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Running head: bystander anti prejudice

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Abstract

This paper describes a 12-week intervention targeting positivity towards asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians. The study also assessed change in the intention to engage in bystander activism in four different scenarios: two Indigenous (old-fashioned and modern prejudice), one Muslim and one asylum seeker. There was a significant increase in positivity towards asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians. There was also a significant increase in ‘speaking out intention’, a form of bystander anti prejudice, in three of the scenarios, but not in response to the Indigenous old-fashioned prejudice scenario. The study indicates that structured education on cross-cultural issues can improve attitudes to perceived “outgroups” and, for the most part, increase participants’ intention to speak out against prejudice.

Prejudiced attitudes towards asylum seekers (e.g., Every & Augoustinos, 2008) as well as Muslim Australians and Indigenous Australians (e.g., Griffiths & Pedersen, 2009) are well documented in Australia. The deleterious effect of such prejudice, together with more structural forms of prejudice, is also well documented both in and outside of Australia (Paradies, 2006; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammed 2009). Given the large body of Australian research that examines prejudice and its antecedents, one could reasonably expect a substantial body of research on how to *counteract* such prejudice. However, this is not the case. There are as few as eight quasi-experimental studies in Australia that have examined this issue with varying degrees of effectiveness. Most have been conducted with respect to Indigenous Australians (Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Issues Deliberation Australia, 2001; Mooney, Bauman, Westwood, Kelaher, Tibben, & Jalaludin, 2005; Pedersen & Barlow, 2008; Teague, 2010). Others have been conducted with respect to Muslim Australians (Issues Deliberation Australia, 2007; Mavor, Kanra, Thomas, Blink, & O'Brien, 2009; Pedersen, Aly, Hartley & McGarty, 2009). No interventions have been conducted with respect to asylum seekers in Australia.

The present study is informed by research throughout the world and we note that there are excellent reviews of the prejudice literature in this regard (e.g., Paluck & Green, 2009). However, the scenarios used and outgroups discussed reflect the contextual nature of prejudice in Australia (Dunn, Forrest, Pe-Pau, Hynes & Maeder-Han, 2009). The contextual nature of prejudice is particularly evident with respect to asylum seekers in Australia which has a particularly harsh detention regime compared to other Western countries (Briskman, Latham & Goddard, 2008). This is mirrored in negative community

attitudes (Pedersen, Watt & Hansen, 2006). In our study, we replicated previous research with an intervention targeting attitudes towards Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians; however, we went beyond that of previous studies by measuring attitudes towards asylum seekers. We based our intervention on the paper by Pedersen, Walker, Paradies and Guerin (2011) that sets out 14 anti prejudice mechanisms that were considered effective as determined from extant literature in this area. These mechanisms include: the provision of information about groups, cultural respect, choosing emotions wisely (e.g., concentrating on increasing empathy rather than instilling guilt), emphasising both the commonality between different cultural groups as well as differences, taking into account the specific context of the intervention, invoking cognitive dissonance, discussing consensus effects through which more prejudiced people incorrectly assume that they are in the majority and are thus more vocal in their intolerance, discussing different identities (i.e. nationalism and whiteness), finding alternate talk, including multiple voices from multiple disciplines, and targeting the appropriate function of attitudes. We also took into account the need for evaluation at three separate points in time. The intervention was relatively long, a few months and hence likely to be more effective in addressing prejudice than shorter interventions (Trenerry, Franklin & Paradise; McGregor & Ungerleider, 1993).

Another important issue that has been somewhat neglected in the research is “bystander anti prejudice”. This refers to individuals taking action, often by speaking out against specific incidents of prejudice when they are not directly involved (Nelson, Dunn, Paradies, Pedersen, Sharpe, Hynes & Guerin, 2010). This is an important topic for research; as noted by Nelson et al., acts of bystander anti prejudice can push social norms

away from prejudice. To our knowledge, there has been no empirical work done specifically on bystander anti prejudice in the Australian setting; however, there is some international research on bystander action that is relevant to the present study.

Bystanders are more likely to help people who they see as similar to themselves (Saucier, Miller & Doucet, 2005). People may be worried about the perpetrator turning on them if they take action (see Aboud & Joong, 2008, with respect to children and bullying).

Aboud and Joong (2008) also found that children worried that any bystander action which they take may be ineffective. This highlights the importance of appropriate skills and the confidence to apply them. There is also the issue of interpersonal relations; as found by Maher (2009), speaking out can negatively impact on relationships with family and friends (also see Guerin, 2003; 2005; Scully & Rowe, 2009). Lastly, it is important not to produce defensiveness among the participants of an intervention (Czopp, Monteith & Mark, 2006; Plous, 2000).

Overview of the Present Study

Our study relates to potential attitudes towards asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians before and after a university unit “Psychology: Culture and Community” using the mechanisms outlined in Pedersen et al. (2011) as a guide. We did not attempt to tease out the differing contributions of the mechanisms; we attempted to use all the mechanisms. Some involved explicit information (e.g., the challenging of false beliefs) and others involved the manner in which the seminars were structured (e.g., respecting the views of all participants even if in disagreement). Some anti prejudice mechanisms were given more weight in the unit than others; for example, the provision of information, the power of social norms, and the use of empathy rather than

guilt. But in some shape or form, all mechanisms were included in the intervention with the students.

There were three aims of our study. First, how likely were students to report they would take action against prejudice in four different scenarios: two Indigenous (one involving old-fashioned prejudice, the other involving modern prejudice), one Muslim and one asylum seeker scenario? Would there be a difference when comparing a blatantly prejudiced scenario with a more socially acceptable (modern) scenario? Second, would there be changes over time with three attitude measures and the four bystander scenarios? Third, what themes emerge from a pre-and-post open-ended question as described in the next section?

Method

Participants

At Time 1, participants were 37 second and third year Psychology students undertaking an elective unit “Psychology: Culture and Community”. At Time 2, participants were a sub-set of the original sample; those who completed the questionnaire at both the first and the last seminar of the semester. There were 23 participants who completed questionnaires at Times 1 and 2. Finally, 10 weeks after Time 2, eight participants completed the questionnaire (all these students completed at Times 1 and 2). This third sub-set is given less emphasis ~~given their small numbers~~ due to the small sample size.

The 23 participants were predominately female (91%) with a wide range of ages (18-44 years with a mean of 26 years). Most (83%) identified as being Caucasian/European with the remainder coming from Asia and Croatia (one participant simply stated she was Australian). Just under half of the sample (44%) reported having

no religion, with 44% stating their religion as Christian. One participant was Muslim (4%) and two were Buddhist (8%).

Measures.

Socio-demographic information. Respondents stated their age in years, their sex, their cultural background, and their religion.

Positivity towards “outgroups”. We used three attitude thermometers to measure attitudes to asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians and Australian Muslims; this type of measurement has been used successfully in previous interventions (e.g., Pedersen & Barlow, 2008). The prefacing question read, “In general how positive or favourable do you feel about ?” Participants could respond from 0° (extremely unfavourable) to 100° (extremely favourable).

Speaking Out Intention. This refers to the intention to engage in bystander anti prejudice. Participants were asked whether they would intervene in four different scenarios (see Appendix A). For all scenarios, there were four quantitative options: two were seen as non-active (e.g., “no, people have the right to say what they want”), two quantitative options were seen as positively active (e.g., “yes, it is important to challenge prejudice whenever it occurs”) and one qualitative open-ended response which simply asked “other” with a couple of lines underneath. There was one asylum seeker and Muslim scenario and two scenarios for Indigenous Australians: one involving old-fashioned and one involving modern prejudice. The modern scenario reflected the notion of “special treatment” which was given considerable emphasis within the seminars.

Qualitative data.

Participants were asked at the end of all the questionnaires: “Finally, are there any other comments you'd like to make that would help me understand your views better?”

Procedure

Time 1 Intervention. The pre-test questionnaire was given in the first seminar; students’ participation was voluntary and responses were anonymous and took an average of 20 minutes to complete. During the unit, students were given 12 non-compulsory three-hour seminars with an emphasis on prejudice against marginalised groups. Each session involved a mix of lecture and discussion. The lectures drew from published empirical research, mostly Australian applied social psychology although information from other disciplines was also included. At times, the discussion was in the form of structured questions; at other times it was spontaneously generated by the students themselves. Students were encouraged to actively engage, and encouraged to critically assess the source of information received.

Students, regardless of their cultural background, were encouraged to acknowledge their prejudices or cultural biases. They were also encouraged to respect different viewpoints even if they personally disagreed with them. The concept of ‘cultural relativity’ was discussed; students were not asked to unthinkingly accept that “morality is wholly relative to cultural outlook” (Crowder, 2008, p. 248). Instead, in line with Crowder’s argument, the notion of “value pluralism” was discussed - there are some ethical universals, and sometimes these may clash with other values. The mechanisms outlined previously from Pedersen et. al. (2011) were incorporated throughout the 12 seminars (e.g., giving correct information about the three outgroups; outlining the relationship between prejudice and acceptance of incorrect information).

Of the 12 seminars, five involved primarily cultural psychology, one introduced community psychology, and the other six were loosely focused on the concept of prejudice (although the prejudice seminars often related to cultural or community psychology). See Appendix B for a description of the seminars which were specifically related to prejudice and associated readings; it also sets out the guest speakers who ~~most~~ presented for between 30-60 minutes. The first prejudice seminar was titled “Attitudes to Australian “outgroups” and was given by the first author. It concentrated on prejudice against the three cultural groups that are the subject of this paper. The second prejudice seminar was titled “Attitudes towards Australian Muslims” given by Australian Muslim Dr Anne Aly and the first author. The third prejudice seminar was titled “Indigenous ‘special treatment’ and Indigenous children at school”. This was based on Pedersen, Dudgeon, Watt and Griffiths (2006) with updated statistical information. The fourth prejudice seminar was titled “Community Psychology and Indigenous Australians” and was given by Dr Lizzie Finn and the first author. The fifth prejudice seminar was titled “Community Psychology and refugees/asylum seekers” which was given by Dr Alex Main and the first author. One of the readings was about a stateless asylum seeker Wasim who is a friend of the first author and after a decade still has no substantive visa. His “difference” and “similarity” to mainstream Australians was discussed. As noted by Park and Judd (2005), it is neither feasible nor desirable to completely eliminate social categories (also see Tilbury, 2007, with regard to asylum seekers). The lecturer attempted not to instill collective guilt in the students but rather concentrated on fostering empathy as guilt is an aversive emotion which people normally attempt to avoid (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002). The final prejudice seminar was titled “Bystander anti prejudice”

and was given by the first author. An ex-student of the unit, Ms Leoni Mole, spoke to the class about an experience where she engaged in bystander anti prejudice when confronted with a vocal prejudiced customer in a work situation. Throughout this last seminar, both the pros and cons of taking bystander action were discussed; as noted previously, it is always possible that the person taking action could be targeted by the perpetrator of the incident. We discussed when it was appropriate, and when it was not appropriate, to take action (the example given to the class was when the first author was targeted by a white supremacist group).

Time 2

Fourteen weeks after distribution of the first questionnaire, students completed a second questionnaire which was identical to the first. This took place at the end of the last seminar.

Time 3

Twelve weeks after distribution of the second questionnaire, students completed a third electronic questionnaire which included the same questions as outlined above.

There was one Muslim participant who was excluded from the attitudes towards Muslim analyses. Given that there were no participating Indigenous or asylum seeking students, all data were used for the other analyses.

Results.

Positivity to Outgroups.

The following section analyses data from the 23 participants who completed questionnaires at both Time 1 and Time 2. At Time 1, the mean for positivity towards Indigenous people and asylum seekers were around Neutral (see Table 1). The mean for

positivity towards Muslim people was closer to Slightly Favourable than Neutral. At Time 2, the mean for positivity towards Indigenous people was close to Fairly Favourable. The means for asylum seekers and Muslim Australians were both Fairly Favourable.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

A number of t-tests were conducted to examine change from Time 1 to Time 2. As noted by Rothman and Greenland (1998), multiple comparisons are problematic only when statistically significant findings are reported without information on the total number of tests conducted. Providing this denominator allows one to determine the proportion of tests that were significant and compare this to the alpha-level set for these tests. We report on all t-tests, allowing the reader to assess the risk of Type I error without increasing the risk of Type II error through adjustment for multiple comparisons.

As can also be seen in Table 1, there was a significant increase in positivity from Time 1 to Time 2 for all three outgroups. With respect to asylum seekers positivity, there was a 22.4 point increase. With respect to Indigenous positivity, there was a 17.2 percentage point increase. With respect to Muslim positivity, there was a 16.8 percentage point increase.

Speaking Out Intention.

Responses were recoded into two categories to allow for a comparison between the students who reported that they would take positive social action and those who reported they would not. This took into account the four possible quantitative responses to the scenarios plus the qualitative response for students who did not feel that the available responses appropriately captured their view (1 = would not take positive action;

2 = would take positive action). Comparisons between Time 1 and 2 (Table 2) demonstrate the considerable potential of anti prejudice education to improve bystander activism. With the asylum-seeker scenario, just over half the sample reported that they would take action at Time 1 while over 90% reported they would do so at Time 2. With the Indigenous scenario regarding special treatment, half of the students reported that they would take action at Time 1, while over four-fifths reported they would do so at Time 2. For the scenario of Indigenous old fashioned prejudice (which was less ambiguous), over four-fifths of students reported that they would take action at Times 1 and 2. With the Muslim scenario, just under two-thirds reported that they would take action at Time 1, while well over 90% did so at Time 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

There was a significant increase in Speaking Out Intention in three out of four scenarios (Table 2). The only scenario that did not significantly increase was the old-fashioned Indigenous one. With respect to the asylum seekers scenario, there was a 39.1 point increase. With respect to the Indigenous “special treatment” scenario, there was a 31.0 point increase. With respect to the Muslim scenario, there was a 33.3 percentage point increase.

Qualitative data: Time 1 and Time 2

To analyse the qualitative dataset, a thematic analysis was conducted (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At Time 1, there were three primary themes that we describe in order of prevalence (from highest to lowest) which primarily involved **not** taking action. The first was the need for *more information*; participants stated that they required more information to make an informed decision. For example, “I don’t know enough about the

Indigenous (sic) to say anything”. The second was the *right to have an opinion*. As one participant stated, “Everyone is entitled to its (sic) own opinions, mutual respect of difference in view is the key for peace”. Here the participant positions the challenging of other people’s opinions as conflictual and as undermining tolerance and peace. Finally, participants argued for *equality not special treatment*. Participants positioned the ‘special treatment’ of minority groups (e.g., Indigenous Australians; asylum seekers) as a violation of the principle of equality. Equality here is constructed as all groups receiving the same government support, regardless of structural disadvantage. For example, one participant reported: “I went to a high school that had a large population of Indigenous people and know quite a few that got money as an incentive to go to school. They also had a building they could go to if they did not feel like going to class, this building was for aboriginal kids only and they never got in trouble if they chose to go there instead of class”. By contrast, there was only one theme that participants used to justify how and why they would intervene: *overt challenging others’ beliefs*. For example, “Explain that the route (sic) of the problem is the nature of indoctrination in all religions and that key problem is the major issue”.

Compared to the responses at Time 1, participants provided more explanations as to why they **would** intervene at Time 2 - two major themes emerged. Most participants suggested that it is important to give facts to challenge prejudice and to react in non-emotional and rational ways (*challenging prejudice through fact*). Indeed, two participants noted that they felt empowered from the unit itself and had more confidence to speak out against prejudice. For example, one participant noted that they felt “more informed after this unit so that I am better equiped (sic) to stand up for the minority & if

not I would research any statements I don't know the true answer to." This is an interesting finding given that a number of participants stated that they would not take action at Time 1 because they felt they did not have enough information. At Time 2, some participants also mentioned that they would *covertly challenge other's beliefs* by challenging the other person's beliefs but in a non-confronting way such as waiting for a joke to be told and challenging the person afterwards, in a one-on-one basis. For example, "Don't interrupt, but try and instill some truth after the joke has been told".

Only one participant stated that they would not take action at Time 2, providing the same argument that they presented at Time 1 that prejudice towards minority groups was justified as they receive special treatment (equality not special treatment). This participant justified their inaction by stating that "I know that we have been taught that some indigenous (sic) people get benefits to make them equal to non-indigenous people, but i (sic) personally feel this creates more resentment & racism".

Time 3

The questionnaire was emailed to students once more, twelve weeks after Time 2. Only eight students responded; 34% of the Time 1/Time 2 sample. We report these findings regardless of the small sample size using an alpha level of .05 for significant results and .10 for marginal results. With respect to Indigenous positivity, there was a marginal increase from Time 1 ($M=41.43$; $SD=16.76$) to Time 3 ($M=58.86$; $SD=30.04$) amounting to a 17.43 percentage point increase ($t(6) = 2.29$; $p = .062$). With respect to Muslim positivity, there was also a marginal increase from Time 1 ($M=56.67$; $SD=16.33$) to Time 3 ($M=80.17$; $SD=9.17$) amounting to a 23.50% increase ($t(5) = 2.54$; $p = .052$). With respect to asylum seekers positivity, there was a significant increase from Time 1

($M=50.0$; $SD=28.28$) to Time 3 ($M=77.43$; $SD=12.90$) amounting to a 27.43% increase ($t(6) = 2.49$; $p = .047$). There was no significant difference between Time 2 and Time 3 with respect to Indigenous positivity ($t(7) = 1.55$; $p = .166$), Muslim positivity ($t(6) = 1.45$; $p = .197$) or asylum seeker positivity ($t(7) = 0.19$; $p = .852$).

Unfortunately, it was not possible to calculate change in the four bystander questions. With two of the questions (old fashioned Indigenous and Muslim) there was no variation between participants' answers at Time 1 and Time 3. With the other two scenarios, there were only four participants for each analysis and, thus, we were unable to utilise any inferential statistics. Similar results were found between Time 2 and Time 3; either there were four participants only or not enough variation.

Discussion

Positivity

There were positive changes from Time 1 to Time 2 with respect to all three positivity measures. The changes were significant and relatively substantial (increases of between 17 and 22 percentage points). While such findings regarding Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians have been noted and discussed previously (e.g., Pedersen et al., 2009), the findings regarding asylum seekers have not been investigated and, as such, we emphasise these findings. Indeed, the improved positivity for asylum seekers was the most dramatic.

Quite a lot of detail was given in the seminars and the readings about asylum-seeker issues. During the 14 week semester period, there was much negative publicity about asylum seekers; for example, Federal Opposition Leader Tony Abbott inaccurately referred to them as "illegal immigrants" and the Liberal Party had a mobile billboard that

asked “How many illegal boats have arrived since Kevin Rudd took over?” Further, Tony Abbott and others spoke of “illegals jumping the queue”. The seminars stressed the importance of “giving of accurate information”; to correct false beliefs as recommended by Pedersen et al. (2011). A key example of such factual information is that seeking asylum is not illegal under either Australian or international law. It was also pointed out that for many asylum seekers there was no queue to jump and that Australia had a quota system rather than a queue in any case. The perceived political gain from fear-mongering about asylum seekers was discussed. The students also had readings addressing both these points (Appendix B). While students did not have first-hand contact with asylum seekers, they were given stories about asylum seekers both in the readings and in the seminars. Both the first author (the lecturer) and the third author (the tutor) are asylum seeker advocates, so much of this information was first-hand. Furthermore, our Muslim guest speaker Dr Anne Aly gave a great deal of first-hand account of experiencing prejudice; as found by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), contact generally decreases prejudice and the contact with Dr Aly would appear to have helped do just that with respect to the Muslim questions.

We are therefore able to say that anti prejudice education that involves factual information to confront false beliefs, as well as materials that humanise outgroups, appear effective tactics for improving positivity towards such outgroups. We note, however, that giving information alone has not always been found to increase positivity (e.g., Gringart, Helmes, & Speelman, 2008).

Bystander anti prejudice

With regard to Speaking Out Intention, scores were relatively low at Time 1 on the asylum seeker and the Indigenous (modern prejudice) scenarios; around half the students would not take positive action in relation to these two groups. Students were slightly more likely to report positive behavioural intentions in the Muslim scenario. The only scenario where most students would take action was the Indigenous (old-fashioned prejudice) scenario: over four-fifths of students said they would take positive action. Old fashioned prejudice has, for a number of years, not been seen as socially acceptable in most circles in Australia (Walker, 2001) and similar arguments have been made elsewhere (Brown, 2010; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). This may explain why students would feel it necessary to take a stand against such blatant bigotry. However, complaints about “special treatment” for minority groups are not commonly perceived as prejudice (Pedersen et al., 2006). Outgroups are often seen to benefit unfairly from social programmes which are designed to level the ‘playing field’. This ~~which~~ perception was apparent in our data.

After the intervention, there was a significant increase in students’ willingness to speak out in three out of four scenarios. Furthermore, seven students volunteered to do asylum-seeker work after the unit was completed. Throughout the second part of the unit, students brought up scenarios that they had faced (e.g., receiving the hoax email outlined in Scenario 2) and how they had dealt with them. Two out of the three bystander scenarios involved the concept of modern prejudice (see Walker, 2001). That is, some marginalised groups are seen as getting more than they deserve. In this case, the perception that refugees receive more benefits than pensioners and that Indigenous people receive “special treatment”. The scenario that did not change significantly was the

Indigenous (old fashioned prejudice) one, although there was an 8% increase in scores. This links in with the previous paragraph about the social norms surrounding the unacceptability of old-fashioned prejudice. Positive action scores were quite high to begin with, and the scenario was relatively low-risk; hence, the lack of statistically significant change is probably due to ‘ceiling’ effects for this ~~construct~~ scenario. It would be interesting to do a follow-up study examining bystander anti prejudice using a similar old-fashioned scenario but against other marginalised groups. There may well be a distinction between blatant and more modern forms of prejudice with these groups as well as with Indigenous Australians.

Our findings support the one other quasi-experimental study on bystander anti prejudice among university students that we know of. Specifically, a role-playing exercise based on Plous (2000) increased the ability of university students to generate effective responses to prejudiced comments above and beyond that of a control group (Lawson, McDonough, & Bodle, 2010).

As noted previously, in this “real-world” intervention, it was not possible to separate out which mechanisms were effective and which were not. However, anecdotal evidence given in the last seminar suggested one piece of information which swayed at least one student. This student said that the issue which changed her mind from thinking “it won’t do any good speaking out” to “I must speak out” was the consensus information. Specifically, that research found that people who score higher on negative attitudes are significantly more likely to see their views as being consensually shared (e.g., Strube & Rahimi, 2006; Watt & Larkin, 2010). This can result in people with higher levels of prejudice being more vocal which has the potential to push social norms

towards prejudice as opposed to acceptance (Miller, 1993). Like our findings, other research in the US finds that giving accurate feedback to students about the prevalence of negative attitudes reduces prejudice (Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001). Clearly, normative effects such as statements by political parties, media portrayals and comments by role models can affect public attitudes. Above and beyond this particular strategy, it is evident that multiple and mutually reinforcing strategies based on the best available evidence are most effective in counteracting prejudice (Paradies, et al., 2009).

Longevity of effect: Time 3 data

The Time 3 data should be treated with caution given the small sample size at Time 3 ($n = 8$). However, there was a trend for positivity to increase between Times 1 and 2 with both Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians and a significant increase in positivity towards asylum seekers. In all three cases, the jump in positivity scores was substantial ranging from approximately 17 to 27 percentage points. The result was stronger with respect to the asylum seekers perhaps due to the negative media publicity given them together with the fact that such attitudes are rarely based on personal experience given the small amount of asylum seekers who land on Australian shores (UNHCR, 2010). Thus, the provision of accurate information may have been more powerful in this situation; in fact, previous research finds that the correlation between prejudice and false beliefs is particularly high with asylum seekers compared with other groups (Pedersen et al., 2005). Our finding echoes similar results emerging from research on intergroup contact which shows that attitude generalisation is particularly strong for out-groups that are less known to participants (Tausch, et al., 2010).

One of the problems with anti prejudice or similar interventions is that there is rarely a third testing (for exceptions, see Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Kernahan & Davis, 2010). Indeed, as mentioned previously, there is rarely a post-test evaluation at all. Our response rate at Time 3 was similar (34%) to that of Kernahan and Davis (36%) with the response rate for Time 3 ~~with~~ in Hill and Augoustinos being higher at 50%. Our low response rate at Time 3 does not augur well for similar future research especially as this is also found in other similar research; nor can we give definite conclusions based on our data. However, we argue that although our Time 3 participants constitute a small self-selected group, this does not detract entirely from our findings. If one believes in the “ripple effect”; that is, a bottom-up approach where members of a community positively influence others in their community, these results are encouraging. It is promising that the positivity of at least some students survived a three-month period after the intervention and in a period of ambient negative political and media engagement with asylum seekers and other outgroups. We did not find evidence that warmth towards outgroups, or preparedness to take bystander action, faded in the intervening weeks between the anti prejudice education and the third survey. This suggests that the positive effects of anti prejudice education can endure, although more substantive empirics are needed on this question.

Qualitative data

The qualitative data supports the quantitative findings. At Time 1, there was only one theme out of four which involved positive bystander action: *the overt challenging of others' beliefs*. A recent review highlighted the importance of this theme as a motivator for bystander anti prejudice (Nelson et al., 2010). At Time 2, two out of three themes

involved positive bystander action. These data show the particular importance of giving accurate information: this was mentioned at both Time 1 and Time 2, although with a different slant (at Time 1, wanting more information before taking action; at Time 2 challenging prejudice through information). Given the well-established link between prejudice and a lack of accurate information, this finding augurs well for interventions that encourage people to take positive action.

Interestingly, one theme which was present at Time 1 was completely absent at Time 2: *the right to have an opinion*. At Time 1, it seems that by not acting, participants felt able to avoid conflict and ‘respect’ people with different views. Yet after the unit, one could speculate that this theme lost its value after students learned how often people’s prejudiced opinions are simply that – prejudice. During the unit, a lot of information was provided to students about the damage that unsubstantiated opinion can cause and the influence of political discourse and media coverage to such opinion (e.g., Pedersen, Watt & Hansen, 2006). With regard to the loss of the *special treatment* theme from Time 1 to Time 2, this supports past research; for example, an intervention by Pedersen and Barlow (2008) found that after completion of a unit similar to the present intervention, there was a significant decrease in the belief that Indigenous Australians receive special treatment. Finally, a new theme at Time 2 was the need to *covertly challenge* prejudiced talk. This also links with previous research (also discussed within the unit) showing that aggressively challenging prejudiced talk tends not to be as effective as a more “gently gently” approach (see Guerin, 2005; Hollinsworth, 2006). The finding also links with some of the literature on whiteness; for example, it has been argued that discussion of white privilege needs to be done sensitively rather than

confrontationally (Pedersen et al., 2011; Trenerry et al, 2010) although it is acknowledged that there are times when the “gently gently” approach does not work (Nayak, 2010). It may be that some people you simply cannot win over with diplomacy and reason.

Our study has limitations such as the small sample size. However, even with this small sample size, our data yielded significant findings; furthermore, similar significant increases in positivity have been found in studies carried out across a number of years using the same mechanisms (e.g., Pedersen & Barlow, 2008; Pedersen et al., 2009). This consistency of change points to the intervention itself being responsible rather than political/historical reasons such as media coverage of marginalised groups (although we note the importance of context). Obviously, because this is a real-world intervention, we are not able to tease apart the specific relationships between variables. This would be interesting to know, and future research may wish to explore this question through controlled experiments. However, we argue that in complex systems, the total is not simply the sum of its parts and the fact that our research is based in the real world is in fact a strength of our study. Our research shows that at least in a university situation, where there is a “captive audience” for an extended period of time, change is possible if the right mechanisms are put into place. Thus, attitudes are not set in stone.

In conclusion, our study replicates previous research in showing the potential of anti prejudice interventions to increase positivity towards Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians. However, our study goes a step further in also showing an increase in positivity towards asylum seekers. This marginalised group has been at the forefront of much negative publicity of late, and it is heartening to know that such negativity can

be unlearned under the right circumstances. Our study also adds to previous research in that we found a significant increase in participants' intentions to involve themselves in challenging prejudice in three out of the four scenarios, and this was mirrored in the qualitative data. Encouragingly, we found no evidence that across-group identity impeded preparedness of students to take bystander action after sitting the unit on cross-cultural relations. Bystanders are less likely to help people who they see as dissimilar to themselves (Saucier, Miller & Doucet, 2005); thus, within-group identity may be an obstacle to bystander action (with people less likely to help those of a different ethnicity). However, 83% of our respondents were Whites of a European background, and yet preparedness to act was widespread across the sample. A small sub-group of students who participated in the long-term follow-up maintained their positive attitudes over a three-month period.

Finally, there is the question whether self-reports regarding future bystander behaviour will necessarily lead to actual future behaviour. There is some evidence in our data to suggest that at least some participants had changed their behaviour. For example, seven students signed up for voluntary work in the field of asylum seekers. Furthermore, some students stated that they felt they must speak up which augurs well for some sort of commitment to change, as did some of the strategies outlined by them in the qualitative data on how to react to specific situations.

Taken together, our findings indicate that under the right circumstances; that is, following the principles of good practice regarding anti prejudice, positive change can occur. Although our study used contextually appropriate Australian scenarios, and there are clearly cross-nation and across-cultural differences, we would argue that certain

elements of our intervention would be equally relevant regardless of where the intervention took place (e.g., giving accurate information; using multiple voices from multiple disciplines; using multiple strategies; engaging in empathy building; consensus findings). Thus, while the findings are specific to Australia, and much of the materials used in the unit were Australian based, there is no reason to believe that elements of our programme would not be relevant in different cultural contexts outside Australia. This is especially the case given that much of the materials used were based on a broader global literature (e.g., consensus; information giving; emotion).

In short, anti prejudice education would appear to be successful not only in increasing positivity but in expanding preparedness for bystander anti prejudice. This was especially apparent with regard to asylum seekers; a group for whom there is little popular sympathy and greater public and political antipathy, not only in Australia but throughout the world.

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Table 1. Descriptive characteristics for Warmth Thermometers

Variables	M/SD Time 1	M/SD Time 2	Difference between Time 1 and Time 2
Positivity Indigenous	51.5 (19.2)	68.7(18.4)	$t(19) = 4.3; p < .001$
Positivity Muslim	58.4 (18.7)	75.2 (14.5)	$t(18) = 4.0, p = .001$
Positivity asylum seekers	50.8 (26.0)	73.1 (18.9)	$t(19) = 4.8, p < .001$

Table 2. Descriptive characteristics for scenarios: Participants who would take action

Variables	Time 1	Time 2	Difference between Time 1 and Time 2
Indigenous (OF)	82.6%	90.9%	$t(21) = 1.000, p = .329$
Muslim	61.9%	95.2%	$t(18) = 2.535, p = .021$
Asylum seeker	52.2%	91.3%	$t(22) = 3.761, p = .001$
Indigenous (Special Treatment)	50.0%	81.0%	$t(19) = 2.854, p = .010$

Appendix A

Scenario One

You are having lunch with several non-Indigenous students. At one point, the conversation turns to issues regarding Indigenous people in Australia. One student says: “*They mostly are a bunch of lazy bastards*”. The conversation continues along these lines, and the students are quite incensed displaying a very negative view of Indigenous people in general. Would you intervene in the conversation?

Scenario Two

You open up your email account to find one of your friends has forwarded the following:

AGED ARE BETTER OFF AS REFUGEES

IT is interesting that the Federal Government provides a single refugee with a monthly allowance of \$1,890 and each can also get an additional \$580 in social assistance, so a total of \$2,470 per month. A family of four can receive \$9,880 per month or yearly \$118,685. A single Australian pensioner who, after contributing to the growth and development of Australia for 40 to 50 years, receives only a monthly maximum of \$1,012 in old age pension and guaranteed income supplement. Maybe our pensioners should apply as refugees. Please pass on to other people you know. What would you do?

Scenario Three

You are catching a train and find yourself sitting opposite a woman who appears to be a Muslim: she is wearing a hijab and reading the Qur’an. A white man gets on the train and sits next to you. He looks at the Muslim woman and immediately says to you in a loud voice: “*Muslims do not integrate with our society; they are a very closed community. They use our prosperity, security and freedom but they treat Australians (especially women) with disdain and contempt. Their leaders spread hatred of western values in mosques and schools. Australians do not want to be forced to change our values or beliefs or customs – they have to adjust to our society! If they do not like it, they are free to go!*” What would you do?

Scenario Four

You are at a social gathering. A woman that you know makes comments about Indigenous people receiving what she describes as “unfair special treatment”. In particular, she said that being Indigenous entitles a person to more handouts such as social security benefits. She went on to say that Indigenous children receive more assistance in the school system, and that Indigenous Australians get away with blue murder in the legal system. What would you do?

Appendix B

Title	Readings	Guest speakers and DVDs watched
<p>Attitudes to Australian “outgroups” and the links with the Salem witch-hunts of 1692.</p> <p>Note: a great deal of asylum seeker information was given in this seminar.</p>	<p>1. Every and Augoustinos (2008)</p> <p>2. Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon, & Griffiths (2005)</p> <p>3. Griffiths & Pedersen (2009)</p>	<p>n/a</p>
<p>Attitudes towards Australian Muslims</p>	<p>1. Aly (2006)</p> <p>2. Aly & Walker (2007)</p>	<p>Guest: Dr Anne Aly: Edith Cowan University who, from a Muslim perspective, spoke on the role of the media in attitudes to Islam</p>
<p>Indigenous “special treatment” and Indigenous children at school</p>	<p>1. Pedersen & Walker (2000)</p> <p>2. Paradies (2007).</p> <p>Pedersen, Dudgeon, Watt & Griffiths (2006) *</p>	<p>Message Stick DVD “Strong and Smart”: Chris Sarra and the transformation of Cherbourg State School</p>

Community Psychology and Indigenous Australians	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vicary & Bishop (2005) 2. Bishop, Vicary, Andrews & Pearson (2006) 	<p>Guest: Dr Lizzie Finn: Curtin University of Technology who spoke on working with Indigenous communities</p>
Community Psychology and refugees/asylum seekers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Duffy & Wong (2003) 2. Surawski, Pedersen, & Briskman (2008) 	<p>“Liyarn Ngarn” DVD on issues relevant to community psychologists working with Indigenous Australians</p> <p>Guest: Dr Alex Main: Murdoch University who spoke on working with traumatised refugees</p>
Bystander anti prejudice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fozdar (2008) 2. Guerin (2005) 	<p>Guest: Ms Leoni Mole, a student who undertook her own bystander anti prejudice action</p>

*Note: this information was given in the seminars rather than being a reading – some elements of the article needed updating (e.g., monetary payments on Abstudy vs Austudy).