

Why do citizens want to keep refugees out? Threats, fairness and hostile norms in the treatment of asylum seekers[†]

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Abstract

A social identity framework was employed to understand why people support the exclusionary treatment of refugee claimants ('asylum seekers') in Australia. Over and above individual difference effects of social dominance orientation and individuals' instrumental threat perceptions, insecure intergroup relations between citizens and asylum seekers were proposed to motivate exclusionary attitudes and behaviour. In addition, perceived procedural and distributive fairness were proposed to mediate the effects of social identity predictors on intergroup competitiveness, serving to legitimise citizens' exclusionary behaviours. Support for these propositions was obtained in a longitudinal study of Australians' social attitudes and behaviour. Small and inconsistent individual-level effects were noted. In contrast, after controlling for these variables, hostile Australian norms, perceived legitimacy of citizen status, and threatening socio-structural relations were strongly and consistently linked to intentions to support the harsh treatment of asylum seekers, and exclusionary attitudes and action at Time 2. Moreover, perceived procedural and distributive justice significantly mediated these relationships. The roles of fairness and intergroup socio-structural perceptions in social attitudes and actions are discussed. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

At the start of 2005, there were more than 19 million 'people of concern' being monitored by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2005). More than 9 million people were identified as refugees, and a further eight hundred thousand as refugee claimants, or 'asylum seekers' (UNHCR, 2005). Tens of thousands of refugees were sheltered in camps on the margins of conflict and disaster zones. Only a fraction of these will ever be admitted to resettlement in the first world; a larger fraction may find resettlement in another third world country. Many refugees, however, stay in the camps which have continued to grow for years and even generations. The social problem is contentious (e.g. Bradford, 2002), and controversy over the treatment of asylum seekers seems likely

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to continue. However, as the world refugee population increases, attitudes towards refugee claimants in host nations have become less welcoming: Increasingly unfavourable attitudes have been expressed in many industrial nations as legislative measures to toughen admission criteria and the treatment of applicants (UNHCR, 2005). This was true even before the September 11th terrorist attack on the United States, and has apparently been consolidated by that event (e.g. Esses, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2001a). The social psychological processes that underlie this widespread support for the restrictive treatment of refugee claimants are thus of great social as well as theoretical interest.

The definition of refugees excuses them from blame and includes a normative prescription to advantaged nations to provide refugees with shelter and protection (UNHCR, 1967). In the refugee context, international agreements underpinned by the concept of basic human rights constrain advantaged nations' motives to reserve resources for their own citizens. Thus, the study of citizens' attitudes and behaviour towards refugee claimants involves a theoretically interesting relationship between fairness motives (which might mandate a generous welcome for asylum seekers) and threat motives (which might mandate exclusion or rejection).

Very little psychological research has specifically examined attitudes towards refugees and refugee claimants (cf. Verkuyten, 2004). Psychological research on refugees has tended to focus on clinical concerns, such as asylum seekers' experience of traumatic stress (e.g. Steel, Silove, Bird, McGorry, & Mohan, 1999) or use of the mental health system in the host country (e.g. Summerfield, 2001; Steel et al., 2005). Nevertheless, there is a larger literature that has examined immigration from a social psychological perspective (see Esses, Dovidio, & Dion, 2001). Research on this topic offers an applied context in which to test the sufficiency and power of social psychological models of intergroup relations. Individual difference and intergroup theories of prejudice, as well as models of conflict based on perceptions of threat and fairness, can be competitively evaluated with respect to predicting social attitudes and actions, and new models can be developed and tested.

INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL APPROACHES

In the domain of individual differences, research on *social dominance orientation* (SDO) has focused on the relationship between individuals' endorsement of hierarchical versus egalitarian social organization and their 'propensities for prejudice' (Pratto & Lemieux, 2001: p. 414). Individuals who endorse the principle of hierarchies in social relations, rather than egalitarian relationships—those who have higher levels of social dominance orientation—have been observed to have more unfavourable attitudes towards a variety of low power groups, such as Black Americans and women (Sidanius, 1993). At the behavioural level, hierarchical values predict variables from support for intergroup violence towards low status groups (Henry, Sidanius, Levin, & Pratto, 2005) to discrimination in the minimal groups paradigm (Amiot & Bourhis, 2005). Higher social dominance orientation has also been associated with negative attitudes to immigrants and immigration (Ho, 1987; Levin, Federico, Sidanius, & Rabinowitz, 2002; Pratto & Lemieux, 2001), and with resistance to changes in competitive intergroup relations between host country citizens and immigrants (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001). Since refugees are a low power group, and a group like immigrants that may be perceived as competing for a scarce, zero-sum pool of resources (Esses et al., 2001a; Esses et al., 2001b; Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998), social dominance orientation may be expected to predict unfavourable attitudes to refugees and willingness to restrict refugee access to the host country and its resources.

In addition to global preferences for hierarchical versus egalitarian systems, individual evaluations of *instrumental threat* to specific resources have been associated with negative attitudes towards

immigrants cross-culturally (e.g. Jackson, Brown, Brown, & Marks, 2001; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999; Wilson, 2001). The focus on individuals' instrumental concerns can be linked to a realistic conflict approach, which sees group-level instrumental concerns as a key predictor of hostility (e.g. Esses et al., 1998; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005; Louis & Taylor, 2002, 2005; Levine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1966). Instrumental threat research is often also linked to 'rational choice' approaches, however, which see individual-level concerns as proximal predictors of attitudes and action, with group-level threats and benefits as irrelevant except via the individual level (e.g. Ajzen, 1991; Olson, 1968). According to this latter perspective, subjective evaluation of individuals' own resource threats should motivate intergroup hostility directly, independent of group concerns.

INTERGROUP APPROACHES

From a *social identity* perspective, however, the individual level of analysis provides an incomplete understanding of social attitudes and behaviours, and subjective beliefs about threatening versus secure relations between groups are paramount (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Salient group identities and norms have been observed to shape individual-level variables such as social dominance orientation (Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003), rational choice calculations (Louis, Taylor, & Douglas, 2005; Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004), and instrumental concerns (Esses et al., 1998, 2001, 2005). In addition, when individuals self-categorise as members of social groups (ingroups), and feel threatened in their status relations with groups to which they do not belong (outgroups), intergroup conflict and prejudice may develop independent of individual-level variables (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also e.g. Turner & Reynolds, 2003; Verkuyten, 2004).

Three subjective beliefs that engender threat perceptions for advantaged groups have been identified (e.g. Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001): permeable intergroup boundaries (disadvantaged group members might encroach on advantaged group status), unstable intergroup relations (the advantaged position is eroding), and legitimacy (the status quo of advantage is justifiable). Advantaged group members' perceptions of permeability, instability, and legitimacy have predicted hostile behaviour towards disadvantaged groups in both field and laboratory studies (Bettencourt et al., 2001; see e.g. Johnson, Terry, & Louis, 2005; Major, 1994). Accordingly, the social identity framework suggests that willingness to restrict access to the host country for refugees should be associated with citizens' perceptions of intergroup or socio-structural threat in relations with asylum seekers.

In addition to perceptions of the intergroup structure, social identity researchers have also identified *norms*, or specific group-based standards of behaviour, as critical predictors in conflict. Ingroup norms become salient to group members along with the social identity based on their category membership, are internalised as 'normative attitudes' (i.e. attitudes congruent with the norm) and serve as a basis for action (Terry & Hogg, 1996; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). If a group norm opposes prejudice, individuals' prejudiced attitudes will be repressed and/or transformed in conformity to the norm. If the group norm supports prejudice, however, individuals will internalize prejudiced attitudes and freely express them behaviourally. For example, Terry, Hogg, and Blackwood (2001) found that prejudiced White Australians were more likely to express their attitudes behaviourally if other White Australians were thought to tolerate prejudice against Asian-Australians, but inhibited prejudice if they thought other Whites would condemn the discriminatory behaviour. Perceptions of the normative climate regarding the treatment of refugees may therefore inhibit or facilitate the expression of hostility. In the social identity account, then, individual-level variables may be of little account when group factors are considered. Threatening socio-structural beliefs and a normative climate of rejection should be the key predictors of attitudes and actions to asylum seekers.

THE ROLE OF FAIRNESS

Finally, we argue that *fairness* concerns are likely to be important in predicting attitudes towards refugees, and may play a central role in understanding hostile attitudes and actions towards refugee claimants. In one of the few social psychological studies of asylum seekers to date, Verkuyten (2004) observed that hostile reactions to asylum seekers were associated with anger and the perception that economic migrants were unfairly exploiting the refugee system, whereas 'genuine' political refugees elicited sympathetic emotional reactions. Indeed, the relationship between refugees and industrial nations is ostensibly governed by fairness concerns that instruct advantaged nations to offer shelter and protection to all those fleeing persecution (UNHCR, 1967). Moreover, the rash of restrictive social policies in industrial nations has been associated with arguments that host nations' refugee programmes are being unfairly abused by criminals, 'queue-jumpers' and economic migrants masquerading as refugees (e.g. Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). Procedural and distributive fairness concerns (Tyler, 1989, 1994) may motivate behaviour independent of resource concerns (e.g. Hogan & Emler, 1981; Tyler & Smith, 1999). For example, citizens might endorse a more restrictive treatment of asylum seekers if asylum seekers are perceived to consume host resources disproportionately, creating distributive unfairness. Similarly, procedural fairness could motivate citizens' support for restrictive measures if the measures are seen as preventing abuse by criminals and claimants who seek economic advantages. In short, the research reviewed to date provides reason to expect that attitudes towards asylum seekers will be associated with fairness independent of group-level threat and normative concerns.

In the present paper we also advance the hypothesis that citizens justify their group-based exclusion of asylum seekers through fairness judgements, so that fairness perceptions *mediate* the relationship between intergroup variables and hostility. Members of advantaged groups who feel that their status position is insecure may perceive that exclusionary measures are more fair than group members who feel secure (Platow, Wenzel, & Nolan, 2003; Tyler & Smith, 1999; Veilleux & Tougas, 1989). Advantaged group members may also selectively perceive fairness to legitimize their status, either consciously (e.g. Chen & Tyler, 2001; Taylor & McKirnan, 1984) or unconsciously (e.g. Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner, 1971; Tajfel, 1982, 1984). And while individual-level variables may play only a minor or secondary role in the asylum seeker context, from an intergroup perspective, there are also reasons to hypothesize that fairness perceptions could mediate relationships involving these variables. For example, recent research in social dominance orientation has shown that dominance orientation motivates support for hierarchy-enhancing ideologies, and these ideologies mediate the relationship between dominance orientation and policy attitudes (e.g. Pratto & Cathey, 2002, p. 144). Perceptions of fairness for the exclusionary treatment of asylum seekers should be enhanced for insecure or dominance-oriented individuals (e.g. Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). In short, concern about the procedural and distributive fairness of exclusionary treatment may be shaped by individual-level variables as well as by intergroup variables such as threatening socio-structural beliefs and norms. Fairness perceptions, in turn, may mediate the link between these variables and hostility to asylum seekers.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present paper reports the results of a longitudinal study of fairness perceptions, individual-level variables, and intergroup variables in relation to subsequent assessments of unfavourable attitudes and

behaviour towards refugee claimants in Australia. At the individual-level, social dominance orientation and perceptions of instrumental threat were measured: Those who were more socially dominant and who perceived instrumental threats from asylum seekers as more costly or probable were expected to be more rejecting of asylum seekers. Intergroup variables such as threatening socio-structural relations and hostile norms were expected to be primary, however, even after individual-level variables were controlled. Finally, the research tested the hypotheses that (a) fairness perceptions motivate support for restrictive measures for asylum seekers; (b) distal intergroup and (to a lesser extent) individual-level predictors of unfavourable attitudes to asylum seekers motivate fairness perceptions; and (c) fairness perceptions mediate the relationship between social identity variables and unfavourable attitudes and actions, as well as between individual-level variables and the dependent measures. This model is presented in Figure 1.

The Australian context is well suited to studying the restrictive treatment of asylum seekers. In Australia, institutional measures (e.g. Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) have been introduced to discriminate the treatment of refugees who are applying from abroad ('off-shore' claimants) from asylum seekers who apply 'on-shore', and to discriminate 'on-shore' claimants who apply 'unauthorised' (e.g. after being smuggled into Australia by boat) from those who apply 'authorised' (e.g. who enter the country with a student, tourist or business visa and then launch a refugee claim). Most of these measures were implemented in the last 5 years, and articulated as a response to the increase in the number of asylum seekers making 'on-shore' applications and the visible involvement of organised crime and 'people smugglers' in the travel of asylum seekers to Australia (see e.g. Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). The measures, such as mandatory detention through the period of

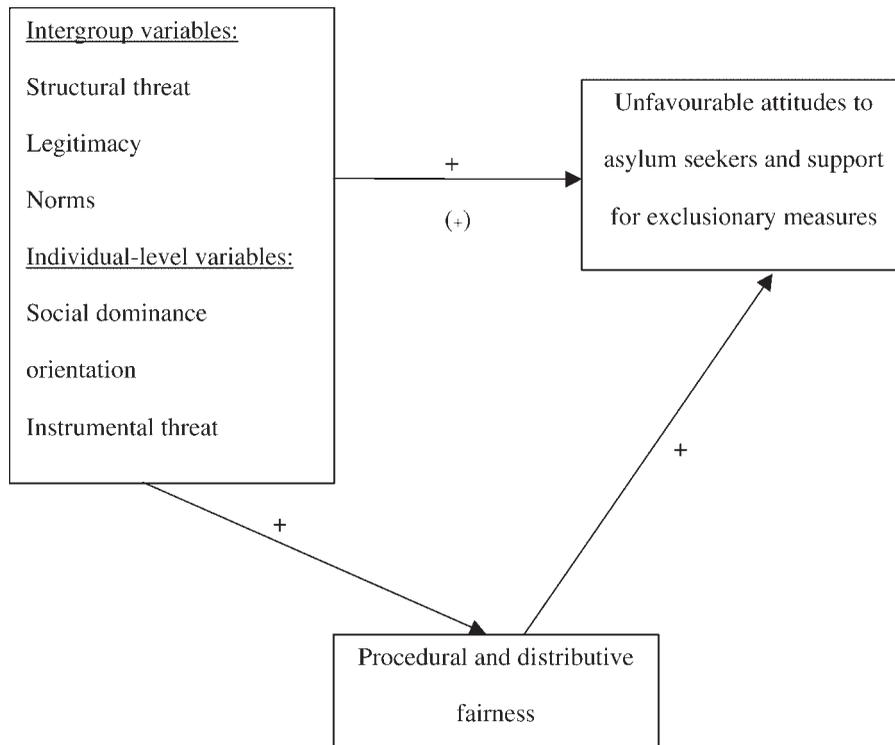


Figure 1. The proposed model of unfavourable attitudes and actions to asylum seekers

claim evaluation, are explicitly formulated to provide a disincentive to unauthorised on-shore refugee claims (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005, p. 19).

The present study involved a two-wave longitudinal design, with questionnaires presented before and after a federal election in Australia in which the issue of asylum seekers was a salient focus of debate (e.g. Barkham, 2001; Bradford, 2002; Maley, 2002a, 2002b). In the electoral context, the individual difference and intergroup processes that motivate and justify increasingly unfavourable views towards asylum seekers were highly susceptible to study. The longitudinal design, and the timing around an election allows us to include and model behavioural measures that are socially as well as theoretically interesting—voting on the issue and speaking out about it during the campaign (Kinder, 1998). By controlling for Time 1 willingness to support the restrictive measures in subsequent analyses, the role of proximal and distal variables in the shaping of intentions and Time 2 behaviours could be examined (cf. Ajzen, 1991). Moreover, the fact that common method variance is decreased in longitudinal studies increases confidence in the validity of the results of the analyses.

METHOD

Design and Procedure

At Time 1, in late October 2001, participants were recruited from four electoral districts in two areas of Northern and Central Queensland (dominated by primary industries, such as agriculture and mining and tourism) and two districts of South-Eastern Queensland (relatively urban, suburban and industrialised) to complete the initial survey.¹ Participants had been selected at random from the electoral rolls. These constitute a representative sample of the adult population, under the system of compulsory voting in Australia that mandates that all adult members of the population register to vote as of age 18. Around 20% ($n = 421$) of the Time 1 surveys were returned. Half of these respondents generated an anonymous personal code and provided contact information for future research (221 of 421, 53%), and were mailed a second questionnaire 4 weeks later. A reminder letter followed 2 weeks after the second survey. The final response rate for the Time 2 sample was 95% ($n = 210$ of 221). The responses of four participants at Time 2 whose anonymous codes and demographic information were unable to be matched with Time 1 data were excluded from further analyses.

Participants

The final sample consisted of 206 participants, whose ages ranged from 22 to 88 years ($M = 52$). With respect to employment, 37% ($n = 76$) of the sample was employed full-time, 26% ($n = 53$) of respondents were retired, and 9% ($n = 18$) were students or 'other'. Twenty-nine percent of the sample ($n = 58$) consisted of unemployed, part-time, casual, and self-employed respondents. A third of the sample ($n = 76$) had some form of university education, but 24% ($n = 50$) had not completed high school. Considerable community diversity was thus represented. Compared to census information for the electoral districts selected for sampling, the gender and regional balance were broadly representative. However, people of European heritage, over age 40, educationally qualified, and economically secure were disproportionately likely to complete the questionnaire.

¹The data presented here were collected as part of a larger study of political decision-making and voting behaviour, political affiliation and responses to the 'War on Terror'.

Materials

Social Dominance Orientation

Participants completed an 8-item individual difference measure of social dominance orientation, from Sidanius and Pratto (1999), to assess individual differences in propensities to prejudice. Four egalitarian items ('Group equality should be our ideal', 'We should do what we can to equalise conditions for different groups', 'All groups should be given an equal chance in life', and 'No one group should dominate in society') were reverse scored and combined with four hierarchy items ('Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups', 'It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others', 'It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and others are at the bottom', and 'To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups'), Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$. The items were assessed on 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), such that higher scores on the final scale indicated stronger endorsement of hierarchical social organizations than egalitarian social organizations.

Perceptions of Social-Structural Threat

Participants completed a 7-item measure of socio-structural threat in the relationship between citizens and asylum seekers. A single-item measure of perceived status ('Compared to Australians, what is the economic and social standing of asylum seekers in Australia?') first assessed Australians' relative status, with a scale ranging from 1 (worse off) to 7 (better off). Six additional items measured threat perceptions along the dimensions of legitimacy, permeability and stability. Legitimacy was measured with the items 'Do you think this [standing] is the way things should be?' and 'Is the economic and social standing of asylum seekers deserved?'; scales ranged from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much). *Permeability* was assessed with the items, 'How much access do asylum seekers have to the resources and opportunities available to Australians?' (1, Asylum seekers have less, to 7, Asylum seekers have more), 'How easy is it for asylum seekers to be accepted into Australian society?' (1, Very difficult, to 7, Very easy), and 'How many special rights and privileges do asylum seekers receive compared to Australians?' (1, Asylum seekers have less, to 7, Asylum seekers have more). *Stability* was measured with the item 'In recent years has the standing of asylum seekers compared to Australians changed?' (1, Standing has declined, to 7, Standing has improved).

A principal components analysis suggested a two-factor solution accounting for 66% of the variance for the 7 items, both with scree and eigenvalue extraction criteria. The first factor consisted of the status, stability and permeability items, each loading > 0.60 on the unrotated solution. The two legitimacy items loaded on a second factor, both at > 0.75 . Accordingly, two intergroup predictors were derived from this set of items. The *legitimacy* measure, with higher scores indicating agreement that asylum seekers deserved their present status, was formed by averaging the two legitimacy items ($r = 0.49$, $\alpha = 0.62$), while a measure of perceived *structural threat* to citizens' intergroup position was formed by averaging the items for perceived instability, permeability, and status ($\alpha = 0.83$). Judgements of structural threat to Australians were coded so that higher scores reflected a diminished status advantage for citizens and worsening position relative to asylum seekers.

Instrumental Threat

Participants were also asked to rate the effects of reducing the number of asylum seekers on eight dimensions of threat (jobs, crime, national security, health, national unity, diversity, way of life and

reputation) and to evaluate the importance of each dimension in the context of asylum seekers. Weighted expectancy-value scores were constructed by multiplying the rated importance of the dimension by the perceived effect of asylum seekers. Principal components analysis suggested a single factor solution accounting for 46% of the variance, and the scores were averaged to constitute a measure of instrumental threat ($\alpha = 0.81$). To facilitate comparison, the measure was rescaled to a 7-point metric (1 = overwhelming costs of reducing the number of asylum seekers; 7 = overwhelming benefits).

Norms

Perceived group norms for reducing the number of asylum seekers were assessed at Time 1. Specifically, participants evaluated the preferences and moral judgements of each of three possible reference groups: 'average Australians', 'friends and family,' and 'people who think like you politically'. For each source, a reverse-scored item measured preferences for increasing the number of asylum seekers: 'In your opinion, do you think that other Australians are in favour of reducing or increasing the total number of asylum seekers allowed in Australia? Specifically: Would [average Australians] prefer to: Reduce number (1)/Leave as is (4)/Increase (7)'. In addition, a positively-scored item asked, 'Do you think that other Australians would agree or disagree with the idea that reducing the number of asylum seekers in Australia is morally right? Specifically: [Average Australians] would say it is: Morally wrong (1)/Morally right (7). Principal components analysis suggested a single factor solution accounting for 60% of the variance. The six items were thus averaged to form a scale measuring perceptions of normative support for reducing the number of asylum seekers ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Perceived Fairness

At Time 1, participants completed measures of perceived procedural and distributive fairness based on Tyler (1989). Two items measured procedural fairness ($r = 0.72$, $\alpha = 0.83$): 'How fair are the current regulations that are used for dealing with asylum seekers?' (1 = Very unfair; 7 = Very fair) and 'How appropriate are the current Australian regulations for dealing with asylum seekers?' (1 = Not at all appropriate; 7 = Very appropriate). Four items measured distributive fairness. Participants rated both target groups (Australians and asylum seekers) in terms of their general living conditions and treatment by the government: "In terms of general living conditions, would you say that most asylum seekers in Australia [Australian citizens] are doing" (1 = Worse than they deserve; 7 = Better than they deserve)' and "Would you say that right now the asylum seekers in Australia [Australian citizens] are treated by the government": (1 = Worse than they deserve; 7 = Better than they deserve)'. Following Tyler (1989), the measure of distributive fairness was computed as the average of the difference scores (asylum seekers–Australians), such that high scores reflected the perception that asylum seekers were unfairly advantaged ($\alpha = 0.93$). Principal components analysis confirmed a two factor solution accounting for 90% of the variance, with the distributive items loading on the first factor (> 0.86) and the procedural items loading on the second factor (> 0.79).

Dependent Measures

Three classes of dependent measure were included in the present study: Behavioural intentions at Time 1 to support the reduction of asylum seekers, unfavourable attitudes to asylum seekers at Time 2,

and self-reported behaviours at Time 2. First, respondents' Time 1 willingness to engage in five behaviours to reduce the number of asylum seekers (voting in a confidential ballot/referendum; speaking out about the issue; taking part in a rally; signing a petition; and distributing information leaflets) was assessed on seven point scales (1 = Not at all; 7 = Very much). Principal components analysis suggested a single factor solution accounting for 68% of the variance. A measure of *behavioural intentions* was created by averaging these items ($\alpha = 0.88$).

Second, three items assessed *attitudes* towards reducing the number of asylum seekers at Time 2: 'When you personally think about reducing the number of asylum seekers in Australia, do you think it is: Bad-Good, Harmful-Beneficial, Foolish-Wise' on scales from 1 to 7. Principal components analysis suggested a single factor solution explaining 94% of the variance. Accordingly, the items were averaged to create a single scale measuring Time 2 attitudinal support for programmes to restrict asylum seekers' access to Australia, $\alpha = 0.97$.

Finally, participants were asked at Time 2 following the federal election to report whether they had engaged in each of the five behaviours: 'I made my decision about voting with asylum seekers in mind'; 'I expressed my views openly to friends, family or co-workers'; 'I signed a petition to express my views on asylum seekers'; 'I attended a rally to express my views on asylum seekers'; and 'I distributed leaflets to express my views on asylum seekers'. Responses were obtained using a forced choice format in which participants ticked one of three columns for each behaviour: 'Yes, I did this'; 'No, because I did not want to do this'; and 'No, because I had no opportunity'. Although 75% of Time 2 respondents had spoken out about the issue, and 52% of Time 2 respondents reported voting in the election with asylum seekers in mind, fewer than 3% reported having signed a petition, and fewer than 1% had either distributed leaflets or attended a rally. Accordingly, the petition, leaflet and rally items were dropped from further analyses. Speaking out and voting variables were recoded to assess whether participants had voted or spoken out in favour of restrictive measures (coded '1' for proponents of reducing the number of asylum seekers who had acted), voted or spoken out against restrictive measures (coded '-1'), or not voted or spoken out on the issue (coded '0').

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Initial tests on the perceived status measure revealed that refugees were perceived as lower in economic and social status than Australians ($t(198) = -5.87, p < 0.001$), confirming the interpretation of the Australians in the present study as a high-status group relative to asylum seekers. Accordingly, the hypotheses were tested that socio-structural factors would predict attitudes and actions to asylum seekers, and would do so in part by shaping fairness judgements, which act as mediators. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the variables are depicted in Table 1.

A series of hierarchical regressions was conducted regressing the perceptions of procedural and distributive fairness (the mediators) and hostility to asylum seekers (the dependent measures) on intergroup and individual difference variables, and then using the Sobel test to evaluate the significance of the change in coefficients for the distal variables on views towards refugees after the measures of fairness were entered.² Missing values for each variable were replaced with means.

²Although some of the independent variables were intercorrelated (as seen in Table 1), the variables were distinguishable on theoretical grounds, and the fact that the intercorrelations did not approach the mean scale reliabilities can be taken as empirical evidence of divergent validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). For this reason, the variables were treated as separate variables rather than combined in the present analyses.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations

| | Means | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|---|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| 1. Social dominance orientation(1-7) | 2.41 | 1.07 | — | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Instrumental threat (1-7) | 4.43 | 1.10 | 0.03 | — | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Structural threat (1-7) | 3.56 | 1.41 | 0.07 | 0.48 | — | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Legitimacy (1-7) | 3.40 | 1.55 | 0.27 | 0.15 | 0.24 | — | | | | | | | |
| 5. Norms (1-7) | 5.15 | 1.24 | 0.23 | 0.52 | 0.51 | 0.28 | — | | | | | | |
| 6. Procedural fairness (1 to 7) | 4.91 | 1.95 | 0.25 | 0.47 | 0.53 | 0.49 | 0.61 | — | | | | | |
| 7. Distributive fairness (1 to 7) | 4.45 | 1.06 | 0.06 | 0.46 | 0.66 | 0.19 | 0.56 | 0.55 | — | | | | |
| 8. T1 willingness (1 to 7) | 4.44 | 1.94 | 0.17 | 0.48 | 0.58 | 0.34 | 0.68 | 0.62 | 0.61 | — | | | |
| 9. T2 attitudes (1 to 5) | 5.11 | 1.92 | 0.22 | 0.51 | 0.54 | 0.39 | 0.64 | 0.72 | 0.61 | 0.73 | — | | |
| 10. T2 voting with opposition to asylum seekers in mind (1 to -1) | 0.25 | 0.62 | 0.27 | 0.41 | 0.47 | 0.29 | 0.52 | 0.60 | 0.50 | 0.57 | 0.64 | — | |
| 11. T2 speaking out against asylum seekers (1 to -1) | 0.39 | 0.71 | 0.25 | 0.42 | 0.55 | 0.37 | 0.56 | 0.64 | 0.60 | 0.63 | 0.69 | 0.66 | — |

Note: $N=206$; missing values replaced with means. $p < 0.05$ for $|r| > 0.13$.

Missing data appeared to be distributed randomly and occurred on 9% of cases, with missing values per variable ranging from 1% to about 3%.

Fairness Judgements as Mediators

First, procedural and distributive fairness were each regressed onto perceptions of threat, norms, legitimacy, and social dominance orientation. The results are presented in Table 2. The two fairness variables were inter-correlated ($r=0.55$), and accounted for significant variance when the other fairness variable was entered as a control in Block 1. However, the addition of intergroup and individual predictors in Block 2 was associated with a significant increase in the variance explained in judgements of both distributive fairness, $F(5, 199) = 23.88$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.26, and procedural fairness, $F(5, 199) = 19.30$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.23.

Inspection of the coefficients for procedural justice revealed that people tended to perceive harsh treatment as being procedurally fair if they felt asylum seekers posed a threat instrumentally ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.025$), if relations between Australians and asylum seekers were perceived to be structurally threatening ($\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.050$), if the unequal relationship was judged to be legitimate ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$), and if normative support was perceived for restricting asylum seekers' access ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Distributive fairness, meanwhile, was associated with the intergroup variables of structural

Table 2. Perceptions of fairness as a function of relations between Australians and asylum seekers, instrumental threat, and social dominance orientation

| Dependent variables:Predictors: | Procedural fairness | Distributive fairness |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Step 1 [Other type of fairness controlled] | 0.19** | 0.21** |
| Step 2 Instrumental threat | 0.13* | 0.06 |
| Social dominance orientation | 0.09† | -0.06 |
| Structural threat | 0.13* | 0.43*** |
| Norms | 0.26*** | 0.22** |
| Legitimacy | 0.30*** | -0.07 |
| Final Model R^2 | 0.56*** | 0.53*** |

Note: Coefficients are reported from the final model.

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, † $p < 0.10$.

threat and norms. People were more likely to feel that asylum seekers were unfairly overbenefited under current measures when they felt that relations between Australians and asylum seekers were structurally threatening ($\beta = 0.43, p < 0.001$), and that there was normative support for restricting asylum seekers' access ($\beta = 0.22, p = 0.001$). In summary, both procedural and distributive fairness judgements were associated with intergroup perceptions. Instrumental threat was uniquely associated only with procedural fairness, while social dominance orientation was not uniquely linked to fairness perceptions at all.

Second, a series of hierarchical analyses was conducted in which attitudes and behaviour towards asylum seekers were first regressed onto the threat judgements, social dominance orientation and norms, followed by fairness judgements in a second block. For the Time 2 behavioural measures, willingness to act at Time 1 was also included as a predictor. Table 3 summarises the results.

Willingness to Act

For Time 1 willingness to act, the variance accounted for was significant in Block 1, $F(5, 200) = 50.23, p < 0.001, R^2 \text{ ch.} = 0.56$. All of the intergroup predictors were related to willingness. People were motivated to act to reduce the number of asylum seekers when they perceived relations with asylum seekers as structurally threatening ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$), Australians' high status as legitimate ($\beta = 0.13, p = 0.012$), and normative support for the goal ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.001$). There were no reliable unique effects of instrumental threat or social dominance. In Block 2, fairness judgements contributed significantly to the variance accounted for, $F(2, 198) = 8.82, p < 0.001, R^2 \text{ ch.} = 0.04$. Participants were more willing to act when they perceived the tough treatment of asylum seekers as procedurally fair ($\beta = 0.16, p = 0.020$) or thought that asylum seekers were overbenefited ($\beta = 0.19, p = 0.004$). As predicted, the relationships between the intergroup variables and willingness to act were mediated by fairness: full mediation for legitimacy (which decreased from 0.13, $p < 0.05$, to 0.08, *ns*), and partial mediation for both norms (0.45 to 0.35, $ps < 0.001$) and structural threat (0.27, $p < 0.001$, to 0.14, $p < 0.05$). Sobel tests examining each mediational path separately confirmed significant indirect effects via procedural justice for norms ($z = 2.04, p = 0.042$) and legitimacy ($z = 2.19, p = 0.029$) and significant effects via distributive justice for norms ($z = 2.17, p = 0.030$) and structural threat ($z = 2.70, p = 0.007$).^{3,4}

³The increase in variance accounted for when fairness concerns were entered in the last block shows that these variables contribute uniquely to the variance accounted for. But we can test the utility of including each distal independent measure once the mediators are controlled by looking at the effects of dropping them from the full model. Consistent with the coefficients reported in the final model (Table 3), dropping social dominance orientation from the full model predicting intentions did not reduce the fit ($R^2 \text{ ch.} = 0.00, F(1, 198) = 0.04, p = 0.850$), nor did dropping individuals' perceptions of instrumental threat ($R^2 \text{ ch.} = 0.00, F(1, 198) = 1.17, p = 0.281$). By contrast, dropping the social identity model predictors (legitimacy, norms and threat) significantly reduces the variance accounted for even when fairness concerns remained in the model ($R^2 \text{ ch.} = 0.08, F(3, 198) = 12.99, p < 0.001$).

⁴In subsequent analyses, it was possible to rule out reverse mediation by the dependent measures *a priori*, since fairness judgements could not have been predicted by attitudes and actions observed 1 month later. However, since willingness, fairness and the distal independent variables were cross-sectionally measured at Time 1, path analyses comparing the present model with reverse mediation by willingness of procedural justice and distributive justice were conducted. In this model, socio-structural variables would motivate intentions which would *in turn* produce rationalizing fairness perceptions. Significant indirect effects of norms on procedural fairness via willingness were observed ($z = 2.20, p = 0.028$), but the mediation of legitimacy on fairness via willingness was not significant ($z = 1.12, ns$). Moreover, while the original model had an adequate fit (GFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.99, AIC = 74.94) the reverse path model provides a poor fit to the data (GFI = 0.88, CFI = 0.78, AIC = 210.29). Similarly, significant reverse mediation of structural threat ($z = 2.35, p = 0.019$) and norms ($z = 2.68, p = 0.007$) on distributive justice via willingness could be observed, but the reverse model provided a poor fit to the data (GFI = 0.86, CFI = 0.76, AIC = 225.58). Thus, the inadequate model fit when willingness was included as a mediator, and the parallel results for Time 2 measures where temporal sequence ruled out reverse mediation by the dependent variables, lend confidence to the view that fairness concerns should be regarded as mediators rather than outcome variables.

Table 3. Attitudes and actions to asylum seekers (AS) in relation to individual difference and intergroup factors

| | Time 1 willingness to take action to restrict AS | | Time 2 Unfavourable Attitudes to AS | | Time 2 Voting in favour of restrictive measures | | Time 2 speaking out in favour of measures | |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|---|---------------|---|---------------|
| | Entry β | Final β | Entry β | Final β | Entry β | Final β | Entry β | Final β |
| Step: Willingness | — | — | — | — | 0.57*** | 0.28*** | 0.63*** | 0.20*** |
| Step: Social dominance | 0.02 | 0.01 | 0.06 | 0.04 | 0.17** | 0.15** | 0.12* | 0.11* |
| Instrumental threat | 0.10 [†] | 0.06 | 0.19** | 0.12* | 0.11 | 0.07 | 0.06 | 0.02 |
| Structural threat | 0.27*** | 0.14* | 0.22*** | 0.03 | 0.16* | 0.07 | 0.23*** | 0.10 |
| Norms against AS | 0.45*** | 0.35*** | 0.36** | 0.18** | 0.13 | 0.04 | 0.13 [†] | 0.04 |
| Legitimacy | 0.13* | 0.08 | 0.19*** | 0.08 | 0.05 | -0.02 | 0.13* | 0.07 |
| Step: Procedural fairness | — | 0.16* | — | 0.37*** | — | 0.29*** | — | 0.25** |
| Distributive fairness | — | 0.19** | — | 0.21** | — | 0.11 | — | 0.22** |
| R ² change | 0.56*** | 0.04*** | 0.53*** | 0.10*** | 0.32*** | 0.09*** | 0.40*** | 0.06*** |
| Final model adj. R ² | — | 0.58*** | — | 0.62*** | — | 0.46*** | — | 0.54*** |

Note: Coefficients for the predictors are β s in the final model.

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; [†] $p < 0.10$.

Time 2 Attitudes

The variance accounted for was significant in Block 1, $F(5, 200) = 45.02$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.53. Only social dominance orientation was not uniquely linked to attitudes towards reducing the number of asylum seekers at Time 2. These attitudes were associated with perceptions of instrumental threat ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.001$), structural threat ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$), normative support ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.001$), and legitimacy ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$). Fairness judgements contributed over and above these variables, $F(2, 198) = 26.39$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.10). Time 1 assessments of both procedural fairness ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$) and distributive fairness ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.001$) predicted Time 2 attitudes. Moreover, the fairness variables, as predicted, were significant mediators. Full mediation was observed for legitimacy (which decreased from $\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$, to 0.08, *ns*) and structural threat (from 0.22, $p < 0.001$, to 0.03, *ns*). Partial mediation was observed for norms (which decreased from 0.36, $p < 0.001$ to 0.18, $p < 0.01$) and instrumental threat (0.19, $p < 0.01$, to 0.12, $p < 0.05$). Sobel tests examining each mediational path separately confirmed indirect effects via procedural justice for every variable: norms ($z = 3.32$, $p = 0.001$), legitimacy ($z = 3.87$, $p < 0.001$), and instrumental threat ($z = 1.86$, $p = 0.035$) as well as a trend for structural threat ($z = 1.86$, $p = 0.063$). As in the analyses for willingness, significant indirect effects via distributive justice were also observed for norms ($z = 2.32$, $p = 0.020$) and structural threat ($z = 2.98$, $p = 0.002$).⁵

Time 2 Behaviour

Additional analyses were conducted to examine the extent to which the model predicted Time 2 self-reports of having voted to reduce the number of asylum seekers and having spoken out on the issue. In each case, willingness was controlled in Block 1. Time 1 willingness to act predicted Time 2 reports both of voting on the issue, $F(1, 204) = 96.15$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.32, and speaking out on the issue, $F(1, 204) = 133.94$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.40. Controlling for these effects, however, the increment in variance accounted for was significant for voting at Block 2 (individual- and group-level variables), $F(5, 199) = 6.02$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.09, and Block 3 (fairness variables), $F(2, 197) = 9.08$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.05. Inspection of the coefficients indicates that after taking willingness at Time 1 into account, people were disproportionately likely to vote with the intention of reducing the number of asylum seekers if they perceived structural threat from asylum seekers, $\beta = 0.16$, $p = 0.020$, or were oriented to social dominance, $\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.004$. In the final model, procedural fairness was associated with having voted on the issue, $\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.001$, along with social dominance orientation and willingness. Fairness appeared to mediate the effect of structural threat which decreased from 0.16, $p < 0.05$, to 0.07, *ns*; but the decrease was not reliable, $z = 1.14$, $p = 0.150$.

The same pattern was observed for speaking out, with increases in variance accounted for by Block 2, $F(5, 199) = 8.38$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.11, and Block 3, $F(2, 197) = 12.52$, $p < 0.001$, R^2 ch. = 0.06. Even taking Time 1 willingness to act into account, people who felt structural threat were disproportionately likely to report speaking out at Time 2, $\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$, as were those oriented to social dominance, $\beta = 0.12$, $p = 0.028$. In addition, those who perceived citizen high status as legitimate were more likely to speak out, $\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.017$. Moreover, as predicted, fairness judgements contributed to behaviour and mediated these effects. In the final model, speaking out

⁵Again, dropping social dominance orientation from the full model did not decrease the variance accounted for in Time 2 attitudes (R^2 ch. = 0.00, $F(1, 198) = 0.79$, $p = 0.375$). By contrast, dropping individuals' instrumental threat significantly reduced the amount of explained variance (R^2 ch. = 0.01, $F(1, 198) = 4.77$, $p = 0.030$), as did dropping the social identity model predictors (R^2 ch. = 0.03, $F(3, 198) = 4.08$, $p = 0.008$).

was associated with both distributive fairness, $\beta = 0.22$, $p = 0.002$, and procedural fairness, $\beta = 0.25$, $p = 0.001$, as well as social dominance orientation and willingness. Full mediation was observed for structural threat (from 0.23, $p < 0.000$, to 0.10, *ns*), legitimacy (from 0.13, $p < 0.05$, to 0.07, *ns*), and norms (from 0.13, $p < 0.10$, to 0.04, *ns*). Sobel tests examining each mediational path separately and controlling for willingness confirmed indirect effects via procedural justice for legitimacy ($z = 2.93$, $p = 0.003$) and norms ($z = 2.19$, $p = 0.029$) and via distributive justice for structural threat ($z = 2.75$, $p = 0.006$).⁶

DISCUSSION

In the past 10 years, attitudes and legislation in most industrial nations have become much less favourable towards refugees and refugee claimants, despite the fact that the needs of the refugee community have increased (UNHCR, 2005). Australia is prototypical of industrial nations in this respect. Increasingly unfavourable attitudes (e.g., Barkham, 2001) and increasingly restrictive measures (e.g., Commonwealth of Australia, 2001) have become a topic of vigorous debate (e.g., Bradford, 2002). Empirically, little research has addressed citizens' support for the restrictive treatment of refugees (cf. Verkuyten, 2004). The present research, using a longitudinal design with a community sample, suggests that citizens' willingness to restrict the access of asylum seekers to their nation and its resources is predicted well by models of intergroup hostility and prejudice. In addition, the study shows that procedural and distributive fairness concerns contribute uniquely to predicting social attitudes and action to asylum seekers, as well as partially mediating the effects of norms, legitimacy, and threatening intergroup relations.

Individual-Level Approaches

Consistent with past research linking social dominance orientation to hostility towards low power minorities (e.g. Levin et al., 2002; Sidanius, 1993), it was observed that those who embraced hierarchical rather than egalitarian social structures were disproportionately likely, one month later, to report having spoken out and voted to restrict asylum seekers' access to Australia. In addition, in accord with an instrumental approach to conflict (e.g. Olson, 1968), individuals' perceptions of the threat posed by asylum seekers to valued resources were linked to judgements of the fairness of harsh treatment as well as Time 2 attitudes. The role of judgements of procedural justice in partially mediating the relationship between instrumental threat perceptions and negative attitudes to asylum seekers is a novel finding with interesting implications for further research that are discussed in more detail below. However, in both cases the role of the individual-level variables was limited. No unique relationship of social dominance orientation to Time 1 willingness to act, Time 2 attitudes, or fairness perceptions was observed. Similarly, no unique effects of instrumental threat perceptions were observed on Time 1 willingness to act, Time 1 distributive fairness perceptions, or Time 2

⁶In this case, dropping social dominance orientation from the full model decreased the fit in both self-reported voting behaviour (R^2 ch. = 0.02, $F(1, 198) = 6.98$, $p = 0.009$) and speaking out (R^2 ch. = 0.01, $F(1, 198) = 4.43$, $p = 0.037$). Dropping individuals' instrumental threat in the model did not reduce the variance in either voting (R^2 ch. = 0.00, $F(1, 198) = 1.33$, $p = 0.250$) or speaking out (R^2 ch. = 0.00, $F(1, 198) = 0.22$, $p = 0.638$) while fairness and Time 1 willingness to act remained in the model. Dropping the social identity model predictors from a model with fairness and willingness also did not decrease the variance accounted for in voting behaviour (R^2 ch. = 0.01, $F(3, 198) = 1.38$, $p = 0.250$), but did decrease the variance in speaking out (R^2 ch. = 0.02, $F(3, 198) = 3.35$, $p = 0.020$).

self-reported behaviour. The relatively weak, inconsistent role for these variables relative to other research (e.g. Amiot & Bourhis, 2005; Henry et al., 2005; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) may reflect the strong normative climate and the majority (70%) consensus among the sample that there are too many asylum seekers at present and thus restrictive measures should be enforced (Barkham, 2001; see also Commonwealth of Australia, 2005). The strong contextual influences may decrease the variance available to individual differences (Louis, Mavor, & Terry, 2003) as well as directly shaping individuals' social dominance focus (Schmitt et al., 2003) and instrumental concerns (e.g. Esses et al., 1998, 2001a, 2005; Louis et al., 2004, 2005; Sherif, 1966).

Intergroup Approaches

By contrast, strong and consistent effects of intergroup subjective beliefs were observed for each dependent measure. Perceptions of the legitimacy of asylum seeker-citizen relations were associated with procedural justice perceptions for harsh treatment, and via this mediator to willingness to act, attitudes and self-reported speaking out. Norms and structural threat were associated with both procedural justice perceptions for harsh treatment and the perception that asylum seekers were distributively overbenefited. Significant indirect effects of intergroup threat and norms via these variables were observed on each dependent measure: Time 1 willingness, Time 2 attitudes, and Time 2 self-reported speaking out and voting. The present results, then, demonstrate the utility of adopting an intergroup approach to the study of citizen-refugee relations (see also Verkuyten, 2004). In line with social identity theory and research, they also point to the specific importance of considering socio-structural beliefs and norms (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Johnson et al., 2005; Terry et al., 2001).

Stressing the importance of the group level of analysis of course does not negate the existence and importance of individual differences *per se*: intergroup variables are measured at the individual level in the present study. Individual differences in *beliefs about citizen-asylum seeker groups* and the specific *citizen-asylum seeker context* strongly and consistently predicted hostile attitudes and actions. Theoretically, the finding supports the social identity approach in locating key, proximal causes of intergroup hostility in *subjective socio-structural beliefs* about real intergroup relationships. Socially, the finding suggests that interventions in the debate concerning the treatment of asylum seekers may productively focus on salient group-level threat and legitimacy of status relations even in the presence of individual 'propensities to prejudice' and instrumental concerns. Socio-structural beliefs concerning the legitimacy, permeability and instability of group status relations affect attitudes to social minorities. Citizen members of an advantaged national group will support increasingly restrictive programmes, and develop unfavourable attitudes, when they perceive that their advantaged status is threatened by instability and permeable group boundaries. And this societal trend may be accelerated to the extent that the citizens perceive that social norms support hostility to asylum seekers.

The Role of Fairness Perceptions in Citizen-Refugee Relations

As expected, those who perceived reducing the numbers of asylum seekers as more procedurally fair were more willing to act at Time 1, and more likely at Time 2 to report unfavourable attitudes and behaviour. A similar pattern of results was observed for perceived distributive unfairness, which was linked to Time 1 willingness to act and Time 2 attitudes and speaking out (with a trend in the same direction for voting). Consistent with past research by Tyler and his colleagues (Smith & Tyler, 1996; Tyler, 1994), procedural and distributive justice were uniquely associated with social attitudes and action. It is not only the fairness of the outcome allocations that is important in decision-making, but

the also fairness of the procedures used to derive the social outcomes. Moreover, fairness concerns contributed to variance in these measures even when personality variables and individual and group threat perceptions were controlled, suggesting the importance of fairness concerns in their own right. Extensive theory and research draws attention to the importance of fairness perceptions in advantaged-group members' willingness to engage in hierarchy-maintaining behaviours (e.g. Louis & Taylor, 2005; Major, 1994; Platow et al., 2003; Smith & Tyler, 1996). This theoretical emphasis finds support in the present data, and draws attention to the critical importance of fairness perceptions in relation to the treatment of asylum seekers.

Of additional interest is the fact that group-based norms and structural threat exerted indirect effects via fairness on all dependent measures (as well as the indirect effect of instrumental threat noted above on Time 2 attitudes via fairness). That is, citizens' attitudinal and behavioural support for measures that restrict asylum seekers' access to Australia were driven in part by fairness perceptions, which were driven in part by intergroup variables, particularly perceptions of threat and normative consensus.

Three important points are suggested by these findings. First, the results demonstrate empirically that the fairness perceptions of advantaged group members are closely linked to motivation to protect their status position (see also, Chen & Tyler, 2001; Louis & Taylor, 2005; Platow et al., 2003; Taylor & McKirnan, 1984). Rather than being independent of status concerns, judgements of the procedural fairness of restrictive measures for asylum seekers were associated with citizens' insecurity in their advantaged position, as well as judgements about the legitimacy of the intergroup inequality itself. Second, direct effects of perceptions of the normative climate and structural threat were observed even when fairness perceptions were controlled, suggesting that variables such as threat may directly drive competitive intergroup behaviours in some cases (see also, Esses et al., 1998; Stephan et al., 1999; Terry & Hogg, 1996). Third, fairness perceptions partially mediated the effects of distal intergroup factors on behavioural and attitudinal support for exclusionary programmes. The existence of these *indirect* effects of norm and structural threat perceptions, via fairness perceptions, suggests that advantaged group members may need to justify competitive intergroup measures that would further advantage them in order to motivate action (see also, Tyler, 1994; Smith & Tyler, 1996). The extent to which fairness perceptions play a mediating role in intergroup threat-behaviour relationships is thus socially as well as theoretically an interesting topic for future research.

Strengths and Limitations

In the present study, the longitudinal design, and the timing of the second wave of data collection immediately after an election in which the issue of asylum seekers was widely debated, allow us to model behavioural measures that are socially as well as theoretically interesting—voting on the issue and speaking out about it during the campaign. These were predicted in the community sample by fairness and threat perceptions measured 1 month earlier, reducing the effects of common method variance via the design. A key issue remains the direction of causality between fairness perceptions and evaluations of intergroup relations, which cannot be empirically established from the correlational data collected at Time 1. Social identity theory, realistic conflict theory and social dominance theory all provide strong theoretical rationales for the argument that to the extent that fairness perceptions influence social attitudes and behaviour, it is a consequence of the status enhancement and status protection motives created by broad socio-structural conflict (e.g. Jost & Banaji, 1994; Platow et al., 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), perceived resource needs (e.g. Esses et al., 1998), or stable personality factors (e.g. Pratto & Cathey, 2002). The present results are consistent with the argument that fairness is driven by these distal motives. However, future research should empirically assess the extent to which judgements about the procedural fairness of the treatment of minorities such as asylum seekers

and the equity of their allocation of resources relative to Australians might causally shape individuals' preference for hierarchical systems, evaluations of threatening intergroup contexts, or perceptions of instrumental threat (see also, Tyler, 1994). The possible existence of third variables should also be explored: for example, salient superordinate 'human' identities may inform structural threat and legitimacy judgements, norm perceptions and fairness perceptions for citizen-asylum seeker relations (Nickerson & Louis, 2006).

A strength of the research was the use of a community sample of voters. The sample was more diverse and representative of the national population than many studies of political attitudes in psychology, which focus only on psychology undergraduates (Kinder, 1998). Nevertheless, the voluntary completion of the survey will have meant that community members disinterested in the issue were not well represented, and thus the results cannot be generalised on statistical grounds. As noted above, young, non-European, and less educated respondents were also under-represented in the present sample. To the extent that these variables are associated with economic or social insecurity, for example, the role of instrumental threat concerns may have been under-estimated here.

A specific issue concerns the distribution of responses to asylum seekers, with a majority who were consistently unfavourable, an undecided minority, and a polarised subgroup who were consistently favourable. In the present study, analyses of the unfavourable majority alone yield similar results to the whole-sample analyses, suggesting that despite the bimodality statistical instability has not been introduced. On a theoretical level, however, the role of other salient identities in distinguishing the small sub-population supportive of asylum seekers could be explored. Identification with alternative (e.g. religious or political) subgroups, or with an active superordinate identity of 'human', may moderate the relationships among intergroup threat perceptions and hostility in *citizen-asylum seeker* relations (e.g. Nickerson & Louis, 2006). In short, although intergroup factors related to the citizen-asylum seeker relationship were predictive of attitudes and actions in the present results, other intergroup factors may also have been important to the treatment of refugees, so that the role of social identity factors is under-estimated here.

The level of analysis at which constructs are defined and operationalised is also a concern. Some may question the value of distinguishing perceived norms and attitudes from each other, or legitimacy and fairness or structural and instrumental threat. Is it an elaborate exercise of reification in which different components of the same organised political ideology/attitude are split off arbitrarily into predictors (structural threat), justifications/mediators (fairness) and dependent variables (attitude)? To this criticism, we would reply on three levels. Conceptually and theoretically, variables such as group socio-structural threat in intergroup relations, legitimacy of status relations, fairness perceptions with respect to procedures for interaction or distribution of outcomes, instrumental concerns and support for harsh treatment of the disadvantaged group have been distinguished in previous research (e.g. Esses et al., 1998; Stephan et al., 1999; Terry et al., 2001; Tyler, 1989, 1994). Empirically, the fact that intercorrelations did not approach the scale reliabilities supports the contention that the variables can be thought of as independent (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). More broadly, the support for the proposed mediational model rather than theoretically plausible alternate models in which fairness is an independent, unrelated predictor along with resource or group threats (e.g. Tyler, 1994) suggests the theoretical utility of examining these interrelated constructs.

Concerning the operationalisation of the socio-structural belief variables, it should be noted that social identity research distinguishes three dimensions of permeability, instability, and illegitimacy (e.g. Bettencourt et al., 2001) yet because of the relatively small sample and high intercorrelations only two dimensions could be identified in the present study. Future research to tease apart permeability and instability and examine the three dimensions' interactive as well as additive effects is desirable. For example, unstable high status positions at low legitimacy and low permeability could be expected to result in less hostility, and less perceptions that exclusionary measures and unequal outcomes are fair,

than unstable high status positions at high legitimacy and/or high permeability (see e.g. Johnson et al., 2005).

Conclusions

The present study examined citizens' attitudinal and behavioural support for the restrictive treatment of asylum seekers. Social dominance orientation and perceptions of instrumental threat played significant, but inconsistent roles in the prediction of unfavourable attitudes and actions. Consistent with a social identity perspective, citizens' perceptions of insecure status relations with refugees and of a normative climate of unfavourable attitudes were consistently linked to support for harsh, unfavourable treatment. Independent of the direct effects of intergroup predictors, fairness perceptions also predicted attitudinal and behavioural support for exclusionary treatment. In addition, fairness perceptions partially mediated the effects of intergroup predictors, such that indirect effects of legitimacy perceptions, perceptions of the normative climate, and perceptions of structural threat via fairness were observed.

The present results thus draw attention to three theoretically and socially important reasons why some citizens want to exclude refugees. First, citizens may feel their national status threatened if the intergroup relationship with refugee claimants is unstable, permeable and with smaller status advantages for the ingroup. Second, the perception of an increasingly consolidated national norm supporting restrictive measures may motivate attitudinal and behavioural support, independent of effects due to social dominance orientation. Finally, perceptions of insecure intergroup relations and normative support may drive citizens' fairness perceptions, resulting in further support for restrictive measures. Intergroup studies of responses to refugees, and explorations of the role of fairness perceptions, thus offer a theoretically and socially exciting avenue for future intergroup research.

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