & Cullen, 2007). Both the public’s crime concerns and their racial animus have been identified as predictors of punitive attitudes, however little is known about their interaction. Kornhauser (2013), while not specifically examining mediating relationships between variables, hypothesizes that racial animus has an indirect effect upon the relationship between people’s crime concerns and punitive attitudes. However, despite these theoretical considerations and implications, there is a dearth of literature exploring the effect of negative perception of cultural minority groups upon the public’s fear of crime and its relationship to their demand for harsher sentencing. Increased knowledge of the

contemporary way these two predictors interact may provide direction to government and policy-makers intent on reducing the public's demand for harsher sentencing and exploding prison populations. For example, targeted strategies to address the public's fear of crime in relationship to cultural groups may be beneficial in ameliorating punitive attitudes. As Roberts and Indermaur (2007) note, identifying and understanding the predictors of punitive attitudes is not only critical to understanding "punitiveness" as a phenomenon, but also to ensuring that relevant information regarding public opinion towards sentencing is available for the purpose of policy development.

The present study aims to extend the current literature through examination of an indirect relationship of racial animus upon the public's crime concerns and their demands for harsher sentencing. The examination of two cultural minority groups, new-immigrants and Indigenous Australians, extends current literature through the examination of more than one cultural group when operationalising the Racial-animus model as a predictor of punitive attitudes.

1.4 Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H1. There will be an indirect effect of the Crime-distrust model on punitive attitudes through negative perception of new immigrants to Australia. That is, negative perception of new immigrants will function as a mediating agent upon the direct relationship between:

- 1a. Fear of Crime (FOC) and punitive attitudes.
- 1b. Perception of Crime (POC) and punitive attitudes.
- 1c. Confidence in Courts (CIC) and punitive attitudes.

Hypothesis Two

H2. There will be an indirect effect of the Crime-distrust model on punitive attitudes through negative perception of Indigenous Australians. That is, negative perception of Indigenous Australians will function as a mediating agent upon the direct relationship between:

- 2a. Fear of Crime (FOC) and punitive attitudes.
- 2b. Perception of Crime (POC) and punitive attitudes.
- 2c. Confidence in Courts (CIC) and punitive attitudes.

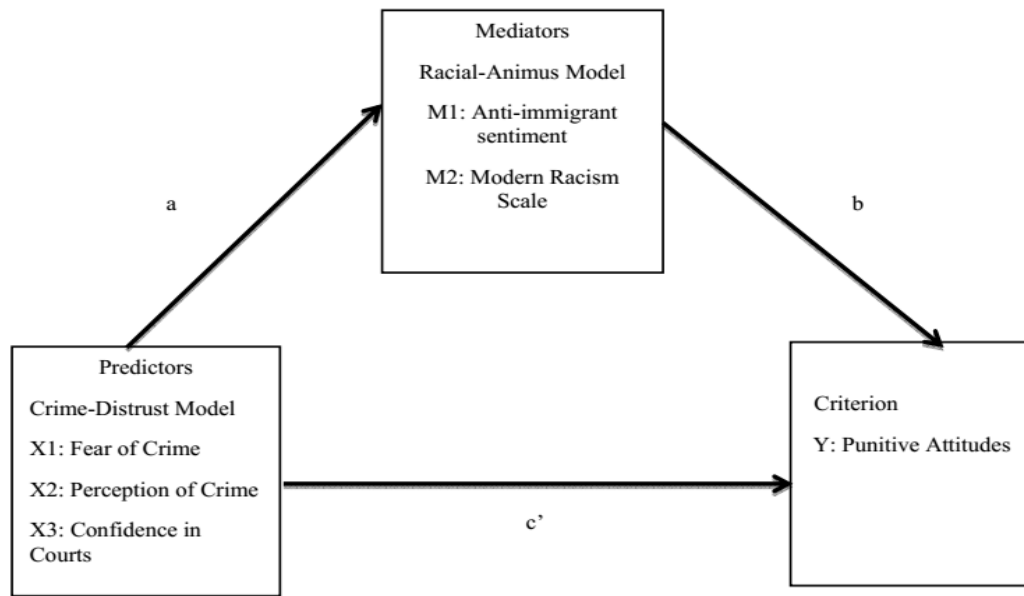


Figure 1. The Theoretical Hypothetical Pathway Hypothesizes That Racial Animus Variables (M1 and M2) Mediate the Relationship between the Crime Distrust Variables (X1, X2, and X3) and Punitive Attitudes (Y)

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants aged 18 years or older were invited to complete an online survey. The survey questions using Survey Monkey were posted on and the SONA system social media fora like Facebook. The SONA system informs first year students of the survey and invites their participation for extra subject credit points. Of the 566 responses, only 533 participants provided complete survey responses in 2014. See Table 1 for further demographic details.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Demographic Variables

Participants provided details about their gender, education level and age.

Table 1. Demographic Information (N = 533)

Demographic	(%)	Demographic	(%)
Gender		Age	
Male	23	18-29 years	23
Female	77	30-39 years	26

Education		40-49 years	26
High school	17	50-59 years	17
Certificate/Diploma	31	60+ years	8
Undergraduate	25.5		
Postgraduate	26.5		

2.2.2 Dependent Variable

The construct of “punitive attitudes” was measured using the Punitiveness Scale (Spiranovic et al., 2011). The Punitiveness Scale (PS) consists of seven items each measured on a 5 point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). A sample question was “People who break the law should be given stiffer sentences”. Scores were summed together with higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of punitive attitudes. Spiranovic and colleagues found the measure to have good internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .83$) and a recent Principle Axis Factor Analysis supported the idea of a uni-dimensional scale (Spiranovic et al., 2011). The reliability measure for the Punitiveness Scale in this study is consistent with previous research findings with Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$.

The Crime-distrust model was operationalized and measured using three separate subscales:

- 1) The Fear of Crime Scale,
- 2) The Perception of Crime Scale, and;
- 3) The Confidence in Courts Scale.

The Fear of Crime (FOC) scale was designed to measure participant’s concerns about becoming a victim of crime (Spiranovic et al., 2011). The three items of the FOC scale were measured on a five-point Likert scale, however the first had a different rating system (1 = never; 5 = many times) to the other two (1 = very safe; 5 = very unsafe). A question was “How safe do you feel when alone at home after dark”. Higher scores on the FOC scale indicated stronger fear of becoming a victim of crime.

The Perception of Crime (POC) scale measured the participants’ perception that crime rates are rising (Spiranovic et al., 2011). The three items of the POC scale were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = decreased a lot; 5 = increased a lot). A question was “In your opinion, do you think that the level of crime overall in your state or territory has increased, decreased or remained the same in the last two years”. Higher scores on the POC scale indicated a stronger belief that crime rates are on the increase.

The Confidence in Courts (CIC) scale measured a participant’s confidence or trust in the court and legal system. The three items measured a participant’s degree of confidence in the courts system as an institution (Mackenzie et al., 2012). The items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all confident; 5 = very confident). A question was “How confident are you that the courts are effective at giving punishments which fit the crime”. Higher scores on the CIC indicated greater confidence in the courts

and legal system.

In previous studies the FOC and POC scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistencies (FOC Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$; POC Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$) (Spiranovic et al., 2011). In the present study the three subscales demonstrated good internal consistencies (FOC Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$; POC Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$; CIC Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$).

The Racial-animus model was operationalized and measured through the Anti-Immigrant Sentiment scale (Kornhauser, 2013) and the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, Hardee, & Betts, 1981).

The Anti-Immigrant Sentiment (AIS) scale was developed by Kornhauser (2013) through summing the responses to two items in the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) (2005) (Wilson et al., 2006). The first item asked; "Do you think the number of immigrants allowed into Australia should be increase of reduced" and was measured on a 5 point Likert scale (1 = increased a lot; 5 = reduced a lot). The second item asked; "To what extent do you agree that immigrants increase crime rates", and was also measured on a 5 point Likert scale but with a different rating system (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment. Research has previously indicated low internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$) (Kornhauser, 2013). In the present study reliability measures demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$).

The Modern Racism Scale (MRS) was originally designed by McConahay, Hardee and Batts (1981) and was adapted for the Australian context by Augoustinos, Ahrens and Innes (1994). The revisions reflect more accurately the Australian setting. For example, the authors replaced the term "black" with "Aboriginal". As such, an example item from the original MRS; "Blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted", became, "Aboriginals should not push themselves where they are not wanted". Augoustinos and colleagues (1994) made further revisions to two items. Item three was revised to read; "Aboriginals have more influence upon government policy than they ought to", while item four was revised to read; "Aboriginals are getting too demanding in their push for land rights". The seven items were rated on a five-point scale (- 2 = Disagree strongly; 2 = Agree strongly). Scores range from a possible minus 14 indicating low or no prejudice to plus 14 indicating high levels of prejudice with zero as the middle point.

The Australian adaptation of the MRS is considered an explicit measure of prejudice toward Indigenous Australians. While the MRS was developed over 20 years ago, it remains an appropriate measure of social attitudes. For example, it demonstrated strong internal reliability and validity when compared with an adaptation of the Implicit Association Test (Skinner et al., 2013). The Australian version of the MRS has demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) (Augoustinos et al., 1994). In the present study the reliability of this measure was consistent with previous findings with a Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$.

3. Result

3.1 Descriptive Statistics and Assumptions

All analyses used IBM SPSS V 22 software. The descriptive statistics indicated that the data set is consistent with the statistical assumptions. Means and standard deviation, and normality data for all measures are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Information of Measurement Scales (N = 533)

Scale	M (SD)	Skewness (SE)	Kurtosis (SE)
Punitiveness	21.76 (6.84)	-0.01 (.11)	-.76 (.21)
Fear of Crime	7.18 (2.31)	.61 (.11)	.21 (.21)
Perception of Crime	10.35 (2.05)	-.06(.11)	.22 (.21)
Confidence in courts	7.49 (2.94)	0.41 (.11)	-.73 (.21)
Anti-immigrant	6.01 (2.13)	.07 (.11)	-.77 (.21)
Modern racism	-5.26 (5.59)	.390 (.11)	-.267 (.21)

There were no extreme univariate outliers, but six multivariate outliers were excluded from further analysis as their Mahalanobis distance were greater than 3.29 standard deviations away from the mean (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). The final sample size of N = 527 met the acceptable sample standard to conduct regression analysis (Green, 1991).

Zero-order correlations between all variables are displayed in Table 3. The variables of Perception of Crime (.55), Confidence in Courts (-.57), Anti-immigrant Sentiment (.58) and Modern Racism Scale (.56) are significantly and moderately correlated with the dependent variable Punitiveness Scale. Fear of Crime (.25) is also significantly, although weakly, correlated with the dependent variable Punitiveness Scale. This suggests that the applied variables measure different constructs. The demographic variables were very weakly correlated with Punitiveness Scale and were controlled for in partial correlation analysis. The partial correlations are also displayed in Table 3 and are similar to the zero-order correlation values. This confirms that the demographics of age, gender and education are unlikely to meaningfully impact the relationships between the variables of interest and were therefore not included in the mediation pathway model.

Table 3. Zero-Order Correlations of the Criterion and Predictor Variables (Bottom Triangle) and Partial Correlations Controlling for Demographic Predictor Variables (Top Triangle)

Measure	PS	Age	Gender	HS vs.		FOC	POC	CIC	AIS	MRS	
				Voc.	Undergrad.						
PS	1.00					.19***	.51***	-.53***	-.53***	.53***	
Age	-.05	1.00									
Gender	.11**	-.17***	1.00								
HS vs. Voc.	.17***	.06	.05***	1.00							
HS vs. Undergrad.	.13**	-.08*	-.02***	-.39***	1.00						
HS vs. Postgrad.	-.24***	.16***	-.12**	-.40***	-.36***	1.00					
FOC	.25***	-.20***	.32***	.09*	-.10*	-.14**	1.00				
POC	.55***	.04	.19***	.18***	-.15***	-.15***	.26***	1.00			
CIC	-.57***	-.06	-.07*	-.18***	.03	.27***	-.20***	-.45***	1.00		
AIS	.58***	.03	.03	.23***	-.08***	-.25***	.21***	.30***	-.39***	1.00	
MRS	.56***	-.00	-.03	.10*	.17*	-.17*	.15***	.39***	-.31***	.47***	1.00

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. PS = Punitive Scale; FOC = Fear of Crime Scale; POC = Perception of Crime; CIS = Confidence in Sentencing Scale; AIS = Anti – Immigration Scale; MRS = Modern Racism Scale. Coding for gender; 1 = male; 2 = female; Coding for education; High school (HS) vs. Vocational (Voc) = 1; HS vs. Undergraduate degree (Undergrad) = 2; HS vs. Postgraduate degree (Postgrad) = 3

Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Punitive Attitudes to Sentencing

Predictor	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>p</i>	Bootstrap ^a Bias Corrected 95% CI			
						Bias	<i>SE</i>	Lower	Upper
Step 1	.133								
Constant		23.71	1.76		.000	.06	1.80	20.20	27.24
Gender		1.10	.68	.07	.107	-.02	.71	-.26	2.50
Age		.01	.02	.01	.801	-.00	.02	-.04	.05
Mid vs. Lower Income		-.86	.70	-.11	.008	.02	.72	-3.22	-.40
Mid vs. Upper Income		-1.05	.08	-.06	.190	-.02	.81	-2.65	.54

								Bootstrap ^a Bias Corrected 95% CI	
	HS vs. vocational	-1.80	.86	-.12	.037	.03	.88	-3.47	-.02
	HS vs. undergraduate	-5.06	.89	-.32	.000***	.02	.91	-6.84	-3.21
	HS vs. postgraduate	-6.33	.91	-.41	.000***	.04	.94	-8.14	-4.41
Step 2		.333							
	Constant	19.6	2.13		.000	.00	2.57	14.55	24.61
	Gender	-.44	.56	-.03	.440	-.02	.55	-1.55	.65
	Age	-.03	.02	-.05	.121	-.00	.02	-.06	.10
	Mid vs. Lower Income	-.72	.56	-.11	.002**	.02	.61	-2.89	-.50
	Mid vs. Upper Income	-.09	.63	-.01	.884	-.00	.57	-1.23	-.98
	HS vs. vocational	-.51	.68	-.10	.027*	.04	.71	-2.90	-.04
	HS vs. undergraduate	-2.82	.71	-.18	.000***	.03	.76	-4.37	-1.32
	HS vs. postgraduate	-3.06	.74	-.20	.000***	.04	.77	-4.55	-1.50
	FOC	.22	.11	.07	.042*	.00	.12	-.02	.44
	POC	1.10	.13	.33	.000***	.00	.15	.82	1.39
	CIC	-.87	.09	-.38	.000***	-.00	.09	-1.06	-.69
Sep 3		.129							
	Constant	16.94	1.99		.000***	-.20	2.32	12.25	21.46
	Gender	-.42	.50	.03	.420	-.02	.05	-.58	1.39
	Age	-.31	.02	-.06	.042*	-.00	.02	-1.06	-.00
	Mid vs. Lower Income	-.91	.49	-.06	.064	.02	.52	-1.89	.15
	Mid vs. Upper Income	-.20	.55	-.01	.712	-.00	.54	-1.27	.83
	HS vs. vocational	-.81	.60	-.05	.177	.03	.60	1.94	.41
	HS vs. undergraduate	-.18	.64	-.08	.063	.02	.67	-2.50	.18
	HS vs. postgraduate	-1.07	.67	-.07	.108	.03	.68	-2.38	.27
	FOC	.08	.09	.03	.368	.00	.10	-.11	.28
	POC	.77	.11	.23	.000***	.00	.12	.54	1.04
	CIC	-.65	.08	-.28	.000***	.00	.08	-.82	-.49

					Bootstrap ^a Bias Corrected 95% CI				
AIS	.73	.12	.23	.000***	.00	.13	.47	.99	
MRS	.32	.04	.26	.000***	-.00	.05	.23	.41	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Note. B = unstandardized regression co-efficient; β = standardized regression co-efficient, SEB = standard error; Bias = difference between original mean and bootstrap mean; SE = standard error of the bias. Coding for gender: 1 = male; 2 = female; Coding for education; High school (HS) vs. Vocational (Voc) = 1; HS vs. Undergraduate degree (Undergraduate) = 2; HS vs. Postgraduate degree (Postgraduate) = 3. Coding for income = Middle vs. Lower = 1, Middle vs. Upper = 2. FOC = Fear of Crime; POC = Perception of Crime; CIC = Confidence in Courts; AIS = Anti-immigrant sentiment; MRS = Modern Racism Scale.

^aUnless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 5000 bootstrap samples.

3.2 Mediation Analyses

Hayes' PROCESS model allows the direct calculation of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2013). Parallel multiple mediator models were used to conduct three separate mediation analyses using an ordinary least squares path analysis (see Table 3) and results were depicted in a statistical diagram (Figure 2). All three X variables (FOC, POC and CIC) were entered simultaneously in the model to yield an estimate of each X's effect on Y (directly and indirectly through M) that is unique to that X relative to the other X variables which are being controlled for in each model (Hayes, 2013).

Table 5. Regression Coefficients, Standard Errors, and Model Summary Information for the presumed Racial Animus Influence Parallel Multiple Mediator Model depicted in Figure 2

Predictor	Outcome											
	M ₁ (AIS)			M ₂ (MRS)			Y (Punitive)					
	b	SE	p	b	SE	p		b	SE	p		
X ₁ (FOC)	a ^{1.1}	.09	.04	<.05	a ^{2.1}	.12	.10	.221	c ¹	.15	.09	.100
X ₂	a ^{1.2}	.26	.05	<.001	a ^{2.2}	.53	.13	<.001	c ²	.79	.11	<.001
(POC)												
X ₃ (CIC)	a ^{1.3}	-.19	.03	<.001	a ^{2.3}	-.41	.09	<.001	c ³	-.64	.08	<.001
M ₁ (AIS)	----	----	----		----	----	----	b ₁	.76	.11	<.001	
M ₂	----	----	----		----	----	----	b ²	.33	.04	<.001	
(MRS)												
Constant	i _{M1}	4.10	.65	<.001	i _{M2}	-8.61	1.78	<.001	i _Y	14.51	1.66	<.001
	R ² = 0.21				R ² = 0.13				R ² = 0.59			

$$F(3,523) = 47.39,$$

$$p < .001$$

$$F(3,523) = 26.61,$$

$$p < .001$$

$$F(5,521) = 147.12,$$

$$p < .001$$

Note. The model coefficients, direct, indirect and total effects are reported in unstandardized form.

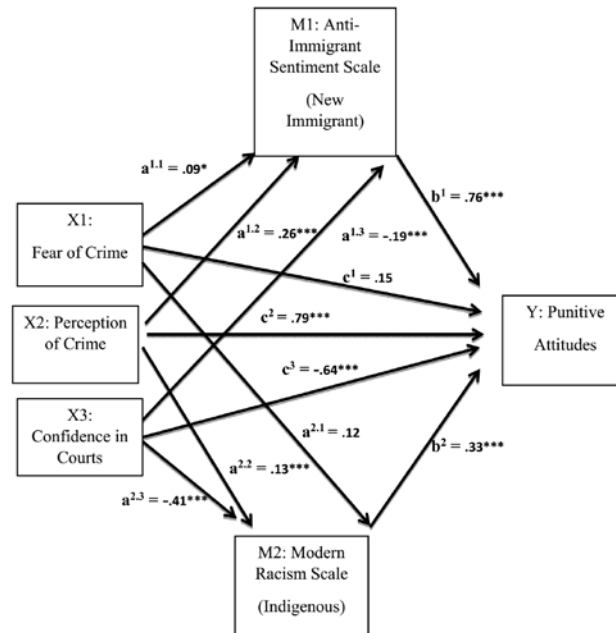


Figure 2. A Statistical Diagram of the Parallel Multiple Mediator Model with the Crimes-Distrust Variables as Predictors (X1, X2 and X3), the Racial-Animus Variables as Moderators (M1 and M2) and Punitive Attitudes as the Criterion Variable (Y)

Note. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

3.2.1 Anti-Immigrant Sentiment (AIS) as Mediator

1) Fear of Crime on Punitive attitude mediated by AIS (New Immigrant).

The significant result suggests that participant's fear of becoming a victim of crime indirectly influences their desire for harsher sentences through their negative perception of new immigrants (see Figure 2). That is, participants who are more frightened of becoming a victim of crime, report more negative perceptions of new immigrants ($a^{1.1} = 0.09$). Participants who score highly on the AIS are more likely to be punitive in their attitudes to sentencing of offenders (AIS: $b^1 = 0.76$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effects (AIS: $ab = 0.07$) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, did not cross zero for AIS ([0.01 to 0.14]). This finding supports Hypothesis 1a, predicting that fear of crime indirectly influences people's punitive attitudes through their anti-immigrant sentiment

These findings suggest that the indirect effect of AIS in the model contributed significantly to the

relationship between fear of becoming a victim of crime and punitive attitudes.

2) Perception of Crime on Punitive attitude mediated by AIS (New Immigrant).

The perception that crime rates are rising also indirectly influences participant's punitive attitudes to sentencing through their negative perception of new immigrants (see Figure 2). That is, participants who report perceiving rising crime rates, also report greater anti-immigrant sentiment ($a_{2.1} = 0.26$). Participants who score highly on the AIS are more likely to desire harsher sentences for offenders (AIS: $b_1 = 0.76$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effects (AIS: $ab = -0.14$) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, was entirely below zero ([AIS: -0.22 to -0.08]). This finding supports Hypothesis 1b, predicting that the perception that crime rates are rising indirectly influences people's punitive attitudes through their anti-immigrant sentiment.

3) Confidence in Courts on punitive attitude mediated by AIS (New Immigrant).

Similarly, Figure 2 illustrates that the degree of confidence participants report in the courts system, also indirectly influenced their desire for harsher sentencing through their negative perception of new immigrants. That is, participants with low levels of confidence in the legal court system also have high anti-immigrant sentiment ($a_{3.1} = -0.19$). Participants who are high on the AIS are then more likely to desire harsher sentences for offenders (AIS: $b_1 = 0.76$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effects (AIS: $ab = -0.14$) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, did not cross zero (AIS: [-0.22 to -0.08]) suggesting that these findings were not by chance. This result lends support for Hypothesis 1c, predicting that people's confidence in the court system indirectly influences their punitive attitudes through their anti-immigrant sentiment.

Findings from the mediation analyses suggest that the indirect effect of AIS in the model contributed significantly to the relationship between all three Crime-distrust variables (FOC, POC and CIC) and punitive attitudes. This supports Hypothesis One predicting that the direct relationship between the Crime-distrust model and punitive attitudes is mediated by anti-immigrant sentiment.

3.2.2 Negative Perception of Indigenous Australians (MRS) as Mediator

1) Fear of Crime on Punitive attitude mediated by MRS (Indigenous)

The non-significant MRS result suggests that participant's fear of becoming a victim of crime does not indirectly influence their desire for harsher sentences through their negative perception of Indigenous Australians. That is, participants who are more frightened of becoming a victim of crime do not report more negative perceptions of Indigenous Australians ($a_{1.2} = 0.13$). However, participants with high scores on the MRS are more likely to be punitive in their attitudes to sentencing (MRS: $b_2 = 0.33$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effects (via MRS: $ab = 0.04$) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, did cross zero for the MRS ([-0.03 to 0.12]). This finding does not support Hypothesis 2a, predicting that fear of crime indirectly influences people's punitive attitudes through their negative perception of Indigenous Australians.

2) Perception of Crime on Punitive attitude mediated by MRS (Indigenous)

Participants who report perceiving rising crime rates, also report greater negative perception of Indigenous Australians ($a_{2.2} = 0.53$). That is, participants who scored highly on the MRS, are more likely to desire harsher sentences for offenders (MRS: $b_2 = 0.33$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effects (MRS: $ab = -0.13$) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, was entirely below zero ([MRS -0.21 to -0.08]). This result lends support for Hypothesis 2b, predicting that the perception that crime rates are rising indirectly influences people's punitive attitudes through their negative perception of Indigenous Australians.

3) Confidence in Courts on punitive attitude mediated by MRS (Indigenous)

Participants with low levels of confidence in the court system also report high negative perception of Indigenous Australians ($a_{3.2} = -0.41$). That is, participants who obtain high MRS scores, are then more likely to desire harsher sentences for offenders (MRS: $b^2 = 0.33$). A bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effects (MRS: $ab = -0.13$) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples, did not cross zero (MRS [-0.21 to -0.08]) suggesting that these findings were not by chance. This result supports Hypothesis 2c predicting that people's confidence in the court system indirectly influences their punitive attitudes through their negative perception of Indigenous Australians.

Findings from the mediation analyses suggest that the indirect effect of MRS in the model contributed significantly to the relationship between only two Crime-distrust variables (POC and CIC) and punitive attitudes. This provides partial support for Hypothesis Two predicting that the direct relationship between the Crime-distrust model and punitive attitudes is mediated by negative perception of Indigenous Australians.

3.2.3 Summary of Results

Findings from the mediation analyses suggest that the indirect effect of anti-immigrant sentiment in the model contributed significantly to the relationship between the public's concerns about crime and their punitive attitudes. This supports the hypothesis predicting that the direct relationship between the crime-distrust model and punitive attitudes is mediated by anti-immigrant sentiment.

Results suggest that the indirect effect of negative perception of Indigenous Australians in the model, contributed significantly to the relationship between punitive attitudes and only two Crime-distrust variables; the public's perception that crime rates are rising and their confidence in the court system. An indirect effect was not demonstrated on the relationship between the public's fear of crime and their punitive attitudes. This lends partial support for the hypothesis predicting that the direct relationship between the Crime-distrust model and punitive attitudes is mediated by negative perception of Indigenous Australians.

4. Discussion

Despite the utility of both racial-animus and public crime concerns to predict punitive attitudes, the way in which the two constructs relate to each other remains poorly understood. As such, the primary aim of the study was to investigate a hypothetical pathway model by examining the indirect relationship of the Crime-distrust model upon punitive attitudes through the Racial-animus model. The finding that the public's crime concerns influence their punitive attitudes to sentencing through racial-animus as potential implications concerning efforts to redress public punitive attitudes. In reducing the public's demand for harsher penalties in relationship to crime, public policy should consider issues of culture and race in addition to addressing the public's crime concerns.

In Australia, research examining the racial typification of crime is limited (Snowball & Weatherburn, 2007) despite empirical evidence indicating that public crime concerns may be associated with specific cultural minority groups (Hogg & Brown, 1998). This is supported by findings in the present study whereby a significant indirect effect of racial animus was noted upon the perception of increasing crime rates and public confidence in the court system and their demand for harsher sentencing. This finding was significant regardless of whether animus was towards new-immigrants or Indigenous Australians. A significant indirect relationship between fear of crime and the demand for harsher sentencing was only found through negative perceptions of new immigrants and not Indigenous Australians. This finding suggests that animus towards different cultural minority groups influences the public's fear of crime and punitive attitudes in distinctive ways. As such, targeted strategies to address the public's fear of crime in relationship to specific cultural groups may be beneficial in ameliorating punitive attitudes. Therefore, the factors which may have contributed to the culturally distinctive findings in the present study will be explored.

4.1 *The Influence of International Events*

Contemporary international and political events may have functioned as environmental factors contributing to the indirect effect between the Fear of Crime variable and punitive attitudes in reference to new-immigrants and not Indigenous Australians. Data for the present study was collected when Islamic terrorism threats in Australia were in the public domain. Security concerns and risk aversion have been public concerns since 9/11 and the "war on terror" (Cunneen et al., 2013). In the Australian context, the terrorist attacks in events like the Bali bombings, and the racially motivated 2005 Cronulla riots in Sydney renewed public debate concerning immigration policy (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). These events may have increased the public's subjective experience of proximity to crime threat in relationship new-immigrants. Islamic terrorism threats may have added to the public's fear of being victimized by extreme forms of crime associated with "immigrant other", resulting in an increased demand for harsher sentencing as a way of managing their fear (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).

4.2 The Influence of the Media

Media coverage may be another environmental factor influencing the cultural distinction between the indirect effects of racial animus upon fear of crime upon punitive attitudes. The broader community, for example, has little first-hand experience with the Muslim or Indigenous communities and are therefore reliant upon the Media for information (Abdalla & Rane, 2008). In relationship to public crime concerns, the personal use of tabloid and commercial media has been identified as a direct predictor of punitive attitudes (Roberts & Indermaur, 2007; Spiranovic et al, 2011). The media is also known for its ability to increase crime salience in the public domain (Flanigan, 1996).

Subtle differences in contemporary media coverage of new-immigrants compared with Indigenous Australians may provide some explanations for the findings in the present study. In English speaking western societies media representation of people from non-Anglo-Saxon backgrounds have been presented as “other” (Cullen et al., 2012). This has included, for example, media representation of Hispanic minority groups in the USA (Chiricos & Eschhalz, 2002), and Muslim minority groups in Australia (Abdalla & Rane, 2008). In the USA, a content analysis of the news presented on three television stations in Florida, revealed that Hispanics were more likely to appear as criminal suspects (Chiricos & Eschhalz, 2002). Media coverage is a contributing factor to cotemporary negative perceptions of the Muslim community (Abdalla & Rane, 2008), and there is growing public association of “immigrant others” with crime (Unnever & Cullen, 2010a). Findings from the present study, although exploratory, lend support for the theory that crime has largely been typified as an “out group” phenomenon (Chiricos et al., 2004).

In contrast to new-immigrants, contemporary Australian media coverage of Indigenous Australians has been positive, focusing on strategies to “Close the Gap” on Indigenous disadvantage. Since the “Close the Gap” campaign commenced in 2007, the concept has become linked with positive media reporting on Indigenous issues (Pholi, Black, & Richards, 2009). While there is still much to achieve with this campaign, positive media coverage is a likely factor that has reduced the association of Indigenous Australians with crime and therefore fear of becoming a victim of crime.

In summary, it is not unreasonable to propose that contemporary international events, and culturally nuanced media coverage are environment factors contributing to the public’s subjective experience or fear of crime and their punitive attitudes. At the very least, the above distinction in findings between the two cultural minority groups confirms the importance of examining specific cultural groups when operationalizing and examining the Racial-animus model as a predictor of punitive attitudes. However, it also needs to be emphasised that cross sectional studies exploring public opinion are heavily influenced by prevailing community attitudes influenced by the media coverage and the perceived political climate towards minority groups.

4.3 Study Limitations and Future Research

One of the limitations of the study and threats to the generalisation of findings is the use of a convenience sample. Recruiting through social networking and university students resulted in an overrepresentation of females and an underrepresentation of older participants. Furthermore, this sampling strategy focused on subjects with tertiary education. Results should be considered with caution as they are representative of a highly educated group. The significance of these exploratory findings, however, provide direction for further research using a representative sample of the Australian population, increasing the confidence with which results are interpreted.

As data did not identify ethnic background in the present study, issues such as reverse racism and its influence on punitive scores, remains unknown. An exploration of the impact of location in Australia may also extend understanding of individual difference between punitive attitudes, especially since rural and remote Australians have less contact with new immigrant populations. Future research may want to control for these suggested considerations.

While it is not possible to examine every potential predictor of punitive attitudes in a single study, future research should consider including a measure of media exposure and usage and the potential relationship to negative perceptions of cultural minority groups. Inclusion of this variable may further explain the relationship found between the Racial-animus model and punitive attitudes. What has been established, however, is that there is no one simple model to explain the public demands for harsher sentencing for offenders. Future research should continue to include cultural explanations and models in an effort to understand the complex influences upon public opinion regarding sentencing.

4.4 Conclusion

Determining predictors to punitive attitudes is important in ensuring that current information regarding public opinion towards sentencing is available for policy development and political purposes (Roberts & Indermaur, 2007). The present study extends the current literature through identifying the significance of negative perceptions of new immigrants and Indigenous Australians as a mediating agent upon the direct relationship with between the Crime-distrust model and punitive attitudes.

Further investigation of the Racial-animus model as a potential mediating agent is warranted to improve our understanding of cultural factors that may increase the public's fear of crime and punitive attitudes. Future research may focus on beneficial strategies aimed at nurturing positive perceptions of New-immigrants and Indigenous Australians as an additional approach to reducing public demand for harsher sentencing. Investigating, for example, whether the media could be better utilised as a source of positive public attitudes towards cultural minority groups and potentially ameliorative public punitive attitudes.

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