Psychological sense of community and values: Understanding attitudes towards people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People

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Abstract

Objective: Discrimination and prejudice have significant implications for individuals and communities and are prevalent throughout the world towards marginalised groups. This study investigated the role of psychological sense of community (PSOC), values of self-transcendence and openness-to-change, and demographic variables, with attitudes towards two different groups in Australia.

Method: A convenience sample of adults living in Australia (N = 396) was randomly assigned to complete one of two online surveys; reporting on their attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People (N = 198), or towards people seeking asylum (N = 198). The study assessed the extent to which a PSOC (in reference to local, national, and global communities), self-transcendence, and openness-to-change, predicted attitudes towards the two groups.

Results: Self-transcendence and psychological sense of global community consistently predicted attitudes towards both groups, with psychological sense of global community partially mediating the relationship between self-transcendence and attitudes. Bivariately, those holding a stronger local psychological sense of community reported more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum, whereas those holding a stronger psychological sense of national community reported more positive attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People. However, in multivariable regression models with self-transcendence and demographic characteristics, only a higher psychological sense of national community significantly predicted more negative attitudes towards people seeking asylum.

Conclusions: This research suggests that where people have a strong sense they are part of a global community they hold more positive attitudes towards people from various cultures both near and far. The research has implications for social cohesion and social policy.

Keywords
asylum seekers, attitudes, first nations people, prejudice, psychological sense of community, self-transcendence
1 | INTRODUCTION

Research demonstrates that there are strong relationships between racial discrimination and negative health outcomes, such as mental health conditions including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Elias & Paradies, 2016). Such discrimination is estimated to cost the Australian economy over $37.9 billion per annum in health and non-health productivity costs (Elias & Paradies, 2016). Two groups who experience prejudice and discrimination in Australia include people seeking asylum, and Australia’s First Nations People. Attitudes towards these marginalised groups are increasingly divided in terms of public opinion (Dorling, 2014), with many reporting negative attitudes (Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005; Pedersen, Beven, Walker, & Griffiths, 2004). Public attitudes shape the way that people treat members of these groups within the community, impact their ability to acculturate (Berry, 1997), and influence policy development and support for certain government responses (Hartley, Anderson, & Pedersen, 2018).

Australia’s First Nations People experience a great deal of prejudice and marginalisation in their country, which has severely impacted their health and wellbeing (Elias & Paradies, 2016). This can be seen in most countries which have a first peoples population (e.g., for a Canadian review, Lashta, Berdahl, & Walker, 2016). They also experience significant health disparities which continue to widen in some areas (Wright & Lewis, 2017; Pedersen et al., 2004; Larrakia Nation, 2015; Australia, 2016; Skinner et al., 2013; Holland, 2018). Similarly, people seeking asylum experience high levels of mental distress and health problems (Robjant, Hassan, & Katona, 2009). Despite condemnation from the human rights community, Australia continues a strict policy of mandatory detention, which has been shown to contribute to high rates of distress (Silove, Austin, & Steel, 2007). Understanding the factors leading to attitudes is important in predicting social policy, and understanding the challenges faced by these groups, including their health, participation, and economic disparities.

In studying the two groups, it is not suggested that experiences or histories are similar or comparable. However, both groups experience prejudice resulting from negative attitudes, and there is a strong positive relationship between attitudes towards both people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People (Pedersen et al., 2004; Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon, & Griffiths, 2005). By assessing attitudes towards the two groups within the same study, we can examine similarities and discrepancies in a range of factors that may influence attitudes within an Australian context. Climate change and continued social unrest internationally are likely to see more displacement and movement of groups of people than ever before; and along with the expected growth in the Indigenous population, a key challenge for Australia is to foster inclusive relations between dominant and marginalised groups (Wu, Hou, & Schimmele, 2011).

2 | ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

Over the past few decades, a growing body of literature has examined a host of factors related to attitudes
towards people seeking asylum. Certain characteristics of the individual are associated with negative attitudes, such as being male (McKay, Thomas, & Kneebone, 2012; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005; Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, & Ryan, 2005), and holding lower educational levels (Lyall & Thorsteinsson, 2007; McKay et al., 2012; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005). Empathy has been found to correlate strongly with positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum (Pedersen & Thomas, 2013), and anger and fear are also implicated (Pedersen & Hartley, 2015; Pedersen, Watt, & Griffiths, 2007).

Beliefs in macro justice principles (such as fairness and equal distribution of resources) have been linked with attitudes (Anderson, 2018; Anderson, Stuart, & Rossen, 2015) and beliefs that people seeking asylum receive more benefits than they deserve (Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, & Lalonde, 2007), enter illegally or are not ‘genuine’, are related to more negative attitudes (Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Watt, & Hansen, 2006). Beliefs that people seeking asylum pose a threat are also common (Canetti, Snider, Pedersen, & Hall, 2016; Goot & Watson, 2005; Louis et al., 2007; Suhanan, Pedersen, & Hartley, 2012). Murray and Marx (2013) found realistic threat and intergroup anxiety were significant predictors of prejudicial attitudes towards undocumented migrants, more so than other immigrant groups. Further, higher levels of national identification are related to more negative attitudes (Nickerson & Louis, 2008). People holding a greater social dominance orientation (SDO; whether an individual feels their group should dominate others) and right wing authoritarianism (RWA; belief in obedience/submission to authority and that subordinates should do the same), have predicted negative attitudes (Cohrs, Kämpfe-Hargrave, & Riemann, 2012; Nickerson & Louis, 2008; Trounson, Critchley, & Pfeifer, 2015). Recent meta-analytic reviews have identified that higher levels of SDO and RWA are the strongest correlates of negative attitudes (Anderson & Ferguson, 2018; Cowling, Anderson, & Ferguson, 2019).

Contact with people from a refugee background may result in more positive attitudes (McKay et al., 2012), however, negative contact is thought to override the effects of positive contact, suggesting it is the nature of the contact that is important (Barlow et al., 2012). People who perceive hostile national norms have also reported more hostility, and people who were more rejecting of people seeking asylum were more likely to overestimate community support for their views (e.g., Hartley & Pedersen, 2007; Nickerson & Louis, 2008; Pedersen, Griffiths, & Watt, 2008; Watt & Larkin, 2010). Thus, a variety of characteristics, emotions, beliefs, experiences, social norms, and ideological variables have predicted attitudes towards people seeking asylum.

3 | ATTITUDES TOWARDS AUSTRALIA’S FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE

There is relatively limited literature regarding attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People, however, similar antecedents have been identified regarding negative attitudes, including higher levels of RWA, SDO, and national identity, and lower levels of education and empathy (Feather & McKee, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2004; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005). Similar themes of false belief, fairness, equity and ‘special treatment’ have also been found (Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Dudgeon, Watt, & Griffiths, 2006). Increased quality of contact has been found to decrease prejudice towards Australia’s First Nations People (Turoy-Smith, Kane, & Pedersen, 2013). Canadian research has highlighted that the development of personal ties is influential in reducing racism (Lashta et al., 2016). Again, those who were more rejecting of Australia’s First Nations People were more likely to overestimate community support of their views (Pedersen et al., 2008). In summary, attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People are influenced by a range of characteristics, emotions, beliefs, experiences, social norms, and ideological variables.

4 | PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY

The current research is based upon a view that how someone relates to/within their communities may be an important factor contributing to their attitudes. Psychological sense of community (PSOC) is defined by Sarason (1974) as the ‘sense that one belongs in and is meaningfully a part of a larger collectivity’ (p. 41). Mannino (2011) found that PSOC played an important role in predicting prosocial action, and that heightening the salience of PSOC increased prosocial action. However, it has also been suggested that PSOC can operate in ways that result in division and exclusion (Fisher & Sonn, 2007; Pretty, Bishop, Fisher, & Sonn, 2007). Research has suggested a negative relationship between diversity and PSOC (Neal & Neal, 2013; Townley, Kloos, Green, & Franco, 2011). However, it has been emphasised that this tension might be used to promote social change through action and adaptation in particular communities (Neal & Neal, 2013). Berry has asserted that cultural diversity and
inclusion/social equity can co-exist (Berry & Sam, 2013), and research has suggested there is no incompatibility between multiculturalism and social cohesion (Wright & Bloemraad, 2012).

The PSOC concept has been extended to include a psychological connection with others that one does not know (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Malsch (2005) went on to expand the construct to an inclusive entity encompassing ‘feelings of membership in, and connection to, a community of humanity’ (p. 89) and developed a measure of this psychological sense of global community (PSOOGC). The measure was strongly related to a global sense of social responsibility, prosocial behaviours, empathy, and global activism (Malsch, 2005). Hackett, Omoto, and Matthews (2015) found that feeling part of a global community plays a critical role in connecting people’s values to human rights concerns and behaviours. It has been proposed that to be a positive source of identity, a superordinate identity must not conflict with subgroup identities (Bastian, 2012; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). However, de Rivera and Carson (2015) describe an imagined global community that is based on active personal relationships, rather than based on cognitive categorisation of group belonging. Käkar (2000) likens this difference to be the ‘we-ness’ of a personal community identity and a ‘we-are’ of a group identity. Such is the difference, for example, between patriotism or love for country, with nationalism with its assertion of superiority (de Rivera & Carson, 2015).

In the present study, PSOC at a local (or neighbour- hood) level (PSOC), a national level (psychological sense of national community; PSONC) and a global level (PSOOGC) have been distinguished. PSONC is suggested to be an entity which encompasses feelings of membership in, and connection to, a national community. Research indicates that those who identify strongly with their Australian national identity are more likely to hold negative views towards people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People (Fozdar, Spittles, & Hartley, 2015; Louis, Esses, & Lalonde, 2013; Nickerson & Louis, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2004; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Dudgeon, et al., 2006; Pedersen & Walker, 1997; Pedersen, Watt, et al., 2006). The PSONC construct may produce different relationships than a unidimensional construct of identification. The current research examines the roles of a PSOC, PSONC, and PSOOGC in predicting attitudes.

5 | SCHWARTZ VALUES AND ATTITUDES

The current research is based upon a view that a person’s underlying values are also important factors contributing to their attitudes. Values are abstract concepts that underlie attitudes and guide behaviour (Schwartz, 2012), and are, therefore, relevant for examining attitudes towards others. Schwartz’s (2012) theory of basic human values is presented as a circular oppositional model. Self-transcendence includes universalism (ideas of social justice and equality) and benevolence (helpfulness), and appears opposite Self-enhancement (comprising achievement and Power). Openness-to-change includes stimulation (an exciting life) and self-direction (creativity and freedom), and appears opposite Conservation (comprising security, conformity, and tradition).

Self-transcendence and openness-to-change are negatively related to SDO and RWA, which themselves have been found to predict negative attitudes towards people seeking asylum (Cohrs, Maes, Moschner, & Kielmann, 2007; Livi, Leone, Falgares, & Lombardo, 2014; McFarland, 2010). Greater endorsement of self-transcendence has also been directly associated with more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum (Greenhalgh & Watt, 2014) and human rights attitudes and behaviours (Cohrs et al., 2007). Prejudice towards Australia’s First Nations People has been negatively related with self-transcendence and openness-to-change (Feather & McKee, 2008). Malsch (2005) found Universalism (part of self-transcendence) predicted PSOOGC, which in turn predicted prosocial behaviours. Hackett et al. (2015) later found self-transcendence was strongly related to human rights concerns, a relationship that was partially mediated by PSOOGC. The current study further explores the relationship between values and attitudes, and builds from research demonstrating that PSOOGC may be an important factor in mediating these relationships. While the primary hypotheses related to PSOOGC, the role of PSOC and PSONC were also evaluated as potential mediators of the relationship between self-transcendence and attitudes.

6 | THE CURRENT RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to examine attitudes in Australia towards two marginalised groups (people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People), and assess their relation to self-transcendence, openness-to-change, PSOC, PSONC, and PSOOGC, testing the potential mediating pathway of the latter. In addition, it examined the role of demographic variables, history and experience of contact, and perception of the views of others in the community towards cultural diversity.

It was hypothesised that (a) being female, and holding higher levels of education, will both be associated with more positive attitudes; (b) both contact and more positive experiences of contact will be associated with...
more positive attitudes; (c) perceptions that others hold more negative views of cultural diversity will relate to more negative attitudes; (d) stronger identification with values of self-transcendence and openness-to-change will predict more positive attitudes towards both groups; (e) higher levels of PSOC, PSONC, and PSOGC will be related to more positive attitudes towards both groups; (f) higher levels of PSOGC will predict more positive attitudes towards both groups, over and above other predictor variables; and (g) analysis will identify mediating roles of PSOGC, PSOC, and PSONC in the relationships between self-transcendence and attitudes.

7 | METHOD

7.1 | Participants

A total of 445 participants were recruited through university distribution lists and social media to complete an online survey (each were offered entry into a draw to win one of five Coles-Myer vouchers) between October 2017 and January 2018. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two surveys: Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers, or Attitudes towards Indigenous Australians. Following data cleaning for incomplete data (49 participants dropped out following demographics section), there were 396 completed surveys collected (198 people in each group). Missing values analysis was not significant (Little’s MCAR > .176), therefore data were imputed using expectation maximisation (Dempster, Laird, & Rubin, 1977). The sample included a majority of females (64%), and ages ranged from 17 to 72 years old (M = 33; SD = 13). The sample was highly educated (31% of participants completed bachelor, 28% completed postgraduate degree or diploma). A large majority of participants reported living in a major city (88%), being born in Australia (79%), and living in Queensland (84%), with 10% from Victoria and 4% from NSW. The sample was largely atheist or agnostic (66%), with 25% being Catholic or Christian, and much smaller numbers reporting Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. The group randomly assigned to complete the survey regarding Indigenous Australians was slightly older (M age = 34.95 years, SD = 13.70) than the asylum seeker group (M age = 32.17 years, SD = 12.42). The two samples did not differ significantly on any other demographic or independent variable.

7.2 | Measures

Demographic items were included in the survey. Education was dichotomised (0 = primary, secondary, certificate or advanced diploma; 1 = bachelor, graduate diploma or certificate, or postgraduate). Four additional items were included that assessed contact and attitudes towards cultural diversity. The first aimed to measure the history of contact with the relevant groups (Contact; 1 = ‘none at all’; 5 = ‘a great deal’). The other aimed to measure experience of that contact (1 = ‘very negative’; 7 = ‘very positive’). The third and fourth assessed the participants’ perceptions of local community’s views (‘Most people in my local community seem to have positive attitude towards cultural diversity’), and national community’s views (‘Most Australians have a positive attitude towards cultural diversity’) (1 = ‘strongly disagree’; 7 = ‘strongly agree’).

7.3 | Psychological sense of community

The eight-item Brief Sense of Community Scale was adopted (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008) which captures the underlying multidimensional Sense of Community theory, including: needs fulfilment (e.g., ‘This neighbourhood helps me fulfil my needs’); group membership (e.g., ‘I belong in this neighbourhood’); influence (e.g., ‘I have a say about what goes on in this neighbourhood’); and emotional connection (e.g., ‘I have a good bond with others in this neighbourhood’). Research has identified the scale has high levels of internal reliability (Peterson et al., 2008; Wombacher, Tagg, Burgi, & MacBryde, 2010), which was also found in the current sample (α = .89). Participants respond on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = ‘strongly disagree’; 7 = ‘strongly agree’) with higher scores indicating a stronger PSOC.

7.4 | Psychological sense of global and national community

Malsch (2005) adapted the Sense of Community Index (McMillan & Chavis, 1986) to operationalise the PSOGC construct, with items modified to reflect the broader sense of community required to encompass that of humanity and the global community (e.g., ‘I feel a sense of belonging to a human or world community, one that extends beyond where I live and includes more than just people I know’). The items are answered on a 7-point Likert scale (‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’). The measure had adequate Cronbach's alpha in the original (α = .84; Malsch, 2005) and the present study (α = .75). The PSOGC scale was adapted here to measure PSONC for the purposes of this research (e.g., ‘People all over the country have a shared fate’). The adapted measure had a lower internal reliability (α = .68), noted as an important
limitation of PSONC results. A mean score was created, with higher scores indicating a stronger PSOGC or PSONC.

7.5 | Schwartz values

A 21-item version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz, 2005) was adopted to measure Schwartz values (SVS; Schwartz, 2012, 2013). Items are presented as ‘portraits’ to which a participant considers if like themselves (e.g., ‘She thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally’). Participants responded on a 6-point scale from ‘not like me at all’ to ‘very much like me’. In the present study, self-transcendence (five items; \( \alpha = .70 \)) and openness-to-change (four items; \( \alpha = .67 \)) were assessed. The latter showed less than adequate internal consistency (Cronbach, 1990; Kline, 1990), however this might be explained—the items intentionally reflect different conceptual components of the same value, moreover, measurement is based on only four items. A mean score was created, with higher scores indicating stronger endorsement of the value.

7.6 | Attitudes towards people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People

The 18-item Attitudes towards Asylum Seekers scale (ATAS; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005) was adopted (e.g., ‘I sympathise with the situation of asylum seekers’), as was the Attitudes towards Indigenous Australians scale (ATIA; Pedersen et al., 2004), which also includes 18 items (e.g., ‘Aboriginal people should try harder to fit in with society’). The items are answered on a 7-point Likert scale (‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’). Both scales had high internal consistency in the sample (\( \alpha = .97 \) and .95, respectively). Scores were summed with higher scores representing more negative attitudes; however, mean scores are reported in descriptive statistics to ease interpretation. Participants were provided with a definition of asylum seekers being people who are claiming to be refugees who have not yet had their claims assessed or who are seeking protection in Australia (UNHRC, 2016), unlike refugees, who have been assessed and granted protection.

7.7 | Procedures

Participants were provided with an electronic information sheet and provided consent prior to commencement. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age (or 17 years if a university student) and referrals for support services and counselling were offered. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two groups following consent, though the ordering of measures was consistent for all participants. Ethical clearance was obtained from the host institution (Ethics approval #1700000617). Data were collected with Qualtrics and analysed using SPSS (version 23).

There were no significant differences between those who completed the full survey and those who discontinued after completing the demographic items. No major deviations from normality were indicated nor extreme outliers identified. The plotting of residuals suggest some deviation from homoscedasticity and a normal distribution of residuals, though these assumptions are robust and only extreme deviations are likely to impact findings. When running mediation analyses, Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) was run with heteroscedasticity control. For the three step multiple hierarchical regression analyses, demographic variables were included at step one if they were significantly bivariately correlated with the outcome, with the values added at step two and then PSOGC at step three, to determine additional variance accounted for. Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation steps were conducted using SPSS, followed by the Hayes PROCESS macro (2017). Data were checked for multicollinearity, with no concerning correlations between predictor variables, acceptable tolerance, and low VIF values. Post hoc power analyses using G*Power (version 3) indicated sufficient power for the analyses.

8 | RESULTS

8.1 | Descriptive statistics, scales, and correlations

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha and bivariate correlations for the scales (demographic variables, contact, experience of contact, perception of local community’s views and perception of national community’s views are presented in text only). Participants on average reported moderate levels (4 = ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and 5 = ‘somewhat agree’) of PSOC, PSONC, and PSOGC. Participants held generally positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People overall (2 = ‘disagree’ and 3 = ‘somewhat disagree’ with negatively worded statements).
experiences were reported as more positive, ATAS, groups expressing more positive attitudes where contact quality or as predicted there were strong correlations between the amount of

As hypothesised, there was a significant effect for gender, \( t(196) = 4.04, p < .001 \), CI [8.59, 25.23], a large effect size of Cohen’s \( d = .88 \), with women reporting more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum than men (Female, \( M = 2.42, SD = 1.26; \) Men, \( M = 3.36, SD = 1.55 \)) and towards Australia’s First Nations People (Female, \( M = 2.04, SD = 0.93; \) Men, \( M = 2.85, SD = 1.43 \)), \( t(194) = 3.89, p < .001 \) CI [7.11, 22.03], a large effect size of Cohen’s \( d = .91 \). Those people with a bachelor degree or higher were more likely to hold more positive attitudes towards both people seeking asylum (\( M = 42.34, SD = 22.89 \)) and Australia’s First Nations People (\( M = 37.25, SD = 18.61 \)) than individuals with lower levels of educational attainment (ATAS \( M = 56.42, SD = 26.34; \) ATIA \( M = 45.36, SD = 22.62 \)), which were both statistically significant (\( p’s < .01 \)).

8.3 Contact variables and attitudes

While there was no significant correlation between the amount of contact someone had experienced and attitudes, as predicted there were strong correlations between the quality or experience of that contact and attitudes, with both groups expressing more positive attitudes where contact experiences were reported as more positive, ATAS, \( r(194) = -.380, p < .001 \) and ATIA, \( r(194) = -.628, p < .001 \).

8.4 Perceptions of others’ views towards diversity

Participants were asked about their perceptions of others’ views towards cultural diversity, distinctly within their local and then their national community. Participants who expressed more positive attitudes towards the two groups also expressed a stronger converse perception of more negative attitudes towards diversity within their national community, \( r(196) = .166, p = .020 \) (ATIA) and \( r(196) = .191, p = .007 \) (ATAS). No such relationship was found between perceptions of attitudes within participants’ local communities and their own attitudes. Those with higher levels of PSOC, however, did report perceptions of more positive attitudes to diversity within their local community, \( r(196) = .257, p < .001 \), and their national community, \( r(196) = .157, p = .002 \). Those with higher levels of PSONC also reported that those in their national community hold more positive attitudes towards diversity, \( r(396) = .270, p < .001 \). There was no relationship between PSONC and perceptions of local community’s views, \( r(396) = .047, p = .349 \).

8.5 Values predicting attitudes

Participants who endorsed greater self-transcendence reported more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum \( r(196) = -.628, p < .001 \), and towards Australia’s First Nations People, \( r(196) = -.495, p < .001 \). In a regression model, self-transcendence predicted 40% of the variance in ATAS, \( F(1,197) = 127.76, p < .001, 95\% \) CI [−26.92, −18.92], with an \( R^2 \) of .40, \( R^2\text{Adjusted} = .39 \). Cohen’s \( f^2 \) was calculated at .67, a large effect size. Self-transcendence predicted 25% of the variance in ATIA, \( F(1,197) = 63.83, p < .001, 95\% \) CI [−18.34, −11.08], with an \( R^2 \) of .25, \( R^2\text{Adjusted} = .24 \). Cohen’s \( f^2 \) was calculated at .33, a medium effect size. Self-transcendence was significantly positively related to the three PSOC measures: Self-transcendence and PSOCG, \( r(394) = .373, p < .001 \), followed by PSONC, \( r(394) = .203, p < .001 \), and PSOC, \( r(394) = .174, p < .001 \). It was also expected that openness-to-change would be related to more positive attitudes

### Table 1: Descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s alpha, and bivariate correlations for scales

| Variable | ATAS | ATIA | Self T | OPEN | PSOC | PSONC | PSOGC |
|----------|------|------|--------|------|------|-------|-------|
| M        | 2.69 | 2.25 | 4.98   | 4.28 | 4.91 | 4.59  | 4.58  |
| SD       | 1.41 | 1.15 | 0.70   | 0.82 | 1.05 | 0.95  | 1.10  |
| Range    | 1.00–7.00 | 1.00–7.00 | 2.80–6.00 | 1.75–4.25 | 1.38–7.00 | 1.00–7.00 | 1.20–7.00 |
| Alpha    | .97  | .95  | .70    | .67  | .89  | .68   | .75   |

Note: *p < .05, **p < .001.
towards both groups, however, while a significant correlation was found with ATAS, $r(196) = -0.253$, $p < .001$, this was not the case with ATIA. Openness-to-change predicted just 6% of the variance in ATAS, $F(1,197) = 13.41$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-11.40, -3.42]$, with an $R^2$ of .06.

8.6 Psychological sense of community and attitudes

As predicted, there were significant moderate negative correlations between PSOGC and ATAS, $r(196) = -0.451$, $p < .001$, and between PSOGC and ATIA, $r(196) = -0.365$, $p < .001$; that is, the more positive the views to these groups, the higher the scores on PSOGC. While PSONC was negatively associated with ATIA as expected, $r(196) = -0.152$, $p = .033$, it was not significantly correlated with ATAS. Therefore, having a stronger PSONC was associated only with more positive attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People only. Conversely, higher PSOC was associated only with more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum, $r(196) = -0.156$, $p = .028$.

8.7 Multiple regression and mediation analysis

The multiple regression and mediation analyses examining the role of PSOGC were run first, which was the primary focus of the current research.

8.8 Attitudes towards people seeking asylum

It was hypothesised that values of self-transcendence and openness-to-change would predict ATAS. Significantly related demographic variables (education and gender) were included in the regression. Results are presented in Table 2. Each step was significant and improved variance accounted for, with the final model predicting 48% of the variance in ATIA, $F(6,188) = 20.88$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .40$, $R^2$ Adjusted = .38. Cohen’s $f^2$ was calculated at .67, a large effect size. The predictive power of self-transcendence dropped slightly in Step 3, but remained significant, $b = -0.40$, $t(194) = -6.42$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-15.55, -8.24]$. In testing the mediation model predicting ATIA scores, analyses indicated that self-transcendence predicted the mediator (PSOGC), $b = .371$, $t(392) = 7.91$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.035, 0.059]; and PSOGC predicted the criterion (ATIA), also bivariately, $b = -0.371$, $t(194) = -5.56$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.83, -0.87]$. In a hierarchical regression, the first step found a significant relationship between self-transcendence and ATAS, $b = -0.628$, $t(196) = -11.30$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-26.92, -18.92]$. The second step demonstrated that, controlling for PSOGC, the predictive power of self-transcendence was reduced. However, self-transcendence did remain significantly predictive and dominant, $b = -0.535$, $t(195) = -8.66$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-23.95, -15.06]$.

Further analysis using the Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) was undertaken to determine the indirect effect. Although the direct effect remained significant, a significant indirect effect of the mediator on the relationship between the predictor and criterion was found, $b = -3.41$, 95% BCa CI $[-6.20, -1.11]$. While the dominant effect is the direct one, the indirect effect is significant, suggesting partial mediation. Findings are illustrated in Figure 1.

8.9 Attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People

It was hypothesised that self-transcendence and openness-to-change would predict ATIA. Significantly correlated demographics (education, gender, and age) were included in the regression. Results of the regression are presented in Table 2. Each step was significant and improved variance accounted for, with the final model predicting 40% of the variance in ATIA, $F(6,188) = 20.88$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .40$, $R^2$ Adjusted = .38. Cohen’s $f^2$ was calculated at .67, a large effect size. The predictive power of self-transcendence dropped slightly in Step 3, but remained significant, $b = -0.40$, $t(194) = -6.42$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-15.55, -8.24]$. In testing the mediation model predicting ATIA scores, analyses indicated that self-transcendence predicted the mediator (PSOGC), $b = .371$, $t(392) = 7.91$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.035, 0.059]; and PSOGC predicted the criterion (ATIA), also bivariately, $b = -0.371$, $t(194) = -5.56$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-1.83, -0.87]$. In a hierarchical regression, the first step found a significant relationship between Self-Transcendence and ATIA, $b = -0.498$, $t(194) = -7.99$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-0.021, -0.013]$. The second step demonstrated that, controlling for PSOGC, the predictive power of self-transcendence was reduced. However, self-transcendence did remain significantly predictive and dominant, $b = -0.429$, $t(193) = -6.89$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-16.30, -9.04]$.

Further analysis using the Hayes PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) showed the direct effect remained significant, but a significant indirect effect of the mediator on the relationship between the predictor and criterion was found, $b = -2.02$, 95% BCa CI $[-4.43, -0.34]$. Therefore, while the dominant effect is still the direct one, the
### Table 2
Hierarchical linear regression predicting attitudes towards asylum seekers and towards Indigenous Australians

| ATAS       | B     | SE B  | 95% CI        | β  | sr  |
|------------|-------|-------|---------------|----|-----|
| **Step 1** |       |       |               |    |     |
| Constant   | 82.57 | 6.71  | [69.23, 95.80]| −**| −   |
| Gender     | −15.65| 3.72  | [−22.98, −8.33]| −.28**| −.28|
| Education  | −12.81| 3.38  | [−19.47, −6.14]| −.25**| −.25|

F(2,195) = 17.63, p < .001, $R^2 = .15$, $R^2$Adjusted = .14, Cohen’s $f^2 = .18$

| **Step 2** |       |       |               |    |     |
| Constant   | 173.93| 10.49 | [153.24, 194.62]| −**| −   |
| Gender     | −8.48 | 3.07  | [−14.53, −2.44]| −.15**| −.15|
| Education  | −11.17| 2.71  | [−16.52, −5.82]| −.22**| −.22|
| Self T     | −20.80| 2.24  | [−25.22, −16.39]| −.57**| −.49|
| Open       | −0.41 | 1.75  | [−3.86, 3.04]  | .01 | .01 |

F(4,193) = 42.37, p < .001, $R^2 = .47$, $R^2$Adjusted = .46, Cohen’s $f^2 = .89$

| **Step 3** |       |       |               |    |     |
| Constant   | 174.66| 10.37 | [154.21, 195.12]| −**| −   |
| Gender     | −7.04 | 3.09  | [−13.13, −0.95]| −.13*| −.12|
| Education  | −10.42| 2.70  | [−15.74, −5.09]| −.20**| −.20|
| Self T     | −18.88| 2.35  | [−23.52, −14.23]| −.52**| −.42|
| Open       | 0.20  | 1.75  | [−3.24, 3.65]  | .00 | .01 |
| PSOGC      | −0.70 | 0.29  | [−1.27, −0.12] | −.15*| −.12|

F(5, 192) = 35.86, p < .001, $R^2 = .48$, $R^2$Adjusted = .47, Cohen’s $f^2 = .92$

| **ATIA**  |       |       |               |    |     |
| **Step 1** |       |       |               |    |     |
| Constant   | 78.62 | 6.44  | [65.91, 91.32]| −**| −   |
| Gender     | −13.82| 3.06  | [−19.85, −7.78]| −.30**| −.30|
| Education  | −4.94 | 2.87  | [−10.61, 0.72]| −.12 | −.11|
| Age        | −0.32 | 0.10  | [−0.52, −0.11]| −.21**| −.20|

F(3,191) = 12.80, p < .001, $R^2 = .17$, $R^2$Adjusted = .15, Cohen’s $f^2 = .20$

| **Step 2** |       |       |               |    |     |
| Constant   | 122.43| 10.44 | [101.84, 143.02]| −**| −   |
| Gender     | −9.76 | 2.81  | [−15.30, −4.22]| −.21**| −.20|
| Education  | −4.62 | 2.56  | [−9.66, 0.43]  | −.11 | −.11|
| Age        | −0.23 | 0.09  | [−0.41, −0.05] | −.15*| −.15|
| Self T     | −13.58| 1.87  | [−17.28, −9.89]| −.46**| −.43|
| Open       | 3.25  | 1.67  | [0.03, 6.53]   | .12 | .12 |

F(5,189) = 20.23, p < .001, $R^2 = .35$, $R^2$Adjusted = .33, Cohen’s $f^2 = .54$

| **Step 3** |       |       |               |    |     |
| Constant   | 131.56| 10.30 | [111.24, 151.88]| −**| −   |
| Gender     | −8.61 | 2.72  | [−13.97, −3.24]| −.19**| −.18|
| Education  | −4.35 | 2.46  | [−9.21, 0.50]  | −.10 | −.10|
| Age        | −0.24 | 0.09  | [−0.41, −0.06] | −.16**| −.15|
| Self T     | −11.90| 1.85  | [−15.55, −8.24]| −.40**| −.36|
| Open       | 3.34  | 1.60  | [0.18, 6.50]   | .13*| .12 |

(Continues)
indirect effect is significant, suggesting partial mediation. Findings are illustrated in Figure 2.

8.10 | PSOC and PSONC regressions and mediations

The same regression models were also tested with PSOC and PSONC in predicting attitudes towards both groups. All of the regression models were significant, however, only PSONC was significant in predicting ATAS in Step 3 of the model, where having higher levels of PSONC predicted more negative attitudes, $b = .17$, $t(193) = 3.11$, $p = .002$ 95% CI [0.33, 1.48], $F(4, 193) = 46.90$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .49$. The predictive power of PSOC and PSONC on ATIA, and PSOC on ATAS, was no longer significant in the multiple linear regression models. Across all models, self-transcendence and gender were consistently significant in predicting attitudes towards both groups, while age was a significant predictor of ATAS and education a significant predictor of ATIA, which is consistent with the models for PSOGC.

A mediation analysis was conducted to assess any mediating effect of PSONC in the relationship between self-transcendence and ATAS. PSONC did not predict the criterion (ATAS) bivariately, $b = -.024$, $t(196) = -.34$, $p = .736$, 95% CI $[-0.90, -0.64]$, but became significant in a model with self-transcendence, and analysis using Hayes PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2017) indicated that the indirect effect (IE = 1.44) was statistically significant 95% CI [0.30, 2.92], with non-parametric bootstrapping showing zero falling outside the confidence interval. Further interpretation revealed that the effect of self-transcendence on ATAS increased with the inclusion of PSONC in the model, with the direct effect being larger than the total effect. The pattern of the negative direct effect and the positive indirect effect results in an inconsistent mediation model.

9 | DISCUSSION

This research sought to understand correlates and predictors of attitudes towards two marginalised populations, people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People. It explored demographic variables, confirming that both being female and more educated are associated with more positive attitudes. This suggests that campaigns to shift attitudes and reduce discrimination might target males and those who have lower levels of education. As predicted, for both groups participants expressed more positive attitudes when they reported contact experiences had been more positive. However, amount of contact itself did not associate with more positive attitudes. Previous research has found that quality of contact reduced prejudice towards people seeking asylum and Indigenous Australians through a reduction in intergroup anxiety (Turoy-Smith et al., 2013). Additional mechanisms to reduce such anxiety might also be explored.

Where participants expressed more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People they also expressed a belief that others in Australia (nationally, but not locally) held more negative attitudes towards cultural diversity. One explanation might be that people feel their national community to be more of an unknown, and potentially more hostile, than members of their local community. Given the generally urban nature of the sample, it is plausible that people believe regional Australians might hold more negative
views. This finding was against expectations reached based on previous research, though the results are explainable by the measure merely being a perception of others views, with no attempt to specifically measure consensus or the influence of social norms.

The research confirms a strong relationship between self-transcendence and attitudes towards the two groups, and supports a model whereby PSOGC partially mediates this relationship. It seems logical that someone who endorses ideas of Universalism and Benevolence (comprising self-transcendence) might hold more positive attitudes towards those from other parts of the world/community who are experiencing hostility. This is consistent with other research which has found self-transcendence to be associated with attitudes and human rights concerns and behaviours (e.g., Cohrs et al., 2007; Feather & McKee, 2008; Hackett et al., 2015). Openness-to-change did not operate as predicted, as it correlated only with ATAS and not ATIA. It is intuitive that a certain openness would be needed to accept people seeking asylum into communities, and further research might explore potential explanations for the relationship with ATIA not emerging.

As predicted, correlations and bivariate regressions showed that those with a stronger PSOC held more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum, whereas those with a stronger PSONC held more positive attitude towards Australia’s First Nations People. However, in the multiple linear regression models they were no longer significant when including self-transcendence and other demographic characteristics. Against predictions, PSOC was not significantly correlated with more positive attitudes towards Australia’s First Nations People, nor was PSONC associated with more positive views towards people seeking asylum. However, in the regression model with self-transcendence, PSONC predicted unique variance in ATAS, with higher levels of PSONC predicting more negative attitudes towards people seeking asylum. The analysis of the mediating effect of PSOC in the relationship between self-transcendence and ATAS suggested an inconsistent mediation model. This might be explained by the positive and negative relationships across variables cancelling each other out. One interpretation is that people who endorse self-transcendence might also identify with people nationally (a positive relationship between those variables). However, where self-transcendence does not extend beyond a national level, there is increasing hostility beyond that boundary, such as towards people seeking asylum. Once PSONC is factored out, self-transcendence expands beyond national borders, and hence the more positive attitudes towards people seeking asylum. The predictive relationship between PSONC and ATAS are consistent with national identification research, which found it relates to more negative views (Fozdar et al., 2015; Louis et al., 2013; Nickerson & Louis, 2008; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005).

These results cumulatively suggest complex and interacting relationships between values, attitudes, and sense of community at varying abstractions that warrant further exploration. These findings have implications for interventions designed to shift attitudes. Strategies to develop or emphasise certain values and a PSOC, particularly at a global level, might prove instrumental to improving attitudes.

As predicted, PSOC was positively related to attitudes towards both groups. That is, when people have a strong sense that they are part of a global community, they have more positive attitudes towards people from various cultures. Further research might explore the relationship between PSOC and a sense of responsibility to marginalised groups, and further evaluate the role of macro justice principles, which have been found to correlate moderately with attitudes (Anderson & Ferguson, 2018).

As predicted, PSOGC partially mediated the relationships between self-transcendence and attitudes towards both groups, adding support to previous findings that feeling part of a global community plays a role in connecting people's values to human rights concerns and behaviours, and that higher levels of PSOGC relate to prosocial behaviours (Hackett et al., 2015; Malsch, 2005). Recent evidence suggests Australians have growing concerns about societal inequality (e.g., Norton, Neal, Govan, Ariely, & Holland, 2014). Further research might assess this link to concerns, actions and behaviours, which becomes more relevant as the global society faces increasingly shared concerns, such as responding to the global refugee crisis and climate change.

Limitations of this study include the relatively homogenous sample (e.g., urban dwelling, highly educated) the self-selected and self-report nature of the survey, and the possibility of socially desirable responses. The results are also limited by the less than adequate measure of internal consistency of the openness-to-change ($\alpha = .67$) and PSOC ($\alpha = .68$) scales. Contact, experience of contact, and perceptions of others were assessed using single items, and warrant more in-depth exploration. Further, the methods used for assessing attitudes towards the two groups means that direct comparisons of attitudes cannot be made. Further research might examine the subscales of self-transcendence (benevolence and universalism). In particular, Universalism comprises items related to both equality for people and care for nature, so further analysis of these distinct dimensions as they relate to attitudes towards people is warranted. Future research might also test alternative mediation models, examine the effects of
each of the subscales of PSOC, explore the malleability of PSOGC, examine additional values, and further explore the interactions between various abstractions of a PSOC with attitudes, actions, and behaviours.

This research highlights there may be distinctions between understandings of group identity and a PSOC, which may be important within increasingly divisive socio-political contexts around the world. Furthermore, it contributes new support for the view that values influence attitudes towards people seeking asylum and Australia’s First Nations People, and that holding a PSOGC plays a part in influencing these attitudes. The research contributes insight into how people formulate attitudes, with the aim of fostering public discourse that contributes to preventing direct harm on groups of people, and which has implications for promoting cultural understanding within communities. Communities that inspire both a strong sense of global community as well as embrace diversity in their local communities will be able to thrive alongside ongoing increases in migration and exposure to cultural diversity.

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