



PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



The Behavioural Consequences of the Automatic Dehumanization of Refugees

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Does Dehumanization Influence Behaviour

- What are the behavioural consequences of automatic dehumanization?
- Does automatic dehumanization of a group influence the treatment of an individual group member?

Past Research on the Behavioural Consequences of Dehumanization

- Studies looked at the relationship between dehumanization and prosocial and antisocial behaviour. Examples:
 - Dehumanization of immigrants (denial of uniquely human emotions) is related to a lower willingness to help immigrants (Costello & Hodson, 2011)
 - Participants were more likely to administer high intensity shocks to a group of people who was described as an “animalistic, rotten bunch” (Bandura, 1975, p. 258)

Past Research on the Behavioural Consequences of Dehumanization

- However, with a few exceptions (e.g. Bandura, 1975; Goff et al., 2008, 2014), most of this research has focused on predicting people's intentions to engage in a behaviour and not actual behaviour.

Determinants of Social Behaviour

According to the reflective-impulsive model (RIM, Strack & Deutsch, 2004) there are two systems that jointly explain social behaviour.

1. Reflective system: Behaviour follows a decision process and the subsequent activation of appropriate behavioural schemata through an intention.
2. Impulsive system: Behavioural schemata are triggered through automatic spread of activation and without the need of an individual's intention.

Determinants of Social Behaviour

According to the reflective-impulsive model (RIM, Strack & Deutsch, 2004) there are two systems that jointly explain social behaviour.

1. Reflective system: Behaviour follows a decision process and the subsequent activation of appropriate behavioural schemata through an intention.
→ explains deliberate behaviours
2. Impulsive system: Behavioural schemata are triggered through automatic spread of activation and without the need of an individual's intention.
→ explains spontaneous behaviours

Methodology

Sample:

- 93 undergraduate students at Western University (9 were excluded due to technical issues)
- Age: $M = 18.46$, $SD = 1.10$ (range 17-24)
- 64 women and 29 men

Procedure

- Participants were invited to participate in two “separate” studies:
 - Study 1: Assessment of automatic dehumanization of refugees
 - Study 2: Interaction with a confederate who was either a refugee or Canadian
 - Cover story: Study about “Social Relationships”
 - Write own bio and read bio of confederate: Canadian or Refugee
 - Baseline interaction with White confederate
 - Warm-up exercise and main interaction with the target confederate (ethnicity held constant – Asian)
 - Length of main interaction between 6 and 10 minutes

Manipulation

- Before participants interacted with the confederate they read a short bio about their interaction partner:
 - refugee bio
 - Canadian bio

Manipulation

Refugee Bio:

My name is **Sayra** and I am in my second year studying Social Sciences at Western. While it can be very stressful at times, I really like Western and my program, I feel like I am learning a lot and the people are great. I came here in 2011 **through the student refugee program from the World University Service of Canada**. I was born in **Burma**, but my family and I had to **flee to Thailand** when I was very young **due to the civil war**. So, I lived **there in a refugee camp** basically my whole life before I was accepted to this program. I study a lot because I hope that one day I will be able to help my family and **the people of my country**. When I am not studying I like to hang out with my friends, listen to music and dance.

Manipulation

Canadian Bio:

My name is Sarah and I am in my second year studying Social Sciences at Western. While it can be very stressful at times, I really like Western and my program, I feel like I am learning a lot and the people are great. I came here in 2011 directly after finishing high school in Guelph. I was born in London, but my family and I had to move from here when I was very young because of my dad's job. So, I lived in Guelph basically my whole life before I was accepted to this program. I study a lot because I hope to get a good job one day so I can help my family and afford a nice lifestyle. When I am not studying I like to hang out with my friends, listen to music and dance.

Sample Interaction



Participant

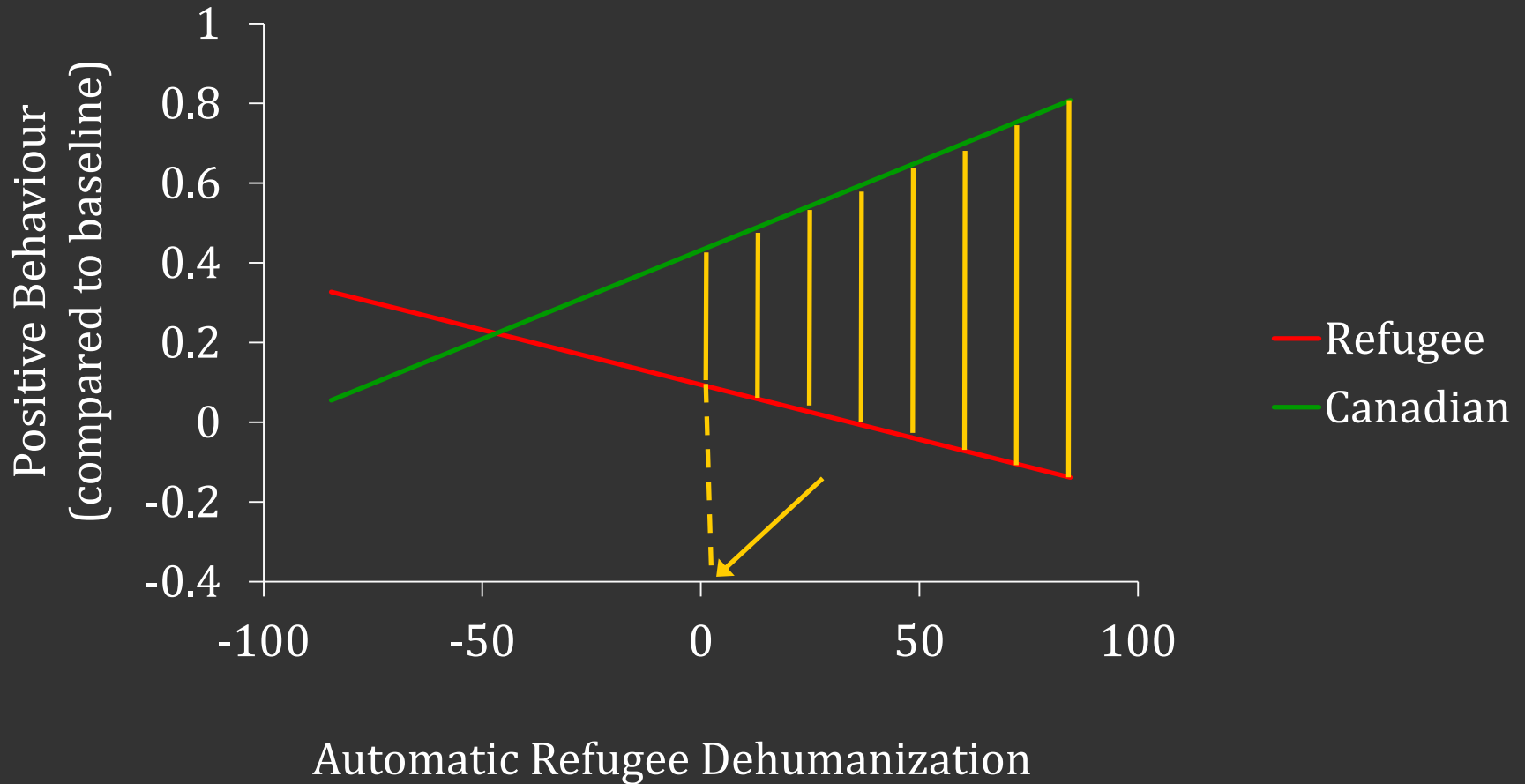


Confederate

Thin Slice Coding

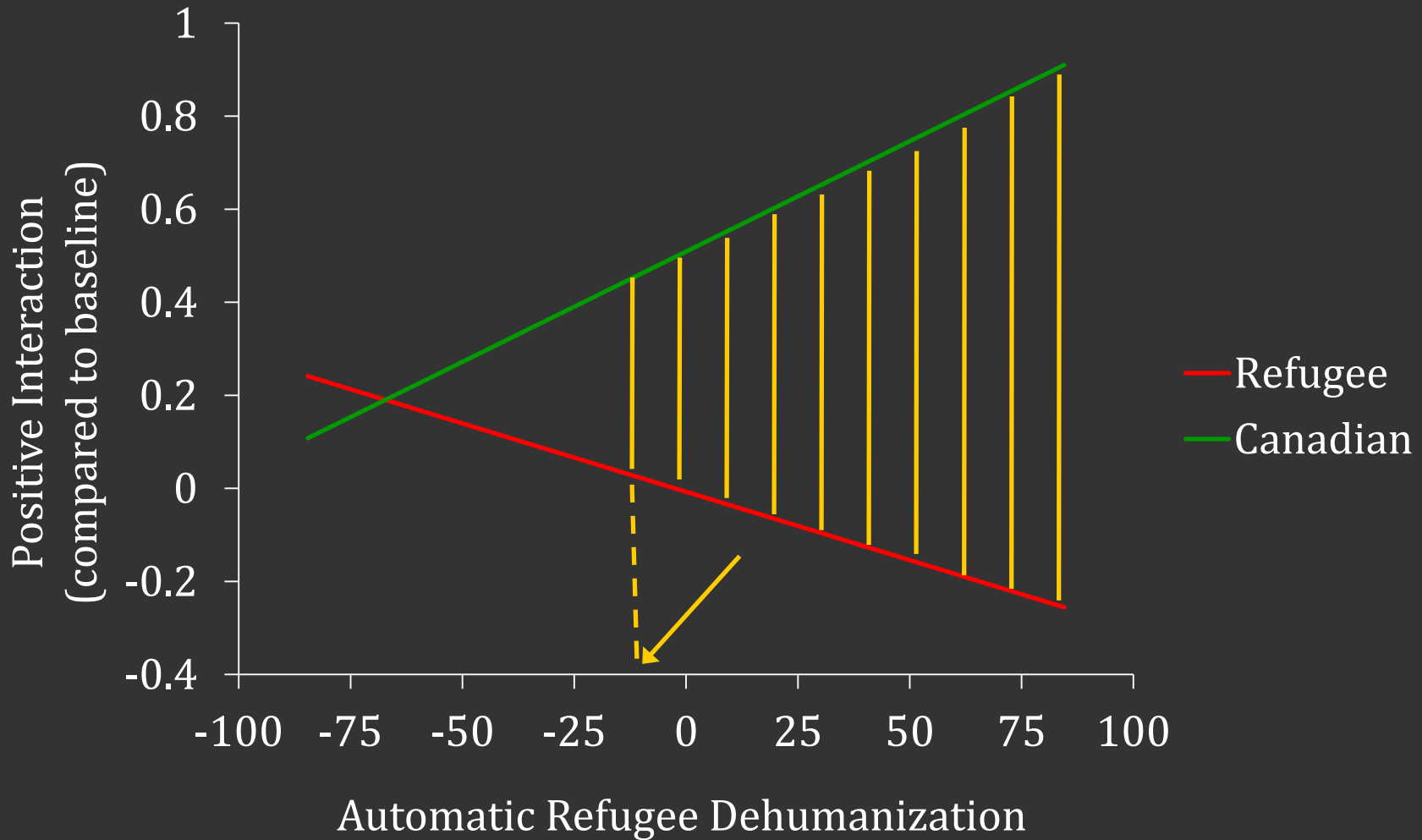
- Coding based on video with no sound (nonverbal behaviour)
- Dependent variables (based on Celano, 2013; Dovidio et al., 1997, 2002):
 - Positive behaviour (e.g., “The participant behaved in an pleasant way”, scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)
 - Positive interaction (e.g., “The interaction was awkward” (reverse scored), scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)

Results – Nonverbal Behaviour



Note. Higher values indicate more dehumanization and more positive behaviour displayed by participants compared to their baselines

Results – Nonverbal Behaviour



Note. Higher values indicate more dehumanization and a more positive interaction compared to participants' baselines

Discussion

- Automatic dehumanization of refugees predicted how participants nonverbally behaved toward a refugee in comparison to Canadians.
- Participants who automatically dehumanized refugees were more likely to behave in a less positive way toward a refugee than a Canadian.

Next Steps

- Humanize refugees by encouraging the public to perceive refugees as people with histories, as individuals, not as a faceless mass
- Humanizing can be done by publicising refugee personal stories and images, enabling the public to identify with them, to see refugees as normal people with everyday thoughts, feelings and aspirations (Haslam & Holland, 2012)

Next Steps

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Starting over: One Syrian refugee family's story, in their own words

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By Margaux Watt, CBC News | Posted: Mar 13, 2016 7:00 AM CT | Last Updated: Mar 13, 2016 5:58 PM CT



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