

International Images and Mass Media: The Effects of Media Coverage on Canadians' Perceptions of Ethnic and Race Relations in Australia

Julie M. Duck

University of Queensland, Australia

Richard Lalonde and Deena Weiss

York University, Canada

Recently, there has been much speculation about the impact of international media coverage of Australia's position on Indigenous people, migrants and asylum seekers on other nations' images of Australia. In this experiment we examined whether there was any basis for such concerns by considering the short-term impact of negative TV coverage of Australians on Canadian viewers. A questionnaire provided baseline data on Canadian students' perceptions of Australians and Australian race relations. Four months later, the students were assigned to one of three conditions that varied media contact with Australians. Students viewed one of two television programs (about right-wing political independent, Pauline Hanson, and her emotive criticisms of Aborigines and Asian immigrants or about an ethnically-mixed group of young Australians and their positive sense of cultural identity), or they viewed no program (no contact control). Results indicated that both positive and negative media coverage of Australians affected Canadians' views of Australia in the short-term. In particular, negative coverage (of Hanson) promoted less favourable views of Australians and Australian race relations over time and relative to the positive media and no media control conditions. The media's role in shaping international images is discussed.

Over the last few years, social commentators in Australia have expressed concerns that "bad press" has damaged Australia's international reputation as a country with a "spirit of tolerance and welcome embrace" (e.g., Wooldridge, 1998, p. 183). First, there was public concern over media coverage of UN reactions to Australia's treatment of Indigenous people. Then, commentators speculated that Australia had become typecast abroad by sensationalised media reports of political independent, Pauline Hanson, and her attacks on various minority groups including Aborigines and Asian immigrants (Kelly, 1998). More recently, some Australians have despaired over international attitudes to the Government's response on the issue of asylum seekers. Headlines in the overseas press such as "Aussie rules bring despair to refugees" (Barkham, 2001) have sparked internal reflection on the image of Australia and Australians that is being projected abroad (e.g., "The Unwelcome Mat", Trioli, 1999). Our concerns that the image of Australians is under threat may reflect, in part, a tendency to over-emphasise media influence on others (viz. the third-person effect, Davison, 1983; Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 2000; Perloff, 1999). On the other hand, there is reason to suspect that images of Australians in the international media may be influential, particularly because of the limited direct contact that people overseas have with Australians. Predictions about the likely impact of media coverage on our national image are informed by social psychological perspectives on stereotype formation and change and, more specifically, by mass communication perspectives that emphasise the central role of the media in the maintenance and development of social stereotypes and of indirect "media contact" as a means of stereotype change.

A number of social psychological studies have sought to identify the attributes perceived to be stereotypic of one nationality or another by individuals from various countries (e.g., Buchanan & Cantril, 1953; Marin & Salazar, 1985; McAndrew, 1990; Reigrotski & Anderson, 1959; Salazar & Marin, 1977), although this research has been largely descriptive, examining the content of cross-national stereotypes rather than exploring more process-related issues (Bartsch, Judd, Louw, Park, & Ryan, 1997). Nonetheless, some attention has been given to the means by which international images are developed, maintained and changed (e.g., Bar-Tal, 1997; Deutsch & Merritt, 1965; Janis & Smith, 1965; Karasawa, 1998; Pool, 1965; Scott, 1965; see Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Reigrotski & Anderson, 1959; Stroebe, Lenkert, & Jonas, 1988, for research on student exchange programs).

The extensive literature on formation and change of social stereotypes, which has flourished in recent decades (see Hilton & von Hippel, 1996, for a review), provides a backdrop for such process accounts. For instance, it is well established that social stereotypes are acquired over time from direct and indirect experience with the social environment and that well developed schemas are quite resistant to change (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995). It is also acknowledged that stereotype change may occur following the presentation of new social category based information (e.g., through intergroup contact), although the positive effects of contact depend on specifiable conditions (the contact hypothesis, Allport, 1965; Amir, 1976; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Stephan, 1985) and there are different models of the specific mechanisms involved. Inconsistent or disconfirming information conveyed through specific instances of contact with members of a stereotyped group may slowly accrue over time to enact change (the bookkeeping model, Rothbart, 1981; see also Queller & Smith, 2002). Schemas

may also undergo dramatic and sudden change in response to salient disconfirming evidence (the conversion model, Rothbart, 1981; see also Hewstone, Johnston, & Aird, 1992). Subtypes may be formed to handle disconfirming evidence (the subtyping model, Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; see also, Richards & Hewstone, 2001). Judgments of social groups may also be influenced by specific disconfirming exemplars that are momentarily salient or activated, paving the way for stereotype change to the extent that such exemplars are incorporated into the social category representation (the exemplar-based model, Smith & Zárate, 1992a, 1992b; see also Kashima, Woolcock, & Kashima, 2000).

Against this backdrop, process accounts of international images have tended to emphasise particular features that influence the formation and change of cross-national stereotypes. These include the importance of media portrayals as a source of social category based information about other nations (e.g., Bar-Tal, 1997), the gross and ill-articulated nature of international attitudes (Janis & Smith, 1965; Smith, 1973), and the relative susceptibility of international attitudes to change (Smith, 1973).

One consistent assumption has been that international images are developed, maintained and changed largely without first-hand contact, and predominantly via media events and news coverage. For instance, in their classic early book, *How Nations See Each Other*, Buchanan and Cantril (1953, pp. 58–59) argued that “media of communication obviously must bear some responsibility for the stereotypes held by members of their audience. So must the leaders of the people who are the subject of the stereotype, since their acts, perceived at second hand through these media, are the events which form and change the stereotypes”. More recently, Bar-Tal (1997) also argued that information provided by various societal channels or communication mediums (e.g., newspapers, television programs, leaders’ speeches) exerts a great influence on the formation and change of group members’ national stereotypic contents, as well as on their intensity and extremity. Bar-Tal reasoned that media coverage is widespread, sometimes the only source of information available, and is trusted and perceived as reliable and credible. The potential importance of media content to images of foreign countries and their people is underlined by the fact that ingroup media sources often convey rather simplified, undifferentiated and quite negative images of other nations (Scott, 1965), “packaging” and interpreting information about outgroups on behalf of their audience. Further, outcome-biased inferences may be generalised to the target group as a whole (see Allison & Messick, 1985; Mackie, Allison, Worth, & Asuncion, 1992). For instance, international attributions (those people are conservative) may be based on outcomes (e.g., election of right-wing candidates) without regard to the factors constraining those outcomes (majority rule) and in the face of contradictory evidence (e.g., that 49% didn’t vote for the right-wing candidate).

The potential for media influence on international images is arguably also compounded by the fact that international images are often gross, poorly organised and ill-articulated in the attitude structure of the individual (see Janis & Smith, 1965; Smith, 1973). According to Smith (1973, p. 119), the individual’s scant knowledge of and lack of interest in other nations seem to provide the individual with broad expectations about other nations rather than with clearly defined attitudes about them, rendering such expectations relatively susceptible to change when expectations are disconfirmed. Indeed, it is when beliefs about the target group are neutral rather than entrenched and broad rather than clearly defined that judgments of social groups are likely to be

dependent upon representations of specific instances or exemplars that are momentarily salient or activated (the exemplar-based model, Smith & Zárate, 1992b). Although contextual shifts in perceptions may be short-lived (see Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, 1995), they may also provide the basis for more long-term stereotype change.

Of course it is widely acknowledged that the media plays a central role in the development and maintenance of a range of social stereotypes (e.g., of the elderly, women, and ethnic minorities) via long-term, cumulative exposure to consonant and often distorted images or representations (e.g., cultivation theory, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994). Indeed, some have noted that the power of the media is such that media images may penetrate even when people are consciously critical of the implicit associations television is making (Philo, 1990). There is also a deal of evidence of more immediate media effects wherein the media sets the public agenda by defining what issues are important at a given point in time and primes the audience to evaluate target groups and individuals in particular ways (see Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar & Simon, 2000; Lavine, Sweeney, & Wagner, 1999; Pan & Kosicki, 1997). From this perspective, the media influences the standard by which others are judged at a given point in time by calling attention to some matters while ignoring others (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). For instance, media portrayals may influence the way in which nations and national groups are evaluated by focusing on selected, salient issues (e.g., a nation’s immigration policy or the election of an ultra-right political candidate).

Research in this vein has shown that one-off exposure to negative portrayals of stereotyped groups (e.g., the mentally ill) may produce harsher attitudes toward the targeted group (Thornton & Wahl, 1996). Other studies, inspired by the contact hypothesis, have also demonstrated the power of the media to provide indirect, positive contact with stereotyped groups and reduce prejudice, although evidence from at least one meta-analysis (Hearold, 1986) suggests that stereotyped messages generally have larger effects than anti- or counter-stereotyped messages. For instance, Riggle, Ellis and Crawford (1996) showed that positive media contact with homosexuals via a documentary film had a significant and positive effect on attitudes. Medvene and Bridge (1990) also found that television-mediated contact with people who had been deinstitutionalised (via pre-broadcast screening of a TV documentary, *Back Wards to Back Streets*) raised information levels, created more favourable attitudes, and changed beliefs about mental illness. Taken together, such research shows that even one-off media messages have the power to change or modify intergroup perceptions in significant ways, at least in the short-term.

In the present study we examined whether media contact in the form of one-off exposure to televised coverage of Australians had the potential to effect short-term change in beliefs about Australians and the country’s approach to Indigenous issues and ethnic diversity. We chose specifically to address the impact of media coverage of Pauline Hanson, a political Independent who was publicly opposed to Australia’s policy of multiculturalism, and to contrast this with media portrayals of Australians who supported multiculturalism and ethnic diversity. In her maiden speech to parliament in September 1996, Pauline Hanson spoke of Aborigines as a new privileged class and of the danger of Australia being swamped by Asians. Subsequently, she called for the repudiation of treaties with Indigenous people, cuts to immigration, an end to multiculturalism, and the re-introduction of national service to protect Australia against Asian aggression. From her parliamentary debut, Hanson was pursued by the popular media. The media made her a national figure and maintained

her national profile (Kelly, 1998; Manne, 1998), leaving itself open to charges of responsibility for damaging relations among white Australians, ethnic communities, and Indigenous people. But, Hanson's impact was not restricted to the national sphere. "By 1998 Hanson had become the best known and most reported Australian public figure in the international media from Europe through Asia" (Kelly, 1998, p. 95). As noted above, this prompted widespread speculation about the likely impact not only on Australia's economic and trade relations with other countries (notably Asia), but also on the image of Australia and Australians held internationally. In this study, conducted during the period of Pauline Hanson's media prominence, we sought to explore whether such fears were founded.

Using a sample of students from Canada, a comparable multicultural nation, we examined whether media contact in the form of one-off exposure to a televised interview with Pauline Hanson had the potential to effect short-term change in beliefs about Australians and the country's approach to Indigenous issues and ethnic diversity. Canada and Australia have been described as similar in terms of their sociodemographic history and their government policy on immigration and Indigenous rights. Both have also been traditionally regarded as countries that support multiculturalism and are sensitive to Indigenous issues (see Fleras & Elliott, 1992; Hawkins, 1982). Obviously, one would expect Australia's reputation as a tolerant nation to be particularly volatile in those countries directly implicated in Hanson's right wing rhetoric (e.g., Asian nations). However, we reasoned that a Canadian sample would provide a useful benchmark of the extent to which positive and negative media coverage might shape impressions of Australia in like-minded countries.

A questionnaire administered in September 1997 provided baseline data on Canadian students' perceptions of Australians and Australian race relations. Four months later students were assigned to a negative media contact, positive media contact, or no media control condition. Following media contact (or no contact) students indicated their impression of Australians, their beliefs about ethnic and race relations in Australia and, where appropriate, their perceptions of the television program they had seen. The two-wave design allowed for tests of the effects of media contact both between-groups (i.e., negative media, positive media, no media control) and within-subjects (i.e., before and after media contact). It also allowed for investigation of change in reported contact with Australians in the intervening 4-month period, a period during which there was significant coverage of Hanson in the international press.

We reasoned that Canadian students' beliefs about Australians and about ethnic and relations in Australia would be susceptible, at least in the short term, to change through one-off media contact. Specifically, we predicted that exposure to media coverage of Hanson and her populist views on immigration, multiculturalism, and Indigenous issues would have a significant negative effect on Canadian students' views of ethnic and race relations in Australia and of Australians in general and that, by contrast, positive media contact might serve to improve perceptions of Australia.

METHOD

Participants and Design

The study comprised two phases. In September 1997 (Time 1), 221 introductory psychology students (67% female and 33% male) completed an anonymous questionnaire as part of a classroom exercise. The questionnaire assessed their impressions of Canadians, Americans, and the focal group, Australians, and their beliefs about ethnic and race relations in these countries. Four months later in January 1998 (Time 2),

71 students (66% female and 34% male) participated for course credit in an experiment on perceptions of media from other countries. They were randomly assigned to a positive, negative, or no media contact control condition and they indicated their impressions of Australians and their beliefs about ethnic and race relations in Australia following the manipulation of media contact. There were 25, 23 and 23 respondents in the control, positive contact, and negative contact conditions respectively and, of these, 21, 17, and 13 respectively had participated at Time 1.

Because of the attrition from Time 1 and the associated lack of power in testing for differences over time, we report both the between-group differences based on the total sample of 71 students who participated at Time 2 as well as the differences pre- and post-media contact for the smaller subsample of 51 students (62% female and 38% male) who participated at both times. Despite the relatively low *n* in the negative contact condition at Time 1, preliminary checks indicated that there were no significant differences in attrition between conditions, $\chi^2(2) = 4.53$, *ns*. Preliminary checks also indicated that the sub-sample of 51 students who participated at both times did not differ significantly from the other respondents at Time 1 either in terms of demographics or in terms of their baseline images of Australia and Australians.

Procedure

At Time 1 students completed an anonymous questionnaire that assessed their impressions of Canadians, Americans and Australians, their beliefs about ethnic and race relations in these countries, and their amount of prior contact with these countries and their people. The order of presentation of the countries was counterbalanced using six versions of the questionnaire. Approximately 4 months after Time 1, participants recruited for a study on "perceptions of media from other countries" were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions that varied their media contact with Australians. Participants viewed one of two Australian television programs about Australians (negative contact and positive contact) or they were assigned to a no video control.

The video used in the negative contact condition was an episode of the Australian current affairs program, *60 Minutes*, (29 minutes in length) about the controversial politician, Pauline Hanson, and her supporters. It focused on her emotive criticisms of Asian immigration and Aborigines (Wilkinson, 1996) although, in keeping with the investigative journalistic style of this program, the story questioned and probed Pauline Hanson's political views. The positive contact video (Teoman & Kneebone, 1994) comprised a talk show (27 minutes in length) with a highly motivated and multicultural group of young Australians aged 19 to 23 about the major issues that concern young people in Australia such as unemployment, health, and cultural identity. The program from the SBS series *Generation X* was hosted by Mary Kostakides and the participants were Poppy King, Nic Frankham, Cathy Freeman, and Andre Dua. By contrast to Hanson and her supporters, these young Australians spoke rationally and optimistically about Australian cultural identity. Although it was impossible to match the two media stimuli on all dimensions, these programs differed fundamentally in the extent to which they portrayed Australians as racist and intolerant versus multicultural and tolerant.

After viewing the program, participants completed a questionnaire about their impressions of Australians, their beliefs about ethnic and race relations in Australia, their prior contact with Australia and Australians, and some questions about the quality and content of the program. In the control condition participants were told that there was a problem with the television and that

the program that they had been assigned to watch could not be screened. They were asked to complete the questionnaire ignoring any questions that were specific to the video.

Measures

A number of items were common to the questionnaires used at Time 1 and at Time 2 (i.e., pre- and post-media contact): Students completed 30 semantic differentials describing Australians, five items asking about ethnic and race relations in Australia, and four items assessing prior contact with Australians. In addition, at Time 2, students in the positive and negative media contact condition completed a number of items about the quality and content of the video.

Preliminary factor analyses based on the full sample of 221 students at Time 1 were used as a basis for data reduction and scale construction. Cronbach's alphas were then calculated for composite measures at Time 1 and Time 2 based on the subsample of 51 students who completed both phases of the study and for the composite measures at Time 2 based on the 71 students who participated at Time 2.

Perceptions of Australians. First, for each of thirty semantic differentials (e.g., friendly-unfriendly) respondents indicated on a 7-point scale (recoded -3, through 0, to +3) which attributes described Australians in general. Preliminary factor analyses based on the measures at Time 1 indicated a major common factor that was defined by six bipolar items, friendly-unfriendly, pleasant-unpleasant, polite-rude, open-minded-closed-minded, tolerant-intolerant, and just-unjust. Responses to these items at Time 1 and Time 2 were subsequently combined into composite indices of *perceived tolerance* ($.86 \leq \alpha \leq .89$). Positive scores indicated that Australians were perceived as tolerant rather than intolerant.

Beliefs about ethnic and race relations in the target countries. Next, respondents indicated how much they agreed (-3 *strongly disagree*, 0 *neutral*, to +3 *strongly agree*) with a series of statements about ethnic and race relations in Australia. These items measured agreement/disagreement that Australia is a country that actively promotes a policy of multiculturalism, is tolerant of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds, does not have any great ethnic conflicts, is free of racial tensions, and has fairly treated its Native/Aboriginal people. Following preliminary factor analysis, the first two items were combined into composite indices of *perceived support for ethnic diversity* ($.61 \leq \alpha \leq .79$). The next two items were combined into composite indices of *perceived freedom from racial conflict* ($.61 \leq \alpha \leq .70$). The final item measuring *perceived fair treatment of Indigenous people* was retained as a single item. The three measures of beliefs about ethnic and race relations and the index of perceived tolerance were moderately intercorrelated, $.15 < r < .53$.

Prior contact. Finally, at Time 1 and Time 2 respondents indicated how much information they felt they had about Australia, how much personal contact they had had with Australians, how much travel they had done in Australia, and how much reading they had done about Australia (1 *none*, 5 *very much*). These items were combined into indices of prior contact with Australians ($.62 \leq \alpha \leq .78$).

Perceptions of the video. Respondents in the positive and negative media contact conditions were also asked to indicate how much they agreed (-3 *strongly disagree*, 0 *neutral*, +3 *strongly agree*) that the quality of the programming was as good as the quality of Canadian programming, that the program was similar to the type of program that would be seen in Canada, that they liked the people on whom the program focused, that they agreed with most of the views presented

in the program, that the social issues presented in the program seemed to be similar to those in Canada, that the type of person shown in the program is equally likely to be found in Canada, that the attitudes expressed in the program were like those of other Australians, and that the individuals focused on in the program matched their expectations of what Australians in general are like. Finally, respondents were also asked whether they had heard of Pauline Hanson, a politician in Australia, prior to the video/experiment (yes, no). Notably, only one participant had and this variable was not further analysed.

RESULTS

Preliminary Checks

Preliminary checks on prior contact and on features of the positive and negative videos were conducted using the sample of 71 students who participated at Time 2.

Prior contact. Results of one-way ANOVA indicated that there were no significant between-group differences in prior contact with Australians, $F(2, 68) = 1.38$ ($M_s = 2.16, 1.90$ and 1.96 for the no video control, positive video, and negative video conditions, respectively). Further, the mean of around 2 on the 5-point scale indicated that Canadian students had had "very little" contact with Australians.

Videos. Checks on respondents' views of the positive and negative videos indicated that there was no difference between the two programs in terms of the degree to which respondents agreed that the quality of the programming was as good as the quality of Canadian programming ($M_s = -.26$ and $-.69$), $t(44) = .74$, or in the degree to which they thought that the program was similar to the type of program that would be seen in Canada ($M_s = .57$ and $.30$), $t(44) = .44$. There was also no difference between the positive and negative video conditions in the extent to which respondents believed that the attitudes expressed in the program were like those of other Australians ($M_s = .17$ and $.13$), $t(44) = .09$, or that the program matched their expectations of what Australians in general are like ($M_s = -1.14$ and $-.74$), $t(44) = -1.06$. Notably, as evidenced by the negative signs on the latter item, students felt that neither program matched their expectations of what Australians in general are like: both means differ significantly from the scale midpoint, zero, $ts(22) = 3.53$ and 3.02 , $p < .05$.

However, respondents who saw the negative video were less likely than those who saw the positive video to agree with the views presented in the program ($M_s = -1.44$ and $.90$), $t(44) = -4.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$, to like the people on whom the program focused ($M_s = -1.35$ and $.91$), $t(44) = -4.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .36$, to agree that the social issues represented in the program seemed to be similar to those in Canada ($M_s = .52$ and 1.87), $t(44) = -2.54$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .13$, and to agree that the persons shown in the program are equally likely to be found in Canada ($M_s = 1.04$ and 1.91), $t(44) = -1.69$, $p < .10$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Further, as evidenced by the opposite signs, students tended to dislike and disagree with the people in the negative video, but to like and agree with the people in the positive video — all four means differ significantly from the scale midpoint, zero, $ts(22) \geq 2.51$, $p < .05$.

Between-Group Differences in Perceptions of Australians and in Beliefs about Ethnic and Race Relations in Australia

As can be seen in Table 1, students in the control (no media contact) condition tended to perceive Australians as tolerant rather than intolerant and to agree that Australia supports ethnic diversity. However, they disagreed that Australia is free from racial conflict or that Australia has fairly treated its Indigenous people. Further, results of a between-subjects

Table 1
Perceptions of Australians and Beliefs about Ethnic and Race Relations in Australia According to Media Contact

	None	Positive	Media Contact		F	η^2
			Negative	df		
tolerance	+1.25a	+1.11a	+0.08b	2, 68	7.80**	.19
support for ethnic diversity	+0.36a	+0.44a	-0.61b	2, 67	3.57*	.09
freedom from racial conflict	-1.10a	-1.37a	-2.44b	2, 67	13.24**	.24
fair treatment of Indigenous people	-0.71a	-0.96a	-1.30a	2, 67	0.97	.03

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$. Means that do not share the same subscript differ significantly at $p < .01$. Positive scores on tolerance indicate a perception that Australians are tolerant rather than intolerant. Positive scores on the remaining measures indicate agreement that Australia is characterised by this feature whereas negative scores indicate disagreement. Unless italicised, the mean differs significantly from the scale mid-point, zero.

ANOVA indicated that there were significant differences according to media contact on the composite indices of perceived tolerance, perceived support for ethnic diversity, and belief in freedom from racial conflict, but not on the single item measuring perceived fair treatment of Indigenous people. Compared with respondents in the control and positive video conditions, respondents in the negative video contact condition perceived Australians as less tolerant, and as less supportive of ethnic diversity, and disagreed more strongly that Australia is free from racial conflict. Given that there were no significant between-group differences on prior contact, the results of these analyses were unchanged by the inclusion of prior contact as a covariate.

Changes in Perceptions of Australians and Beliefs About Ethnic and Race Relations in Australia Following Media Contact

Next, the variables were analysed using a split-plot ANOVA with Time (Time 1, Time 2) as the within-subjects factor and Media Contact (none, positive, negative) as the between-subjects factor. Our interest was in significant Time \leftrightarrow Media Contact interactions that would indicate changes (within-subjects) in beliefs about Australia and Australians as a consequence of media contact.

Results on the composite index of perceived tolerance indicated a significant main effect for time that was qualified by a significant Time \leftrightarrow Media Contact interaction, $F(2, 49) = 23.75, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$ (see Figure 1). As expected, follow-up tests indicated a significant simple effect of Media Contact at Time 2, $F(2, 49) = 6.50, p < .01$, but not at Time 1, $F(2, 49) = 1.93, ns$. At Time 2, respondents in the negative contact condition perceived Australians as less tolerant than participants in the positive video or control condition (both pair-wise comparisons significant at $p < .05$). In addition, tests for the simple effects of time indicated that respondents in the negative video condition perceived Australians as more tolerant at Time 1 (pre-video) than at Time 2 (post-video) ($M_s = 1.54$ and $.07, p < .001$). There was some evidence of a reverse tendency among respondents who viewed the positive video ($M_s = 0.74$ and $1.12, p < .07$) whereas there was no change over time for respondents in the control (no video) condition ($M_s = 1.12$ and 1.37).

Results on the composite index of perceived support for ethnic diversity indicated a marginal Time \times Media Contact interaction, $F(2, 48) = 2.69, p < .08, \eta^2 = .04$, and no significant main effects (see Figure 2). Follow-up tests for the simple effects of Media Contact indicated that there were no significant between-group differences at Time 1, $F(2, 48) < 1$, or at Time 2, $F(2, 48) = 1.88$,

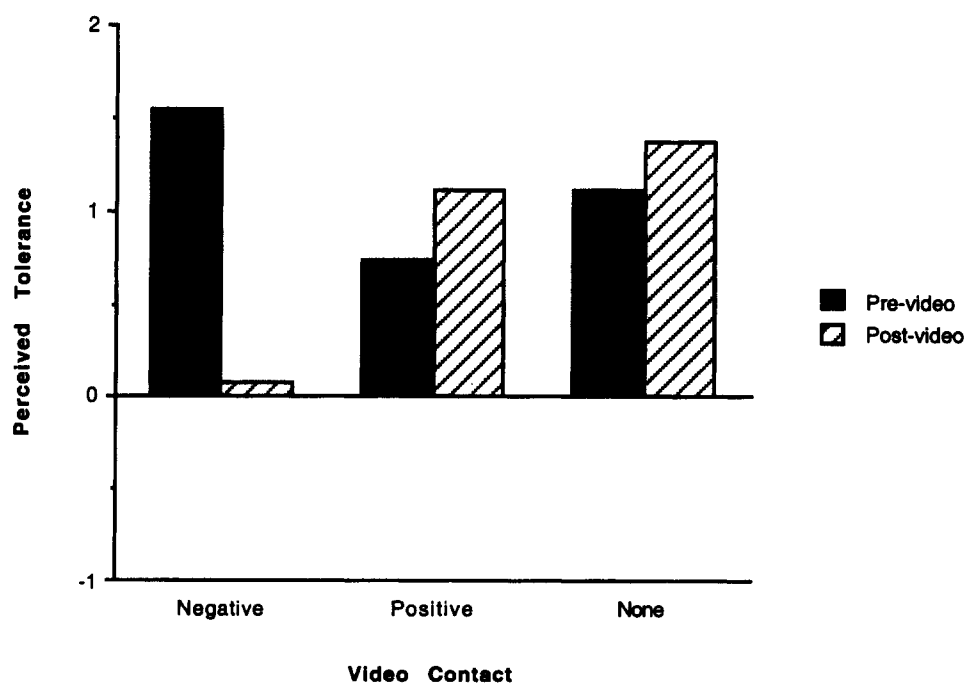


Figure 1
Perceived tolerance at Time 1 and Time 2 as a function of type of media contact.

ns. Although inspection of Time 2 responses suggested that respondents in the negative contact condition perceived Australians as less supportive of ethnic diversity than participants in either the positive video or control condition, neither pairwise comparison was significant at $p < .05$. Tests for the simple effects of time were also non significant, although suggestive of opposing trends for respondents in the negative and positive contact conditions. Media contact tended to decrease agreement with the belief that Australia supports ethnic diversity for those in the negative video condition ($M_s = +.19$ and $-.50$, $p < .10$), but to increase agreement for those in the positive video condition ($M_s = -.09$ and $+.56$, $p < .10$), whereas there was no significant change over time for those in the control (no video) condition ($M_s = +.10$ and $+.31$).

Results on the composite index of perceived freedom from ethnic conflict indicated significant main effects for media contact and time that were qualified by a marginal Time \times Media Contact interaction, $F(2, 48) = 2.60$, $p < .09$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (see Figure 3). As expected, follow-up tests indicated a significant simple effect of Media Contact at Time 2, $F(2, 48) = 7.33$, $p < .01$, but not at Time 1, $F(2, 48) < 1$. At Time 2, respondents in the negative contact condition perceived Australians as less free from ethnic conflict than participants in the positive video or control condition (both pair-wise comparisons significant at $p < .05$). In addition, tests for the simple effects of time indicated that respondents in the negative video condition disagreed more strongly with the assertion that Australia is free of racial conflict after viewing the video ($M_s = -.81$ and -2.46 , $p < .001$), whereas there was no corresponding change over time for respondents in the positive video condition ($M_s = -.88$ and -1.41) or in the no video control ($M_s = -.60$ and -1.10).

Finally, results on the single item measuring beliefs about whether Australia had fairly treated its Indigenous people indicated only a significant main effect for time, $F(1, 47) = 5.19$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$, and no significant Time \times Media Contact interaction, $F < 1$. Although respondents disagreed at Time 1 and at Time 2 that Australia had fairly treated its Indigenous people ($M_s = -.52$ and -1.00), this belief was accentuated at Time 2.

Results of a repeated measures ANOVA on prior contact with Australians with time (Time 1, Time 2) as the within-subjects factor also indicated a significant main effect of time, $F(1, 49) = 6.71$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Respondents reported having had more contact with Australians at Time 2 ($M = 2.04$) than at Time 1 ($M = 1.82$) and this was not affected by the experimental (video) manipulation. It was possible therefore that the significant change in respondents' beliefs about Australia's treatment of its Indigenous people was a function of increased contact with Australia over the four month interval. However, the correlation between the two change scores, $r = .15$, was modest and not statistically significant.

Finally, in order to check for any further possible effects of incidental contact with Australians, additional analyses were conducted on each of the dependent measures examining change scores (pre-video minus post-video) according to video condition with prior contact with Australians measured at Time 1 as a covariate. The pattern of results reported above was unchanged.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, this research provided evidence that one-off exposure to television coverage of representatives of a country has the potential to change international images at least in the short-term. This accords with evidence in other domains that shows change in impressions of social groups such as the mentally ill and homosexuals after one-off media contact (e.g., Medvene & Bridge, 1990; Riggle, et al., 1996; Thornton & Wahl, 1996). Against the background that only one of the 71 participants had heard of Pauline Hanson prior to the experiment, results provided clear evidence of a negative shift in impressions of Australians following exposure to a TV program about Pauline Hanson and her reactionary views on Asian immigration and Indigenous issues. Moreover, this shift was observed not in respondents from countries directly implicated in Hanson's right wing rhetoric (e.g., Asian nations), but in respondents from a similarly multicultural nation, Canada. To this extent, results provided some basis for the concerns of social commentators who were troubled by Hanson's international media prominence if only in suggesting that "bad

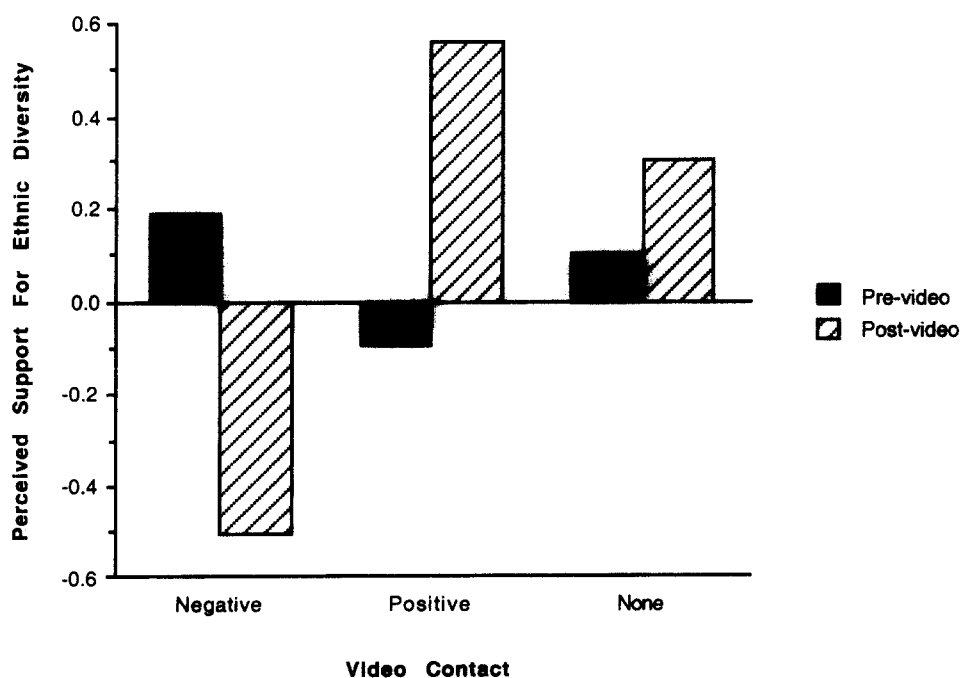


Figure 2

Perceived support for ethnic diversity at Time 1 and Time 2 as a function of type of media contact.

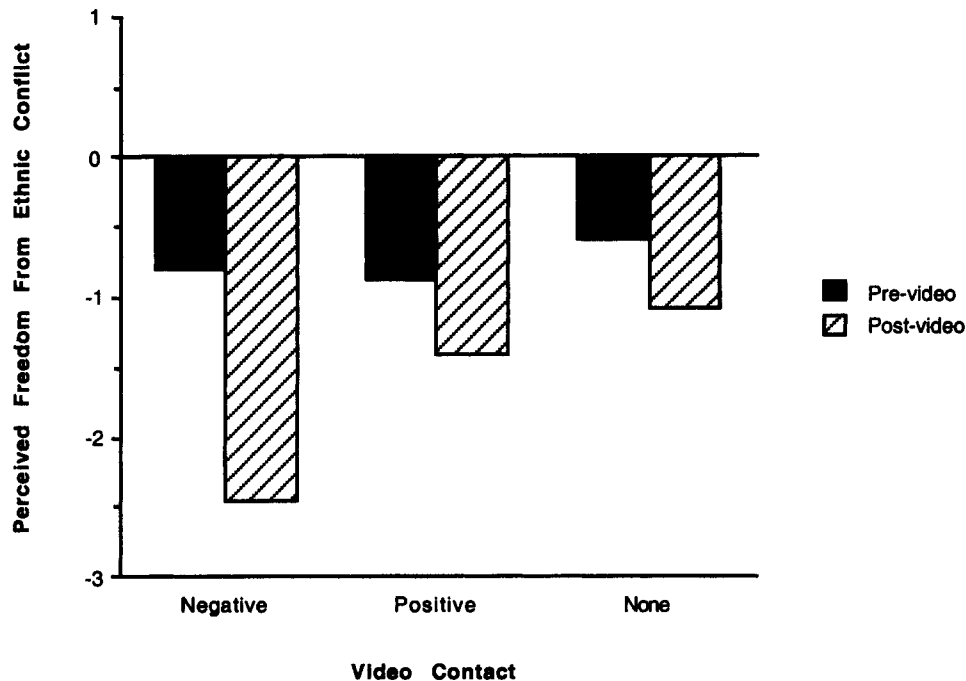


Figure 3

Perceived freedom from ethnic conflict at Time 1 and Time 2 as a function of type of media contact.

press" could produce short-term shifts in (impartial) others' images of Australia and Australians. It is also somewhat ironic to note that Canadian students were left with a more negative impression of Australians after viewing the video of Pauline Hanson given that the Australian TV producers were clearly not endorsing Hansonism, but perhaps even satirising Hanson's redneck views.

At the same time, evidence that positive media contact with Australians improved aspects of the Australian image was encouraging in showing that media messages may effect positive as well as negative change in images of social groups (also see Medvene & Bridge, 1990; Riggle et al., 1996). It should be noted that although preliminary checks indicated that the positive and negative programs were matched in terms of perceived quality, there was no attempt to match them in terms of the degree of positivity or negativity in their portrayal of Australians. Thus, it is unclear from this research whether positive or negative portrayals are likely to have the greater impact on international images, although, as noted earlier, one meta-analysis of television showed that stereotypic messages had larger effects than anti- or counter-stereotypic messages (Hearold, 1986).

The Australians who appeared in the positive and negative television programs differed significantly (and predictably) in terms of how much they were liked by Canadian students and in terms of the extent to which the Canadian students agreed with what the Australians said. Specifically, Canadian students reported disliking Pauline Hanson and disagreeing with the views that she expressed, whereas they reported liking the young Australians and agreeing with their views. However, neither the negative exemplar, Hanson, nor the positive exemplars, the motivated young Australians, matched the students' expectations of what Australians in general are like. Although the students did not strongly believe that the attitudes expressed in either program were like those of other Australians, the unexpected nature of the portrayals of Australians by Australians may account for subsequent shifts in their perceptions in the direction of the media content. For instance, as noted above, judgments of social groups

are dependent upon representations of specific instances or exemplars that are momentarily salient or activated (Smith & Zárate, 1992b), especially when the stereotypes and beliefs about the target group are neutral rather than entrenched and based on scant knowledge of the group. It is notable that the Canadian students reported having had "very little" contact with Australians, and that their baseline perceptions of Australia and Australians were moderate rather than extreme (with a high of 1.25 on a scale -3 to +3).

Although the Canadian students had had little contact with Australians, they reported having had more contact with Australians at Time 2 than at Time 1, a finding that might reflect increased media coverage of Australia during the intervening period. Overall, the students also disagreed more strongly at Time 2 than at Time 1 that Australia has fairly treated its Indigenous people, although there was little evidence to suggest that the increased contact with Australians explained this change in perceptions as might be expected if the increased contact was largely in the form of bad press. On the other measures of perceived tolerance, perceived support for ethnic diversity and perceived ethnic conflict, there were no differences between measurement points; specifically, there were no time effects in the untreated control group. In short, changes in beliefs about Australia pre-and post-video according to the type of media contact (positive, negative) were more consistent than main effects of time. The research thus provided clearer evidence for changes over time due to the experimental video contact rather than to incidental contact in the intervening four-month period (e.g., through exposure to international media coverage of Australia). There is, of course, a range of possible explanations. First, the effects of incidental contact might have been moderated by the quality of contact, a factor that was not assessed in the current study. Second, the time interval might have been too short or not have captured a phase of greater media coverage. Third, the students might not have sufficiently attended to the coverage.

An additional factor that may have affected the evaluations of Australians and perceptions of incidental contact with Australians at Time 2 relative to Time 1 is a difference in the

social comparative context that was used in the two questionnaires. At Time 1, respondents gave their impressions of three target groups — Canada, the United States and Australia — whereas respondents only described Australians at Time 2. It has been noted that images of national groups may change depending on the frame of reference (e.g., on the number and combination of groups that are evaluated; see Diab, 1963; Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Hayes, 1992; Hopkins, Regan, & Abell, 1997). However, in our research the absence of change in the control condition pre- and post-video argues against the possibility of an experimental confound arising from the exclusion of questions about Americans and Canadians at Time 2. Moreover, our tests of between-group differences according to the type of media contact (positive, negative, none) are appropriate despite possible within-group differences over time that ensue from the change in comparative context.

The results of this research go some way toward furthering our understanding of the potential impact on international images of media coverage of reactionary politicians such as Pauline Hanson. Results suggested that Australians had not become “typecast abroad” by incidental international media coverage of Hanson (cf. Kelly, 1998). Without the experimentally contrived media contact, Canadian students had a relatively positive image of Australians and their tolerant attitudes, although they were aware of the reality of current and historical ethnic divisions and tensions within Australian society. Moreover, despite Australians’ concern about the impact of media coverage on others’ perceptions of Australia and its traditional “spirit of tolerance and welcome embrace” (Wooldridge, 1998), Canadian students were almost entirely unaware of Hanson and her views. This might reflect the fact that Hanson did not receive significant media attention in Canada (but see reviews on Hanson e.g., in *Time*, August 25, 1997, December 29, 1997) or that Canadian university students were relatively unaware of whatever media coverage there was.

However, results provided evidence that media coverage of Hanson (and of more positive counterparts) could affect images of Australians and Australians at least in the short-term. Clearly, designs including longer-term follow-ups would be necessary to assess any enduring impact of one-off media exposure to exemplars of national categories. Designs with more naturalistic exposure to media materials that may not have the potential demand characteristics of an experimental situation are also required in order to increase the ecological validity of our findings. We recognise that the purpose of the experiment might have been transparent to participants in the negative and positive media contact conditions, although it is unclear whether the recognition of the association between the media stimulus and subsequent questions would have produced less or more conservative results.

Future research also needs to examine the effects of cumulative exposure to images of social groups (see Babad, Birnbaum, & Benne 1983; Seiter, 1986), and specifically to international images, and to consider the possible role of initial attitudes or expectations (e.g., own political ideology) as a moderator of media influence. The ability of media presentations to influence attitudes towards various outgroups and to improve or deteriorate intergroup relations should not be ignored (Riggle et al., 1996, p. 67). Concerns about the potential negative impact of “bad press” might be justified, however researchers should also re-examine the mass media as a means of promoting international accord and positive international images (e.g., Smith, 1973).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Michael Wenzel and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on an earlier version of this article.

REFERENCES

- Allison, S.T., & Messick, D.M. (1985). The group attribution error. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 21, 563-579.
- Allport, G.W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Amir, Y. (1976). The role of intergroup contact in change of prejudice and ethnic relations. In P. Katz (Ed.), *Towards the elimination of racism* (pp. 245-308). New York, NY: Pergamon.
- Augoustinos, M., & Walker, I. (1995). *Social cognition: An integrated introduction*. London: Sage.
- Babad, E.Y., Birnbaum, M., & Benne, K.D. (1983). *The social self: Group influences on personal identity*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Barkham, P. (2001, August 9-15). Aussie rules bring despair to refugees. *Guardian Weekly*, p. 21.
- Bar-Tal, D. (1997). Formation and change of ethnic and national stereotypes: An integrative model. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 21, 491-523.
- Bartsch, R.A., Judd, C.M., Louw, D.A., Park, B., & Ryan, C.S. (1997). Cross-national outgroup homogeneity: United States and South African stereotypes. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 27, 166-170.
- Bodenhausen, G., Schwarz, N., Bless, H., & Wanke, H. (1995). Effects of atypical exemplars on racial beliefs: Enlightened racism or generalized appraisals? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31, 48-63.
- Brewer, M.B., Dull, V., & Lui, L. (1981). Perceptions of the elderly: Stereotypes as prototypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, 656-670.
- Buchanan, W., & Cantril, H. (1953). *How nations see each other: A study in public opinion*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Davison, W.P. (1983). The third-person effect in communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47, 1-15.
- Deutsch, K.W., & Merritt, R.L. (1965). Effects of events on national and international images. In H.C. Kelman (Ed.), *International behavior: A social-psychological analysis* (pp. 130-187). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Diab, L.N. (1963). Factors affecting studies of national stereotypes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 59, 29-40.
- Duck, J.M., Hogg, M.A., & Terry, D.J. (2000). The perceived impact of persuasive messages on “us” and “them”. In D.J. Terry & M.A. Hogg (Eds.), *Attitudes, behavior and social context* (pp. 265-291). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fleras, A., & Elliott, J.L. (1992). *Multiculturalism in Canada: The challenge of diversity*. Scarborough, ON: Nelson Canada.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1994). Growing up with television: The cultivation perspective. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), *Perspectives on media effects* (pp. 17-41). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Haslam, S.A., Turner, J., Oakes, P.J., McGarty, C., & Hayes, B.K. (1992). Context-dependent variation in social stereotyping 1: The effects of intergroup relations as mediated by social change and frame of reference. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 22, 3-20.
- Hawkins, F. (1982). Multiculturalism in two countries: The Canadian and Australian experience: A comparative study. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17, 64-80.
- Hearold, S. (1986). A synthesis of 1043 effects of television on social behavior. In G. Comstock (Ed.) *Public communication and behavior* (Vol 1, pp. 65-133). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Hewstone, M., & Brown, R. (1986). *Contact and conflict in intergroup encounters*. London, England: Basil Blackwell.
- Hewstone, M., Johnston, L., & Aird, P. (1992). Cognitive models of stereotype change: II. Perceptions of homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 22, 235-249.
- Hilton, J.L., & von Hippel, W. (1996). Stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47, 237-271.
- Hopkins, N., Regan, M., & Abell, J. (1997). On the context dependence of national stereotypes: Some Scottish data. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 36, 553-563.
- Iyengar S., & Kinder, D.R. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar S., & Simon, A.F. (2000). New perspectives and evidence on political communication and campaign effects. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 149-166.

- Janis, I.L., & Smith, M.B. (1965). Effects of education and persuasion on national and international images. In H. Kelman (Ed.), *International behavior: A social-psychological analysis* (pp. 188–235). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Karasawa, M. (1998). Eliminating national stereotypes: Direct versus indirect disconfirmation of beliefs in covariation. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 40, 61–73.
- Kashima, Y., Woolcock, J., & Kashima, E.S. (2000). Group impressions as dynamic configurations: The tensor product model of group impression formation and change. *Psychological Review*, 107, 914–942.
- Kelly, P. (1998). Hanson — Symptom of a deeper problem. In N. Davidoff (Ed.), *Two nations: The causes and effects of the rise of the One Nation Party in Australia* (pp. 89–102). Melbourne: Bookman Press.
- Klineberg, O., & Hull, W.F. (1979). *At a foreign university: An international study of adaptation and coping*. New York, NY: Praeger.
- Lavine, H., Sweeney, D., & Wagner, S.H. (1999). Depicting women as sex objects in television advertising: Effects on body dissatisfaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25, 1049–1058.
- McAndrew, F. T. (1990). Auto- and heterostereotyping in Pakistani, French, and American college students. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 130, 341–351.
- Mackie, D.M., Allison, S.T., Worth, L.T., & Asuncion, A.G. (1992). The generalization of outcome-biased counter-stereotypic inferences. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 28, 43–64.
- Manne, R. (1998). Foreword. In N. Davidoff (Ed.), *Two nations: The causes and effects of the rise of the One Nation Party in Australia* (pp. 3–9). Melbourne: Bookman Press.
- Marin, G., & Salazar, J.M. (1985). Determinants of hetero- and autostereotypes: Distance, level of contact, socioeconomic development in seven nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 16, 403–422.
- Medvene, L.J., & Bridge, R. G. (1990). Using television to create more favorable attitudes toward community facilities for deinstitutionalized psychiatric patients. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 20, 1863–1878.
- Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G.M. (1997). Priming and media impact on the evaluations of the President's performance. *Communication Research*, 24, 3–30.
- Perloff, R. (1999). The third-person effect: A critical review and synthesis. *Media Psychology*, 1, 353–378.
- Philo, G. (1990). *Seeing and believing: The influence of television*. New York: Routledge.
- Pool, I.S. (1965). Effects of cross-national contact on national and international images. In H. C. Kelman (Ed.), *International behavior: A social-psychological analysis* (pp. 104–129). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Queller, S., & Smith, E.R. (2002). Subtyping versus bookkeeping in stereotype learning and change: Connectionist simulations and empirical findings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 300–313.
- Reigrotski, E., & Anderson, N. (1959). National stereotypes and foreign contacts. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 23, 515–528.
- Richards, Z., & Hewstone, M. (2001). Subtyping and subgrouping: Processes for the prevention and promotion of stereotype change. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5, 527–3.
- Riggle, E.D.B., Ellis, A.L., & Crawford, A.M. (1996). The impact of "media contact" on attitudes toward gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 31, 55–70.
- Rothbart, M. (1981). Memory processes and social beliefs. In D. Hamilton (Ed.), *Cognitive processes in stereotyping and intergroup behavior* (pp. 145–82). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Salazar, J.M., & Marin, G. (1977). National stereotypes as a function of conflict and territorial proximity: A test of the mirror image hypothesis. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 101, 13–19.
- Scott, W.A. (1965). Psychological and social correlates of international images. In H. Kelman (Ed.), *International behavior: A social-psychological analysis* (pp. 70–103). New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Seiter, E. (1986). Stereotypes and the media: A re-evaluation. *Journal of Communication*, 36, 14–26.
- Smith, D.D. (1973). Mass communications and international image change. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 17, 115–129.
- Smith, E.R., & Zárate, M.A. (1992a). Exemplar and prototype use in social categorization. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 8, 243–262.
- Smith, E.R., & Zárate, M.A. (1992b). Exemplar-based model of social judgment. *Psychological Review*, 99, 321.
- Stephan, W.G. (1985). Intergroup relations. In G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (Vol 2, pp. 599–658). New York, NY: Random House.
- Stroebe, W., Lenkert, A., & Jonas, K. (1988). Familiarity may breed contempt: The impact of student exchange on national stereotypes and attitudes. In W. Stroebe, A.W. Kruglanski, D. Bar-Tal, & M. Hewstone (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup conflict. Theory research and applications* (pp. 167–187). Berlin: Springer.
- Teoman, M. (Producer) & Kneebone, K. (Director). (1994). *Generation X: The lost generation* [Television broadcast]. Sydney, NSW: SBS.
- Thornton, J.A., & Wahl, O.F. (1996). Impact of a newspaper article on attitudes toward mental illness. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 24, 17–25.
- Trioli, V. (1999, December 14). The unwelcome mat. *The Bulletin*, pp. 34–36.
- Wilkinson, P (Producer). (1996). *The Hanson phenomenon* [Television broadcast]. Sydney, NSW: Channel 9, 60 Minutes.
- Wooldridge, M. (1998). A pathology in the political process? In N. Davidoff (Ed.), *Two nations: The causes and effects of the rise of the One Nation Party in Australia* (pp. 178–192). Melbourne: Bookman Press.