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## Attitudes toward asylum seekers: The role of beliefs in procedural fairness

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Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers: The Role of Beliefs in Procedural Fairness

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A report submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of  
Bachelor of Science (Psychology) Honours

Faculty of Computer, Health and Science

Edith Cowan University

Submitted October, 2009

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Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers: The Role of Beliefs in Procedural Fairness

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between beliefs in procedural fairness, humanitarian values, and attitudes toward asylum seekers amongst a sample of first year university students in Western Australia ( $N = 148$ ). Beliefs in procedural fairness were measured in terms of beliefs in the fairness of decision making and beliefs in the fairness of treatment. Findings supported the hypotheses, in that beliefs in procedural fairness were significantly related to attitudes and humanitarian values. Regression analyses revealed that beliefs in the fairness of treatment and humanitarian values made unique contributions in predicting attitudes. However beliefs in the fairness of decision making did not make a unique contribution to the prediction of attitudes. The roles of beliefs in fairness and humanitarian values in attitudes are discussed.

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Submitted: October, 2009

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### Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers: The Role of Beliefs in Procedural Fairness

In recent times the world has experienced an increase in the migratory movement of asylum seekers to developed western countries (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2009). Berry (2006) purported that a blend of individuals from varying cultural backgrounds into one society results in culturally plural societies. In culturally plural societies, intergroup relations occur when individuals who identify with one group interact, in terms of their group identifications, with members of another group (Sherif, 1962, cited in Hogg & Abrams, 2001). Individuals identify with their group as the ingroup and compare themselves to other groups, known as outgroups. Identification with an ingroup, and the comparisons made between the ingroup and outgroups, can lead to intergroup conflict and discrimination toward outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Within the Australian context, individuals who self identify as being 'Australian' may be considered the dominant ingroup while asylum seekers might be considered as outgroups (Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005).

Issues of intergroup discrimination have been identified in the Australian context regarding host nationals' negative attitudes toward asylum seekers (Klocker, 2004; Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, & Ryan, 2005). One important factor that has been found to be related to attitudes is beliefs. Previous research has focused on the host nationals' beliefs in the rights and legitimacy of asylum seekers (Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005; Pedersen, Watt & Hansen, 2006). However, there is a paucity of empirical research into beliefs about the fairness of treatment received by asylum seekers. The present study contributes to the existing literature on intergroup relations

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and the relationship between beliefs and discriminatory attitudes. In particular, the present study investigated the relationship between Australian residents' beliefs in fairness and their attitudes toward asylum seekers.

### Asylum Seekers and Australia

Research of a psychological nature has previously identified asylum seekers as outgroups to the Australian "mainstream" group (Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon & Griffiths, 2005; Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller & Lalonde, 2007). Asylum seekers share many similarities with refugees, such as being minority groups, which cause the terms to be used interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Schweitzer et al., 2005). The legal status of the two groups provides the distinction. A refugee is "any person who owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted... is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/ herself of the protection" of their country of nationality (Refugee Council of Australia [RCOA], n.d.). Once meeting the UNHCR requirements as a refugee, a person may be referred to a country for resettlement. An asylum seeker has not yet been recognised as meeting the requirements of refugee status but has sought international protection (UNCHR, 2009). Asylum seekers are at risk of persecution and have fled to a country, arriving either with some form of temporary visa, no documentation, or false documentation (RCOA, n.d.).

Currently, Australia offers protection to refugees and asylum seekers through the Humanitarian Immigration Program. The offshore resettlement component of this program accommodates refugees and others who are suffering from violations to their human rights in their home countries. In the 2007-08 period, Australia granted 10 799

visas to people under the offshore component (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008). The onshore component accommodates asylum seekers already in Australia who seek protection. For example, this may include people who have arrived in Australia (by boat, plane, or other method of arrival), who request asylum, or who, once in Australia with a visa, then apply for asylum. During the same period, 2007-08, Australia granted 2 215 visas to people under the onshore component. The Humanitarian Program will increase places to 13 500 places for the 2008–09 period (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008). The present research focuses on asylum seekers as an outgroup.

The Australian Government's acceptance and treatment of asylum seekers has resulted in much controversy during recent times. Particular attention has been placed on Australia's mandatory detention of asylum seekers and the tightening of border security for the country. While political in nature, such issues are the source of increased research which explores attitudes toward asylum seekers in the field of psychology. In an analysis of Australian print media, Saxton (2003) demonstrated that representations of asylum seekers served to legitimise the Australian Government's actions concerning their exclusionary treatment. The Australian Government's actions were constructed as acts of protection against asylum seekers. This in turn, functions to represent asylum seekers as people unlike Australians; people that Australia needs protection from. Such representations have been demonstrated to be related to the Australian community's attitudes toward asylum seekers (e.g. Pedersen, et al., 2006).

## Attitudes

An attitude is a psychological tendency, based on an evaluation of a specific entity, and expressed in terms of a degree of favour or disfavour (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Attitudes share a reciprocal relationship in the formation of affect, beliefs, and behaviours (Albarracin, Zanna, Johnson, & Kumkale, 2005), in that attitudes contribute to the formation of affect, beliefs, and behaviours, which in turn, contribute to the formation of attitudes. Within the asylum seeker literature, previous research has identified the existence of negative attitudes of the Australian community toward asylum seekers.

Issues surrounding the Australian Government's reception of asylum seekers have been found to be associated with the Australian public's attitudes toward asylum seekers (Klocker, 2004; Pedersen et al., 2006). Unfavourable attitudes have been found to be related to actions which do not support asylum seekers resettlement in Australia, such as support for exclusionary treatment (Louis et al., 2007). The prevalence of negative attitudes poses a problem for the successful integration of asylum seekers into the society of the host nation (Leudar, Hayes, Nekvapil, & Turner Baker, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2006) and may, in turn, act as justification and legitimisation for the Australian Government's treatment of asylum seekers. Alternatively, the Australian Government's treatment of asylum seekers may act to justify the negative attitudes.

### Predictors of Attitudes

Factors that influence attitudes can be examined according to three frameworks (Leong, 2008). The framework of individual level differences incorporates personal trait variables such as social dominance orientation. The framework of intergroup relations incorporates such constructs as threat and prejudice. The framework of cultural differences is related to the way of life adopted by a collective group (Leong, 2008). This multilevel framework provides a clear and concise basis for examining predictor variables of attitudes in relation to a minority group.

#### *Individual Differences*

Research findings of the relationship between demographic variables and attitudes have been inconsistent. Pedersen et al. (2006) examined attitudes toward a wider range of issues surrounding asylum seekers, their behaviour and treatment. The findings of this research demonstrated that being male and having a higher level of education were significant predictors of negative attitudes. Other research examining prejudice attitudes toward asylum seekers conducted by Schweitzer et al. (2005) demonstrated support for a relationship between gender and attitudes such that males are more likely to hold negative attitudes. In their survey of 238 Australian public servants, Lyall and Thorsteinsson (2007) further examined attitudes toward asylum seekers in terms of support for the mandatory detention of asylum seekers in Australia. Their research demonstrated a significant relationship exists between a lower level of education and negative attitudes thus, highlighting the inconsistency of results within this area of study. Inconsistency of findings from the work of Pedersen

et al. and Lyall and Thorsteinsson may be explained by considering the different measures of attitudes employed by these research investigations.

Research exploring the role of identity variables has demonstrated the importance that particular variables play in the formation of attitudes. Leong (2008) categorised personality trait variables, such as social dominance orientation, as individual level differences. Lyall and Thorsteinsson's (2007) research demonstrated that those higher in right wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation also report increased support for mandatory detention. Louis et al. (2007) found a relationship between social dominance orientation and attitudes toward asylum seekers exists. Further defining that social dominance orientation is only related to voting to reduce the number of asylum seekers and speaking out against asylum seekers. Louis et al. did not find a significant relationship between social dominance orientation and a willingness to act to reduce the number of asylum seekers. The findings presented here of research into the role of personality variables demonstrates the importance such variables play in the formation of attitudes toward asylum seekers. It also serves to highlight the effect of outcome measures. For example, *support for detention* and *willingness to act* were both framed as attitude measures. If both were not defined beyond the broad scope of attitudes, comparisons of these studies would yield inconsistent results. Explicitly, if Lyall and Thorsteinsson, and Louis et al. had defined their research as investigations of the relationship between social dominance orientation and attitudes, their findings would not be supportive of the other. In view of the fact that the authors defined their measurements of attitudes, it is clear that social dominance orientation is related to some measures of attitudes but not others.

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*Intergroup Relations*

While individual differences have been found to be influential in attitudes toward asylum seekers (Louis et al., 2007; Lyall & Thorsteinsson, 2007; Schweitzer et al., 2005), an examination of those alone fail to provide a complete understanding of the relationship between attitudes and group relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) postulates that individuals make sense of their world and their place in their world in social terms according to their ingroup. Individuals compare their ingroup against outgroups to evaluate their social identity. Group members aim to evaluate the ingroup as positively distinct from outgroups to attain or preserve positive social identity. Individuals who identify strongly with their ingroup, and also feel threatened in their relations with outgroups, are likely to favour their group greater than other groups. Such ingroup favouritism and perceptions of threat may result in intergroup prejudice (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

The relationships between group identity, evaluations of outgroups, and related concepts have previously been investigated. In a Dutch study employing a sample of 124 undergraduate students, Verkuyten (2004) demonstrated that national identification was negatively related to support for immigrant policies. In essence, participants who reported strong identification with the Dutch community also reported higher than average scores for support for policies that restrict immigrants' support services, opportunities, and rights in the Netherlands.

Salience of the group with which individuals identify and the impacts on attitudes toward asylum seekers has been explored by Nickerson and Louis (2008). This

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research employed a sample of 242 students and activists within the Australian context. The findings of this research suggest that when national identity is made salient to individuals, negative attitudes toward asylum seekers increase in prevalence (Nickerson & Louis, 2008). However, when human identity is made salient, positive attitudes toward asylum seekers increase (Nickerson & Louis, 2008). National identity is a collectivist term as opposed to human identity, which lies toward the individualist end of the continuum. These findings provide evidence that attitudes toward asylum seekers are related to the breadth of the identity being made salient.

*Group norms.*

Individuals who identify as a member of a group also identify with the standards, or *norms*, of their group. Norms refer to the standards the group has in relation to behaviour (Levine & Moreland, 1998). Norms of the ingroup have been found to be instrumental in the formation of attitudes toward the outgroup, asylum seekers.

Nickerson and Louis (2008) demonstrated that when the ingroup endorse negative evaluations of the outgroup, there is an increase in hostility toward asylum seekers. This relationship was found to be stronger for those who report higher identification with the ingroup. However, when individuals perceive the ingroup holding favourable humanistic norms, there is a decrease in the hostility toward asylum seekers (Nickerson & Louis, 2008). Group norms of reducing the number of asylum seekers have also been found to be related to the perception that harsh treatment of asylum seekers is fair (Louis et al., 2007). This research suggests that norms of the Australian ingroup are related to the formation of attitudes toward asylum seekers.

*Perceptions of threat.*

According to Integrated Threat Theory, realistic and symbolic threats are two types of threat that are posed by outgroups, such as asylum seekers. Realistic threat refers to the subjectively perceived threat toward the ingroup's existence, political or economic power, or physical well being (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Symbolic threat refers to the perceived threat toward the ingroup's morals, values, norms, standards, beliefs, and attitudes (Stephan & Stephan, 1996).

Realistic and symbolic threats have been demonstrated to be reliable predictors of attitudes toward asylum seekers in Australia, with realistic threat being the stronger predictor (Schweitzer et al., 2005). Schweitzer et al. examined attitudes toward asylum seekers and refugees in relation to threat in a sample of 261 undergraduate students. The findings demonstrated that participants, who reported perceptions of threat, also reported significantly more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. Further to this, when Australians view the Australian community as stable, and do not see asylum seekers as a threat, there is a greater leniency for asylum seeker policy (Hartley & Pedersen, 2007). However, when asylum seekers are perceived as posing a threat to Australia's resources and group relations, there is an increase in the support for the harsh treatment of asylum seekers and a willingness to act to reduce the number of asylum seekers within Australia (Louis et al., 2007). This research is evidence of the importance of perceptions of the stability and security of the individual's ingroup in the formation of the Australian community's attitudes toward asylum seekers.

### *Cultural Differences*

Cultural variations between groups are ways of explaining the socio-psychological differences between groups and the outcomes of these differences (Leong, 2008). The focus of cultural differences is on socio-psychological differences between groups and how these differences influence perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes (Leong, 2008). The process of acculturation involves groups engaging in intercultural contact, with a potential outcome being conflict (Berry, 2005). In the process of acculturation, conflict may arise because of the cultural variations between groups.

In a study of national cultural differences, Hofstede and McCrae (2004) developed a taxonomy of four cultural dimensions. *Power distance* refers to the level of deference between individuals who belong to groups who differ in status (Leong, 2008). Power distance represents the inequalities of a society. *Uncertainty avoidance* refers to a society's ability and coping mechanisms to deal with unstructured situations (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Uncertainty-avoiding cultures attempt to minimise uncertain situations, by means of imposing many rules and regulations, whereas uncertainty-accepting cultures are more tolerant of such situations. *Individualism* versus collectivism refers to the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Hofstede and McCrae (2004) suggest that in collectivist societies, individuals are integrated into strong ingroups whereas in individualist societies, individuals do not have as strong bonds with a group. *Masculinity* relates to the emphasis that is placed on achievement or maintaining harmonious interpersonal relations (Leong, 2008). These four cultural

dimensions, used to differentiate cultures from one another, are also variables that are found to be related to attitudes.

Leong (2008) explored the relationship between cultural differences and attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism. This study used secondary data from Hofstede's (1980, cited in Leong, 2008) pioneering research into the four cultural dimensions and the 15-nation Eurobarometer survey (Eurobarometer, 2000, cited in Leong, 2008). The Eurobarometer survey identified five dimensions of attitudes towards immigrants and multiculturalism through interviews with a sample of 15,000 participants (Leong, 2008). Leong's correlational analyses between the results of the secondary data demonstrated that all four of the cultural dimensions are related to support for co-existence policies. Cultures that are higher in uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and power distance, but lower in individualism showed weaker support for policies that promote diversity. This research is an indication of the existence of a relationship between cultural level differences and attitudes toward outgroups.

### Beliefs

There is growing interest into the portrayal of asylum seekers by the media and influential political figures in Australia. In an analysis of print media, Saxton (2003) demonstrated that asylum seekers were portrayed in a negative light. Such portrayals included asylum seekers being represented as "illegal, non-genuine, and threatening" (Saxton, 2003). Saxton proposed that the motivation behind this characterisation was to reconcile the dilemma between protecting Australia's national identity and the treatment of asylum seekers. Further to this, Klocker and Dunn (2003) also identified

the negative portrayal of asylum seekers by the media and federal government officials and departments. In their analysis of government documents, 91% were found to be negative in their tenor toward asylum seekers. Both media and government sources portrayed asylum seekers as a “threat,” “illegal,” and “burdensome” (Klocker & Dunn, 2003). Despite this narrow view of asylum seekers and refugees, the Australian public have few other sources to rely on for information on asylum seeker issues.

There is evidence of a relationship between Australians’ beliefs about asylum seekers and the portrayal of asylum seekers by political figures. Pedersen et al. (2006) examined the relationship between beliefs, attitudes and the rhetoric of political statements in a sample of 602 Western Australian participants. Participants were sent a questionnaire composed of both qualitative and quantitative components. The findings demonstrated that a significant proportion of respondents held beliefs such as asylum seekers are ‘queue jumpers,’ ‘non-genuine’ refugees,’ and ‘illegal.’ Pedersen et al. identified the same terms used in political statements. The findings also demonstrated that participants who held such beliefs also reported significantly more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. Implying a causal relationship between political statements, participants’ beliefs, and negative attitudes is not possible given the nature of the investigation. However, Pedersen et al. suggested the possibility of a bi-directional relationship; the acceptance of political statements may influence attitudes, however existing attitudes may influence the degree to which such statements are acceptable. That is, politicians may aim to reflect public opinion.

Beliefs have also been found to be correlated with negative attitudes toward asylum seekers (Klocker 2004; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005, Pedersen et al., 2006). Klocker (2004) examined antagonism toward asylum seekers within a community setting located in close proximity to a detention facility, within Australia. Through a social constructionist approach, it was demonstrated that participants viewed asylum seekers as 'burdensome,' 'threatening,' and 'illegal.' Opposition to asylum seekers was highlighted by respondents' support for the federal government's exclusive and deterrent orientated asylum policies and opposition to the construction of the detention facility. This sample may not be representative of the Australian population as a whole due to the particular nature of participants' close proximity to the detention centre, which most other Australians would not experience. However, the results highlight the prevalence of negative attitudes toward asylum seekers when the proposition of asylum seekers as 'neighbours' is a reality.

The relationship between beliefs and attitudes to asylum seekers has also been found to exist in research employing a sample that may be more representative of the Australian population. Pedersen, Attwell, et al. (2005) investigated the predictive value of beliefs to attitudes toward asylum seekers in a sample of the Perth community. A significant number of participants reported believing that asylum seekers were 'queue jumpers' (64.3%), 'cashed up' (52.9%), or received government handouts (41.7%). The results of this investigation demonstrated that these beliefs are strongly related to negative attitudes toward asylum seekers (Pedersen, Attwell, et al.). The research thus far, convincingly explains attitudes toward asylum seekers as being associated with beliefs.

## Procedural Fairness

Thibaut and Walker (1975) proposed a theory of procedural justice in which reactions to third party allocations are influenced by peoples' evaluations of both the fairness of the procedures and the fairness of outcomes. Tyler (1988) empirically tested the theoretical model with a sample of 652 participants who had experiences with legal authorities. It was demonstrated that evaluations of the fairness of procedures were a stronger predictor of outcome satisfaction than evaluations of the fairness of outcomes (Tyler, 1988). To a large extent the empirical testing of this theory has been carried out in legal settings, such as, encounters with police and courts. This has resulted in outcomes having been measured only in terms of settlement (Tyler, 1994). However, the development of various models based on Thibaut and Walker's procedural justice theory have made the theory applicable to a wider variety of settings, allowing the examination of outcomes in terms other than legal settlement.

In their four-component model of procedural fairness, Blader and Tyler (2003b) define the sources of experiences by which the fairness of procedures are judged. According to the four-component model, *formal* and *informal* sources are used to evaluate perceptions of procedural fairness, both of which are uniquely important (Blader & Tyler, 2003a). *Formal* sources are impersonal ways of making decisions and treating group members (Blader & Tyler, 2003a). Formal sources are likely to be constant across time and situations (Blader & Tyler, 2003b). In the context of asylum seeking, formal sources refer to the government's policies on the processing and decision making of applications for asylum. *Informal* sources refer to the actions of,

and experiences of, a group member with specific group authorities (Blader & Tyler, 2003a). In the context of asylum seeking, informal sources may refer to the assessment of asylum applications on a case by case basis and the experience an individual may have with a particular group authority processing the application. The distinction is made between informal and formal sources because it is proposed that both sources serve as distinct influences on evaluations of procedural fairness (Blader & Tyler, 2003a).

Based on these two sources of information, Blader and Tyler (2003b) developed four types of judgements that people use when assessing procedural fairness. Judgements are not only based on the source (formal or informal) of the fairness but are additionally based on the function of the fairness (Blader & Tyler, 2003b). In evaluations of fairness, individuals' consider the quality of decision making as well as the quality of treatment experienced. This results in judgements of procedural fairness being influenced by evaluations of: formal rules and policies related to how decisions are made; formal rules and policies that influence how group members are treated; informal decision making of particular group authorities; and informal treatment of group members by group authorities (Blader & Tyler, 2003a).

The four-component model is relatively new and support for the model has largely come from research in organisations such as workplace settings and community groups that have existing authority structures (Tyler, 2000). Previous research has demonstrated that when judgements of procedural fairness are made, the distinct sources of formal and informal information are evaluated (Blader & Tyler, 2003b). Blader and Tyler (2003a) investigated outcome satisfaction with a sample of



540 financial services employees and 161 students of introductory psychology. The results demonstrated that in both contexts, evaluations of procedural fairness are grouped by the four components of the four component model. It was demonstrated that all four components made a unique contribution to the model, however when fairness was defined by either the function or the source, formal sources were the strongest predictor of outcomes. That is, participants' beliefs, of the fairness of formal treatment and formal decision making, was identified as the best predictor of outcome satisfaction.

Models of procedural fairness have not been widely applied to other areas of psychological investigation thus far. One exception is the study of Louis and colleagues (Louis et al., 2007) who investigated procedural fairness based on the earlier work of Tyler (1989). Their research comprised of a sample of 206 Queensland residents and investigated whether the exclusionary treatment of asylum seekers is related to perceptions of the fairness of the regulations used for dealing with asylum seekers. This research examined procedural fairness in terms of the group value model which suggests that judgements of fairness are influenced by neutrality of decision making, trust in the third party, and information the experience conveys regarding social standing (Tyler, 1989). The findings of this research demonstrated that individuals who perceive reducing the number of asylum seekers as procedurally fair also hold significantly more unfavourable attitudes toward asylum seekers. The research of Louis et al. supports the use of judgements of procedural fairness in relation to the formation of attitudes toward asylum seekers.

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### Implications of Research Findings

The research presented here demonstrates the existence of a relationship between attitudes toward outgroups and individual, intergroup, and cultural differences. However, research concerning variables within the three frameworks has thus far been lacking in depth or consistency. Such discrepancies build a need for further research into variables contributing to attitudes of ingroup members toward outgroups.

Research conducted under individual differences of the multilevel framework has demonstrated inconsistent findings in relation to demographic variables. For this reason, the present study investigated the relationship between age, gender and education level to attitudes toward asylum seekers with the aim of establishing consistency with some of the previous research.

The literature presented here highlights the important contribution that values have to the formation and maintenance of attitudes toward asylum seekers. Despite this, a literature search revealed no research into the relationship between Australian community's humanitarian values and attitudes. In consideration of Australia's apparent humanitarian approach to asylum seeker policy, which appears to be contradicted by the tightening of Australia's border security and the placement of asylum seekers into detention centres upon arrival, such values are expected to be pertinent. The present study addressed this issue by exploring humanitarian values in relation to attitudes toward asylum seekers.

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At the cultural differences level, there is a lack of research into the relationship between ingroup cultural variables and attitudes. The study by Leong (2008) provides evidence of such a relationship on a large scale in relation to attitudes toward immigrants. The present study investigated this relationship by exploring the effect of cultural and ethnic identity to attitudes toward a different outgroup, asylum seekers.

Research thus far has consistently demonstrated a relationship between beliefs and attitudes toward asylum seekers and refugees. With the exception of Louis et al. (2007), there is a lack of research into beliefs regarding issues besides those surrounding the legitimacy and rights of asylum seekers. The present study sought to address this issue by examining beliefs in procedural fairness from an Australian ingroup's perspective. The findings of Louis et al. provide a foundation for such research based on their findings of a relationship between the two variables. Where Louis et al. employed two items to measure procedural fairness in relation to the group value model, the present study operationalised the four components of Blader and Tyler's (2003b) procedural fairness model. The present study used a 25 item scale to measure beliefs in procedural fairness. In addition, attitudes toward asylum seekers were explored using a scale that was expected to provide a more comprehensive measure of attitudes than the three item scale employed by Louis et al.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the extent to which beliefs in procedural fairness are related to attitudes toward asylum seekers. Beliefs in procedural fairness were examined specifically in terms of Blader and Tyler's

(2003b) four component model: informal treatment, formal treatment, informal decision making, and formal decision making. Based on the findings of Balder and Tyler (2003a), the present investigation of beliefs according to the model was expected to provide a comprehensive analysis of beliefs in procedural fairness. The aim of this research was to gain insight into antecedents of Australians' attitudes toward asylum seekers. The present research explored how beliefs in the fairness of informal and formal treatment of asylum seekers, and the fairness of the informal and formal decision making processes surrounding applications for asylum are related to attitudes toward asylum seekers. Based on the previous research of Louis et al., it was hypothesised that a relationship would exist between beliefs in procedural fairness and attitudes toward asylum seekers, in that respondents who believe that the policies and procedures presiding over methods of seeking asylum, and the government's enforcement of those policies and procedures, are fair, will hold unfavourable attitudes toward asylum seekers. Secondly, it was hypothesised that a relationship would exist between humanitarian values and attitudes toward asylum seekers, in that respondents who are high in humanitarian values would hold favourable attitudes toward asylum seekers.

## Method

### *Design*

This study employed a correlational survey design and recruited a sample of convenience from an undergraduate social psychology class of Edith Cowan University, in Perth, Western Australia. Beliefs in procedural fairness and

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humanitarian values were measured to determine the extent that these beliefs and values are related to attitudes toward asylum seekers. Demographic information was also gathered as part of the data collection to determine if demographic variables influenced attitudes toward asylum seekers, beliefs in procedural fairness, or humanitarian values.

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 148 participants. Of the sample 20.9% were male ( $n = 31$ ), 78.3% were females ( $n = 116$ ), and 0.6% ( $n = 1$ ) failed to indicate their gender. The mean age of participants was 23.86 years ( $SD = 9.26$ ), and ranged from 17 to 59 years. In regards to the highest education level achieved, 1.4% ( $n = 2$ ) reported they had completed year 11 or below, 69.6% ( $n = 103$ ) reported they had completed year 12, 18.9% ( $n = 28$ ) reported they had completed TAFE or another technical certificate, 4.7% ( $n = 7$ ) reported they had completed an undergraduate degree, and 4.1% ( $n = 6$ ) reported they had completed a postgraduate degree. Two participants did not disclose their level of education attained.

In response to place of origin, 64.2% ( $n = 95$ ) reported they were born in Australia, 34.5% ( $n = 51$ ) reported they were born overseas. This is a slight over-representation of overseas born Australians, which compose 24% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). One participant (0.7%) failed to disclose their place of birth. Participants' parents' place of birth was also recorded. Analyses revealed that 36.5% ( $n = 54$ ) of participants reported their mothers were born in Australia. A further 61.5% ( $n = 91$ ) reported their mothers' were born

overseas and two participants (1.4%) failed to report their mothers place of birth. It was also revealed that 38.5% ( $n = 57$ ) of participants reported their fathers were born in Australia and 58.8% ( $n = 87$ ) reported their fathers were born overseas. Four (2.8%) participants failed to report their fathers' place of birth.

Participants were categorised into 1 of 14 ethnic or cultural groups<sup>1</sup>. The majority of participants, 42.6% ( $n = 63$ ), reported they identify with the Australian ethnic/ cultural group, 28.4% ( $n = 42$ ) reported they identify with the Australian plus, one or more, additional ethnic/ cultural groups (e.g. Australian and Irish), 5.4% ( $n = 8$ ) reported they identify with the southeast Asian ethnic/ cultural group, 4.7% ( $n = 7$ ) reported they identify with the British ethnic/ cultural group, and 2.7% ( $n = 4$ ) reported they identify with the Asian ethnic/ cultural group. Three participants did not address this section and four participants did not specify their ethnic/ cultural group identity, responding to this question with a 'dash.' A complete list of participant's ethnic or cultural groups can be found in Appendix A.

### *Materials*

The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part was an information letter outlining the purpose of the study, potential risks and harms, and contact details for the researcher, supervisor, independent person and support services (see Appendix B). The letter also highlighted that participation in the study was voluntary. The second part of the questionnaire included four sections (see Appendix C). One section consisted of the scale measuring beliefs in procedural fairness. The scale measuring

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<sup>1</sup> Cultural/ ethnic groupings are derived from participants' self-labelling thus are not specifically categorised according to country, continent or region.

procedural fairness consisted of four subscales measuring formal treatment, informal treatment, formal decision making, and informal decision making. A second section consisted of the scale measuring attitudes toward asylum seekers. The scale measuring humanitarian values was presented in a third section. A fourth section consisted of questions designed to elicit demographic information, such as age, gender, country of birth and ethnic/ cultural identification (open-response format). Space was also provided for participants to contribute any additional comments regarding asylum seekers or procedural fairness. The order of the scales was reversed in half the questionnaires to control for order effects.

The scale employed to measure beliefs in procedural fairness was based on the scale developed by Blader and Tyler (2003a). This scale measured four components of procedural justice. The original scale consisted of 37 items to measure procedural justice in a workplace setting. This scale consisted of subscales to measure quality of formal decision making, quality of informal decision making, formal quality of treatment, and informal quality of treatment. The Procedural Fairness scale employed in the present study consisted of 25 items. Adaptation of this scale was required to reflect the Australian Government's treatment of asylum seekers, thus original questions were re-worded enabling them to be appropriate and applicable to this setting. For example, an original question was *my supervisor's decisions are consistent across people and situations*, and in the present scale this question appeared as *the Australian Government's decisions regarding people's applications for asylum are consistent across people and situations*. The subscales from the original scale were retained. Some questions were eliminated as they distinguished

between general workplace rules and supervisors' implementation of those rules; distinguishing between the creator of rules and those who implement the rules was deemed unnecessary for the present study because the Australian Government is responsible for both defining and implementing the rules.

An outline of Australia's current policy and procedures for handling and processing peoples' requests for resettlement in Australia, and the scale to measure beliefs in procedural fairness were provided to participants. Participants were required to indicate their responses to each item, on various 6-point Likert scales ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (6), or *very unfair* (1) to *very fair* (6), or *disagree strongly* (1) to *agree strongly* (6). An example from the scale is *the rules dictate that decisions regarding people's applications for asylum should be fair and unbiased*. Possible scores range from 25 to 150, with a higher score demonstrating a stronger belief in the fairness of Australia's current procedures relating to asylum seekers.

The scale employed in this study to measure attitudes toward asylum seekers was based on the Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers (ATAS) scale developed by Pedersen, Attwell, et al. (2005). In the original form, the scale was demonstrated to be internally reliable ( $\alpha = .94$ ; Pedersen et al., 2005). This scale required participants to respond on a 7-point Likert scale, higher scores demonstrating greater negative attitudes. Possible scores range from 18 to 108.

The scale used in the present study to measure attitudes toward asylum seekers retained all items of the ATAS scale. An example of items from the scale is *asylum seekers are holding Australia to ransom by resorting to violence such as rioting*. To



avoid ambiguous answers, and to uniform the response scales of the questionnaire, responses to the ATAS scale were measured on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from *disagree strongly* (1) to *agree strongly* (6). This eliminated the possibility of midpoint response. Responses to 9 of the 18 items were reverse coded, as in the original form of the ATAS scale i.e. a response of *agree strongly* scored 1 in half of the items and scored 6 in the other half of the items. For example, a response of *strongly agree* to the statement *Asylum seekers are holding Australia to ransom by resorting to violence such as rioting* would score 6. A response of *strongly agree* to the statement *If asylum seekers need refuge, they should be granted refuge* would score 1.

To measure humanitarian values, a scale that was employed by Katz and Hass (1988) was used in the current study. Katz and Hass employed this scale in their investigation to explore the relationship between humanitarian-egalitarian values and white racial attitudes toward black Americans. This study demonstrated the scale to be internally reliable ( $\alpha = .84$ ). This scale consists of 10 items, using a 6-point Likert response scale. An example of an item from the scale is *a person should be concerned about the well-being of others*. Responses range from *disagree strongly* (1) to *agree strongly* (6). Possible scores range from 10 to 100, with higher scores demonstrating stronger humanitarian values.

### *Procedure*

Participants were recruited from a first year social psychology class. Permission was sought from the unit coordinator and lecturer of the class to approach the

students. Students were approached during regular class time for the unit. So that participation could not be identified by the researcher or lecturer, all students attending the lecture were provided with a copy of the questionnaire and information sheet. A verbal summary of the research aims and procedures was provided, and students were advised that participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. This information was provided in a cover letter attached to all questionnaires. Students were given 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, after which time all questionnaires were collected. Students were later provided with further information about the purpose of the study (debriefing) via an online posting as part of the unit online materials.

## Results

### *Scale Analysis*

Scale analyses verified that all major scales of this research demonstrated high internal consistency. The ATAS scale had a high level of internal consistency, with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ . Assessment of normality revealed that responses to the ATAS scale violated the assumption of normality. The Humanitarian Values scale also demonstrated a high level of internal consistency with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ . The Procedural Fairness scale demonstrated a high level of internal consistency with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ . The Decision Making subscale of the Procedural Fairness scale yielded a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .86. The Treatment subscale of the Procedural Fairness scale yielded a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .93. Due to the low internal consistency of the Formal Decision Making subscale, it was decided that both decision making

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and treatment would be investigated in terms of total scores, as opposed to analyses of the four subscales (Informal Decision Making, Formal Decision Making, Informal Treatment, Formal Treatment) that contribute to the Treatment and Decision Making scales.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Analyses of descriptive statistics revealed that participants generally believed the current policies and procedures relating to the processing and treatment of asylum seekers by the Australian Government are fair ( $M = 96.01$ ,  $SD = 18.39$ ). Possible scores on the Procedural Fairness scale ranged from 25 to 150. Participants generally believed that decision making was procedurally fair ( $M = 27.27$ ,  $SD = 5.48$ ) and treatment was procedurally fair ( $M = 56.79$ ,  $SD = 12.72$ ). Scores on the Decision Making and Treatment scales ranged from 7 to 42 and 15 to 90, respectively. Participants also held generally negative attitudes toward asylum seekers ( $M = 58.40$ ,  $SD = 14.68$ ). Examination of descriptive statistics relating to humanitarian values revealed that participants were also generally high in humanitarian values ( $M = 46.39$ ,  $SD = 7.03$ ).

### *Demographic Variables; Gender, Age and Ethnicity*

Analyses were performed to determine if demographic variables were related to attitudes toward asylum seekers, beliefs in procedural fairness, or humanitarian values. Tests of violations of assumptions revealed that homogeneity of variance was violated for analyses of the relationships between gender and attitudes, and gender and beliefs in the fairness of decision making. Thus corrected statistics are presented.

There was no difference between men and women in attitudes toward asylum seekers scores,  $t(37.49) = .66, p = .51$ , on beliefs in decision making fairness,  $t(39.58) = -1.36, p = .18$ , on beliefs in treatment fairness,  $t(145) = -.74, p = .46$ , or on humanitarian values,  $t(145) = 1.27, p = .21$ . Correlations revealed a significant, but small, negative relationship between age and attitudes toward asylum seekers,  $r(147) = -.19, p = .02$ . This result indicates that older participants hold more positive attitudes toward asylum seekers. No significant relationship was found between age and beliefs in decision making fairness,  $r(147) = -.04$ , beliefs in treatment fairness  $r(147) = -.10$ , or humanitarian values,  $r(147) = .15$ .

Cultural/ ethnic identity was defined by three categories. The first category was defined by identification only with the Australian cultural group. The second category was defined by identification with the Australian cultural group in addition to one or more other cultural/ ethnic groups (e.g. Australia, Irish and Spanish). The third category was defined by identification with one or more cultural/ ethnic groups, other than Australian (e.g. Vietnamese and Chinese). Further analyses of demographic information revealed that there were significant differences in attitudes according to participants' cultural/ ethnic identity,  $F(2, 142) = 6.83, p = .001$ . The effect size was medium (eta squared = .08). Means and Standard Deviations are presented in Table 1. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers score of those identifying with the Australian cultural group was significantly higher than the mean score of those identifying with the Australian and additional cultural/ethnic groups. Participants identifying with only one or more other cultural/ ethnic groups did not differ

significantly from those identifying with the Australian cultural group or Australian and additional cultural/ ethnic groups. These results demonstrate that participants identifying with only the Australian cultural group hold more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers than participants who identify with the Australian plus other cultural group.

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Cultural/ Ethnic Identity*

Cultural/ Ethnic Identity	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Australian	62.58	15.06
Australian plus Other	52.33	14.33
Other	57.37	11.75

*Predicting Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers*

Correlational analyses were performed to determine the extent of the relationship between attitudes toward asylum seekers and the variables beliefs in treatment fairness, beliefs in decision making fairness, and humanitarian values. Results demonstrate a moderate to large positive correlation between attitudes toward asylum seekers and beliefs in treatment fairness,  $r(148) = .58, p = .001$ . This result indicates that participants who hold stronger beliefs in treatment fairness, also hold more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. A small to moderate positive correlation is evident between beliefs in decision making fairness and attitudes toward asylum seekers,  $r(148) = .34, p = .001$ . This result indicates that participants,

who hold stronger beliefs in decision making fairness, also hold more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. A moderate to large negative correlation is evident between attitudes toward asylum seekers and humanitarian values,  $r(148) = -.60, p = .001$ . This result indicates that more positive attitudes were related to higher humanitarian values. A small to moderate negative correlation was found between beliefs in treatment fairness and humanitarian values,  $r(148) = -.39, p = .001$ . This result indicates lower humanitarian values were related to stronger beliefs in treatment fairness. A small to moderate negative correlation was found between beliefs in decision making fairness and humanitarian values,  $r(148) = -.32, p = .001$ . This indicates lower humanitarian values were related to stronger beliefs in decision making fairness.

A regression analysis was performed to investigate the hypothesis of the predictive value of beliefs in procedural fairness and humanitarian values to attitudes toward asylum seekers. Procedural fairness was investigated in terms of the two subscales, beliefs in the fairness of treatment and beliefs in the fairness of decision making. Evaluation of the assumptions were performed. With the use of a  $p < .001$  criterion for Mahalanobis distance, it was revealed that one outlier existed. Removal of this case was not carried out because the sample size is large enough for the analysis to be robust against any effects of the outliers. Removal of this case would also reduce the accuracy of the representation of the sample.

Table 2 displays the results of the regression analysis.  $R$  for regression was significantly different from zero,  $F(3, 147) = 48.86, p < .001$ , with  $R^2$  at .50. The adjusted  $R^2$  value of .494 indicates that 49.4% of the variability in attitudes toward

asylum seekers is predicted by beliefs in treatment fairness, beliefs in decision making fairness and humanitarian values. Beliefs in treatment fairness and humanitarian values made significant contributions to the model. Beliefs in decision making fairness did not make a significant unique contribution to the model. Humanitarian values made the largest unique contribution to the variance, accounting for 16%. This variable was a negative predictor of attitudes toward asylum seekers, indicating that lower humanitarian values are associated with negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. Beliefs in treatment fairness made a unique contribution, accounting for 13% of the variance. The variable, beliefs in procedural fairness, was a positive predictor of attitudes toward asylum seekers, indicating that stronger beliefs in procedural fairness are associated with negative attitudes toward asylum seekers.

Table 2

*Summary of Standard Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting of Attitudes Toward Asylum Seekers (N = 148)*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Beliefs in Treatment Fairness	.58	.09	.47
Beliefs in Decision Making Fairness	-.25	.20	-.09
Humanitarian Values	-.93	.13	-.45

## Discussion

### *Procedural Fairness and Attitudes*

Previous research has demonstrated a relationship between beliefs and attitudes toward asylum seekers (Louis et al., 2007; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2006). However, much of this research has focused on the Australian community's beliefs regarding the legitimacy and rights of asylum seekers. This is with the exception of the investigation performed by Louis et al. that explored the relationship between beliefs in procedural fairness and attitudes toward asylum seekers. The primary aim of the present study was to extend upon the research of Louis et al. by further exploring beliefs in procedural fairness and attitudes toward asylum seekers in more depth by operationalising the four components of Blader and Tyler's (2003b) model of procedural fairness. This was achieved by applying a 25 item scale to explore beliefs in procedural fairness to the investigation. Additionally the ATAS scale (Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005) was employed to examine attitudes toward asylum seekers.

Based on the findings of Louis et al. (2007), it was hypothesised that beliefs in procedural fairness would be related to attitudes toward asylum seekers. In that participants who hold higher beliefs in procedural fairness, would also hold more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. The analyses performed examined fairness in terms of the two functions of fairness: decision making and treatment. The hypothesis was confirmed with results supporting the findings of Louis et al. (2007).

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The results of the present study demonstrates respondents who believe the Australian

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Government's policies and procedures related to the treatment and decision making concerning asylum seekers are fair, also hold greater unfavourable attitudes toward asylum seekers.

This research provides further support for research findings of Louis et al. (2007), in demonstrating the relationship between beliefs in procedural fairness and attitudes, and extends on knowledge of this relationship. Whilst Louis et al. measured fairness in general, the present study aimed to examine fairness in terms of four components, which was expected to provide the opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the four dimensions. Louis et al. measured fairness in relation to a broad definition of Australian regulations, whereas the present study examined treatment and decision making aspects of the Australian Government's policy relating to asylum seekers. Where Louis et al. examined attitudes toward asylum seekers in terms of wanting to reduce the number of asylum seekers, the present study examined attitudes in general terms, with items addressing a broader array of issues surrounding asylum seekers (e.g. mandatory detention, rioting, and government policy). The findings of the present research confirm the existence of a relationship between beliefs in procedural fairness and attitudes with the additional demonstration of the unique relationship that various dimensions of procedural fairness share with attitudes toward asylum seekers.

The utilisation of Blader and Tyler's (2003b) four component model of procedural fairness in the present research contributes to aspects of reliability of the model. Firstly, the present study is supportive of the use of the model in a setting it has not previously been applied to. Much of the previous research utilising the four component model has been investigated in legal, organisational, and workplace

settings (Blader & Tyler, 2003a). The present study demonstrates the applicability of the four component model when exploring the relationship between fairness and beliefs within the asylum seeker setting.

Secondly, the results of the present study are consistent with previous research findings demonstrating the contribution beliefs in the fairness of decision making and treatment make to overall judgements of fairness (Blader & Tyler, 2003a). The findings of the present study demonstrate that beliefs in the fairness of treatment make a larger contribution than do beliefs in the fairness of decision making. However, the findings of previous research, which demonstrate the contribution evaluations of informal and formal sources make to judgements of fairness, could not be supported by the present research. This was due to the low internal consistency of the Formal Decision Making subscale, which resulted in evaluations of fairness not analysed in terms of the source of fairness. However, this is not considered to be a significant shortcoming as distinguishing between informal and formal sources was considered irrelevant for the purpose of this research. The Australian Government is both the formal and informal sources of decision making and treatment. However, if future research is concerned with distinguishing between these sources, measures to ensure the reliability of all scales should be taken. Such research may be able to distinguish between, for example, beliefs in the fairness of the United Nations and the Australian Governments as informal and formal sources of treatment and decision making, concerning asylum seekers. Despite this limitation, the present study demonstrates support for other aspects of Blader and Tyler's (2003b) four component model of procedural fairness.

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A third factor supporting the reliability of the four component model is the use of the model in the present study to measure beliefs in procedural fairness between groups. Previous research that has employed the model to measure judgements of fairness has done so in settings where all individuals involved identify with the same ingroup (e.g. a workplace; Tyler, 2000). The present study supports the reliability of the four component model to measure beliefs in fairness when more than one group is involved.

The present study extends on previous research by measuring outcome satisfaction in terms of attitudes. Existing research into the relationship between beliefs in fairness and outcome satisfaction has measured outcomes in terms of individuals' satisfaction with settlement or resolution (Blader and Tyler, 2003b). The demonstration of outcomes measured in terms of attitudes provide grounds for future research to examine the relationship between procedural fairness and outcomes, measured in terms other than those previously confined to legal and organisational settings.

The present study provides theoretical implications in terms of demonstrating support for the effects of ingroup favouritism. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) individuals who identify with the ingroup view the ingroup in a positive light, in comparison to outgroups, in order to maintain positive self identity. Ingroup favouritism leads to prejudicial attitudes toward outgroups. This was evident in the present study with the prevalence of negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. The present study did not employ a scale to measure evaluations of the ingroup. Future research should employ a scale to measure ingroup evaluations,

which may further support the trade-off between ingroup favouritism and outgroup discrimination.

The present research demonstrates a plausible relationship between beliefs in fairness and attitudes. However, these results should be interpreted with caution as a causal relationship is not argued. As previously argued by Pedersen et al. (2006), the identification of a relationship between variables resulting from correlational research may be bi-directional. While negative attitudes may be increased by stronger beliefs in the fairness of procedures, individuals with existing negative attitudes may be more inclined to believe the procedures to be fair. Whichever the direction of the relationship, this research has important implications and provides direction for future research into beliefs in fairness.

Media and government statements regarding asylum seekers are proposed to play a role in individuals' beliefs (Pedersen et al., 2006). If this is the case, then media and government sources may be used to increase peoples' beliefs in fairness, thus increasing positive attitudes toward asylum seekers. Conversely politicians may aim to reflect public opinion (Pedersen et al., 2006). Therefore, if public attitudes are moved towards the positive end of the spectrum, this may force the government to create fairer procedures. However, concepts of fairness in relation to treatment of asylum seekers may prove difficult to target.

Measuring fairness poses a problem in that fairness is a concept that is conceptualised differently. For example, two people may consider the Australian Government's treatment of asylum seekers fair, however their conceptualisations of

*fair* has serious implications for the interpretation of results. This is evident in comments made by participants during data collection. In reference to Australia's acceptance of asylum seekers, one participant said "...*we have to look after our own community first...it's not our problem to deal with.*" This participant may consider the treatment of asylum seekers fair because they are placed in detention and deprived of certain liberties. While another participant said about the same issue "*they are human too.*" This participant may also consider the treatment of asylum seekers fair because asylum seekers are accepted by Australia and offered services to help them settle in. A limitation of the present study is that what constitutes fairness was not measured. It is plausible that participants were unclear whether the concept of fairness used in the present study was in reference to what is considered fair for Australians or what is considered fair for all of humanity. Future research should endeavour to establish how individuals conceptualise fairness when investigating matters that involve asylum seekers.

#### *Humanitarian Values and Attitudes*

In light of Australia's apparent humanitarian approach in aiding asylum seekers, there appears to be a lack of research into the relationship between humanitarian values and attitudes toward asylum seekers. A second aim of the present study was to determine the existence of a relationship between humanitarian values and attitudes. The present research employed a Humanitarian scale (Katz & Hass, 1988) to explore these values. It was hypothesised that a relationship would be found to exist between humanitarian values and attitudes toward asylum seekers.

Specifically, it was expected that participants who were higher in humanitarian values

would also hold more positive attitudes toward asylum seekers. Results demonstrate support for this hypothesis in that respondents who were higher in humanitarian values also hold more favourable attitudes toward asylum seekers.

Results of the present study support previous research findings, such as that of Leong and Ward (2006), in demonstrating a relationship between humanitarian values and ingroup attitudes toward outgroups. The present study also extends on prior knowledge of this relationship in that Leong and Ward (2006) focused on attitudes toward immigrants, whilst the present study focuses on attitudes toward another minority group; asylum seekers. One plausible explanation for the humanitarian values/ attitudes relationship is that individuals who are higher in humanitarian values are more sensitive to the struggles of marginalised groups and display less prejudicial attitudes to individuals belonging to these groups (Federico & Sidanius, 2002).

The present study demonstrated an additional relationship between humanitarian values and beliefs in procedural fairness. Specifically, it was found that participants who believed procedures to be fair also reported lower humanitarian values. This correlational nature of the present investigation prevents a causal nature to be identified. However, the possible direction of the relationship ought to be considered. The possibility that humanitarian values influence beliefs in fairness is supported by an investigation of the usefulness of values in predicting fairness judgements (Peterson, 1994). The findings of Peterson's (1994) research demonstrate that assessments of fairness play a mediating role between values and affirmative action. Therefore, it is suggested the findings of the present research imply participants' lower humanitarian values are predictive of beliefs in the fairness of

Australia's increased border security to make it more difficult to reach Australian shores, and the Government's response to the arrival of asylum seekers of placing them into detention centres while they wait processing. Such individuals would then be less sympathetic toward asylum seekers.

The importance of investigating humanitarian values is highlighted by an additional finding of the present research. Analyses revealed that humanitarian values was the most significant predictor of attitudes toward asylum seekers with beliefs in treatment fairness identified as the second most significant predictor, while beliefs in decision making fairness not a significant predictor. That is, although all three variables together contribute to predicting attitudes toward asylum seekers most of the variance in attitudes is explained by humanitarian values and beliefs in treatment fairness.

One possible explanation regarding the non-significance of beliefs in decision making is the context that it is used in. When the four component model is applied in work or organisational settings, decision making of authorities is an important component to evaluations of outcomes. However, when the model is applied in other settings, such as that of this study, decision making is not an important consideration for individuals. Another possible explanation for the non-significance of beliefs in decision making is the other variables that are considered alongside it. Humanitarian values seem far removed from employees' outcome satisfaction, whereas these values are closely related to issues surrounding asylum seekers. Thus the present study investigated humanitarian values alongside beliefs in procedural fairness and was

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therefore able to demonstrate the importance of this factor in predicting attitudes over beliefs in fairness.

### *Demographics and Attitudes*

The present study explored the relationship between demographic variables; including age, gender and education level, and attitudes toward asylum seekers. Results revealed no significant relationship between gender and attitudes and only a small but significant relationship between age and attitudes. This may be due to the majority of the sample (over 76%) being under the age of 25 and being female (over 78%). This poor representation of age ranges and gender may have reduced the power of the investigation to detect any possible relationships. Research consisting of more representative samples has previously demonstrated a relationship between gender and attitudes. Pedersen et al. (2006) and Schweitzer et al. (2005) demonstrated that being male was predictive of negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. Both studies employed samples which consisted of approximately even numbers of male and female participants which may have contributed to the power of their research findings of the existence of a relationship between gender and attitudes. While the present study failed to demonstrate the existence of a relationship between gender and attitudes, future research examining gender and age effects should ensure a more representative sample of age ranges and gender for statistical power.

A further limitation of the present study is the generalisability of the results to a sample beyond that employed. The present sample was drawn from a first year university psychology class, in Perth, Western Australia. Therefore, all participants



are at minimum, partially higher educated, with some of the sample already having a bachelors or masters degree. Previous research has demonstrated that higher educated individuals hold more positive attitudes toward such marginalised groups (Crowell, 2000). Therefore, the present study may be an underrepresentation of the prevalence of negative attitudes.

### *Cultural Group and Attitudes*

The present research explored cultural differences in a broad sense by defining groups according to participant's identification with the Australian cultural group, or the Australian plus other cultural groups, or other cultural groups. A relationship was found to exist between cultural/ ethnic group identity and attitudes toward asylum seekers. That is, participants identifying with the Australian cultural group were found to hold more negative attitudes toward asylum seekers than participants identifying with the Australian plus one or more other cultural groups.

The present research supports the findings of previous research by Ward (2006), that there are differences between individuals who identify with one cultural group and individuals who identify with more than one cultural group. Individuals' who identify with two cultural groups perceive themselves equally similar to both cultural groups (Ward, 2006). A similar phenomenon may be evident in the present study in that participants who identify with the Australian cultural group do not consider themselves as similar to other culturally defined groups. This may lead individuals who identify with the Australian group to evaluate themselves more positively in comparison to outgroups, such as asylum seekers, a precursor to

discrimination against the outgroup. Participants who identify with the Australian plus other cultural group may consider themselves similar to both the Australian cultural group and other cultural groups they identify with. This may result in a reduction in group differences, thence a reduction in discrimination against other culturally defined groups.

Participants of the present investigation identified with such an array of cultural or ethnic groups that these were collapsed to create larger groups. This is a limitation of the present study because there was a lack of in-depth analyses of cultural groups. It is possible that there may have been a large amount of variance within the Australian plus other cultural group or the one or more other cultural group that was not detected in the present study. Future research should allow for cultural groups to be defined in a narrower sense to detect any possible variance within the larger groupings that the present study was not able to detect.

### Conclusions

The present study examined attitudes toward asylum seekers. Beliefs in procedural fairness and humanitarian values were found to be related to attitudes. Consistent with the four component model of procedural fairness, beliefs in the fairness of treatment of asylum seekers was demonstrated to have a stronger correlation to attitudes than did beliefs in the fairness of decision making. Furthermore, it was found that beliefs in the fairness of decision making make no unique contribution to the prediction of attitudes toward asylum seekers.

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Humanitarian values made the largest unique contribution to the prediction of

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attitudes, followed by beliefs in the fairness of treatment. The significant contribution humanitarian values made to the prediction of attitudes implies positive attitudes toward asylum seekers may be increased by a strengthening of humanitarian values among the Australian community.

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## Appendix A

*Cultural/ Ethnic Groups Categorised According to Participants Self-Labels (N= 145)*

Cultural/ Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percent
African	2	1.4
American	1	.7
Asian	4	2.7
Australian	63	42.6
Australian + other group	42	28.4
British	7	4.7
Central European	3	2.0
Hebrew	1	.7
North European	1	.7
Not Specified	4	2.7
One or more other group	2	1.4
Southeast Asian	8	5.4
Southeast European	3	2.0
Southwest European	4	2.7
Total	145	98.0

Appendix B

**ATTITUDES TOWARDS ASYLUM SEEKERS**



Dear Participant,

I am a psychology student of Edith Cowan University, currently completing my Honours degree. As part of my degree, I am conducting research into attitudes towards asylum seekers. The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between perceptions of fairness and attitudes towards asylum seekers. This research has been approved by the Faculty of Computing, Health and Science Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee of Edith Cowan University.

Participation in this research involves completing a questionnaire. The survey contains questions regarding your attitudes towards asylum seekers, your views on fairness and some background questions, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. The survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time. Information gathered in this research is anonymous and no information will identify you or your participation, included in the resulting thesis and reports. Please complete the questionnaire to the best of your ability. Once you have completed the questionnaire please place it facedown and wait for it to be collected from you. There are no rewards for participation, nor are there any penalties for not participating or withdrawing.

It is possible that you may experience slight discomfort completing the questionnaire in the exploration of your own beliefs or attitudes. There are contact numbers listed at the end of this letter for support services you may wish to contact.

If you have any questions, or require any further information, please feel free to contact me, Lisa Palamountain, or my supervisor, Dr Justine Dandy, on the contact details below. If you wish to speak to an independent person, you may contact Professor Craig Speelman, Head of School, on 6304 5724 or [c.speelman@ecu.edu.au](mailto:c.speelman@ecu.edu.au). Results of this research can be made available to you upon request.

**Your participation is greatly appreciated. Please retain this letter for your own information.**

Lisa Palamountain  
**Researcher**  
School of Psychology  
Edith Cowan University  
[lpalamou@student.ecu.edu.au](mailto:lpalamou@student.ecu.edu.au)  
[REDACTED]

Justine Dandy  
**Supervisor**  
School of Psychology  
Edith Cowan University  
[j.dandy@ecu.edu.au](mailto:j.dandy@ecu.edu.au)  
(08) 6304 5105

Support services

Crisis line  
198 313

ECU Psychological Service Centre  
(08) 9301 0011

ASeTTS  
(08) 9227 2700

Appendix C

## **Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers**

This questionnaire is part of a study being conducted by Lisa Palamountain, fourth year psychology student. The purpose of the project is to examine the relationships among students' attitudes and beliefs related to asylum seekers and the fairness of government procedures relating to the treatment of asylum seekers. There are no right or wrong answers.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. The questionnaire is confidential and you will not be identified in any results or publications arising from this study.

---

*Please turn over and begin the questionnaire.*

## Section A

**Please read the following and with this in mind, address the statements over the page:**

Australia grants permanent protection and resettlement to refugees and other people who are subject to persecution or substantial discrimination in their home country. There are two components of the Australian Humanitarian Program:

The **offshore resettlement component** offers protection and resettlement to people:

- who have not yet entered Australia
- who the United Nations identify as refugees
- who the United Nations refer to Australia for resettlement

The **onshore component** offers *asylum* and protection to people:

- who have arrived in Australia
- who have not been classified as refugees by the United Nations
- who apply to Australia for asylum and protection and their applications are successful

The current government policy is to place people applying through the onshore component in detention whilst their applications are being processed (excluding children).

---

*Please turn over the page*

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling one answer for each statement which you most identify with.

1. How often do you feel that decisions are made in *fair* ways regarding the rights of people to seek asylum in Australia?

Never	Mostly never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	-----------------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

2. Overall, how *fair* would you say the decisions and processes are regarding people seeking asylum in Australia?

Very unfair	Unfair	Somewhat unfair	Somewhat fair	Fair	Very fair
----------------	--------	--------------------	------------------	------	-----------

3. Overall, how would you rate the *fairness* with which issues and decisions that come up surrounding asylum seekers are handled?

Very unfair	Unfair	Somewhat unfair	Somewhat fair	Fair	Very fair
----------------	--------	--------------------	------------------	------	-----------

4. The rules dictate that decisions regarding people's applications for asylum should be *fair* and unbiased.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

5. The rules and procedures regarding people's applications for asylum are applied consistently across all people and situations.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

*Please turn over the page*

6. The rules dictate that decisions regarding people's applications for asylum are made based on facts, not personal biases or opinions.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

7. The rules and procedures regarding applications for asylum are equally *fair* to everyone.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

8. The Australian government's decisions regarding applications for asylum are consistent across people and situations.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

9. The Australian government's decisions regarding applications for asylum are based on facts, not personal biases or opinions.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

10. The Australian government's decisions regarding applications for asylum are equally *fair* to everyone.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

11. The rules dictate *fair* treatment of asylum seekers when decisions are being made.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

12. The rules dictate *fair* treatment of asylum seekers when decisions are implemented.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

13. The rules ensure that the needs of asylum seekers will be considered in their treatment.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

14. The rules respect the rights of asylum seekers as people.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

15. The rules dictate that asylum seekers are treated with dignity.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

16. The rules dictate that promises of the provision of protection for refugees must be followed through.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

*Please turn over the page*

17. The rules dictate that the well-being of asylum seekers is considered.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

18. The Australian government treats asylum seekers *fairly* when decisions are being made.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

19. The Australian government treats asylum seekers *fairly* when decisions are being implemented.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

20. The Australian government takes account of the needs of asylum seekers when making decisions.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

21. The Australian government can be trusted to do what is best for asylum seekers.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

*Please turn over the page*



22. The Australian government respects the rights of asylum seekers as people.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

23. The Australian government treats asylum seekers with dignity.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

24. The Australian government follows through on promises of the provision of protection for refugees.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

25. The government cares about the well-being of asylum seekers.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

## Section B

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling one answer for each statement which you most identify with.

1. Asylum seekers are holding Australia to ransom by resorting to violence such as rioting.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

2. If asylum seekers need refuge, they should be granted refuge.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

3. Asylum seekers are being dealt with appropriately by the government.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

4. Separating asylum seekers like they are alien species dehumanises us all.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

5. Asylum seekers are ungrateful by protesting in the manner that they do.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

*Please turn over the page*

6. I sympathise with the situation of asylum seekers.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

7. Asylum seekers are justified in hunger striking to attract attention to their situation.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

8. The Australian government's policy on asylum seekers is justified.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

9. Asylum seekers are being unfairly detained.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

10. Asylum seekers are manipulative in the way that they engage in self-harm protesting such as self-mutilation.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

11. Asylum seekers don't attempt to be part of Australian society.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

*Please turn over the page*

12. Asylum seekers are innocent victims of bad government policy.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

13. Asylum seekers are legitimate refugees and should be welcomed.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

14. So called asylum seekers are people fleeing the chaos of war and the cruelties of monstrous regimes.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

15. Asylum seekers who mutilate themselves would not make model citizens.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

16. Asylum seekers breed hatred.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

17. If asylum seekers are not happy, send them home.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
-------------------	----------	------------------	---------------	-------	----------------

*Please turn over the page*

18. Asylum seekers would be better off in self sufficient communities rather than in detention.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

Section C

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling one answer for each statement which you most identify with.

1. One should be kind to all people.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

2. One should find ways to help others less fortunate than oneself.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

3. A person should be concerned about the well-being of others.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

4. There should be equality for everyone – because we are all human beings.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

5. Those who are unable to provide for their basic needs should be helped by others.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

6. A good society is one in which people feel responsible for one another.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

7. Everyone should have an equal chance and equal say in most things.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

8. Acting to protect the rights and interests of others is an obligation for all persons.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

9. In dealing with criminals, the courts should recognise that many are victims of circumstances.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

10. Prosperous nations have moral obligations to share some of their wealth with poor nations.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Tend to agree	Agree	Agree strongly
----------------------	----------	---------------------	------------------	-------	-------------------

**Please use this space to add any further comments you may have in relation to your beliefs in the treatment of asylum seekers or your attitudes towards asylum seekers:**

[illegible]

Please turn over the page



**Section D**

**Please complete the information below. Please tick one box for each question that best applies to you.**

1. Your gender:  
☐ Male  
☐ Female
2. The educational level you have completed:  
☐ Year 11 or below  
☐ Year 12  
☐ TAFE or other technical certificate  
☐ Undergraduate degree  
☐ Postgraduate degree

**Please complete the information below. Please write in the space provided.**

3. Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ years
4. Your country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Your mother's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Your father's country of birth: \_\_\_\_\_
7. What cultural or ethnic group (or groups) do you identify with? (e.g. Australian, Vietnamese, British) \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your participation, your time is appreciated.**