

Political Values and Responses to Fear Messaging: An Australian Perspective

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SPECIAL EDITION

THE Daily Telegraph

Wednesday, September 12, 2001 90 cents*



SPECIAL 7AM EDITION

Herald Sun

27 AUSSIES KILLED IN MISSILE ATTACK



Teen allegedly hid pipe bombs from parents

Police say lives saved when attack foiled

FROM THE SCENE

SPECIAL 2PM EDITION

The Daily Telegraph

The instant we changed forever

IS takes 13 hostages in city cafe siege

DEATH CULT CBD ATTACK

Lindt
MERRY CHRISTMAS

The Newspaper of the Year

Courier Mail

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2014 // \$2.20 INCL GST

TERROR ALERT NOW 'HIGH' **'CHATTER' ABOUT AUSSIE ATTACK** **POLICE SWARM MAJOR EVENTS**

WAR ON OUR WAY OF LIFE

RENEE VILLARIS STEVEN SCOTT

PRIME Minister Tony Abbott warned there were homegrown extremists who "wish to do us harm" as Australia's terror alert was dramatically ratcheted up to its highest level ever yesterday. Police have begun swarming major events, airports and other key assets after increased "chatter" among jihadists prompted ASIO to announce it had raised the terror alert to high, meaning a terrorist attack is likely.

Extra police will patrol the Cowboys Club with the Broncos in Townsville tonight after bomb squad officers swept the stadium yesterday, while security will be increased for Riverfire in a fortnight.

Mr Abbott said Australians were a threat because of our sense of life.

"There are people, I regret to say, out there who wish to do us harm, not because of anything that we have done, but because of who we are and the life we lead," Mr Abbott said, while announcing the heightened alert with ASIO chief David Bouyer (pictured left) and acting Australian Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin (centre).

"They regard our society as an abomination and that's why I regret to say we are targets, and we would be targets regardless of anything that we did."

Fear Messaging: What, Why and How?

Not just media - Politics

- Analysis of Howard's speeches

Linked to *conservative* politics

Fears and trust in government/nationalism

Conservative policies better suited to provided sought after certainty?

Conservative shift or worldview defence?

Terror Management Theory

Terror Management Theory (Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986)

Fear of certain death = Potential for terror

Reminders of mortality increases this fear, or *mortality salience*

Escape fear by clinging to aspects of the individual's world view that will exist after the death of the self

Research indicates that once wider aspects of worldview made salient, more likely to see *worldview defence* in the face of fear messaging

Conservatism and Progressivism

What do these labels actually mean?

- Rigidity yet inconsistency

US and Australian political parties as proxies for conservatism and progressivism?

Australians still self-identify along these lines (Charnock, 2010)

Haidt and colleagues (2004, 2007) moral foundations

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| ◦ Harm/Care | Fairness/reciprocity | |
| ◦ Ingroup/loyalty | Authority/respect | Purity/Sancity |

Study Overview

N=13

13 hours of interviews,

Discussed : Haidt and Grahams moral foundations, and

Responses to media images

Participants

Two cohort search unsuccessful

Student sample,

- Age range, 23-45 (median = 31)
- Locations : Melbourne (n=8), Sydney (n=2), Sunshine Coast (n=1), Cairns (n=1), London/Sydney (n=1)
- Field of study : Psychology (n=9), Law (n=3), International development (n=1)

Results

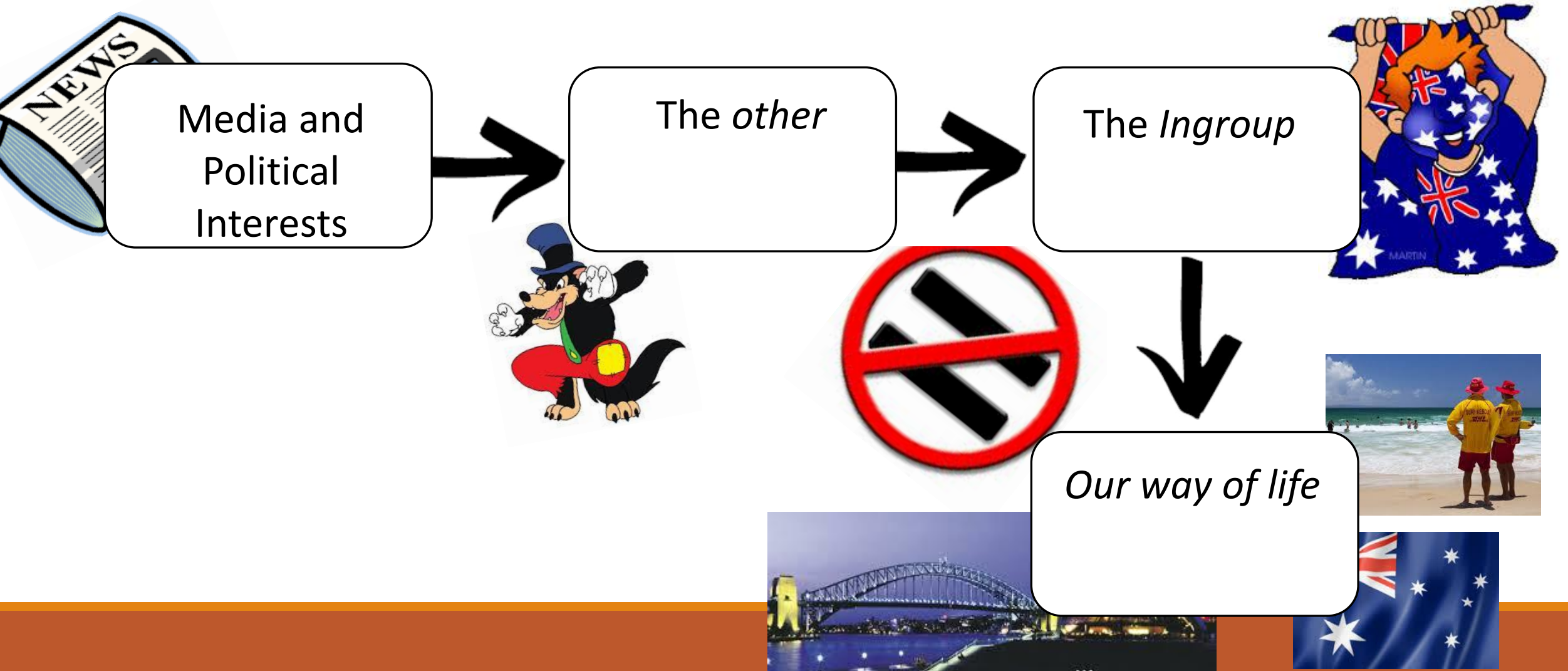
Moral foundations

- Expected : Grouping per moral foundations
- Results: No grouping possible, strong conditionality theme

Allowed for a more open ended investigation

- Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

Discursive Object Constructions



Reactions

Safety vs danger

- More likely to accept the constructions when perceiving danger

Personalisation vs politicisation

- More likely to accept the constructions when engaging personally

Desensitisation vs emotional response

- More likely to accept the constructions when reacting emotionally

Conclusions

Holistic labels of people as *conservative* or *progressive* warrants further consideration

Participants here were able to paint a clear picture of the messages included implied or made explicit by the media content

Acceptance or rejection depends on how they reacted on three spectrums

In their own words

“It narrows the *us* instead of broadening the *us* because it encompasses everyone but if you narrow it then it’s easier for a community to become to feel justified in a reaction to it. And I think the media is very good at this. Like it sells more papers to get people wound up, you know?”

“there’s been more people killed by cows or something like that in Australia than there has by terrorists...”

“Remember when the government, John Howards government wasn’t doing very well and the election was coming up. And the big issue was children overboard. And suddenly because everyone was worried about law and order and being overrun by refugees, their tough stance, and ultimately it was a lie, but their poll seemed to go up. It seemed to be related.”

“Nationalism is so easily manipulated to become racism”

“I think we’ve become totally desensitized. We, we take this shit in our stride. We, we barely see it.”

“We’re part of a global community. We’re not distinguished by our geographic lines. We’re not, we’re not separated by the place that we were born..”

Questions



Key References

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