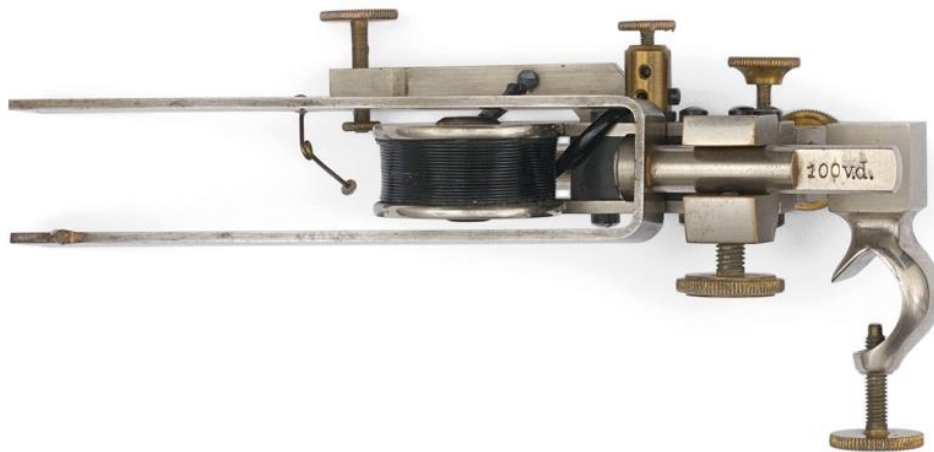


XXVIII SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

EMPIRICAL STUDIES IN PSYCHOLOGY

31st MARCH – 3rd APRIL, 2022.

FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE



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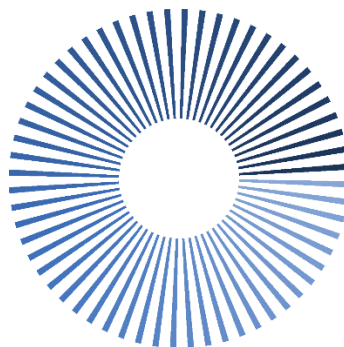
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Electromagnetic tuning fork for direct time recording on kymographic band (E.Zimmermann, Leipzig-Berlin)

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“THEY ARE GOING TO ISLAMIZE US”: INTERGROUP CONSPIRACY BELIEFS
SHAPE DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR AGAINST REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS
THROUGH INTERGROUP THREAT PERCEPTIONS

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The Intergroup threat theory (ITT) proposes that perception of an outgroup (OG) as threatening to the ingroup (IG) leads to prejudice towards that OG. Prejudice can further result in discriminatory behavior against the OG. Although conspiracy beliefs (CBs) are generally considered an outcome of threat perception, some authors argue that CBs about a particular OG can serve as a generator of intergroup threat rather than its consequence. Thus, we examined how CBs about refugees and migrants shape behavior. More precisely, we tested the hypothesis that such CBs elicit perception of this OG as a threat to the IG that in turn results in higher discrimination intentions. The sample consisted of 798 participants (48% men; age 18-87 [$M = 49.3$, $SD = 16.8$]). We constructed four intergroup CBs items (5-point Likert scale, $\alpha = .82$) based on the narrative that was salient in Serbian media at the time of data collection. Participants also filled in the following scales (5-point Likert): intergroup threat perception scale that captures symbolic (two items, $\alpha = .81$) and realistic threats (three items, $\alpha = .82$), as well as a scale that captures discrimination intentions against refugees (three items, $\alpha = .77$). We also registered and statistically controlled for participants' religiosity and ethnic identification (both single-item, 7-point scale), and frequency of OG contact (positive and negative, four items). Since only 31% of participants reported having any contact with the outgroup, we computed two binary variables that indicated presence or absence of (a) positive and (b) negative outgroup contact. To test our hypothesis, we built a structural equation model (SEM) with Intergroup CBs as a predictor and discrimination intentions as an outcome. Perceptions of symbolic and realistic threat served as mediators. The model proved to fit the data well ($\chi^2(58) = 342.63$, $p < .001$, CFI = .936, TLI = .906, RMSEA = .078, SRMR = .085). The intergroup CBs predicted discrimination intentions both directly ($\beta = .21$, $p = .034$) and indirectly through the perception of refugees as a realistic threat ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$). On the contrary, the indirect effect through symbolic threat perception was not significant ($\beta = .19$, $p = .173$). Our results confirm that CBs about a particular OG can make fertile ground for the perceptions of that OG as a threat to the IG, and this threat can further act as a booster of the intention to discriminate against the same OG. This pattern of the effects indicates that intergroup CBs should be experimentally examined as a generator of the intergroup threat, although they are traditionally seen as its outcome. It also points out the adverse outcomes that conspiratorial narratives in media can have on people's behavioral intentions.

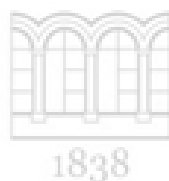
Keywords: Intergroup conspiracy beliefs, Intergroup threat, Discrimination, Prejudice, Refugees

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