How 'mutual' is acculturation?: Majority Australians' acculturation attitudes toward refugees

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Acculturation is defined as a mutual and dynamic process of cultural change that occurs when two or more cultures come into contact. However, research interest in the attitudes of the majority or 'host' community is relatively recent and remains scarce. In this study we explored majority Australians' views on acculturation in respect to refugees, including own-group acculturation: the extent to which they desire cultural maintenance and/or change in response to the growing ethnic diversity of Australian society. These views were explored through in-depth interviews with a sample of 14 participants who identified as Anglo-Australian. Thematic analysis of the data revealed eight themes relating to two research questions: how participants view their own acculturation, and how they view refugee acculturation. In general, participants viewed their preferred acculturative change as minimal, but expected refugees to change in significant ways. The findings are discussed in the context of contemporary models of 'mutual' acculturation.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR] reported that in 2013 there were 51.7 million forcibly displaced people in the world (UNHCR, 2013). Australia grants permanent settlement to approximately 13,000 refugees annually as part of the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program (Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC], 2012). Since 1901 at least 750,000 refugees have settled in Australia (Refugee Council of Australia, [RCOA], 2012).

Refugees are particularly vulnerable when arriving in a host country for various reasons including; the trauma of fleeing war or other conflict, the stress of not knowing if their family is safe in their home country, and not having support networks in the receiving country (Berry, 2001). Little is known about refugees' acculturation strategies and attitudes toward majority groups, and while there are some studies of the majority's perspective toward migrants, there is a paucity of Australian research examining majority members' attitudes toward refugees. Moreover, there is no Australian research focussed on the part that majority members feel they play – or should play - in the acculturation of migrant and refugee groups. It is important to address this gap in the research because how minority groups adjust is influenced by the attitudes and expectations of the majority

(Lopez-Rodriguez, Zagefka, Navas, & Cuadrado 2014). In the present study we sought to investigate this by exploring majority Australians' acculturation expectations of refugees and for themselves: *own-group acculturation.*

Mutual Acculturation

Using Berry's (2001) model, acculturation is defined as a mutual process of change in which different cultural groups, including majority, and minority groups, are altered when they come into enduring contact with each other. Acculturation requires the mutual accommodation of aspects of each culture (or cultures), although it is acknowledged that non-dominant or minority groups experience a greater change than dominant groups e.g., the majority (Berry, 2005). According to this model, acculturation is facilitated by a process involving a number of strategies, comprised of attitudes (how the individual wishes to engage in acculturation), and behaviours: the things that people actually do (Berry, 2001). Underlying acculturation strategies are two main issues: the desire to maintain one's heritage and culture, and the degree to which one wishes to interact with other cultural groups. Eight acculturation strategies then emerge, for minority groups they are; *integration* (interested in maintaining both cultures, and in daily interactions with other groups), *assimilation* (not wishing to maintain their own cultural identity and seeking daily

interaction with other cultures), *separation* (holding onto their original culture, and avoiding interaction with others), and *marginalisation* (not interested in cultural maintenance nor in interacting with others). When employed by the host (majority) society they are called*; multiculturalism, melting pot, segregation,* and *exclusion* (Berry, 2001).

Acculturation research often focuses on a minority group's acculturation strategy preferences, experiences and how these impact on the group's wellbeing (Rohmann, Piontkowski, & van Randenborgh, 2008). Some argue that to focus only on minority group acculturation strategies takes the onus off majority groups, placing responsibility for acculturation outcomes with the people who are relatively powerless when it comes to deciding how they will acculturate (Bowskill, Lyons, & Coyle, 2007). Dandy (2009) argued that host community acculturation preferences and attitudes have been neglected in research to the detriment of intergroup relations, which could result in further marginalisation of refugees and migrants. Although Berry's acculturation model has been criticised as being too narrow in its vision and therefore possibly overlooking the complexities of acculturation (e.g., Rudmin, 2003), it is widely accepted and often used as a framework for research (e.g., Bowskill, et al., 2007; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013; Kunst & Sam, 2013; Pfafferott & Brown, 2006).

Majority Acculturation Attitudes

Majority attitudes toward minority groups are influenced by factors including the acculturation strategies employed by minority groups (Matera, Stephanile, & Brown, 2011) and perceived characteristics of certain groups. For example, Murray and Marx (2013) examined majority attitudes towards refugees and authorised and unauthorised immigrants in California, focussing on the legal standing of immigrants and the perceived value of immigrant members. Overall, participants reported favourable attitudes toward refugees. However, participants consistently reported less favourable attitudes toward unauthorised immigrants compared with authorised immigrants, with older participants holding less favourable attitudes. Australian attitudes toward unauthorised immigrants ('boat people') are similarly negative (Markus, 2014).

Better settlement outcomes and positive intercultural relations are more likely when there is compatibility between the acculturation strategies of minorities and the preferences of majority members (Rohmann et al., 2008). For example, if majority members favour integration, minority members are more inclined to seek out contact with the host community which results in more positive outcomes for them (Pfafferott & Brown, 2006). Majority perspectives are particularly important in the context of refugee settlement because, unlike voluntary migrants, many refugees do not have a choice of which acculturation strategy to employ due to many factors including lack of family support and economic security (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001). Others have commented that the acculturation strategy that refugees choose depends largely on the political environment of the more dominant host community (Ward, Fox, Wilson, Stuart, & Kus, 2010). Moreover, several authors have criticised the emphasis of past research on minority group acculturation strategies, arguing that it takes the onus off majority groups and places responsibility for acculturation outcomes with the people who are relatively powerless when it comes to choice of acculturation strategy (Bowskill, et al., 2007). Thus, there is a clear need to examine majority perspectives on acculturation.

Geschke, Mummendey, Kessler and Funke (2010) conducted one of the few studies of majority members' perspectives on their own acculturative change. They examined majority Germans' own acculturation goals as predictors of attitudes and behaviours toward asylum seeking refugees. They found that majority members had more positive attitudes toward refugees if they were supportive of refugees maintaining their own culture within the majority community. Conversely, majority members who were more in favour of segregation strategies (wanting to keep the cultures separate) had much more negative views of refugees. Geschke et al. recommended further

research from majority acculturation perspectives to inform acculturation theory.

Australian Acculturation Research

There is limited Australian research focussed on majority acculturation attitudes and even fewer studies of acculturation attitudes toward refugees (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013). Studies in which more general attitudes toward immigration and diversity are surveyed point to positive views among Australians (e.g., Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Markus, 2014), although this is often tempered by concerns about ethnic segregation and other perceived threats to social cohesion. In addition, many Australians hold negative attitudes toward specific minority groups, such as people from Muslim, Middle Eastern, and/or African backgrounds (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Markus, 2014). Moreover, research on majority attitudes toward asylum seekers and refugees has shown that a significant proportion of Australians hold negative views (e.g., Markus, 2014; Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005; Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, & Ryan, 2005). Not all Australians share those views, however, and it is evident that the treatment of asylum seekers who arrive by boat has become a highly polarised topic in Australian discourse (Markus, 2014; Schweitzer, et al., 2005).

A Mutual Focus for Australian Acculturation Research

Researchers agree that minority and majority attitudes and behaviours should be taken into consideration when investigating the acculturation process (e.g.,Ward et al., 2010). Although there is research on majority attitudes toward immigrants in general, and asylum seekers specifically, there is a paucity of research on Australian majority attitudes toward refugees, despite media and political focus on refugees and asylum seekers (Pedersen et al., 2005). Moreover, to our knowledge there is no Australian research addressing majority members' views on their own acculturation expectations regarding minority groups, particularly refugees. For these reasons, the focus of this study was solely on refugees, rather than including immigrants and asylum seekers. It is important to note that, in the Australian context, refugees and asylum seekers are often confused, and the terms 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' are used interchangeably, often to refer to 'boat people' (asylum seekers trying to enter Australia by boat; Rowe & O'Brien, 2014). There is, however, an official distinction; a refugee is a person who, for fear of persecution for a number of reasons, lives outside their home country. Asylum seekers are seeking the same protection but have not yet been granted refugee status by the receiving country or the UNHCR (Rowe & O'Brien, 2014)

The aim of the proposed study was to explore majority Australian acculturation attitudes toward refugees. Employing a qualitative framework, the study sought to answer two questions; "How do majority Australians view their own acculturation in the context of refugees" and "What are majority Australian attitudes toward refugee acculturation?"

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 14$) were recruited from Perth's metropolitan area via convenience and snowball sampling. Participants were male ($N = 6$) and female ($N = 8$) adult Australians from white, British cultural backgrounds, aged between 22 and 64 years (mean age of 34 years) from a range of educational backgrounds and occupations (see Table 1). Importantly, every attempt was made to ensure the sample was comprised of participants from a range of educational backgrounds in order to enhance the likelihood of capturing a range of views, because education has been shown to be related to attitudes toward migrants and refugees (Bilodeau & Fadol, 2011; Pedersen, et al., 2005).

Procedure

Data collection. Following receipt of university ethical approval for the study, a flyer was posted on the first author's personal Facebook page. This provided an overview of the research aims and first author's contact details. Six participants were recruited via this method and an additional eight participants were recruited via purposive (personal contacts) and snowball sampling. Most participants were not known to the first author, rather they were

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Age	Gender	Highest Education Level Achieved	Occupation
56	Female	Year 10	Housekeeper
33	Male	TAFE[1]	Scaffolder
56	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Student
57	Female	Bachelor's Degree	School Registrar
57	Female	Year 10	Retired
40	Female	TAFE	CEO (not for profit)
57	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher
22	Male	Bachelor's Degree	Student
30	Female	TAFE	Office Manager
26	Female	Bachelor's Degree	Sales
42	Male	TAFE	Sign Technician
41	Male	Year 12	Store person
25	Male	Year 10	Store person
64	Female	Year 10	Semi-Retired Counsellor

Note[1]: TAFE is a provider of vocational education and training in Australia

family and friends of her Facebook contacts which include professional, university and personal contacts. There was no difficulty recruiting participants, none refused to be in the study, and no participants withdrew from the research. Interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes (18 minutes - 86 minutes). The interviews were conducted at the first author's home or the participant's home, with the exception of one interview which was conducted in a meeting room at the university. Two interviews were conducted over the telephone. The first author conducted and transcribed all of the interviews.

The interview questions were guided by the two dimensions of Berry's (2001) acculturation model, that is; the degree to which people want to maintain (or shed) their own culture and identity, and the degree to which people want to mix/have contact with (or avoid) people outside of their cultural group. Each of these dimensions was framed reciprocally, resulting in four main topics for questions. For example, participants were asked for their views on the importance of refugees learning about majority Australian

culture and the importance of majority Australians learning about refugees' cultures. The interviews were audio-recorded.
Data analysis.
Data analysis was conducted by the first author using theoretical (or deductive) thematic analysis as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). The interviews were listened to several times and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were then read and re-read and examined for themes relating to cultural learning/mixing and cultural maintenance. The second author analysed several transcripts alongside the first author to enhance interpretative rigour and confirm the analytical approach. With the assistance of the QSR NVIVO 10 (QSR International, 2012) program, and following Braun and Clarke's approach, we undertook a six phase process of thematic analysis. This began with familiarisation with the data by reading, re-reading and taking note of any patterns that emerged or initial ideas. Secondly, initial codes were generated by systematically identifying interesting features in the data set and grouping data under each code. Step three involved identifying potential themes and collating

codes into these themes, followed by a review of these themes and construction of a thematic map during step four. During the fifth phase themes were defined and named, requiring continual analysis and refinement of the specific elements of each theme. The sixth phase involved writing up the findings and report

Concept of Refugees

Because the term 'refugee' overlaps with that of asylum seeker, particularly in popular discourse in Australia, the first researcher ensured that a common understanding was being used in the interviews by providing a definition of the term, or distinction between it and 'asylum seeker' or 'migrant', as appropriate to each conversational flow. Generally, participants knew what was meant by the term 'refugee' and conveyed this in the interviews. Participants who asked for clarification or appeared to not clearly distinguish between refugee, asylum seeker and/or migrant were given a definition by the researcher, for example: "refugees are people that have been given refugee status and they can live in the community".

Findings and Interpretations

The two research questions were; "How do majority Australians view their own acculturation in the context of refugees?" and "What are majority Australian attitudes toward refugee acculturation?" For the first question, three themes emerged. The second question also resulted in three themes. Underlining in quotes (e.g., _them_) denotes verbal emphasis (stress) made by the participant.

Majority Own Acculturation Expectations

In this section data are presented that represent how participants viewed their own acculturation process relative to refugees. Themes that emerged were; 'cultural learning and diversity', 'responsibility for interaction' and "Australianness" and its boundaries'.

Cultural learning and diversity

There were mixed views about the value of learning about refugees' cultures when participants were asked about their own acculturation, and learning about others. Most participants expressed a willingness to learn, which was believed to facilitate more

understanding toward refugees, which would ultimately assist their acculturation. One of the participants, a well-travelled teacher, said:

> "yeah I think that's where the whole problem lies is people don't understand other people's cultures. Australians don't understand other people's cultures if they haven't travelled... yeah that's important for us to be educated...why they're actually leaving that country, coming here" (Female, aged 57)

This participant views understanding other cultures as being important and sees travel as helpful in facilitating this process. This reflects a commonly-held belief that prejudice stems from lack of knowledge; if there was greater knowledge then there would be greater understanding and people would be less likely to rely on stereotypes and false beliefs about refugees. There is some evidence to support this view, in terms of the effects of positive intercultural contact, which has been shown to reduce prejudice under the right conditions and this is assumed to be at least in part due to enhanced knowledge. However, mere information is insufficient to change attitudes; cross-cultural awareness programs and advertising campaigns have been found to have weak and short-lived effects (if any; Pedersen, Walker, & Wise, 2005).

Conversely, other participants expressed that they did not have an interest in learning about refugees' cultures:

> "On the fence like.. _if_ you're interested in that.. yeah, but if you're not, if I'm not interested in computer games, I'm not gonna play computer games.. if I'm not interested in sport, why am I gonna watch sport? If I'm not interested in learning their culture, why would I wanna learn their culture?" (Male, aged 25)

This participant does not view learning about refugees' cultures as important but instead he views it as an optional activity and compares learning about other cultures to hobbies like sports and computer games. It is a strongly individualist view, with little declared responsibility or belief in the value of cultural

learning.

Responsibility for Interaction

Participants had mixed feelings about interaction with refugees and expressed apathy or lack of motivation when it came to interaction. For example when asked if he could see himself seeking out interaction with refugees, one participant said "*I haven't yet, not for any other reason…laziness or indifference I suppose*" Another participant responded:

> "*yes and no…I don't feel like I have to interact with refugees at all because I don't know where they <u>are</u> ya know"?* (Male, aged 22).

This participant's response implies that the choice to interact is somewhat 'out of his hands' or externalised because if he was told where refugees were, he could perhaps interact.

Willingness or interest in interacting with refugees was also qualified with the view that refugees should be willing to take steps to help facilitate majority Australian interaction with them. When asked if interaction was valuable, one participant agreed, but added:

> "*yeah I'd qualify that I'm all for [interaction with] people that are willing to assimilate and make effort to get out within and contribute to the community*" (Female, aged 57)

When asked if they would interact with refugees, some agreed, but with conditions:

> "*Yeah… I wouldn't care less….as long as they follow our rules, that's all I care about*" (Male, aged 22)

> "*Yeah I do… and I think it's also important that they don't just fill up certain areas with certain cultures*" (Female, aged 26)

Although participants had different reasons for inability to interact or conditions or qualifications on interaction, the common thread in responses was that participants felt the onus was essentially on refugees. Whether it be that refugees are not easily identifiable, thus hampering interaction, or that they be required to put in effort or meet Australians' half way; participants clearly see themselves as playing a

smaller role in interaction. Indeed, Dandy and Pe-Pau (2013) found that majority members felt excluded from diversity programs in which they might want to participate, again placing the onus for lack of interaction on others. According to Wise and Velayutham (2009) majority Australians' largely see themselves as free from obligation to interact with people from minority groups and from acculturation in general. This complacent majority, with a self-perceived lack of agency, combined with minority members who perhaps lack the confidence to initiate contact, results in precious little productive inter-cultural connections being made.

"Australianness" and its Boundaries

In discussing majority Australians' own acculturation, most of the discussion from participants referred to aspects of Australian culture that should *not* change (rather than the ways in which it should) and thus this theme centred around definitions of Australian identity and its boundaries. For example, some participants felt strongly about maintaining the Christian nature of society in Australia:

> "*I get really annoyed when I hear people saying, "oh well.. umm, it's not Merry Christmas anymore you know because it's against their religion, well I'm sorry you're coming to a country that believes in Christmas… We accept your culture… we accept your churches you need to accept ours.*" (Female, aged 26)

This statement reflects the passionate tone of the participants in general when speaking about maintaining a Christian society. Many of the arguments for maintaining a Christian way of life included reference to tolerating and allowing the cultural or religious practices of others, but that this tolerance should be reciprocated ("*we accept your culture, you need to accept ours*"). This implied that Christianity was under threat in Australia. Specifically, most participants expressed concern about perceived threats to school Christmas celebrations. As a teacher, one participant was concerned about rumours she had heard that Muslim groups were trying

to stop end of year celebrations in schools:

> "...someone said we shouldn't have Christmas, we shouldn't celebrate Christmas in the school because of other religions....well, I don't believe that because they're coming to our country, it [Christianity] is entrenched in our society and is our religion." (Female, aged 57)

The language is interesting here as this participant uses "we" and "our" versus "they're" and "other" to refer to refugees or minority Australians. Hage (2000) argues that the assigning labels of 'other' or 'them' to an out-group gives majority members feelings of empowerment and supervisorship over the Australian 'space', while rendering members of the out-group as objects to be managed. This participant's feeling that practices in 'our society, our country' should not be changed to accommodate the 'other' is an example of majority members supervising the Australian space and setting the terms by which the space operates. Other participants overwhelmingly agreed with this sentiment, that omitting Christmas celebrations from schools was something they would not allow. One participant said that schools "_should_ be able to have Christian themed assemblies and so on, because I feel like that [is] the _culture_ of _this_ country, based on Christian values." (Female, aged 57)

A boundary of "Australianness" which participants were happy to extend, related to the diversity of cuisine and the arts that different cultures bring:

> "I know the food I _used_ to eat was very Anglicised compared to the food I eat these days um and there's so _much more_ variety available now. The interesting influence of immigrants... that's a fantastic thing." (Female, aged 57)

> "witnessing and experiencing other people's cultures, um their food, their arts, their music.. I think it creates a very rich environment to have.... different backgrounds coming together." (Male, aged 42)

Participants valued the influence of immigration on the cuisine that is available in Australia. This diversity of cuisine could perhaps be viewed as a less threatening aspect of living in a multicultural country. This has sometimes been referred to as the _pasta and polka_ view of multiculturalism, in which less threatening aspects of other cultures such as food, music, and dress are celebrated and encouraged, while other cultural norms and values are discouraged or not invited (Collins, 2013).

Refugee Acculturation

This section focuses on majority Australian attitudes toward refugee acculturation. Three themes emerged: 'rejected aspects and stereotypes', 'assimilation', and 'embrace Australian culture'.

Rejected aspects and stereotypes: Violence and the burqa

Participants' spoke of undesirable features of refugees' cultures that they did not wish to see integrated into Australia. The main sub-themes were 'violence' and 'the burqa'.

Participants expressed concern about levels of violence in refugee communities in Australia. One participant worried that refugees were bringing the violence of their homeland with them to Australia:

> "...we don't know what they bring out like there's all this violence that's breaking out... that's all they know... all they know is violence." (Male, aged 25)

Another participant attributed violence in refugee communities to particular cultural groups congregating in certain suburbs, resulting in inter-group conflict because of religious differences between these groups:

> "[Perth Suburb] is known as the Nigerian... pretty much little clique, you've got a lot of Nigerians living there and you've got a lot of... um _bashings_ because of it, you've got the African cultures in one set mixed with a lot of Muslims, and they're just _clashing_ with each other." (Female, aged 26)

The view that African groups are associated with violence is common in Australia (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010) and was shared by others participants, including one who said *"African youths are causing trouble"*. No participant reported they had experienced this directly but often cited the media as being one of the sources of this information (*"what I hear in the news"* and *"the gangs are getting worse...I try not to be biased by the news but with all the evidence it seems to be true"*). Representations in the media of certain refugee groups such as those who are Muslim and/or from African backgrounds serve to reinforce negative stereotypes and are associated with psychological essentialism (Hanson-Easey, Augoustinos, & Moloney, 2014). For example, Hanson-Easey et al. identified that speakers on talkback radio associated people from Sudan (either living in Sudan, or Australia) with tribal properties and that this tribal 'essence' accounted for violent behaviour apparently seen in these groups.

Along with violence, wearing the burqa was a contentious issue among participants. Reasons for this included that it was; a risk to security and/or safety, a barrier to communication, and that it oppresses women. For example, one participant made comparisons to the general rule that helmets were not allowed to be worn into banks and service stations:

> *"I couldn't care if they wanna wear it they can but if they go into the banks or in places where it has to be taken off.. y'know service stations, we can't wear a helmet in there like the motor bike helmet or anything, they shouldn't be able to wear that in there either... why one rule for one and not the other?"* (Male, aged 25)

Participants were also concerned when they thought about communicating with a woman who is wearing the burqa:

> *"... umm you read someone by their body language and if you can't see their body because they're completely covered in black and you can't see their face..."* (Female, aged 26)

Participants felt strongly that the burqa was oppressive to women and that there is no place for this oppression in Australia:

> *"I think it's a shame though that their culture is at the point where they have -women have to be covered because the men obviously, well, the men can't control themselves and women have to cover themselves so that nobody looks at them, I think that's sad."* (Male, aged 42)

In recent years, the burqa has been a contentious issue debated in public and political arenas in Australia and more broadly. Some researchers have argued that these debates are fuelled by negative portrayal of the burqa by the Australian media, in which women in the burqa are portrayed as a risk to security and oppressed by 'fundamentalist' Islam, a view evident in participants' responses (e.g. Hebbani & Wills, 2012).

Assimilation

A second theme of refugee acculturation was the view that refugees should assimilate. Participants spoke about assimilation in terms of 'blending in' and refugees segregating themselves;

> *"really you've gotta kind of blend in ya know"* (Female, aged 56)

> *"...if they're going to live in our culture they've got to learn about it, they've gotta mesh in... they've gotta become virtually invisible with the people so they're not outstanding, for their own protection too."* (Female, aged 64)

Although this second participant does not use the term "assimilate", according to Berry's (2001) model she is nonetheless seeking *assimilation* from refugees because there is clear instruction for refugees to "*mesh in*" and "*become virtually invisible*" by not appearing different to other (or majority) Australians. Moreover, it is suggested that refugees blend in for "*their own protection*"; presumably this is to avoid being negatively targeted for standing out. It is evident from these responses that majority members require

refugees to alter themselves in some way so that they may be accepted by the majority community; however there was no suggestion as to how majority members may help facilitate this process. Other participants stated explicitly that they wished for refugees to assimilate:

> *"... I understand why they're coming here, I understand that it's harder for them, but having arrived here and been accepted, then they need to assimilate into our society."* (Female, aged 57)

Participants also spoke of concerns about residential segregation; refugees living in isolated pockets in the community:

> *"...I think if they're segregating themselves...they don't* [want] *to participate in the actual culture that they're now within, and I think if you're going to move into somebody else's culture...you have to be ready to integrate rather than segregate yourself."* (Male, aged 42)

Again, this participant has an assimilationist standpoint, asking that refugees immerse themselves in mainstream culture and not stand out. This response is comparable with other research on majority attitudes which has found that majority members dislike immigrants and minority groups being segregated, or separate from majority communities (e.g. Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). The participant explains that refugee segregation is a barrier to assimilation and integration and that segregation is something that refugees freely choose. Most participants in this study viewed residential segregation as choice made by refugees. Comparisons were made with travelling to another country, like a tourist:

> *"they group together, in like their own little society and have their own rules, instead of...if I go to another country I wanna, mingle with the locals and learn their way."* (Male, aged 25)

Segregation was also viewed with suspicion:

> *"creating their own, idealised separate .... community that's then* <u>*separated*</u> *... they put walls up against the other community... I think that's*

where <u>*fear*</u> *comes from"* (Male, aged 42)

However, some participants felt that segregation was desirable and that refugee practices should be kept away from the view of majority Australians:

> *"yeah it wouldn't matter if there was a little secret room somewhere where the toilets are hidden in the alley way, they can have their* <u>*prayer*</u> *room in there as well."* (Female, aged 57)

Or indeed, that whole communities should be hidden:

> *"You know what I reckon they should do? They should get a- the middle of Australia so all the people* [refugees] *can go live in their own city in the middle of Australia."* (Female, aged 64)

This participant expressed a desire for refugees from various cultures to have their own small nations in the outback, while framing this idea as giving refugees their own oasis, as a gift of sorts. Here the participants would like to allocate a space especially for refugees out of view from mainstream Australia. Hage (2000) argues that White (majority) Australians' assign themselves the job of 'supervisor' or 'manager' of the Australian 'space'. That is, majority members decide who and what will be included, excluded, the degree to which majority members and refugees will interact and how this interaction will play out. Assigning refugee groups their own 'spaces' away from majority Australians may also be explained by a perceived threat to majority cultural dominance and homogeneity of that dominant cultural space (Dandy, 2009).

Australian Culture Adoption

The final theme regarding refugee acculturation related to participant desire for refugees' to adopt majority Australian culture.

All participants stated that learning English was a necessity for refugees. Participants reported that although they understood that refugees may not speak English initially, they should start learning English as soon as possible. A school teacher

explains:

> *"Yeah I think, I think they should... learn to speak English... I don't mind them keeping their home language and teaching their children their home language, but I don't think their children should be learning the home language to the detriment of learning English"* (Female, aged 57)

This participant's comment demonstrates that she supports acculturation strategies of *integration* and *multiculturalism.* This respondent also expresses concern that learning the home language may interfere with learning English; as if the two languages are in competition. Others felt that not learning English was disrespectful to majority members and Australia in general but the majority of participants expressed that learning English was important for refugees' simply because it would make their experience easier.

Most participants expressed that they expect refugees to actively learn about Australian culture and embrace the Australian way of life, although participants did not explicitly define what the Australian way of life was, apart from that it was of a Christian nature, as described earlier:

> *"embrace values that <u>we</u> hold in common here, and in their personal lives try and embrace the same values, I know it's very hard for them to ah you to give up, their <u>home</u> culture and all that but I mean they've made the decision to come and live in a <u>new</u> country they're obviously open to.. umm new experiences and a new way of life and umm I think they need to sort of... adapt themselves to the new way of life."* (Female, aged 57)

This participant acknowledges that refugees have experienced troubled times but asks that they "*give up*" their own culture and adapt to the Australian culture and way of life. Therefore, according to Berry's (2001) model, this participant expressed a desire for refugees to adopt a *melting pot* strategy because she prescribes maximal cultural shedding and interaction from refugees. This participant and

others spoke about refugees and majority Australians in terms of "their" culture and "our" culture as clearly defined and rigid entities (essentialism). Moreover, there was a sense that there could not be a mix of cultures, but they are in competition for limited space or capacity within the individual, but they are in competition for limited space or capacity within the individual, or they are seen as contradictory. Thus one has to shed his/her own culture to make space for Australian culture to reside.

Another concern was the need for Australian laws to be understood and respected. Moreover, participants stated clearly that they felt that changing existing laws to accommodate refugees' values and norms was unacceptable.

> *"...as long as they follow our rules and our laws... That's the main thing that annoys me is that they want to bring in their own rules and we have our own rules already..."* (Male, aged 25)

> *"They gotta assimilate like everyone else does, so yeah. We obey our laws, I don't obey <u>their</u> law... only if I go to their country I would, so yeah, apart from that, they should obey our laws. With some, you give <u>some</u> leniency but yeah, it's just...you know, you're here, you gotta understand our laws, ya know?"* (Male, aged 56)

Emphasis was placed on 'their laws' and 'our laws', again demarcating clear boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. They expressed frustration at what they perceived to be attempts by refugees to change existing laws in Australia; "*the main thing that annoys me is that they want to bring in their own rules and we have our own rules already*".

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study we sought to answer the questions; "How do majority Australians view their own acculturation in the context of refugees?" and "What are majority Australian attitudes toward refugee acculturation?" The findings reveal that participants are resistant

to changing in meaningful ways but they desire considerable change from refugees. In particular, the participants preferred that refugees adopt Australian culture and shed many aspects of their heritage culture in order to integrate with and be accepted by Australian society. Furthermore, although participants' expressed the desire to learn about refugees' cultures and mix with refugees, they viewed their own role in the process of acculturation as being minimal, a finding consistent with previous international research (e.g. Berry, 2001). These attitudes are also consistent with Hage's (2000) claim that majority Australian members' maintain their cultural dominance by being managers of the Australian space. Similarly, Vasta (2003) argued that majority members, feeling threatened by incoming cultures, prefer to view the dominant Anglo culture as an unmoveable, static entity that cannot change, a concept that was reflected in participant responses in the present study.

Most of the participants expected refugees to choose strategies of integration or assimilation in which they would interact with majority members, change cultural practices such as what they wear, learn English and embrace the Australian way of life; all of which are significant changes. Moreover, participants expected refugees to make a concerted effort to bring about these changes, i.e., the responsibility for integration or assimilation was seen to rest with refugees. These attitudes reflect those found in other studies of majority acculturation attitudes in the context of minority groups (e.g. Matera et al., 2011). These findings are consistent with Berry's (2001) model of acculturation, in that participants chose strategies for refugees of assimilation (or melting pot) and integration (or multiculturalism), as outlined in his model. However, there is less evidence for the mutuality of acculturation that Berry's model entails, because how much participants wanted to change compared with how much they thought *refugees* should change was significantly disproportionate. Moreover, participants

were ambivalent about interaction with refugees; on the one hand, they expressed a desire for refugees to make significant effort to interact and blend in, but on the other hand they were not motivated to seek out or help facilitate this interaction themselves.

It was evident throughout the interviews that participants consistently thought of refugees as people with Islamic religious beliefs and/or from Middle Eastern or African backgrounds despite the reality that people from refugee backgrounds in Australia come from a much broader range of national origins. (Department of Immigration and Border Protection [DIBP], 2013). This may be because these groups are more readily identifiable: 'visible' minorities. Nonetheless, these groups are also those most often associated with negative stereotypes such as violence and terrorism (e.g. Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Hanson-Easey, et al., 2014). Negative attitudes toward minority groups in Australia, particularly Muslim groups, are often fuelled by the media (Hebbani & Wills, 2012). It is possible that media representations of refugees were the primary basis for participants' attitudes because most reported they had not had direct contact with refugees.

Participants' lack of experience and interaction with refugees is a potential limitation of this study because their attitudes were largely based on stereotypes and associated false beliefs (which may have led to a further avoidance of interaction; Pedersen et al., 2005). Future research could investigate the attitudes or experiences of majority members who have had interactions with refugees, although previous research suggests that this interaction is uncommon (e.g. Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2013). There is also a need to explore refugee acculturation strategies in order to compare them with majority Australians expectations. Concordance or conflict between acculturation strategies of minority and majority groups has been shown to play significant part in outcomes for both groups (e.g. Kunst & Sam, 2013; Pfafferot & Brown, 2006).

This qualitative study has provided insight into the acculturation attitudes of

majority Australians in relation to refugees. Our findings reveal that majority members view their role in acculturation as minimal, while requiring refugees to change significantly. Moreover, our findings highlight the complex and ambivalent nature of acculturation, particularly from a majority perspective, and the significant role of the media in forming and perpetuating stereotypes of refugees. These findings are important because the attitudes of majority members in refugee-receiving countries have been found to directly impact on refugee acculturation and subsequent outcomes. Future studies should further explore these themes with larger samples, to inform our understanding of 'mutual' acculturation in Australia.

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Notes
[1] Those with British cultural heritage
[2] Australians who were born in Australia with
    one or both parents born in Australia or
    Britain
[3] The Burqa is the full face/body veil with
    eyes hidden under mesh, however, in
    Australia the most commonly seen full-
    cover veil is the niqab; the full face/body
    veil with the eyes visible through a
    rectangular slit. The niqab is largely
    referred to by majority Australians as the
    burqa (Hebbani & Wills, 2012). As such,
    for the purpose of this study and ease of
    reading, either of the two full face/body
    coverings will be referred to as the burqa

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