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**TITLE:** Public Discourse and the News Media: The Relationship between Mainstream Media Content and the Attitudes of the Western Australian Community towards Asylum Seekers and Refugees

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The asylum seeker issue is one of national interest in Australia and continuously attracts debate and controversy (Suhnan, Pedersen & Hartley, 2012). Despite Australia's obligations to provide protection under international law, there is some evidence to suggest that media coverage has portrayed asylum seekers as queue jumpers, illegal immigrants, and a threat to Australian society (Clyne, 2005). A growing body of research indicates that many Australians hold hostile attitudes toward asylum seekers (Klocker, 2004; Pedersen, Attwell & Heveli, 2005; Schweitzer, Perkouldis, Krome, Ludlow & Ryan, 2005). Furthermore, some studies have uncovered a relationship between community attitudes towards asylum seekers and the acceptance of misinformation (Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon & Griffiths, 2005; Suhnan, et al, 2012; Croston & Pedersen, 2013). Despite the existing literature concerned with both media representations and community perceptions of asylum seekers, no prior research has directly examined the relationship between community members' perspectives of this issue and their engagement with Australian news media. This research has adopted a qualitative design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the relationship between media and societal discourses on asylum seekers in Western Australia. Examining this relationship is critical to addressing Australia's treatment of asylum seekers. A key aim is to provide insight into how societal discourses are formed and reinforced by the information presented to the public about asylum seekers, enabling a more critical understanding of how these discourses can be addressed.