

Hosting asylum seekers and attitudes toward cultural diversity in Australia

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In 2012, the Australian government in office introduced a novel scheme of housing asylum seekers as guests of Australians in the community. A number of Australians participated in the scheme and volunteered as hosts. This study compared those who volunteered to assist asylum seekers with general members of the community to explore the impact attitudes towards cultural diversity and demographic factors had upon willingness to support asylum seekers. Further, the two groups were combined to examine the factors that can contribute to positive attitudes to diversity in society in general. Participants (N = 142; aged from 24-79 years) completed online questionnaires assessing demographic variables, attitudes towards cultural diversity and acculturation. Various analysis of variance procedures, Chi-squared tests and correlations were conducted. Group comparisons indicated that volunteers' attitudes did not impact on willingness to support asylum seekers. However, some demographic differences between groups emerged. Volunteers were more likely to be professionals with stable jobs, ethnically diverse and well-travelled individuals. Analyses on the combined groups indicated age, education, and not having a strong religious affiliation enhanced Australians' positive attitudes to cultural diversity. The findings have implications for promoting positive attitudes to diversity in individuals, organisations and communities. Potential opportunities for professionals and policy-makers to promote support for cultural diversity in the community are discussed.

Cultural diversity is a feature of Australian society (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012), and can bring many benefits, including exposure to new ideas, experiences and economic opportunities (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). However, there are also challenges and negative attitudes and discrimination towards minority groups in Australia have gone hand in hand with the country's long history of immigration (Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, & Ryan, 2005). Schweitzer et al. investigated attitudes held by Australians towards cultural diversity and acculturation, and whether these attitudes impacted upon people's willingness to act in support of asylum seekers. Research has found low levels of prejudice in members of a majority group correspond to greater support for policies designed to assist minority groups (Turoy-Smith, Kane, & Pedersen, 2013). For the present study, willingness to assist was demonstrated through volunteering to participate in the Community Placement Network (CPN), a homestay program to help

asylum seekers settle into the community.
Attitudes toward Cultural Diversity in Australia

Research into attitudes to cultural diversity in Australia has produced varied findings. Dandy and Pe-Pua (2010) found that although Australians in general favour diversity, they had concerns about its perceived negative consequences. Others have proposed Australia is currently retreating from embracing cultural diversity (Pedersen, Fozdar, & Kenny, 2012) and many Australians are prejudiced towards minority groups (Schweitzer et al., 2005; Stewart, Pedersen, & Paradies, 2014). These inconsistencies in attitudes towards cultural diversity may be a result of the political and economic climate as official support for multicultural policies has varied in Australia (Colic-Peisker, 2011) Further, world events such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States and the 2002 Bali bombing can also influence attitudes (Stewart et al., 2014; Suhnan, Pedersen, & Paradies, 2012). People become less tolerant to cultural

diversity when a threat to security or to economic wellbeing is perceived, (Schweitzer et al. 2005). Bulbeck (2004) reported that although cultural diversity is favoured, the idea of sharing resources is not popular. Moreover, the cultural origin of migrants can also contribute to the attitudes of the Australians toward diversity. Currently, attitudes towards asylum seekers, often from the Middle East or Afghanistan (Suhnan et al., 2012), are particularly negative (Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005; Pedersen, Watt, & Hansen, 2006; Schweitzer et al., 2005; Stewart et al, 2014). This is despite the fact that asylum seekers make up only a small proportion of the total number of migrants Australia receives each year. In the period 2011-2012, from a total of 184,998 places made available through Australia's migration program, humanitarian visas comprised just 13,759, compared to 125,755 skilled migration places (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2014). Pedersen, et al. (2006) argue that false beliefs held by Australians that asylum seekers are queue jumpers, illegal, and not genuine refugees can contribute to the prejudice faced by asylum seekers in Australia. Further, media coverage and governmental harsh policies of turning the boats and smashing the people smugglers' business have aggravated public fears and biases towards asylum seekers (Suhnan et al., 2012; Stewart et al., 2014) .

Asylum Seekers in Australia

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, n.d.) an asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee, but whose claim to international protection has not yet been evaluated by the country in which they are seeking protection. While Australian law classifies those asylum seekers who arrive in Australia as 'unlawful non-citizens', their right to seek asylum here is recognised under international law, along with their right not to be penalised due to their means of entry to the country (Phillips, 2011).

There is much public debate in Australia about how the government should process the refugee status of asylum seekers to this country, particularly those who arrive by boat, and recent governments have developed

policies designed to deter maritime arrivals (Pedersen et al., 2005). By the end of the 1990s, when a new wave of asylum seekers began arriving by boat from countries like Afghanistan, Iraq and Sri Lanka, asylum seekers were detained in remote locations, for up to seven years at a time, without having their applications processed (Pedersen et al., 2006). Other Australian government initiatives to deter asylum seekers arriving by boat include offshore processing and the Regional Resettlement Arrangement with Papua New Guinea, whereby asylum seekers to Australia are transferred to Papua New Guinea with no hope of resettlement in Australia (UNHCR, 2013).

Community Placement Network (CPN)

The UNHCR has expressed concerns over the physical and psychological wellbeing of asylum seekers held under such arrangements. Therefore, they welcomed an initiative in 2012 by the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, in collaboration with humanitarian and settlement organisations, to form the CPN. The CPN aimed to move eligible asylum seekers on bridging visas from detention centres into the community using a home-stay program. Community volunteers were sought to host two or more asylum seekers in their homes for a six-week period. Volunteers received training and briefing about their guests from the settlement organisation. Within two months of the program being announced, over 1,400 volunteers from the community had applied to host asylum seekers (Bowles, 2012), and more than 4,000 people volunteered over the course of the program (Bycroft, 2013). Even though controversies around the management of asylum seekers led to the suspension of the scheme in 2013, it was still interesting to examine the factors associated with the act of helping this population. The establishment of the CPN offered a new opportunity to investigate why, in an era when negativity towards asylum seekers appears to prevail in at least some parts of the community, other Australians are willing to take action to support asylum seekers. It is unclear how the attitudes towards cultural diversity affect the

willingness to take action with respect to refugees in Australia (Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). Turoy-Smith et al. in their Perth-based study found reduction in prejudice towards refugees led to increased support for affirmative action and equal opportunity policies, as well as increased willingness to act. However, Turoy-Smith et al. measured self-reported willingness to act, and the attitudes of those who have taken action by volunteering to host asylum seekers have not been examined. It was of interest to investigate if attitudes toward diversity and willingness to support asylum seekers were influenced by acculturation preferences and demographic factors.

Demographic Variables Associated with Attitudes to Cultural Diversity

Previous research in Australia has found education, age, gender, employment status, and membership of the dominant Anglo Australian cultural group to be associated with attitudes towards cultural diversity in general (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). Education and gender have also been associated with attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers (Schweitzer et al., 2005). Dandy and Pe-Pua found women, who generally demonstrate lower levels of social dominance, to have more positive attitudes toward immigration and cultural diversity. Schweitzer et al. found that men, compared with women, reported a higher level of prejudice towards refugees because they are more likely to perceive them as economically or politically threatening. Income has an impact on attitudes toward diversity and immigration. In Europe, people with higher income were less likely to see migrants as competing for their jobs, compared to lower wage workers (Jackson, Brown, Brown & Marks, 2001). However, a recent study on attitudes to immigration and multiculturalism in New Zealand found no effect for income (Ward & Masgoret, 2008), so it would be useful to investigate whether Australia more closely matches New Zealand or Europe in this regard.

Further, some preliminary research exploring the link between religious beliefs and tolerance for cultural diversity has revealed mixed outcomes. Hunsberger and

Jackson (2005) found a positive relationship between religiousness and prejudice, which seems to run counter to the principles of religions that emphasise benevolence. However, these researchers suggest that intergroup dynamics can exacerbate prejudice even for people who may individually value compassion and tolerance. People who most strongly identify with their religious group may be more likely to hold unfavourable attitudes towards outgroup members in order to enhance esteem (Hunsberger & Jackson). Recent research from multicultural societies indicate that people from minority groups tend to support other ethnically diverse groups more effectively as at times they are more aware of their issues and can understand them better than the host society (Lam, Tracz, & Lucey, 2013; Warburton & McLaughlin, 2007). Finally, globalisation and increased travel are now emerging as factors that promote awareness and acceptance of diverse cultures (Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2002).

Acculturation

Different cultural groups residing in Australia interact and influence each other. When different cultural groups come into contact with each other, a process of acculturation is said to occur. Acculturation is a multidimensional concept and involves cultural and psychological changes at both the group and individual level and at the minority and majority level (Berry, 2003; 2005; Chirkov, 2009; Hernandez, 2009; Ward, 2008). According to Berry (2005), acculturating groups or individuals can differ along two dimensions - attitude towards *maintenance* of their original culture, and attitude towards *contact* with the new (Zagefka & Brown, 2002). Four acculturation strategies emerge, according to whether a positive or negative orientation is held towards these dimensions of maintenance and contact (Berry, 2001). *Integration* occurs when the desire to maintain one's original culture is high, combined with a high desire for contact with other groups. *Assimilation* refers to a low desire for maintenance,

combined with a high desire for contact. *Separation* is manifested by a high desire for maintenance, along with a low desire for contact, and *marginalisation* results from a low desire for either maintenance or contact (Berry, 2001; Hernandez, 2009; Zagefka & Brown, 2002). Although minority groups undergo most of the adaptation, the changes and attitudes of the majority are also very important in the settlement of the newly arrived and inter-group relations (Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt, 2009; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997).

In order to understand the complex acculturation process, researchers have incorporated the preferred acculturation strategies of the host society as well as the migrants (Bourhis et al, 1997; Rohman, Florack, & Piontkowski, 2006). According to these researchers it is important to consider how the preferred strategies of host country and minority groups can interact. A fit of acculturation preferences, where both host and minority groups agree on either integration or assimilation, can lead to consensual outcomes resulting in less intergroup tension and better communication between groups (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003). A lack of fit of acculturation preferences, where host and the minority groups disagree, with one preferring integration while the other desires separation, can result in conflict and poor intergroup relations (Zagefka & Brown, 2002).

Zagefka and Brown (2002) suggest that when predicting acculturation outcomes, the subjective perception of either the host society or minority group about the preferred acculturation strategy of the other group may be of more utility than an objective measure of the other group's acculturation preferences. For example, while minority groups may in fact favour integration, if the host society perceives the minority group to desire separation, this perception, although incorrect, will influence how the host society views the acculturation process (Zagefka & Brown). To investigate this, Zagefka and Brown measured host society and minority group acculturation preferences among German school students, as well as the perceptions each group held about the acculturation preferences of the other.

They found that not only do the actual acculturation strategies of each group interact, but each group's perception of the strategy favoured by the other influences intergroup relations.

Further, research based on British nationals found that host society' members tend to support cultural diversity when they perceive a minority group as desiring contact with the host society and wanting to adopt the host society culture (Tip, Zagefka, Gonzalez, Brown, Cinnirella, & Na, 2012). The perception that minority group members wished to maintain contact with their original culture was associated with less support for cultural diversity and considered a threat by the host society. Tip et al. noted that this tendency of the host society seems to conflict with a basic concept of multiculturalism, according to which minority groups maintain the right to express their cultural identity. Zagefka and Brown (2002) and Tip et al. analysed the different dimensions of acculturation by examining previously overlooked host society preferences and perceptions. Nevertheless, being based on students, these studies have limited generalisability (Pedersen et al., 2005; Schweitzer et al, 2005). Therefore, there is a need to study general members of the community from a range of demographic backgrounds and those who have volunteered to host minority group members in their own homes. While a number of Australian studies have looked at acculturation challenges of refugees, migrants and international students (Lu et al., 2011; Milner & Khawaja, 2010; Smith & Khawaja, 2011), the acculturation attitudes and preferences of members of the host society have not been extensively researched. It is unclear what type of attitudes and factors influence a person to support asylum seekers. An understanding of mainstream Australians' attitudes towards cultural diversity and acculturation, and factors influencing their willingness to act in support of minority groups, may assist policy-makers, organisations and professionals to develop strategies for enhancing the relationships among diverse groups in Australia.

Aims and Hypotheses

The present study is important as it investigated the mainstream Australian attitudes toward cultural diversity by recruiting general members of the community and those who volunteered to host asylum seekers. The study had two aims. The first goal was to compare those who volunteered (CPN volunteers) to host an asylum seeker, with general members of the Australian community, to investigate possible links between attitudinal and demographic factors and willingness to take action in support of asylum seekers. It was hypothesised that the CPN volunteers and community members would be differentiated by age, education, gender, group status, income, religion, and country of birth, as these demographic features are associated with attitudes to diversity and immigration. Due to the exploratory nature of the study the direction is not postulated. Further, it was hypothesised that CPN volunteers, compared with community members would have a higher level of support for cultural diversity, and would favour both cultural maintenance and cultural contact.

The second aim of the study was to explore broadly the attitudes of mainstream Australians toward cultural diversity and acculturation to gain insights into the acculturation preferences and perceptions of Australians. This information is theoretically important in all multidimensional models of acculturation, and also important in understanding the stressors associated with acculturation for minority groups. It was hypothesised that demographic variables of age, education, gender, group status, income, and religion would be associated with attitude to cultural diversity and acculturation preferences for maintenance and contact. Secondly, in line with multidimensional models of acculturation, it was predicted that perceived acculturation preferences of contact and adoption would be positively associated with support for cultural diversity, while the perceived acculturation preference of maintenance would be negatively associated with support for cultural diversity.

Method

Participants

A total of 142 participants were recruited for this study, 99 women and 43 men. The age range of participants was from 24 to 79, with an average age of 48.23 years ($SD = 12.62$). Participants were from two groups - members of the CPN ($N = 72$) and a community sample ($N = 70$). Out of the CPN group, 42 had hosted asylum seekers, while the rest were waiting for guests to be allocated to them. No-one from the community sample had registered for this scheme. CPN members were recruited via email through one of the organisations associated in setting up the CPN, while community members were recruited via a snowballing technique. Email invitations were sent to staff and students within QUT's School of Psychology and Counselling. Recipients of the email invitation were requested to forward the recruitment email and survey link on to a further two contacts.

Measures

A demographic form gathered data on age, gender, country of birth, education, religion, ethnicity, overseas travel, income, and employment status. The Preferred Acculturation Strategy Scale measures acculturation. The Perceived Acculturation Preference Scale measures perceived acculturation preferences and the Multicultural Ideology Scale measures attitudes toward cultural diversity.

Preferred Acculturation Strategy Scale (Zagefka & Brown, 2002). This five-item scale measures participants' desire for each of the dimensions of acculturation, cultural maintenance, and cultural contact. This scale was adapted from Zagefka and Brown's (2002) scale administered to German host society members, for host society members in Australia by replacing the words Germany or German with Australia and Australian. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale consists of two subscales: Acculturation preference- maintenance and acculturation preference - contact. Three items measure the respondent's attitude towards cultural maintenance ("I think it is

important that migrants to Australia maintain their own culture"). A higher score on this subscale indicates more support for immigrants to maintain contact with their original culture. Zagefka and Brown found high internal validity ($\alpha = .80$) for this dimension. Two items measure the respondent's attitude towards contact ("I think it is important that migrants have Australian friends"). A higher score on this subscale indicates support for immigrants to have contact with mainstream Australians. The internal reliability for this dimension was reported as high ($\alpha = .88$; Zagefka & Brown).

Perceived Acculturation Preference Scale (Tip et al. 2012). This eight-item scale measures how British dominant society perceived the acculturation preferences of Pakistani minority group members. This scale was adapted for the dominant society in Australia, by replacing references to Britain or British with the words Australia or Australian. It measures the perceptions Australians hold about the acculturation strategies preferred by minority group members. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). This scale contains three subscales. The first three-item subscale 'Perceived Maintenance Preference', measures the perception of the minority group's desire for cultural maintenance ("I believe migrants to Australia want to maintain their own religion, language and clothing"), with an internal reliability of $\alpha = .83$ (Tip et al.). The second three-item subscale 'Perceived Adoption Preference', measures the perception of the minority group's adoption of Australian culture such as ("I believe migrants to Australia want to adapt to Australian religion, language and clothing"). For this subscale, $\alpha = .69$. The final two-item subscale 'Perceived Contact Preference', measured the perception of the minority group's attitude towards contact with $\alpha = .90$ ("I believe migrants to Australia find it important to have Australian friends").

The Multicultural Ideology Scale (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Dandy & Pe-Pua 2010). This ten-item scale measures people's support for a culturally diverse society. The scale is an Australian adaptation of the original Canadian

Multicultural Ideology Scale (Berry and Kalin, cited in Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2003). The items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Five items are measured positively (Migrants should be supported in their attempts to preserve their own cultural heritage in Australia), while the other 5 items are worded in a negative direction (It is best for Australia if people forget their different cultural backgrounds as soon as possible). Dandy and Pe-Pua found high internal reliability for the scale, with $\alpha = .83$. A higher score indicates a more positive attitude towards diversity.

Procedure

Ethical clearance for this project was obtained from the Queensland University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number 1200000646). Participants 18 years or above with Australian citizenship or permanent residency were eligible for the study. Emails with information about the study and a link for an online survey were used to recruit participants. An agency responsible for arranging the home stay of the asylum seekers was approached and they agreed to forward recruitment emails to their members who had volunteered to host an asylum seeker. A snowballing technique was used to recruit participants for the community sample. Psychology students at a university were asked to send the invitation email to at least two of their friends and acquaintances who met the eligibility criteria. Data collection was carried out over a four-month period between December 2012 and March 2013. As the total number of people who were invited to participate in the study was not known, a response rate could not be calculated.

Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and responses would be anonymous. Completion and submission of the online survey was regarded as the participant's consent. Participants were also informed that once the questionnaire was submitted, it was no longer possible to withdraw from the study, as identifying information was not collected to

maintain confidentiality. Participants were provided with information on how to access support in the event that they experienced distress or discomfort as a result of completing the questionnaire.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Data were screened for data entry errors and missing values. On the demographic form, data were missing for 7 respondents on the item 'income'. No pattern across the groups was apparent in these responses, so the respondents were excluded for that comparison. A minimal amount of missing data existed for responses to scales. The missing data occurred randomly across the groups and were replaced with the group mean for that variable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

The data were checked for assumptions of normality. Many of the distributions were negatively skewed, with significant results found on the Shapiro-Wilks test of univariate normality. These results were not considered problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the non-normality was due to skewness, which tended to occur in the same direction in each case (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Secondly, Tabachnick and Fidell suggest that multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests are robust to violations of normality as long as there are at least 20 degrees of freedom for error in a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), and as no cell in the following analyses has a sample size of less than 20, this criterion was met. When univariate outliers were found, it was determined that they were drawn from the population in question and not the result of data entry errors.

One extreme multivariate outlier was found and excluded from the analyses. Several less extreme multivariate outliers were found, but were retained, as according to measures of Cook's Distance, they were not influential (Allen & Bennet, 2012). No multicollinearity, and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices were met, unless otherwise discussed in the individual analyses. Unless otherwise mentioned, an alpha level of .05 was used throughout.

Reliability Analyses of Scales

Internal consistency was measured using

Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's alpha for Acculturation Preferences - Maintenance, Acculturation Preferences - Contact, Perceived Maintenance Preference, Perceived Adoption Preference, Perceived Contact Preferences and Multicultural Ideology Scale were .84, .84, .85, .68, .84 and .84 respectively.

Analysis of Intergroup Differences

Demographic variables. The first stage of statistical analysis involved investigating whether there were any differences between the groups (CPN volunteers and community sample). ANOVAs and Pearson's chi-squared tests of contingencies were conducted to look for differences between the groups based on demographic factors. The descriptive statistics for gender, age, income, occupation, education level, religious belief, country of birth and cultural group are presented in Table 1. The Pearson's chi-square test for occupation was statistically significant, with the CPN and community groups differing by profession, although the effect size was small, ($\chi^2(1, n = 142) = 7.45, p = .006$, Cramer's $V = .23$). The Pearson's chi-square test for country of birth was also statistically significant, although again the effect size was small, ($\chi^2(1, n = 142) = 3.86, p = .049$, Cramer's $V = .17$). There were no other statistically significant results.

In addition to the above demographic variables, participants were also asked about overseas travel during the last five years. CPN volunteers (90.3%) were more likely to have travelled than community members (71.4%). The Pearson's chi-square test for overseas travel was statistically significant, with a small effect size. ($\chi^2(1, n = 142) = 8.19, p = .004$, Cramer's $V = .24$).

Attitudes to diversity and acculturation preference.

Overall, scores on the attitudinal scales were compared between groups and were in the upper ranges for each scale, suggesting respondents were generally in favour of multicultural ideology, cultural maintenance and cultural contact. High scores for both cultural maintenance and cultural contact correspond to support for an integration strategy. Table 2 presents the

Table 1
Demographic Variables by Group Membership

Demographic Variable	Community Sample	Community Placement Network
Gender (%)		
Female	65.7	73.6
Country of Birth (%)*		
Australian Born	80	65.3
Overseas Born	20	34.7
Highest Level Education Completed (%)		
Year 12 or below	11.4	11.1
Technical Diploma/TAFE	22.9	15.3
Bachelors	48.6	41.7
Master degree or higher	17.1	31.9
Age in years: Mean (SD)	46.94(13.3)	49.47(12.54)
Cultural group (%)		
Dominant	92.6	86.1
Non-dominant	7.4	13.9
Religion (%)		
Religion	57.1	51.4
No Religion	42.9	48.6
Occupation (%)*		
Professional	68.6	87.5
Non-Professional	31.4	12.5
Household income (%)		
Under \$35,000	20.6	18.6
\$35,000 to under \$50,000	14.7	7.1
\$50,000 to under \$75,000	14.7	18.6
\$75,000 to under \$100,000	13.2	15.7
\$100,000 or above	36.8	40

Note. * Chi –square tests were significant for these variables.

means and standard deviations for each group. A MANOVA, with three dependent variables, indicated support for cultural diversity as measured by score on the Multicultural Ideology Scale, and scores for subscales of Preferred Acculturation Strategy Scale

(Acculturation Preference - Maintenance and Acculturation Preference – Contact). The independent variable was group membership. No significant difference between groups was found, $F(3,137) = 1.16, p = .328$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for to Multicultural Ideology, Cultural Maintenance and Cultural Contact by Group Membership

Variable	Sample	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Multicultural Ideology	Community	51.81	1.19
	CPN	53.78	0.92
Acculturation Preference -			
Maintenance	Community	10.69	0.31
	CPN	11.03	0.29
Acculturation Preference -			
Contact	Community	8.27	0.18
	CPN	8.54	0.19

Perceived acculturation preference. A MANOVA was conducted with group membership as the independent variable, and scores for the subscales of Perceived Acculturation Preference Scale (Perceived Maintenance Preference, Perceived Contact Preference and Perceived Adoption Preference) as dependent variables. One influential outlier was identified and excluded from the analysis. No significant differences were found between groups, $F(3,132) = 1.12$, $p = .345$, partial $\eta^2 = .025$.

General Attitudes to Diversity

The intergroup differences between the CPN volunteers and community samples indicated that the groups were demographically very similar. Therefore, the decision was made to combine the groups in order to investigate factors influencing Australian attitudes towards diversity and acculturation.

Demographic variables. Multiple analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) were

conducted to examine the effect of gender, ethnicity, religion, education, income and employment on attitudes to diversity and acculturation preferences for maintenance and contact. Group membership (CPN volunteers or the community members) was used as a covariate throughout the following analyses to accurately assess variable effects by accounting for any variance due to group membership. MANCOVAs examined the effects of gender, ethnicity (membership of dominant versus non-dominant culture), income level and employment field upon attitudes towards multicultural diversity, and acculturation preferences were statistically non-significant.

A MANCOVA was carried out to test the effect of religious identification on multicultural ideology and acculturation preferences, and was statistically significant, $F(3,136) = 4.17$, $p = .007$, partial $\eta^2 = .084$, showing a difference in attitude related to religious identification. Analysis of the

dependent variables individually showed no significant effects of religion on individual variables of multicultural ideology, acculturation preference for contact or maintenance. Respondents who indicated they did not hold any religious beliefs reported higher scores on multicultural ideology ($M = 54.10$, $SD = 9.26$) than those respondents who held religious beliefs ($M = 49.69$, $SD = 9.93$). By contrast, participants who indicated they did hold religious beliefs reported higher scores on acculturation preference for contact ($M = 8.78$, $SD = 1.41$) than respondents who did not hold religious beliefs

($M = 8.17$, $SD = 1.54$).

The effect of level of education on multicultural ideology and acculturation preferences was also tested. The analysis showed a statistically significant difference between groups based on their education level, $F(9,408) = 2.05$, $p = .033$, partial $\eta^2 = .043$. Analysis of the dependent variables individually showed no effects of education on multicultural ideology, acculturation preference for contact or maintenance.

Correlation was used to investigate the relationship between age and multicultural ideology and acculturation preference. As the

Table 3

Relationship among Perceived Acculturation Preferences, Acculturation Preference and Multicultural Ideology

	2	3	4	5	6
1. Multicultural Ideology	-.12	.34**	.17**	.18**	-.09
2. Acculturation Preference- Contact	-	.11	.07	.25**	.08
3. Acculturation Preference- Maintenance	-	-	.16*	.19**	.31**
4. Perceived Adoption Preference	-	-	-	.44**	-.07
5. Perceived Contact Preference	-	-	-	-	.02
6. Perceived Maintenance Preference	-	-	-	-	-

* Correlation is significant at $p = .05$ (two-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at $p = .01$ (two-tailed)

assumption of normality for the data was not met, a non-parametric procedure was used and Kendall's tau-b was calculated. The results indicated a weak positive correlation between age and acculturation preference for contact, $\tau = .16$, $p = .01$, two-tailed, $N = 141$. No statistically significant relationship was found between age and multicultural ideology or preference for maintenance.

Perceived Acculturation Preferences of Others

Correlations were conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' perceptions of the acculturation preferences of others and their own acculturation preferences and attitudes to multicultural ideology. Kendall's tau-b was calculated and the results are summarised in Table 3.

As seen by the Table 3, participants' multicultural ideology, views that migrants should maintain their own original culture and a perceived preference for migrants to adopt the host society's culture and to maintain a link with them were correlated. More favourable attitudes to cultural diversity, as measured by multicultural ideology, were associated with the host society favouring maintenance of original culture in the acculturation process, along with the perception that minority groups desired contact with the host society, and were in favour of adopting host society culture.

Discussion

Australia is a culturally diverse society with migrant, refugees and asylum seekers arriving from different parts of the world. Even though Australian population favours cultural diversity, there has been a fear that it may lead to negative consequences (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). The fears and concerns have been severe toward asylum seekers, who have been arriving in the last decade (Schweitzer et al., 2005; Stewart et al., 2014). In spite of the prejudices and biases toward the asylum seekers, a number of Australians participated in a government program and hosted these individuals in their homes (Bowles, 2012; Bycroft, 2013). It was of interest to explore if these volunteers differed from the others. It was also important to explore the beliefs and ideas the general community had toward diversity. The study had a dual purpose.

Firstly, it aimed to compare those who offered themselves as volunteers with other members of the community to investigate whether demographic and attitudinal factors influenced the volunteers' willingness to support asylum seekers by hosting them in their houses. Secondly, the Australian attitudes towards diversity and acculturation were explored generally. Hypotheses were partially supported.

Intergroup Differences

Predictions regarding intergroup differences between CPN volunteers and the wider community were generally not supported. The study found no differences between the groups on age, gender, education, income, religious belief, ethnic status, or cultural group. However, some areas of difference were identified. CPN volunteers were more likely to have been born overseas. This is consistent with literature which indicates that being part of non-dominant ethnic group helps a person understand the multicultural issues of other culturally diverse individuals (Lam et al., 2013; Warburton & Laughin, 2007). Members of the CPN were more likely to have travelled overseas within the previous five years than the community sample. Overseas travel can be considered as a way of exposing people to different cultures (Oudenhoven & Ward, 2013; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and thereby effecting change in the individual's attitudes towards diversity. Although Ward et al. (2002) argue tourism is often characterised by superficial and unequal interactions, on the other hand, recreational travel is likely to involve voluntary and positive interactions. These conditions have been associated with reductions in prejudice (Pettigrew, et al., 2011). Further investigation is needed to determine the nature of overseas travel however, as this study did not distinguish between travel for recreation and for work. There may also be individual traits associated with actively seeking out overseas travel experience that could also influence how likely a person is to actively seek out the opportunity to participate in a scheme such as the CPN. One possibility could be a person's openness to experience. This study did not

look at individual traits, but given no significant differences in attitude were found between the two groups, exploring individual traits may be of benefit in understanding what causes some people to take action.

CPN volunteers were also more likely to be professionals. In the absence of a difference based on income, it may be that features of professional employment such as potentially greater job security and opportunities for advancement, can lead to reduced realistic threat, shown to increase prejudice (Schweitzer et al., 2005). People working in professional fields may feel less threatened by asylum seekers and immigrants in general as they are less likely to experience real or perceived competition for temporary or lower skilled jobs (Jackson et al., 2001).

It was predicted that CPN volunteers would have higher multicultural ideology scores, indicating more support for cultural diversity, but this was not supported by the results, as the groups did not differ significantly on this measure. The means for both groups were towards the upper end of the range, indicating relatively high support for multiculturalism, which is in line with Dandy and Pe-Pua's (2010) findings. It was also hypothesised that CPN volunteers would hold more positive views towards cultural maintenance and cultural contact. However, acculturation preferences for either maintenance of original culture or contact with new culture did not differ between the groups. The lack of difference across groups may be partly due to the high proportion of tertiary educated participants in all groups.

The group comparison results suggest that overall the groups were very similar demographically and attitudinally. From this study, it must be concluded that attitudinal differences in themselves are not enough to distinguish those people who are willing become involved in the hosting asylum seekers in their home.

General Attitudes to Diversity

Demographic variables. Partial support was found for the impact of demographic variables upon support for multiculturalism and acculturation across the pooled sample. Results indicated participants who were more

highly educated reported more favourable attitudes towards multiculturalism. This corresponds to earlier research (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010), which also found more highly educated participants held more positive views of cultural diversity. Further education may help in developing the skills to critically analyse false beliefs about minority groups such as asylum seekers. Tertiary institutions are also often culturally diverse institutions, allowing opportunities to interact with people from a range of backgrounds, thus reducing prejudice.

The second demographic variable that had an effect on attitude was religion. Respondents who indicated they did not hold religious beliefs had higher scores on the Multicultural Ideology Scale, indicating higher levels of tolerance for diversity. This corresponds with much of the psychological literature that has found links between religious belief and prejudice (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005). Various explanatory mechanisms have been employed to understand this link (Hunsberger & Jackson). People who most strongly identify with their religious group may be more likely to be prejudiced against outgroup members (Hunsberger & Jackson).

Acculturation preferences. The results revealed a positive association between scores on the Multicultural Ideology Scale and acculturation preference for maintenance of original culture. As expected, participants who were more in favour of diversity were more likely to advocate that migrants maintain their original culture when they come to Australia. This is in line with earlier acculturation research, which associates support for multiculturalism with an integration strategy for acculturation, where both groups maintain elements of their own cultures as they come into contact (Berry, 2001; Zagefka & Brown, 2002).

Predictions relating to the impact of perceived acculturation preferences on support for cultural diversity were partially supported. Participants who perceived migrants as wanting to both adopt Australian culture and have contact with Australians were more likely to support cultural diversity.

However, no significant relationship was found between perceived desire to maintain original culture and support for multiculturalism. While the results of this study suggest perceived desires of migrants for certain acculturation strategies are linked to host societies' attitudes towards diversity, they do not fully align with Tip et al.'s (2012) findings, which predict that the perceived desire of minority groups to maintain their original culture can appear threatening to a host society, and potentially lead to less tolerance for multiculturalism. Instead, the results suggest that contrary to the British sample studied by Tip et al., the Australians sampled in this study did not find cultural maintenance threatening and were more likely to consider the benefits of cultural diversity.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

There are a number of limitations to consider and results of this study should be taken with caution. Firstly, the community sample did not represent the broader Australian community accurately, as they were recruited through a snowballing method that started within a university setting, leading to a higher proportion of tertiary-educated respondents. Future research should ensure large samples with participants from all walks of life are recruited, leading to a more representative sample of Australian society. Secondly, convenience sampling was used, and participants in all groups were self-selected. It is possible people decided to participate as they felt strongly about issues related to multiculturalism in Australia, particularly at a time of wide media coverage of issues relating to asylum seekers. Finally, although the survey was online and anonymous, due to the subject matter, survey responses may have been subject to social desirability effects. It may be beneficial to include a measure of social desirability in future studies.

Keeping in view that attitudinal differences between groups were not found, it may be worthwhile investigating if, personal characteristics such as empathy impacts why people take action in support of others or fears and anxieties prevent them from such behaviours.

Implications and Conclusion

Despite the study's limitations, this was the first research to examine why Australian members of the community volunteered to host asylum seekers by participating in the government initiative to move them into the community. Therefore it was a unique opportunity to investigate the characteristics of people willing to take action in support of a minority group. The study also adds to the body of work on acculturation theory in Australia more generally, by analysing acculturation preferences from the host society's point of view, as well as investigating how a host society's perceived acculturation preferences are related to its support for multiculturalism. Current models of acculturation recognise the role of host society preferences in the acculturation process, with discordance between host and minority group strategies potentially leading to problematic outcomes. The ability to predict when consensual or conflictual outcomes are likely to result may assist professionals working with minority groups to better anticipate and address acculturative stress.

This study also reinforces earlier work that has demonstrated the importance of education in reducing prejudice and improving support for diversity. Any attempts by policy-makers or professionals to increase support in the community for diversity should consider the role of education in addressing bias. There are also implications from the finding that religion can be associated with more negative attitudes towards diversity. While membership of a religious organisation may sometimes result in less positive attitudes towards outgroup members, organisations, and their leaders also have an opportunity to encourage positive attitudes towards diversity and create intergroup contact opportunities, and this could also be applied to all organisations that inspire strong ingroup identity among their members.

At a time when political and public debate over asylum seekers continues, further understanding of the factors that can contribute to support for multiculturalism, and furthermore, actual willingness to

support asylum seekers and other minority groups, may be useful when confronted by negative attitudes in the community in general. The outcome is potentially useful for professionals, policy-makers and clinicians who need to address these issues and their consequences in Australian society.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Australian Homestay Network and the participants for their assistance with the study.

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