

2009

## Anglo-Australians' attitudes towards asylum seekers and egalitarianism

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Anglo-Australians' Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers and Egalitarianism

Antonietta Matrone Faulkner

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

Faculty of Computer, Health and Science

Edith Cowan University

Submitted October, 2009

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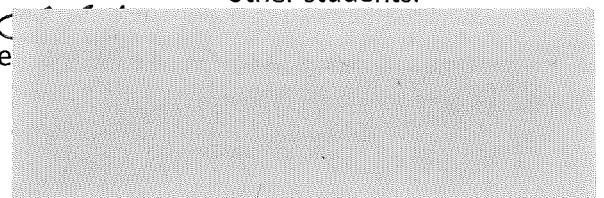
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Anglo-Australians' Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers and Egalitarianism

Abstract

Research has found that generally Australians hold negative attitudes towards asylum seekers. These negative attitudes appear to be influenced by perceptions of threat and false beliefs. The current study explored the attitudes of Anglo-Australians towards asylum seekers and how attitudes are related to the concept of Australian egalitarianism and *fair go*. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study. Three main themes were identified through thematic content analysis: characterising asylum seekers, responses to asylum seekers in Australia, and constructing fairness. Characterising asylum seekers represented the informants' constructs of asylum seekers as being *genuine asylum seekers*, or *boat people* and *illegal immigrants*. The latter two are stereotypes commonly used by the media and political figures which appear to influence most of the informants' constructs of asylum seekers. Responses to asylum seekers in Australia reflected the informants' discussions of intercultural racist attitudes, competition for resources, and perceptions of threat. These appeared to be guided by in-group and out-group relations. Constructing fairness reflected the informants' definitions of fairness and how it is applied to asylums seekers. It appears the allocation of fairness is distinguished by in-group favouritism. This study adds to the prior knowledge of attitudes towards asylum seekers within an Australian context.

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Submitted: October, 2009

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### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Justine Dandy. Justine, your guidance throughout this study has been insurmountable. From the onset of this research project, you have always been enthusiastic, patient and encouraging.

I have been fortunate to have a fantastic support network of encouraging friends. Jacquie, Lisa and Amiee-Jade, thank-you for being there for me, especially through the tough times.

To my four gorgeous children. You have been my motivation and determination to complete this degree. Today would not have come without you. Thank-you. I would also like to acknowledge all the help and patience you have had as my excellent tutors of *Teaching Mum Computer Skills 101*.

To my wonderful husband, Michael, you are my rock. Thank you for your patience and unrelenting support not only for my studies but throughout all the years we have shared together. Tomorrow is a new beginning and the best is yet to come.

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## Anglo-Australians' Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers and Egalitarianism

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) there were 16 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, at the end of 2008 (UNHCR, n.d.). The arrival of asylum seekers on Australia's shores is topical in the media, and is often associated with negative attitudes within the community (Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005; Pedersen, Griffiths, & Watt, 2008; Pedersen, Watt, & Hansen, 2006; Saxton, 2003; Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, & Ryan, 2005). Attitudes towards minority groups and related concepts such as immigration have been extensively researched within the social psychology field, with specific attention to the factors influencing such attitudes (Berry, 2001; Berry & Kalin, 1995). In recent years, issues surrounding the arrival of asylum seekers in Australia have evoked positive and negative attitudes within the larger community. Such issues include asylum seekers being placed in mandatory detention upon arrival in Australia, their perceived *queue jumping* and *illegal arrival* on Australian shores, as well as perceived threats to Australia's economy and security. Asylum seekers' presence in Australia is subject to considerable public debate, nonetheless research on Australian attitudes towards asylum seekers is limited. The present study aims to contribute to knowledge by exploring the attitudes of Anglo-Australians towards asylum seekers and perceptions of fairness towards them.

The terms asylum seeker and refugee are often confused. An asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee, but whose application has not yet been evaluated (UNHCR, n.d.). In contrast, refugees have been able to demonstrate that they have been forcibly displaced from their home for fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular

social or political group (UNHCR). Australia is a voluntary signatory to the *1951 Refugee Convention* and the *1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*; these outline the responsibilities and obligations of host nations to refugees (UNHCR). However, whilst the convention makes provision for people who have been identified as refugees to claim asylum, the convention does not compel any signatory to allow asylum seekers to enter their country and make a claim for asylum (UNHCR). Consequently the unexpected arrival of asylum seekers without formal documentation places them in a position of breaking the law (O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007).

Australia's Humanitarian Program comprises of two components: *offshore* resettlement for people in humanitarian need overseas (refugees); and *onshore* protection for those people who have come to Australia with temporary visas or in an unauthorised manner, and are claiming Australia's protection (Refugee Council of Australia [RCOA], n.d.). During 2007 to 2008, Australia granted 10,799 visas for *offshore* resettlement and 2,215 visas for *onshore* protection (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008a). The majority of *offshore* applicants are identified and referred to Australia for resettlement by the UNHCR (Department of Immigration and Citizenship).

Since 1991, the Australian Government has taken a strong stance against asylum seekers who arrive onshore, unauthorised, by placing them in detention centres for an extensive period of time (Nickerson & Louis, 2008; Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005). Furthermore, the media, in their reporting of matters concerning asylum seekers have reflected many of the Government's policies and claims involving asylum seekers as being a threat to the national rule and security (Nickerson & Louis; Pedersen, Attwell et al.). Consequently, both the RCOA and

the United Nations have expressed concerns regarding the Australian Government's policies and claims, as well as the media's negative portrayal of asylum seekers (Klocker & Dunn, 2003; Schweitzer et al., 2005). In particular, the RCOA has suggested that the Government and media's negative portrayal of asylum seekers is eliciting negative attitudes and increased prejudice towards asylum seekers within the Australian community (Klocker & Dunn).

The aim of this thesis is to research and examine attitudes of Anglo-Australians towards asylum seekers. Specifically, this review will concentrate on examining attitudes in the context of intergroup relations. It will commence with a brief discussion of attitudes and how they are defined, as well as an outline of the theories behind the formation of attitudes. Following this, research from Australia and overseas will be examined. Finally, research examining Australians' attitudes towards asylum seekers will be discussed, with a focus on identifying limitations as well as future directions for research in the Australian context.

### Attitudes

Attitudes are evaluative responses directed at a given object or target (e.g., person, group of people, action or concept; Ajzen 1988; Allport, 1958; Bohner & Wanke, 2002). An attitude is a construct that is difficult to observe and usually understood through measuring negative or positive evaluations of the attitude object (Ajzen; Allport; Bohner & Wanke). The tripartite model of attitude structure specifies three hypothetical unobservable classes of response to a stimulus, these are: affect, conation, and cognition (Ajzen; Breckler, 1984). Affect refers to an emotional response (a gut reaction) toward the attitude object (Ajzen; Breckler). Conation includes overt actions, behavioural intentions, and verbal

statements regarding behaviour (Ajzen; Breckler). Beliefs, knowledge structures, perceptual responses, and thoughts constitute the cognitive component of attitudes (Ajzen; Breckler). These three components are distinct, separate entities which may or may not be related, depending upon the context (Ajzen; Bohner & Wanke; Oskamp, 1991).

Research examining individuals' attitudes towards intercultural concepts such as immigration and multiculturalism has been widespread (Berry, 2001, 2006; Berry & Kalin, 1995). Immigration refers to people moving from one country to another (Stephan, Bachman, & Ybarra, 1999); multicultural ideology is one strategy for the accommodation of other groups by the dominant group within a society (Berry, 2006). Attitudes towards immigrants reflect an evaluation of perceived consequences of possible threat to one's own group (Stephan et al., 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). As migrants are individuals from other countries, attitudes towards them are an evaluation of a particular social group as identified by stereotypes and cultural features of the social group (Ang, Brand, Noble, & Wilding, 2002; Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993). Cultural features include dress, religion, traditions and language.

The attitudes between dominant and non-dominant groups in a society have been found to play a key role in the acculturation process (Berry, 2001, 2006; Berry & Kalin, 1995). This is based on the degree to which the groups seek to engage with each other, such as the extent to which a group will maintain their culture and identity and the degree to which the group will interact with other ethnocultural groups including the dominant one (Berry, 2006). Mutual acculturation is a process of cultural change which occurs when dominant groups and incoming or non-dominant groups interact and accept changes in order to

accommodate each other (Berry, 2001, 2006; Berry & Kalin). However, Schweitzer et al. (2005) argued that the experiences of displaced individuals arriving in a new country are different to the experiences of migrants, as refugees and asylum seekers are often viewed differently by their host countries. Therefore more research in this area is required.

### Predictors of Attitudes Towards Cultural Minority Groups

The literature indicates that attitudes towards cultural minority groups seem to be associated with social and demographic variables such as age, gender and level of education attained (Gomersall, Davidson, & Ho, 2000; Pedersen & Walker, 1997). There is little empirical research examining attitudes towards asylum seekers, nonetheless, several social and demographic indicators of attitudes towards asylum seekers have emerged (Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon, & Griffiths, 2005; Pedersen & Walker). Consistent with research on attitudes towards minorities, positive attitudes towards asylum seekers have been found amongst younger respondents, female respondents and individuals with a higher level of education (Pedersen, Clarke et al.; Pedersen & Walker; Schweitzer et al., 2005). Conversely, individuals holding a right-wing political position and high levels of national identity held negative attitudes toward asylum seekers (Pedersen, Clarke et al.).

### *Social Psychological Models*

Much of the psychological research within the cultural domain is based on theories of social psychology focusing on intergroup relations. Three such theories are the Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1986); the Instrumental Model of Group Conflict (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong,

1998) and the Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) proposed by Stephan and Stephan (2000a, 2000b). SIT proposes that individuals categorise themselves and others into social groups (Tajfel & Turner). In order to maintain a positive social identity, a person evaluates their social group (in-group) in a positive way when compared to the other groups (out-groups). The Instrumental Model of Group Conflict is important in understanding how perceived threats influence out-groups. ITT suggests that fear is a core cause of prejudice (Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). Both in-group and out-group members experience perceptions of threat by the opposing group and these threats predict negative attitudes towards a group (Stephan & Stephan, 2000b). These theories will now be discussed further.

#### *Social Identity Theory.*

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is based on principles that focus on intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). SIT proposes that an individual defines and evaluates oneself in group terms. The primary group that an individual identifies with is known as the *in-group*, in comparison to the other social groups that one does not belong to, which are defined as the *out-groups*. Membership of an *in-group* is linked with a positive evaluation of the group by its own members as well as a sense of belonging. *In-group* membership also provides measures for the evaluation of the social differences between groups which results in a positive social identity for *in-group* members (Hartley & Pedersen, 2007; Tajfel & Turner; Turner et al.). In contrast, intergroup relations are the opposite as they lack familiarity, intimacy and trust characteristics. Intergroup relations usually involve negative feelings of hostility, aggression or superiority. The bond that keeps in-group relations together does not exist for intergroup relations. This perspective enables the understanding of

stereotyping and prejudism to arise from the desire to attain or maintain a positive social identity (Hartley & Pedersen; Tajfel & Turner; Turner et al.).

Dandy and Pe-Pua (2006) explored Australians' attitudes towards immigration and multiculturalism. The sample consisted of migrants and non-migrants residing in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. Participants completed several questionnaires through telephone and written surveys, as well as taking part in qualitative interviews. A finding of the qualitative analysis of the interviews was that some Australians believed that immigrant groups keep to themselves rather than attempting to integrate into Australian society. This was perceived as not accepting the Australian way of life and thus leading to intergroup conflicts. Intergroup conflicts can result in discrimination and racism and are attributed to lack of acceptance and understanding that different cultures are guided by different values and beliefs (Dandy & Pe-Pua). Conversely, Ang et al. (2002) found that more Australians were accepting of immigration than cultural diversity. Ang et al. explain cultural diversity as the presence of difference within a society resulting from many social cultural groups residing together within the given society. Findings from research conducted by Ang et al. as well as Dandy and Pe-Pua reflect the ambiguity of Australians attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity.

A qualitative study by Butcher and Thomas (2001) among young people of Asian and Middle Eastern background in Western Sydney examined which cultural group they primarily identified with, such as belonging to the Australian group or another group. Results indicated that the students perceived Australian culture in a stereotypical manner which excludes them from belonging to it. Whilst the students identified as being Australian citizens, they did not identify



with Australian culture. This was found to be primarily due to visible differences, which support Hage's (1998) suggestion that being Australian is defined as being *white*.

### *Group differences.*

Differences have been found between in-group and out-group evaluation as characterised by perceptions of in-group superiority and intergroup inequality (Duckitt, 2005; Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Male, 1994; Stephan et al., 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). Social dominance orientation (SDO) refers to a belief in intergroup inequality, it supports group hierarchies in society and individuals high in SDO are most likely to show prejudice and discriminative traits (Duckitt). Individuals asserting right wing authoritarian (RWA) values have been found to be particularly sensitive to threats to their traditional values (Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). National identity refers to part of the individual's self-concept of knowing that one is a member or rather belongs to a national social group. The more strongly one identifies with a group, the more that group and its intergroup relations will affect and guide one's beliefs and behaviours. In contrast to groups holding perceptions of superiority and inequality, individuals identifying with a humanity in-group (human identity) welcome individuals from other social groups to be members of their in-group (Nickerson & Louis, 2008).

Research has demonstrated that high levels of belief in social dominance, RWA, and national identity are related to negative intercultural attitudes. Nickerson and Louis (2008) conducted research with a sample of Australian university students to examine predictors of attitudes towards asylum seekers. Results indicated SDO, RWA and national identity were significantly related to

negative attitudes towards asylum seekers. In contrast, human identity was the only predictor included in Nickerson and Louis' study that was significantly related to positive attitudes towards asylum seekers in Australia.

*Threat theories.*

The Instrumental Model of Group Conflict maintains that perceived threat is a consequence of a group's perceptions whereby they fear that other groups are competing for their limited resources (Esses et al., 1998). They also hold the belief that once resources are exhausted, there will not be any for members of other groups, this is known as a zero-sum belief (Esses et al.). This perception of resource competition between groups is associated with perceptions of threat resulting in the possible development of intergroup, negative attitudes (Esses et al.). Whilst several studies support this model (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Esses et al., 1998; Verkuyten, 2006), the Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) proposed by Stephan and Stephan (2000a, 2000b) provides an alternative theoretical model.

The ITT stresses that intergroup threats and fears are the major causes of prejudice and discrimination (Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). ITT combines theories such as Realistic Group Conflict Theory (which focuses on threat to resources) and Symbolic Racism Theory (which focuses on threat to beliefs and worldviews; Stephan & Stephan, 2000b). The concepts of these theories do not occur in isolation from each other but rather are complementary in understanding the formation of negative out-group attitudes (Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b).

The integration of ITT includes several threat types such as realistic threat, symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes of out-groups as

sources of threat and fear (Stephan et al., 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). Realistic threats are threats to the core-existence of the in-group, including threats to political and economic resources as well as to the physical/material wellbeing of the in-group (Stephan et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). Symbolic threat refers to intergroup differences in morals, values, norms, standards, beliefs and attitudes, which defines a group and provides group members with a social identity (Stephan et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). Intergroup anxiety suggests that an individual feels personally threatened (e.g., embarrassment, discrimination or rejection) and anticipates a negative consequence during contact with members of the opposing group (Kenworthy, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2005; Stephan et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). Lastly, stereotypes form a basis for expectations concerning the behaviour of members belonging to the stereotyped group (Sears, 2005; Stephan et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). Stereotypes are usually of a negative nature and therefore lead to the avoidance of out-group members. Stereotypes provide negative trait attributions to explain the out-group's behaviour and result in a justification of discrimination to the out-group (Sears; Stephan et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b).

The above threat types can be clustered as either representing a threat to the group (intergroup threat) or to the individual (interpersonal threat). Realistic and symbolic threats are intergroup threat types, whilst intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes are interpersonal threats (Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Stephan et al., 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b). ITT proposes that both in-group and out-group members experience perceptions of threat by the opposing group and

these threats predict negative attitudes toward a group (Stephan et al.; Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b).

Much empirical research has been guided by the framework of ITT, leading Riek, Mania and Gaertner (2006) to conduct a meta-analysis on the large body of research on integrated threat. The meta-analysis comprised of 95 studies that examined attitudes towards different social groups defined by characteristics such as gender, race and sexual orientation. The results of the meta-analysis revealed that intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes were the best predictors of attitudes, however all threat types were significantly related to attitudes. This meta-analysis is particularly important as it demonstrates the relationship between perceptions of threat and attitudes towards out-groups across a broad sample of social groups.

Several studies used in the meta-analysis by Riek et al. (2006) described target out-groups based on their ethnic and cultural differences. This procedure emphasises the application of social psychological threat research to race relations research. Within the cultural relations arena, threat refers to perceptions among members of one cultural group that the presence of other cultural groups threaten their place in society (Berry, 2006; Stephan et al., 1999). Berry proposed that individuals will only be supportive of intercultural concepts such as immigration, when they feel that their cultural group's place within society is secure and not threatened by the presence of the out-group.

### Prejudice

Prejudice is a negative attitude based on stereotypes attributed towards a defined social group and towards individuals perceived to be members of that

group (Allport, 1958). Dovidio and Gaertner (1986) argued that prejudice is conceptualised as having a cognitive component (e.g., stereotypic beliefs about a target group); an affective component (e.g., dislike); and a conative component (e.g., avoidance of the target group). Theories of prejudice distinguish between the old-fashioned overt forms and the modern subtle forms (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Dovidio, Kawakami & Gaertner, 2000). Old-fashioned prejudice is based on the beliefs that *white* people are biologically superior to *black* people and promotes the segregation of races (Dovidio & Gaertner; Dovidio, et al., 2000). Modern forms of prejudice are variously labelled such as *subtle prejudice*, *aversive racism* and *modern racism* (Sears, 2005). Modern forms of prejudice consist of three elements: (a) rejection of old-fashioned prejudice and acceptance of racial equality, and (b) continuing negative affect toward *blacks* (e.g., animosity towards blacks, and distancing oneself from blacks), and (c) holding of non-racial values, individualism, and Protestant Ethic (Sears).

Stephan, et al. (1999) explored predictors of prejudicial attitudes towards immigrants from Cuba, Mexico and Asia, among American university students. Realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes were the variables used as predictors of prejudice. Results indicated that all four variables were significant predictors of prejudicial attitudes. The results were consistent with theories suggesting that perceived threats are related to prejudiced attitudes.

#### Australian Research on Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers

As discussed previously, research on Australian attitudes towards asylum seekers is scant. Most studies have been correlational, focussing on false beliefs as

predictors of positive or negative attitudes (Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke et al., 2005). In addition, social identity predictors such as perceived threats have been examined to measure attitudes towards asylum seekers (Schweitzer et al., 2005). Discursive analyses of print media and government official representations have also been evaluated to examine the construction of stereotypes of asylum seekers (Gelber, 2003; Klocker & Dunn, 2003; O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007; Saxton, 2003).

### *False Beliefs*

Much of the Australian research exploring attitudes towards asylum seekers (Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2008; Pedersen et al., 2006), has found that *false beliefs* were highly correlated with negative attitudes towards asylum seekers (Pedersen, Attwell et al.; Pedersen, Clarke et al.). Some Australians have been found to hold several *false beliefs* regarding asylum seekers, of which Pedersen, Attwell et al. and Pedersen, Clarke et al. have examined three. The first belief is that asylum seekers must be "cashed up" (Pedersen, Attwell et al., p. 152) to be able to afford the journey to Australia. The second belief is that the Australian Government provides asylum seekers with many benefits such as housing and living expenses. The third belief is that asylum seekers are "queue jumpers" (Pedersen, Attwell et al., p. 152) as they are not coming to Australia through the correct visa application process and are pushing in ahead of other refugees that have applied and followed the correct process.

The reason why Pedersen, Attwell et al. (2005) and Pedersen, Clarke et al. (2005) refer to these as false beliefs is that, firstly, asylum seekers fleeing

persecution often have a network of people prepared to sell all their possessions to ensure the safety of those who are being persecuted. Secondly, asylum seekers do not receive any Australian Government funded benefits; the little monetary assistance they receive is provided to them by humanitarian agencies (RCOA, n.d.). Asylum seekers receive similar entitlements as other Australians once they have been granted either humanitarian or protection visas (RCOA). Thirdly, Australia does not have embassy representation in all troubled countries such as Afghanistan or their surrounding countries, and this makes it difficult for asylum seekers to obtain the correct paperwork required to travel abroad (Pedersen, Attwell, et al.; Pedersen, Clarke, al.).

Pedersen, Attwell, et al.'s (2005) study consisted of questionnaires measuring attitudes towards asylum seekers, national identity and self-esteem. Results indicated a high correlation between false beliefs and negative attitudes towards asylum seekers. In a separate study, Pedersen, Clarke et al. (2005) examined community attitudes towards asylum seekers and Indigenous Australians with particular emphasis on the role of false beliefs. Results indicated that false beliefs significantly predict negative attitudes towards both cultural groups; with more negativity directed towards asylum seekers. Pedersen, Clarke et al. suggested that Australians hold more negative attitudes towards asylum seekers than towards Indigenous Australians. One proposed reason is that most Australians do not have any contact with asylum seekers. Another possible reason is that Indigenous Australians are seen as part of the Australian culture whilst asylum seekers are not (Pedersen, Clarke et al.). This comparison of Australians' attitudes towards asylum seekers and Indigenous Australians demonstrates the relationships between intergroup processes across two social groups.

*Stereotypes in the Media*

The media not only reflects a society's stereotypes but greatly contributes to their production as well (Betts, 2001; Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald; Klocker & Dunn, 2003; O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007; Saxton, 2003). Discursive research has demonstrated that asylum seekers have been negatively portrayed by the media and Australian political figures (Betts; Dunn et al., 2004; Klocker & Dunn; Mummery & Rodan, 2007; O'Doherty & Lecouteur; Saxton). The Federal Government has portrayed events involving asylum seekers in a negative manner, such as the alleged throwing of the children overboard by asylum seekers (Mares, 2002; Saxton). A statement made by Prime Minister John Howard on radio at that time, "I certainly don't want people like that here" (Mares, p. 135), constructed asylum seekers as being the out-group posing a threat to Australian society (Mares; Saxton). The media relies primarily on the Federal Government for the release of information regarding asylum seekers (Klocker and Dunn). This places the Government in a powerful position of influence on the media both as a censor of information and a major source of information (Klocker & Dunn). The Government therefore relies on the media to deliver its policies to the people and to gather their support for the policies (Klocker & Dunn; Mummery & Rodan). Research has also noted that the Government uses negative representations of asylum seekers as *boat people* and *illegal immigrants* to justify Australia's hard line response to them (Klocker & Dunn; O'Doherty & Lecouteur).

Pedersen, Watt et al. (2006) conducted a qualitative questionnaire with Australians to examine antecedents of attitudes towards asylum seekers. The research compared the spontaneously generated responses of participants to a set of false beliefs previously identified in the literature. Participants' responses were



also compared to statements regarding asylum seekers made by government officials. Results found that societally-prevalent false beliefs were related with negative attitudes toward asylum seekers. The same false beliefs were identified in statements made by politicians. The researchers concluded that this relationship is not causal but likely to be bi-directional. For example, whilst the community's acceptance of political statements has found to influence negative attitudes, prejudiced individuals are more likely to accept these statements. Pedersen, Watt et al. expressed concerns that the community's negative attitudes toward asylum seekers may be attributed to their acceptance of mis-information delivered by political leaders as being correct.

#### *Attitudes and Perceived Threat*

Research by Schweitzer et al. (2005) revealed that attitudes towards refugees appear to be predicted by perceived threat. Schweitzer et al. conducted a study with 261 Australian undergraduate students examining the prevalence and correlates of negative attitudes towards refugees. Participants were assessed on a prejudicial attitude scale, measures of symbolic and realistic threat as well as the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Schweitzer et al.). The results found that almost 60% of the participants scored above the mid-point on prejudicial attitudes, indicating that more than half of the Australian community held prejudicial attitudes towards other groups. Male participants held less favourable attitudes towards refugees when compared to their female counterparts. This is consistent with the literature's findings that females report more favourable attitudes towards minority groups (Gomersall et al., 2000; Pedersen, Clarke et al., 2005; Pedersen & Walker, 1997). Analyses revealed that both realistic and symbolic threat predicted prejudicial attitudes, with realistic threat being the

stronger predictor. Schweitzer et al. concluded that concerns of realistic and symbolic threats were predictors of prejudicial attitudes towards asylum seekers.

### Australian Egalitarianism

Attitudes towards asylum seekers appear to be guided by values such as fairness (Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2006). A review of the literature suggests that the *values* of egalitarianism and fairness characterise Australian self-definition (Halloran, 2007; Kapferer, 1996; Mummery & Rodan, 2007; Thompson, 1994). Values are a person's goals or standards in life, and therefore it can be assumed that individuals hold strong positive attitudes towards the values they hold (Oskamp, 1991). Australian egalitarian core values maintain equality for all, therefore everyone is granted equal social and political opportunities and everyone is assumed to have the same social political and cultural needs (Kapferer; Thompson). However, Australia's early egalitarian principles were committed to *Anglo* values based on the notion that Australia was socially and racially homogenous, and composed of British *whites* (Thompson). Australian egalitarianism focusing on sameness gave rise to the White Australia Policy (McMaster, 2001; Thompson). These principles ignored the economic, social and cultural contributions made by non-British migrants (Thompson). Kapferer argues that core values are important attributes of a dominant culture as they provide substantiation in which the culture of the society moulds and remoulds group identities.

Australian egalitarianism of equality and the *fair go* is constructed and used in differing ways (Every & Augoustinos, 2008; Gelber, 2003; Thompson, 1994). These different interpretations of egalitarianism have been used to justify various policies over the years. For example, the White Australia Policy was

presented as necessary because having a mixed race in Australia would not be egalitarian and unfair to those minority groups unable to compete with *white* British settlers (Every & Augoustinos; Thompson). In contrast, in the current context, asylum seekers are not playing fair because they are *queue jumping* (Gelber, 2003). This proposes the notion that those who do not act fairly should not be treated with fairness (Every & Augoustinos; Gelber).

The perception of asylum seekers *queue jumping* to obtain entry into Australia brings an underlying threat to Australia's values, and characteristics of modern and impartial bureaucracy (Mares, 2002). Gelber (2003) suggests that bureaucracy is guided by rules which ensure a levelling of economic and social differences. Queues represent order or patterns of equality which have been regarded as a component of distributive justice. Rank order is personified by first come, first served. Therefore in the Australian society, queues represent impartiality and fairness (Gelber). Queue jumping violates the purpose of a queue and is characterised as *unfair*. Consequently in a society such as Australia, hostility towards queue jumpers will be justified (Gelber).

There appears to be a lack of research examining attitudes towards asylum seekers in the context of fairness or *fair go*. As discussed, attitudes towards displaced individuals reflect an evaluation of fairness motives and threat motives. Anecdotal evidence and discourse analytic studies have shown that the arrival of asylum seekers is perceived as a disruption to the unified meanings of national identity and safety as well as economic stability (Hage, 1998; Schweitzer et al., 2005; Tascon, 2002). It has been argued that the construction of Australian identity is built on racial exclusions in a need to protect Australian *whiteness*. This *whiteness*, also includes ethnic and religious dimensions which mandate the

preservation of Anglo-Celtic and Judeo-Christian traditions (Every & Augoustinos, 2008; Tascon). In the Australian context, national identity (Every & Augoustinos, 2007, 2008; Mummery & Rodan, 2007; Tascon) and perceptions of threat (Schweitzer et al.) are used to mark the differences between Australians and asylum seekers. Therefore it is important to understand how asylum seeker schemas are developed which in turn, influence the attitudes towards them by Australians.

The research previously outlined provides a background into the current understanding of intergroup relations across cultural groups both overseas and Australia. Thus far, the literature examining Australian attitudes towards asylum seekers shows that many Australians hold negative attitudes (Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2008; Pedersen & Walker, 1997; Pedersen et al., 2006; Schweitzer et al., 2005). Social identity and ITT were examined and suggest that realistic threat, symbolic threat and social desirability are instrumental in attitude formation and expression towards intergroup relations more specifically towards asylum seekers (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Gomersall et al., 2000; Halloran, 2007; Schweitzer et al.). False beliefs, as well as misrepresentations by political figures and media, also aid the distancing between in-groups and out-groups (Klocker & Dunn, 2003; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; O'Kane; Pedersen, Attwell et al.; Pedersen, Clarke et al.; Saxton, 2003). The media tabloids and politicians sensationalise their reporting on matters concerning asylum seekers and are influential in terms of ideologies and practices within the society.

The aim of the present study was to obtain an understanding of Anglo-Australian attitudes towards asylum seekers and how these attitudes are perceived

as fair, especially in the context of Australian egalitarianism. The little research conducted in Australia to date on Australian attitudes towards asylum seekers has shown that Australians maintain negative attitudes. The majority of this research has been via questionnaires which minimise participants' ability to tell their story in depth, because most questionnaires provide participants with pre-determined responses from which to choose. The use of a qualitative approach, for this present study, enabled the researcher to obtain detailed responses from the informants using their own words. This enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how informants construct their meanings and justify their attitudes towards asylum seekers. Research in this area is needed to understand how members perceive intercultural interactions with incoming groups (Berry, 2001), more specifically asylum seekers. For the purposes of this study Anglo-Australians are defined as individuals who are born in Australia whose parents were born in either Australia or Britain, and identify with British heritage.

### Research Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of Anglo-Australians, towards asylum seekers. The research questions were: (1) What are the attitudes of Anglo-Australian towards asylum seekers? (2) How are these attitudes related to the concept of Australian egalitarianism and *fair go*?

### Methodology

#### *Paradigms and Assumptions*

There are several methodological assumptions underlying this qualitative study. The researcher assumes that the nature of reality and its characteristics are subjective and therefore reports on the multiple realities as discussed by

informants. The interaction between the researcher and the informants enables a deeper understanding of how informants construct their meanings. Nonetheless, the researcher appreciates that she may be perceived as both an *insider* and an *outsider* (Stanfield II, 1998). The researcher recognises that some informants may have perceived her as an outsider for several reasons. Firstly, participants who were not university educated may have perceived her as an outsider due to her being a university student of psychology conducting a research project. Consequently informants could have perceived this as a disparity of status between themselves and the researcher, which might have impacted upon their participation (Stanfield II). Secondly the researcher's cultural heritage, that is, first generation Italian makes her a non-member of the dominant culture, that is, Anglo-Australian. This may be perceived by some informants as evidence that she may not share an insider perspective and this may have hindered the interview process; suggesting that informants may have responded differently to a researcher of the same cultural group membership (Stanfield II). However, it should be noted that following World War II, Italians have been a significant cultural minority in Australia with subsequent generations having integrated with the dominant culture. Consequently some informants may have not perceived her as being of a different cultural group membership. There is recognition by the researcher that these influences on the relationship cannot be removed; however efforts were made to dilute them by reassuring participants that all their responses were valued and that none of their answers would be deemed incorrect.

Qualitative research is value-laden and the researcher acknowledges the presence of personal bias (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Stanfield II, 1998). The researcher's interest in attitudes towards asylum seekers have guided

her in the development of this research topic as she believes social justice should be regarded as a valuable and important attribute for Australia's humanitarian values. The personal values held by the researcher have influenced the interview questions posed, how she conducted the interviews, and the themes she identified during analysis (Stanfield II). In order to reduce the influence of her values, the researcher received input from her supervisor during development of the interview schedule; recorded her thoughts and responses in a reflective diary after each interview and after reading the transcripts. Investigator triangulation was also incorporated into the analysis process. Researcher triangulation involves the inclusion of other researchers in the research process. In the present study, the researcher obtained feedback from her supervisor and other researchers, to explore the different perspectives of the informants constructions and if they were reflected within the identified themes (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Combining reflexive strategies strengthens the rigour and credibility of the study (Creswell).

Four types of rigour were used in this study; theoretical, methodological, interpretive and reflexive. Theoretical rigour refers to the appropriateness of the research design and theories in relation to the research questions (Creswell, 2007; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). This has been demonstrated through the justification of the research design for this study. Methodological rigour refers to the process of analysis conducted throughout this research (Creswell; Liamputtong & Ezzy). During this study, methodological rigour was maintained through an audit trail which documented the research process for example, keeping a reflective diary (Creswell; Liamputtong & Ezzy). Reflexive analysis of the data, ensures interpretive rigour which is the accurate interpretation of the themes (Creswell; Liamputtong & Ezzy; Lincoln & Guba, 2003). The use of quotations to exemplify themes is a feature of methodological rigour which contributed to the interpretive

rigour of the study (Creswell; Liamputtong & Ezzy). Informants' quotations have been used to support the identified themes, so that readers may assess the reliability of the researcher's interpretations (Lincoln & Guba). In addition, investigator triangulation also assisted with the interpretive rigour of the analysis (Creswell; Liamputtong & Ezzy). Lastly, rigorous reflexivity refers to the researcher being aware that she is a co-participant of the study and thus may have influenced the study (Creswell; Liamputtong & Ezzy). This is demonstrated by the research assumptions previously outlined. Investigator triangulation was also a function contributing to rigorous reflexivity, as feedback provided by the supervisor aided the researcher in ascertaining the validity of her interpretations.

This research is shaped by a social constructionist worldview, where individuals seek an understanding of the world in which they live (Creswell, 2007). The research was aimed at identifying an understanding of the informants' subjective meanings of asylum seekers. Informants' perspectives are formed through contact with the outside world. In the context of this study, one of the ways in which Anglo-Australians' attitudes towards asylum seekers are assumed to be influenced is through the media's portrayal of world events. Therefore, when interviewing informants, the researcher asked them to reflect and share their attitudes towards asylum seekers, which provided a framework for understanding their perception of fairness towards asylum seekers.

### *Informants*

Saturation was reached with a sample of 12 Anglo-Australian adults residing in Perth's upper northern suburbs. Anglo-Australians were defined as people born in Australia, whose parents were born in Australia or the United Kingdom, and who identified as having British cultural heritage. The minimum



age requirement was set at 25 years of age, as much of the research to date on this topic has been conducted with undergraduate students. Informants were six women aged between 26 and 54 years and six men aged between 25 and 55 years of age. All informants were Australian born, with eleven of them reporting that their parents were too, whilst one had British born parents. Paid employment positions included a company managing director, a support officer, a storeman, a sales manager, a registered nurse, a small business owner, an accounts clerk, a secondary school teacher, an electrician, a receptionist, a therapist and a teacher's assistant. Educational backgrounds varied: three informants had completed a Bachelor's degree; two had completed TAFE qualifications; one informant had left school at year 10; one at year 11; and six informants had completed year 12. Five informants had commenced university studies without completion.

Several methods were utilised to recruit informants. Flyers were placed on community noticeboards (e.g., recreation centres and a university campus) seeking volunteers who were interested in participating (see Appendix A). Snowballing was also utilised through informants suggesting other people who were willing to participate in the research (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). These methods were used in order to attempt to recruit a diverse sample of community to participate in this study.

Upon first contact, volunteers were screened; this ensured that participation criteria were met. Interview arrangements were made to be held at a mutually convenient time and place (e.g., participant's home or the local library) for both parties. The researcher ensured her safety by advising her husband of the time and location of the interviews, and she contacted him to say when she arrived and when she left the interviews.

*Researcher*

The researcher is a 50-year-old white female of Australian nationality and Italian cultural heritage, currently undertaking a Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) course.

*Data Collection Procedures*

Semi-structured, open ended, in-depth, individual interviews were conducted with each participant. This approach was chosen as it enabled the discovery of the subjective meanings and interpretations held by informants. An advantage of individual interviews is that informants' responses are less influenced by others enabling them to discuss more sensitive matters (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Silverman, 2006). In addition, some informants may feel more relaxed sharing their views on a one to one basis, because it is less likely to be influenced by social desirability or consensus-driven opinions (Liamputtong & Ezzy).

The interviews were approximately 20 to 60 minutes long and were audio recorded to assist transcription. Informants were given an information letter and a consent form (see Appendices B and C). During the research process, the informants' confidentiality was maintained as all documents with identifying information were kept separate from the transcripts, in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. Pseudonyms were used throughout the interview transcripts as well as the final report.

Prior to commencing the interview, informants were asked to complete the consent form and a questionnaire regarding their background and demographic information (see Appendix D). An interview schedule (see Appendix E) was used as a guide; in addition, probes were used to elicit further information and

clarification of the informants' words (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). A funnelling method of questioning was used with the interview commencing with broad questions such as "What do you think is meant by the term asylum seeker?" and then gradually following with more specific questions pertaining to the issue being investigated such as "Do you think our treatment of asylum seekers reflects Australian ideas of *fair go*?" The assumption made using this strategy is that both informants and researcher would not be comfortable commencing discussions with an issue that may be threatening or uncomfortable to contemplate. Broad questions at the beginning of an interview allow the informants to consider issues at a personal level and as the rapport develops they are asked to interpret their own personal stance (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995).

### Analysis

Following each interview, the tape-recordings were transcribed verbatim, using a version of the Jefferson method of notation as outlined by Atkinson and Heritage (1984; see Appendix G). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcripts. This process, involves identifying the informants' common and different perspectives (Minichiello et al., 1995). The analysis commenced with the researcher personally transcribing the transcripts and then reading them which increased her familiarity with the data. Following this, the researcher recorded her thoughts and responses in the right hand margin of the transcripts; this assisted with identifying personal values that may have influenced data interpretation. The researcher re-read the transcripts highlighting key words as well as general ideas which had emerged from the interviews (Minichiello et al.). After this, key words and sentences were coded and combined into common themes (Minichiello et al.). In order to maintain an inductive exploratory viewpoint, themes were developed

during the process of analysis and were not predetermined prior to commencement of analysis. In addition, to ensure that the identified themes represented the common and varying attitudes of informants toward asylum seekers, the researcher repeatedly compared the identified themes of all the transcripts (Silverman, 2006).

Investigator triangulation was constant throughout the analytical process (Denzin, 1994; Maxwell, 2005). Meetings between the researcher and her supervisor facilitated the analytical process. This assisted the researcher to appraise whether the identified themes were reflected within the informants discussions (Silverman, 2006).

### Findings and Interpretations

The informants' discussions of asylum seekers revealed three principle themes: *characterising asylum seekers*, *responses to asylum seekers in Australia* and *constructing fairness*. Characterising asylum seekers portrays the informants' understanding of asylum seekers. There were four characterisations; genuine asylum seekers, illegal immigrants and boat people, and the media's role in the characterisation of asylum seekers. Responses to asylum seekers in Australia are further defined by two sub-themes which are: racism and threats. Constructing fairness provides an understanding on how the informants' cognitive and affective evaluations attribute perceived fairness to the treatment of asylum seekers.

#### *Characterising Asylum Seekers*

Most informants characterised asylum seekers in differing ways and used diverse terms when referring to asylum seekers. Whilst acknowledging that some asylum seekers are genuine; most informants used terms such as *boat people* and

*illegal immigrants* when referring to asylum seekers. These descriptors have been found to be commonly used by the media when reporting on issues surrounding asylum seekers (O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007; Saxton, 2003).

### *Genuine Asylum Seekers*

This sub-theme demonstrates the characterisation of asylum seekers, as *genuine asylum seekers*. Most informants held a clear understanding that asylum seekers were fleeing their countries for fear of persecution; however they also maintained that asylum seekers travel by boats to come to Australia and pay money to do so. Amy stated,

*People that have to flee their country for safety [mm] maybe their lives are threatened, like physically because of war or famine. Um they usually go by boats. Some people pay [mm] um other people to get them over here like by boats.*

However Amy's description of asylum seekers is not consistent with that of the UNHCR, which describes an asylum seeker as someone who has been forcibly displaced from their home and is seeking refugee status in new host countries (UNHCR, n.d.).

Ken was the only informant who articulated that asylum seekers find themselves in life threatening situations and the only way to improve their quality of life is to leave the unsafe environment in which they are. Ken was aware that asylum seekers do not have access to assistance, nor are they able to make applications for immigration to other countries and therefore their only choice is to escape from the situation they are in. He said,

*Um, someone who's basically come from a country or an environment that is not where they want to be↑ Um through whether it be like a war situation or famine or an environment which is not conducive to their way of life and then the; the only way for them to get out of that is to escape or to change countries I guess [mm]; um and they can't do that necessarily by the normal means. Um so they can't go through the authority or the channels that with authority. So they can't just go on and apply for a passport like most people can and then apply for visas, they actually have to um basically escape.*

Researchers have argued that asylums seekers have been recipients of negative social categorisation by the media (O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007). Therefore it was important to understand the constructs informants have of *genuine asylum seekers*. This is because the term asylum seeker is used interchangeably with other forms of social categorisations which imply different meanings.

#### *Illegal Immigrants and Boat People*

Most informants used the terms *illegal immigrants* and *boat people* interchangeably to identify asylum seekers arriving in Australia. Eve and Barry, the youngest informants accepted that the term *boat people* has become part of Australians' everyday language. For example, Eve said, "*Boat people, it's you know just the generic term for refugee.*" Barry also felt that the media had introduced the label of *boat people*, "*I guess the term the media bandies around... what we've got um presented all the time um 'boat people' and I guess it's just a colloquial term that we use now.*"

Some informants likened *illegal immigrants* to migrants who had not applied to emigrate, but rather chose to become asylum seekers in order to sidestep the immigration process for example Cliff stated,

*... they are just trying to get around the legal system of maybe moving here from another country to maybe earn money... Um, if you're wanting to move to Australia to work to earn more money than perhaps you'd earn in your own country they'd have to go through and like apply for visas... Yeah, people that want to leave their country for work and not because they're really asylum seekers.*

A recent analysis of media print in South Australia, found the terms *illegal immigrants* and *boat people* were commonly used in tabloid newspapers referring to asylum seekers (O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007). It is important to note that government sources are the primary informants of the media with information pertaining to asylums seekers (Klocker & Dunn, 2003; O'Doherty & Lecouter; Saxton, 2003); and that Government policy prevents boats carrying asylum-seekers from entering Australian migrations zone (Betts, 2001). O'Doherty and Lecouter argued that Australian Government officials use labels such as *illegal immigrant* and *boat people* to construct negative schemas of asylum seekers. These labels portray asylum seekers as people who are manipulating the system in order to be accepted into the country (Klocker & Dunn). Consequently, the support of the Federal Government policies regarding asylum seekers' by Australians, indicates a presence of national unity and exclusion of asylum seekers (Betts, 2001). Research based on SIT has found that intergroup perceptions may influence whether the in-group supports or opposes social justice strategies for out-groups (Hartley & Pedersen, 2007).

*The Media's Role in the Characterisation of Asylum Seekers*

All of the informants stated that their knowledge of current events regarding asylum seekers was acquired through the media and they all conceded not personally knowing any asylum seekers. Lucy exemplifies this, "*Well that's what they report in the media... how else am I going to know, I don't know any asylum seekers ((laugh)).*" Cliff also admitted that his information of asylum seekers is acquired through the media; however he acknowledged that the media's portrayal of asylums seekers may be influencing his point of view,

*Well, yeah, you know, I've never dealt with asylum seekers personally, so I can't honestly say. It's stuff that I've read it's purely from a media point of view. Whether or not that's sensationalism it's tainting my point of view.*

It is also interesting to note that four informants perceived the media to mis-represent asylum seekers, portraying them in a negative light. For example, David commented that the media's negative portrayal of asylum seekers has a profound influence on Australians' attitudes towards asylum seekers,

*...The media does influence us! (.) Massively! [mm] I think if the media would portray asylum seekers as skilled migrant workers it would be a totally different thing. There would be a totally different attitude towards them [mm]... Even just the term asylum seeker you see in the paper every single day with a story attached to it about them on a boat or people smugglers from Indonesia. [mm] You know, trying to infiltrate our country if you see some words and things like that then subconsciously they're getting at ya. They're getting you to think a certain way! [mm] It's obviously going to have some impact on it. When you tell someone something over and over and over, then you do start to believe it [yep] but*



*yeah, I'd like to think that I'm a very fair person and I can make up my own mind. But if yeah, someone keeps repeating something to you then obviously something is going to creep in somewhere along the line.*

Informants believe that the media plays a central role in providing information of current events regarding asylum seekers to the Australian community.

Interestingly David believes that the media has the ability to sway public perception of asylum seekers. Researchers argue that misrepresentation and categorisation of asylum seekers by the media can support and encourage specific actions and attitudes towards them by the larger community (Klocker & Dunn, 2003; O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007; Saxton, 2003). All the informants of this study had not personally met any asylum seekers and most of them have accepted the media's information regarding asylum seekers as schemas upon which their attitudes have been formed.

### *Responses to Asylum Seekers in Australia*

In general, most informants said that Australia should assist displaced individuals. However, most informants emphasised the importance of protecting and maintaining Australian society as they know it. This was raised through the informants' discussions of intercultural racist attitudes as well as their perceptions of threat, more specifically, symbolic and realist threats, as well as competition for limited resources (Dunn et al., 2004; Schweitzer et al., 2005).

### *Racism*

A concern of racism was raised by six informants. They claimed that whilst Australia on the surface claims to be a multicultural society, it still maintains racist attitudes towards minority groups. In particular, they said that

Australians hold negative attitudes towards individuals who are visibly different.

Barry stated,

*I guess Australia generally is a very racist country I think, um even though it's quite multicultural... Um in my experience I've seen a lot of people whether they realise it or not are very racist and that stems from that perhaps um difference... It's just acceptable to be um just racist towards um other groups like Asian groups particularly Aboriginal it's just accepted... Certain groups. Anyone who is basically not like your Anglo kind of English type from the UK. Australians! I guess it's anyone that's different, that's pretty much it, really.*

This demonstrates Barry's identification of group distinctions, between Anglo-Australians and those who are not. Phenotypes are identified as being the visible markers determining membership to the *white* racial in-group (Anglo-Australians), or the out-group (anyone who is not white, Anglo-Australian). Barry also points out that racist attitudes are directed to "*anyone that's different*". The literature identifies Asian-Australians, Muslims and Indigenous people as key out-groups excluded from Australian *whiteness* (Dunn et al., 2004; Hage, 1998).

David was the only informant who specifically referred to racism towards asylum seekers on the basis of colour. David said, "*I think a lot of Australians have a very negative attitude towards, towards asylum seekers anyone who's not like us should we say... Yeah! When I say like us, I mean white. I mean Australian!*" He maintains that it is easier to be accepted within the Australian society if one is "*white*". David states,

*You would probably find that there are a lot more people willing to be-friend, to like include someone in their group of friends; obviously it would be a lot easier than if you were talking to someone who was say African black.*

Colic-Peisker (2005) argued that Australia's acceptance of Bosnian refugees during the 1990s was because of their European background. The *whiteness* of the Bosnian refugees allowed them to not stand out and therefore be able to claim *in-group* status (Colic-Peisker). Bosnians were the largest single group accessing Australian humanitarian protection in the 1990s; as well as being the largest group receiving Australian permanent protection visas at this time (Colic-Peisker). Hage (1998) argued that *white* people espousing *white* nation ideologies do not differentiate between migrants of non English speaking backgrounds or other European migrants but rather "those who are Third World-looking" (p. 19). This is consistent with the literature that some Australians hold racist attitudes towards minority groups who appear and dress differently to the *white* Australian (Colic-Peisker; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008; Dunn et al., 2004; Hage).

### *Threats*

Most informants raised concerns that with the arrival of asylum seekers in Australia, the country would be subjected to an influx of different cultures impacting on Australian traditions and values, that is, symbolic threats (Schweitzer et al., 2005). In addition perceptions of realistic threat and concerns of competition for resources were revealed by informants, with discussions including that Australia's national security and resources were at risk.

*Symbolic threat.*

Symbolic threat was a significant concern among six of the older informants. Informants raised concerns of fear that asylum seekers are extremists who would not respect Australian cultural values but rather expect that Australians would have to change their ways. Bill stated,

*...people that are actually, um, probably what it is, it's our way of life [mm]. So Australia has a way of life where we're free, we have free speech and we dress the way we wanna dress and... some of those people [who?] Muslims, will come out here and wanna change us. They're coming here because they believe our country is better than what they've been in and yet they want to impose their views and change our culture.*

The primary concern of symbolic threat is the intergroup differences in values, norms, beliefs and attitudes (Esses et al., 1993; Kenworthy et al., 2005; Sears, 2005; Stephan et al., 1999; Stephan & Stephan, 2000b). These threats arise because of the in-group's belief of their values and moral righteousness (Stephan et al., 1999).

Interestingly, the younger informants identified that some members of the Australian community are more likely to resist cultural changes and therefore feel more threatened with the arrival of new cultures. Ken explained, “... *there are Australians who if their way of life seems to be threatened they will then I guess prejudice um those people of other cultures.*”

It is also interesting to note that Ken perceived some Australians' prejudice towards culturally different people. He believes that this occurs because some Australians feel threatened by the possible changes that the presence of

other cultures brings to Australian society. The age divide between the older (40 years to 55 years) and younger (25 years to 39 years) informants reflects positive and negative attitudes towards asylum seekers resulting from perceptions of threats. Specifically, negative attitudes towards asylum seekers are expressed by the older informants with reactions of anger when feeling the possible threat to what they perceive as *our culture* (Pedersen & Walker, 1997). This supports previous research demonstrating that most younger Australians are more accepting and tolerant of other cultures compared to older Australians (Ang et al., 2002; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2006).

The younger informants, as seen by Ken's extract above, did not hold concerns of symbolic threats, however they did recognise that members of the community hold perceptions of symbolic threat which result in feelings of prejudice towards minority groups. This observation by the younger informants is consistent with research showing that hostility towards out-group occurs when groups hold differing worldviews (Esses et al., 1998; Stephan et al., 1999).

#### *Realistic threat.*

Most informants raised concerns of realistic threat. This was discussed in the context of threats to the in-group's physical wellbeing and national security. Informants were primarily concerned about possible terrorist attacks in Australia. Marc associates some asylum seekers as being potential terrorists and asserts that *we need to be selective as to who enters our country Australia*. He stated, "*Who knows terrorism these days. I mean e-everyone is very jumpy and scared about terrorism [yep]. We can't just let anybody in without identification [yep]. Without knowing where they're from.*" Marc believes that for the protection of the in-group, individuals coming into Australia need to supply identification as well as

information as to where they originate from. Stephan and Stephan (2000a, 2000b) argue that perceptions of threat by an opposing group are a predictor of negative attitudes towards a group. Australians appear to have a high level of intolerance towards Muslim and Arab-Australians (Dunn et al., 2004). These negative attitudes have been heightened by the events of September 11 and subsequent international terrorist attacks (Dunn et al.).

*Competition for resources.*

The majority of informants expressed varying concerns that Australia's resources are not infinite. Therefore resources should be allocated to Australians first. Lucy expressed this concern,

*"... I don't know that we have the, have the assets in Australia to be able to look after our own problems without having to take on all of them as well. I think if we let too many in it will stretch our resources."*

Lucy's statement demonstrates a concern for the core-existence of the in-group as she states that *we* need to look after *our own* foremost. This is in line with social identity theory's proposition that members of the receiving society may perceive that they are in competition with in coming groups for limited resources (Verkuyten, 2006). These concerns are also reflected by a zero-sum belief that reflects that once resources have been exhausted there will not be any for members of the in-group (Esses et al., 1998).

*Constructing Fairness*

This section represents the informants' definitions of fairness and, in turn, how they perceived fairness is applied to asylum seekers. This is particularly important as previously noted; informants' schemas of asylum seekers appear to

be guided by media representations rather than the UNHCR definition. Most of the informants likened the construct of fairness to the Australian egalitarian value of *fair go*. Consequently, informants used the terms fairness and *fair go* interchangeably.

### *Defining Fairness*

Informants identified fairness primarily as a construct of equality for all. For example Amy defined fairness as, “... *having the belief, the personal belief that what’s good for me is good for you. Like if I deserve (.) good food and a nice place to live, so does everybody else*”. *You know equality and equal opportunity.*” Cliff associated fairness with the Australian value of fairness for all. He believed Australians treat everyone equally, regardless of visible differences, and religious affiliations; therefore Cliff identified the presence of different cultures within Australian society. Cliff uses the terms *fair go* and fairness interchangeably.

*One of the first things you think of is Aussie! That’s an Aussie way of thinking. Being fair [how?] Well you give everybody a fair go! That’s, that’s always been. You don’t judge.... You give everybody a fair go whatever what colour they are or what religion they are.*

Cliff believes that Australian egalitarianism’s focus is on “equality for all” (Thompson, 1994, p. 27).

Generally, informants associated fairness with equality and *fair go*. Lori was the only one who raised the point that fairness is not defined equally by all Australians. She believes that different individuals hold their own meaning of fairness. Lori stated, “*What I think is fair is not necessarily what my neighbour is going to think is fair... but yeah, fair is defined differently by everybody.*”

Lori is aware that Australian egalitarianism can have differing interpretations and is used to justify the given situations. Similarly the Australian Government has, historically used Australian egalitarianism in differing ways, for example, to introduce the White Australia Policy and mandatory detention of asylum seekers (Gelber, 2003; Thompson, 1994).

### *Asylum Seekers and Fairness*

Having obtained the informants' definition of fairness, it is interesting to see how they perceived fairness is applied to asylum seekers. Generally, informants applied the concept of fairness differently towards asylum seekers to how they had previously described it above. For most, in-group and out-group membership became clearly evident when allocating fairness to the two groups.

Barry explained his understanding of the Australian egalitarian concept *fair go* only applies to Anglo-Australians. Barry stated, "*No not Australians, its fair go as long as (.) um the Anglo kind of thing is, as long as there's fair go for Anglos who cares about the rest of them!*" Barry appears to believe that the concept of *fair go*, is exclusively Anglo-Australian and excludes other cultures. This is consistent with the early egalitarian principles that distinguished Australians as a homogenous group whose dominant characteristic was being British (Thompson, 1994).

Ken, argued that the recipients of fairness are different to the recipients of *fair go*.

*Well fair go is an Australian cultural concept [mm]. So it applies to those within Australia [yep] ...Um, now if, if this goes back to < asylum>*



*seekers and giving them a fair go, well keep in mind they are still at the gate waiting to come in.*

Ken stated that the Australian egalitarianism of “equality” (Thompson, 1994, p. 27) should only be applied to Australians because it belongs to Australians. It is important to note that he did not differentiate between the various cultural groups residing within Australia; this supports the notion of equality for all and acceptance of all (Thompson). However, Ken pointed out that asylum seekers have not been accepted into the Australian fold and therefore are not yet eligible to receive Australian egalitarianism. Ken’s statement reflects Hage’s (1998) argument that Australian nationalists’ images of a nation is to keep undesirables outside of the “national space” (p. 42).

Lori does not believe that asylum seekers are being treated fairly,

*I think we are extremely selective of who we give a fair go to. No they’re just not getting it. Absolutely not... Australia prides itself on being fair and open and warm and friendly and wonderful; and I think we actually need to do those things. We’ll give anyone a fair go as long as they look like us and sound like us (.) and we can pronounce their surname and their first name [mm]. But anything that challenges us (.) I think we back off, very strongly.*

Lori explained that Australian fairness applies to members of the Australian racial in-group and not to racial groups that are visibly different. Lori also expressed concerns that individuals from visibly different cultures are stereotyped because of their difference and therefore excluded from in-group membership. Previous research demonstrates that exclusion from in-group membership provides

justification for discrimination of the out-group by the in-group (Sears, 2005; Stéphan et al., 1999). Lori believes that visible differences exclude one from being accepted by the in-group and therefore result in being excluded from in-group privileges such as fairness. Within this group of informants, intergroup processes appear to guide the allocation of fairness towards asylum seekers in Australia.

Most of the informants believed that asylum seekers are being treated fairly upon arrival to Australia. Bill believes that asylum seekers are being treated fairly when considering they have arrived in Australia without paperwork to identify them. He maintains that background checks need to be done to ensure Australia's safety. He also justifies asylum seekers are being given an opportunity to stay when compared with other countries that send asylum seekers back to where they came from. Bill stated,

*Yeah I think the system is fair. They have to have set rules because you don't want to be letting in people who are coming on boats without their papers. We need to do a certain degree of ground checking and make sure they're legitimate and not terrorists or just coming out for work. And the only way you can really keep track of people would be to put them in detention. I can't imagine that would be worse than where they say they're coming from! I mean other countries just turn them around and send them back. But um, it has to be done. So is that fair? Um (.) YES ah I think so!*

Consistent with the literature, attitudes towards other cultures reflect evaluations of support or perceived consequences of possible threat to the existing society (Stephan & Stephan, 2000a, 2000b) Most informants' attitudes towards asylum seekers have reflected an evaluation of perceived threats to the Australian

society. These perceived threats may be a result of the informants' schemas of asylums seekers as *illegal immigrants* and *boat people*. Therefore the informants believe that in order to establish the legitimacy of asylum seekers and the protection of Australia from possible threats, fairness is applied accordingly to asylum seekers such as being detained until their application is processed.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of Anglo-Australian's attitudes towards asylum seekers and their perceptions of fairness, with a focus on Australian egalitarianism. The qualitative nature of the study enabled the exploration of the informants' definitions of asylums seekers as well as their attitudes towards them. Most informants' definition of asylum seekers, differed from that of the UNHCR (n.d.), as they mainly referred to asylum seekers as *boat people* or *illegal immigrants*. Generally, informants harboured negative attitudes towards asylum seekers, as they are perceived as potential threats to Australian society. This predicates the exclusion of asylum seekers from the Australian society and consequently Australian egalitarianism.

Varying definitions between *genuine asylum seekers*, *boat people* and *illegal immigrants* were reflected in the informants' understanding of asylum seekers; the latter two appeared to guide this group of informants' attitudes towards asylum seekers. The informants' definitions of asylum seekers as being *boat people/illegal immigrants* are inconsistent with definitions such as *queue jumpers* as identified by previous Australian research (Pedersen, Attwell et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke et al., 2005) which suggest a link between false beliefs and negative attitudes. Most informants held concerns that asylum seekers coming

to Australia are not *genuine asylum seekers* but rather masquerading as such because ordinarily they may not qualify to enter Australia as immigrants.

Discursive analysis suggests that both the media and Australian political figures refer to asylum seekers in a negative manner using terms such as *illegal immigrants* (Klocker & Dunn, 2003; O'Doherty & Lecouter, 2007; Saxton, 2003). The Australian community appears to use these stereotypes interchangeably when referring to asylum seekers (Mummery & Rodan, 2007; O'Doherty & Lecouter). As negative stereotypes are related to prejudicial attitudes towards the out-group by the in-group, research suggests that the media's use of negative categorisations of asylum seekers appears to be instilling a sense of community amongst Australians (Mummery & Rodan; Pedersen et al., 2006; Schweitzer et al., 2005). Furthermore, Every and Augoustinos (2008) argued that discourses of national security have been used to make the arrival of asylum seekers appear as a threat to national security and identity. Research suggests that the Federal Government's exclusive policies towards asylum seekers are also perceived by the larger community, as exclusionary practices to prevent asylum seekers from entering Australia (Every & Augoustinos). Most of the informants appeared to form their evaluations of asylum seekers primarily on information acquired from the media. This may be attributable to the fact that none of them have had personal contact with asylum seekers. Consequently, most informants hold negative attitudes towards asylum seekers. This may be due to the negative stereotypes often used by the media and political figures when referring to asylum seekers.

Reports from the media and political figures are considered to be possible external sources of information which may have influenced informants' responses throughout this study. During the interview stage of this study, there were ongoing

reports of asylum seekers arriving in Australia. In addition, there were regular reports on the investigation of an earlier incident where an explosion had occurred on a boat; killing up to five asylum seekers and injuring many more. The media reports made allegations that in order for the boat to not be turned away from Australia, asylum seekers had deliberately caused the explosion (Uhlmann, 2009). It is probable that media coverage may have heightened informants' attitudes towards asylum seekers during the interview process. Such external sources of information have contributed to a limitation of this study in that informants' responses may not have been based on their own experiences, but heavily influenced by outside sources. Conversely, these circumstances add to the external validity of the study as it is contextual within the Australian society.

Consistent with previous research, most informants of this study discussed concerns of perceived competition (Esses et al., 1998) and threat (Schweitzer et al., 2005) related to their attitudes towards other social groups. One such concern focused on the principles of the Instrumental Model of Group Conflict. This model asserts that higher levels of perceived competition of resources amongst social groups result in more negative attitudes towards the presence of other groups (Esses et al.). These concerns were focused on group distinction between Anglo-Australians (i.e., us) and asylum seekers (i.e., them). This was reflected by informants' discussions that as resources are limited, they should be used for the sustainability of Australians.

When exploring perceptions of threat with informants, two components of ITT were raised. Realistic threat within this group of informants was identified as a threat to national security, highlighted by the perception that asylum seekers may be terrorists. Symbolic threats were identified as intergroup differences in

values, beliefs and attitudes between Australians and asylum seekers. Both perceptions of realistic and symbolic threats appeared to be due to informants' belief that most asylum seekers originate from Middle Eastern countries. Informants' negative attitudes towards asylum seekers appeared to be guided by their perceptions that asylum seekers are possibly Muslim terrorists because of their Middle Eastern origins. The informants' negative attitudes related to perceptions of asylum seekers place of origin as being from the Middle East are consistent with Dunn et al.'s (2004) findings which demonstrated that Australians have a high level of intolerance towards Muslim and Arab-Australians.

The findings from this study are consistent with the findings of Schweitzer et al. (2005) which demonstrated that realistic and symbolic threat are related to negative attitudes towards refugees. However, the present study varies from that of Schweitzer et al. in that informants' perceptions of realistic threat are discussed as physical threats such as disruption to national security arising from possible terrorist attacks. Whereas participants employed in the study of Schweitzer et al. identified realistic threats as perceived threats to the availability of future jobs. In this present study, negative attitudes towards asylum seekers were more pertinent among the older informants, whilst the younger informants were primarily concerned with perceptions of realistic threat. The demographic information was not consistent with previous studies of attitudes towards asylum seekers. Nonetheless, informants generally endorsed negative attitudes towards asylum seekers as a result of perception of competition and threats.

Future research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the perception of competition/attitude relationship and threat/attitude relationship among Anglo-Australians. In addition, such research should be replicated to

investigate which asylum seeker group elicits higher negative attitudes from the community. Such knowledge could inform government policy regarding the specific general community concerns about different cultural social groups. Future strategies may be implemented that aim to decrease perceptions of threat and increase positive attitudes towards asylum seekers.

Finally, upon exploring informants' attitudes of fairness and egalitarianism towards asylum seekers, it appears that these concepts are related to in-group favouritism. Informants discussed fairness towards asylum seekers in the context of them being *boat people* and *illegal immigrants* and not *genuine asylum seekers*. The manner in which asylum seekers are perceived to arrive in Australia has endorsed informants' beliefs of underlying threats to Australian values. Therefore threats to Australian values are perceived as a disruption to the unified meanings of national identity (Hage, 1998; Schweitzer et al., 2005; Tascon, 2002). The literature has indicated that constructions of Australian identity is founded on racial exclusion and protection of Australian *whiteness* (Every & Augoustinos, 2008; Tascon), not only of skin colour per se, but also of culture and religion (Hage; Thompson, 1994). Another limitation of this study is that informants were not asked to define their understanding of being Australian. It is suggested that future research explores this concept further as being Australian may have differing definitions at an individual level.

Some informants discussed the presence of prejudice among the Australian community particularly towards people who are visibly different. Upon several counts, asylum seekers are perceived as being visibly different by most Australians. Asylum seekers differences of colour, culture, religion and values are perceived as being incompatible with being Australian, this difference elicits anti-

asylum seeker attitudes (Every & Augoustinos, 2008; Schweitzer et al., 2005). Most informants expressed the view that Australian egalitarianism and *fair go* is for Australians. Consequently as asylum seekers are not perceived to be members of the Australian community, they do not qualify for a *fair go*. Therefore Australian egalitarianism is seemingly reconstructed to protect the status position of Anglo-Australian within the society (Every & Augoustinos; Gelber, 2003; Louis et al., 2006; Thompson, 1994). Interestingly, Australian values are endorsed in the Australian Values Statement (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008b) which all persons of 18 years of age and over applying for an Australian visa are required to sign. Among the values listed is “a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need ...” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship). Nevertheless most informants of this study appear to make in-group identification when discussing egalitarianism towards asylum seekers. Only one informant of this study held a positive attitude towards asylum seekers stating that they were not being treated fairly.

A final limitation of this study relates to the method of informant recruitment. All twelve informants resided within Perth northern suburbs, Western Australia. Census statistics revealed that a high proportion of English migrants reside in this particular area (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Consequently residents of this area may be exposed to high levels of English influence. Future research should attempt to recruit Anglo-Australians from other geographical areas of the community as well as rural areas in order to explore their attitudes towards asylum seekers.

News of asylum seekers is occurring daily as more boats are arriving on Australia's shores and detention centres are becoming overcrowded. Current



Australian Government policies and media categorisations seemingly focus on exclusion practices of asylum seekers. As discussed, fairness perceptions are mediated by intergroup processes (Louis et al., 2006). More specifically Australian egalitarianism is mediated by in-group identification and exclusion of out-groups (e.g., asylum seekers). Exclusionary practices, can aid the facilitation to legitimise specific social actions towards asylum seekers (Berry, 2006). In doing so, Australians would be perpetuating the perceived irreconcilable distances between the two groups, and reducing opportunities for asylum seekers to integrate into society (Berry). Gelber (2003) proposes Australia should be developing policies which offer immediate and appropriate assistance to asylum seekers. This would endorse Australian egalitarianism which at face value suggests *fair go* for all (Thompson, 1994). It appears that in the Australian context, word-use associating accurate meaning is not consistent with policy, values and beliefs.

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Appendix A

*Recruitment Flyer*

Australians'  
*Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers*



**Are you Australian born?**

**Are you at least 25 years old?**

**If you answered YES to both the above questions, I  
would like to interview YOU!**

As part of the requirements of my Bachelor of Arts Psychology Honours degree at ECU, I am researching how people feel about asylum seekers. I would like to hear about your thoughts and feelings towards asylum seekers and if you feel they are getting an *Aussie fair go!*

If you are interested in participating in this study, or if you require any further information, you can contact Antonietta on [REDACTED] or [amatrone@student.ecu.edu.au](mailto:amatrone@student.ecu.edu.au)

Appendix B

*Information Letter to Participants*

Australians' Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers


My name is Antonietta Matrone and I am currently studying Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours at Edith Cowan University. As part of the requirements for my degree, I am researching the attitudes that Australians have towards asylum seekers and how these attitudes reflect the *Aussie fair go* values. The Human Research Ethics Committee of the university has consented to this project.

I would like to interview individuals who are born in Australia and who are at least 25 years of age. I am interested in finding out what you think and feel about asylum seekers and do you think they are getting an *Aussie fair go*. There are no right or wrong answers; I am just interested in finding out your thoughts on the matter. There will be no rewards for participating in this study; however you might enjoy the experience of the interview and also discover more about yourself as you share your thoughts with me.

The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes and it will be audiotaped. The interview will be held at a mutually convenient place sometime between April to June. Participation is voluntary and you can choose not to answer a question or withdraw from the study at any time. If you do choose to partake, your participation will be confidential. I will personally transcribe the interview, and assure you that your name will not be used and you will not be identifiable.

Although it is envisaged that being interviewed will not be stressful, if at any time you feel distressed by discussing this topic with me, I will provide you with a list of counselling services and other contact details that are available to offer you assistance. If you have any questions regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below or my supervisor, Dr Justine Dandy on 6304 5105 (School of Psychology). If you have any concerns about the research project and would like to speak to an independent person, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer, Ms Kim Gaskins at ECU 100 Joondalup Drive, JOONDALUP WA 6027 or by phone 6304 2170 or email [research.ethics@ecu.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@ecu.edu.au).

If you are interested in participating in this research, or would like further information, please contact me on:

 or [amatrone@student.com.au](mailto:amatrone@student.com.au)

Thanking you for your time.

Kind regards

Antonietta Matrone

Appendix C

*Participant Consent Form*

Consent Form

Australian's Attitudes Towards Asylum Seekers: A Qualitative Study

I, \_\_\_\_\_, declare that:

(Please tick boxes):

- ☐ I have read and understood the information sheet provided
- ☐ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions
- ☐ I am aware that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team (on the details provided on the information sheet)
- ☐ I understand that participation in the research project will involve audio-tape recording of the interview
- ☐ I understand that the information provided will be kept confidential, and that I will not be identifiable
- ☐ I consent to my data being presented in a thesis, and possibly being published, as long as I am not identifiable
- ☐ I understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from further participation at any time
- ☐ I understand that this research project has gained ethics clearance from the ECU Human Research Ethics Committee
- ☐ I am agree to participate in this study

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Antonietta Matrone (Primary Researcher): \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix D

*Demographics Information*

Gender –

Age –

Highest Level of Education attained –

Occupation –

Place of Birth –

Mother's Place of Birth –

Father's Place of Birth –

How would you describe your cultural background?

## Appendix E

### *In-Depth Interview Schedule*

Before we begin I would like to thank you for your time and decision to participate in my research. I would like to advise you that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and that you can withdraw at any time. – I am interested in hearing your views on asylum seekers and if you think they are getting an *Aussie fair go*!

OK, let's begin with a few background questions.

1. What do you think is meant by the term asylum seeker?
  - a) Can you please explain?
2. What are your views about asylum seekers coming to Australia?
  - a) Why / Why not?
3. What do you know about how asylum seekers are treated on arrival in Australia?
  - a) If participant does not know:
 

*People who arrive without appropriate documentation seeking asylum are usually apprehended and transferred to detention centres and are mandatorily detained until their applications for asylum have been decided.*
4. How fair do you think this treatment is?
  - a) Why / Why not?
5. When you hear the term 'fairness' what words come to mind?
6. What do you think of asylum seekers compared to offshore applicants?
  - a) Can you explain please?
7. Do you think fairness is important to Australians and to you?
  - a) Why / Why not?
8. Do you think it fits with Australian ideas of fair go?
  - a) How/ how not?

Again thank you very much for your time and sharing your thoughts with me. You've given me lots of interesting ideas to think about. I don't have any other questions. Is there anything else you would like to add or talk about?



Appendix F

*Counselling Services Contact Details*

Edith Cowan University Psychological Services Centre	9301 0011
Lifeline	13 11 14
Mental Health Direct	1800 220 400

## Appendix G

*Transcription Symbols*

The transcription notation system employed for data segments is an adaptation of Gail Jefferson's work (see Atkinson & Heritage (Eds.), 1984, pp.ix-xvi; Beach (Ed.), 1989, pp.89-90). The symbols may be described as follows:

:	<u>Colon(s)</u> : Extended or stretched sound, syllable, or word.
<u>          </u>	<u>Underlining</u> : Vocalic emphasis.
(.)	<u>Micropause</u> : Brief pause of less than (0.2).
(1.2)	<u>Timed Pause</u> : Intervals occurring within and between same or different speaker's utterance.
(( ))	<u>Double Parentheses</u> : Scenic details.
( )	<u>Single Parentheses</u> : Transcriptionist doubt.
.	<u>Period</u> : Falling vocal pitch.
?	<u>Question Marks</u> : Rising vocal pitch.
↑ ↓	<u>Arrows</u> : Pitch resets; marked rising and falling shifts in intonation.
° °	<u>Degree Signs</u> : A passage of talk noticeably softer than surrounding talk.
=	<u>Equal Signs</u> : Latching of contiguous utterances, with no interval or overlap.
[ ]	<u>Brackets</u> : Speech overlap.
[ [	<u>Double Brackets</u> : Simultaneous speech orientations to prior turn.
!	<u>Exclamation Points</u> : Animated speech tone.
-	<u>Hyphens</u> : Halting, abrupt cut off of sound or word.
> <	<u>Less Than/Greater Than Signs</u> : Portions of an utterance delivered at a pace noticeably quicker than surrounding talk.
OKAY	<u>CAPS</u> : Extreme loudness compared with surrounding talk.
hhh	<u>.hhh H's</u> : Audible outbreaths, possibly laughter. The more h's, the longer the aspiration. Aspirations with periods indicate audible inbreaths (e.g., .hhh). H's within (e.g., ye(hh)s) parentheses mark within-speech aspirations, possible laughter.
pt	<u>Lip Smack</u> : Often preceding an inbreath.
hah	<u>Laugh Syllable</u> : Relative closed or open position of laughter
heh	
hoh	
\$	<u>Smile Voice</u> : Laughing/chuckling talk between markers.