Deconstructing the Racialisation Experience of Asian Australians: Process, Impact and Response

by

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Abstract

The study uses racialisation as a lens to understand the racist experiences of ordinary Asian Australians. It examines the racialisation processes underlying these experiences and explores the strategies employed to respond to and mitigate the impact of being racialised. It addresses the need to develop the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of racialisation and anti-racism in light of the dearth of research work on these especially in Australia.

Different elements from various theories were drawn to frame the empirical investigation since no single theory was adequate as anchor for this qualitative study. In-depth interviews and focus groups with 64 Asian Australians generated rich narratives that provided interesting insights on the personal, political, and spiritual dimensions of human experience that connect the lives of racialised subjects.

Deconstructing stories of racialised subjects laid bare the essence of racist experiences by revealing insights into when and how race becomes a salient signifier of difference. Racialisation provides a productive way of understanding racist experiences since it allows for the unpacking of the multi-layered linked processes of racial categorisation, racial differentiation and problematisation, marginalisation and exclusion, inferiorisation and devaluation. These processes are ordinarily part of the experiences of minority people. They constitute what can be called 'everyday racialisation'.

The study uses stress-coping theory to examine the long-term and cumulative impact of being part of a racialised group. It shows how exposure to racism stressors has multifarious effects on the health and well-being of racialised subjects. The everyday racialisation of minority groups affects their socio-psychological functioning and limits the life chances and economic opportunities available to them.

In addition, the study demonstrates how Asian Australians cope with the stress of their everyday racialisation by drawing from their personal repertoire of discursive, cognitive and behavioural strategies. These, in combination with outside support mechanisms, make up
what can be termed 'everyday anti-racism' strategies. Racialisation provides valuable insights into when, how and why racialised subjects deploy these different strategies to negotiate, contest and bridge the constraints and boundaries imposed on them.

The study offers an integrated model for understanding racialisation experience and lays the foundation for developing further the concepts of 'everyday racialisation' and 'everyday anti-racism'.
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Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1: 37). He has made this journey possible. He has provided for all my needs. And for all these, I thank and praise Him.

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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Anti-Discrimination Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADT</td>
<td>Administrative Decision Tribunal</td>
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<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Chinese-Australian Support Services Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPCA</td>
<td>Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia (Brisbane)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIMA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>PACSI</td>
<td>Philippine-Australian Community Services, Inc.</td>
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Chapter 1
Searching for a Holy Grail

Racism remains a significant issue in the world today. Whether openly acknowledged or hidden behind the curtain of political correctness, racism is a problem that affects many groups in varying degrees. The plethora of writings and empirical research on prejudice and racism, the continuing debates on the issue during public forums, and the gnawing effects of racism on society all attest to this. In one sense, the issue is now less about determining whether racism is still a problem but more about what is being done about it. Indeed, while significant progress has been made over the decades in improving our understanding of the causes and manifestations of racism, the search for the holy grail\(^1\) of anti-racism continues.

But just as racism has many forms, is ever changing, and is different everywhere (Kobayashi & Peake 2000), anti-racism is diverse and ‘is a difficult issue’ (Lloyd 2002: 62). Moreover, anti-racism is a largely under-researched subject (Denney 1997; Lentin 2004; Lloyd 1998, 2002). Its ‘theoretical and methodological underpinnings are still in the formative stage’ (Dei 1996: 260). It has generally been taken for granted in conceptual terms and considered as something ‘merely and unproblematically, as the opposite of racism’ (Lentin 2004: 428) or the converse of racism (Murji 2006). ‘Racism and ethnic discrimination are under continuous historical and sociological examination. But antiracism is consigned to the status of a ‘cause’ fit only for platitudes of support or denouncement’ (Bonnett 2000: 2). And although there is a large body of materials in psychology and sociology that deal with the issue of racism, there still is continuing debate on what race means and what constitutes racism. Moreover, the literature on anti-racism has focused by and large on either individual level approaches to prejudice reduction at one end and macro-level social policy approaches on the other end. This study hopes to bridge the gap between these two extremes.

\(^1\) The ‘Holy Grail’ refers to the mythical chalice that Jesus Christ used at the Last Supper. According to legend, medieval knights took long quests for this because of its miraculous powers but to no avail. This legend formed the basis of contemporary usage of the term. In modern-day parlance, it refers to ‘an object or goal that is sought after for its great significance’ or ‘the object of an extended or difficult quest’ (Meriam-Webster Online Dictionary).
A review of the literature showed that past empirical studies have been concerned mainly with proving the existence of racism, measuring its extent, and determining which groups are being targeted. Social science researchers are now being urged to redirect their efforts from this preoccupation to the more important task of understanding the process by which racism happens and determining what can be done to counter racism (Anthias & Lloyd 2002; Karumanchery 2003; Reicher 2001).

In order to understand and fight racism (as opposed to sorting out empirically who are its targets at any particular point in time), it is important to focus on processes, structures and outcomes, through looking both at changing configurations of ideas about fear, threat, otherness, undesirability, and at how groups who are targeted may be responding to these challenges. (Anthias & Lloyd 2002: 8)

The concept of racialisation\(^2\), with its distinct emphasis on process provides a useful framework to guide researchers in the task of meeting the challenges posed above. Racialisation has been used increasingly in the past two decades to ‘signal the processes by which ideas about race are constructed, come to be regarded as meaningful, and are acted upon’ (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 1). But there is wide disagreement regarding the value of the concept for analysing racial phenomena. This can be attributed to racialisation’s lack of conceptual clarity and the unqualified ways it has been applied in empirical research. Like the core concept of anti-racism, much still needs to be done to develop the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of racialisation. This is the problematic that is at the heart of this investigation.

1.1 Research aims and questions

The study sought to understand the racialisation experience by analysing the processes underlying racist experiences, by exploring the impact of racialisation, and by examining responses to racialisation. I used the experiences of Asian Australians since their unique settlement history and experiences with racism cannot simply be subsumed under those of the generalised ‘other’.

\(^2\) This word is sometimes spelled in the literature with a ‘z’. However, to be consistent with the way it has been used by British sociologists (e.g. Robert Miles, Michael Banton, etc.) who developed the concept, I have spelt the word with an ‘s’ in this thesis unless quoted material spells it with a ‘z’.
Following are the specific research aims and questions:

**Aim 1: To analyse stories of racist experiences**

- What are the circumstances in which Asian Australians experience racialisation?
- What do these stories reveal about the processes that underlie racist experiences?

**Aim 2: To explore the impact of racialisation**

- What are the effects of racialisation on the health and well-being of Asian Australians?
- How does being racialised affect their sense of identity and sense of belonging?

**Aim 3: To examine how Asian Australians have responded to their racialisation experience**

- What types of discourse do Asian Australians use to explain the causes of racism? What types of arguments do they construct to justify why racialisation must be resisted?
- How do Asian Australians respond to being racialised? What coping strategies do they use? What factors contribute to people's decision to act (or not act) against their racialisation?
- What outside interventions or support mechanisms are available to mitigate the impact of racialisation? To what extent do Asian Australians know and make use of these strategies? What other strategies should be in place?

**1.2 Key concepts**

A central proposition of this study is that it is necessary to look at process, impact and response in order to fully understand the total racialisation experience of minority groups. The main concepts embodied in this central thesis are defined in this section.
In this thesis, race is treated as socially constructed and roughly equivalent to the notion of ethnicity. Race refers to the socially constructed labels used to differentiate and categorise people through the process of racialisation.

Racialisation is used in this study to refer to the dynamic social and psychological processes by which signifiers of difference (e.g. skin colour, accent, language, culture, religion) are used arbitrarily as the bases for categorising people and for subjecting them to differential and unequal treatment. On the other hand, racism is defined here as a system of beliefs, behavior and practices that perpetuates and legitimates the dominant hold of particular groups on power and on socially valued resources. Racism is viewed here as the ideological base or the reason why minority groups are treated differently, regarded as inferior, marginalised and dehumanised.

The terms racism and racialisation are used very closely here since only a thin line separates the two concepts. There are more similarities than differences in their basic premises that probably explain the tendency in much of the literature for these terms to be used interchangeably. However, in this study I use racialisation mainly to refer to the underlying processes that are presumed to have an effect on those targeted. On the other hand, racism is used to refer mainly to the racist incident, or any instance or experience that targets regard as racially motivated. This conceptualisation stresses that the subjective interpretation of a racist incident from the perspective of the target is crucial in determining what constitutes racism and what racialisation is all about. I also emphasise that understanding the impact or effects of racialisation is more important than trying to ascertain the motives or intentions of the perpetrator.

This study emphasises agency (or the ability to act for oneself) rather than deprivation or oppression (Ballard, 1992). Thus, I refer to the study participants as racialised subjects rather than victims. By doing so, I am arguing that racialised subjects are ‘living, thinking and feeling agent[s], capable of both reflexive thought and proactive action’ (Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Liuk 2004: 52). In essence, this study seeks to deconstruct stories of racism, not so much to prove that Asian Australians are racialised but more to explore the strategies they have used to mitigate the impact of their racialisation.
The participants I chose for this study were all Asian Australians, or permanent residents of Australia who were born (and/or whose parents were born) in any of the countries belonging to Southeast, Northeast, and Southern Asia. I have used the collective term 'Asian Australian' to refer to the participants, but I recognise that the group is diverse in terms of their cultural, class, and social backgrounds. I have restricted the sample to Asian immigrants or permanent settlers to Australia although this does not mean that other Asians (e.g. temporary visitors such as international students) coming into Australia would not have similar racist experiences. I did not deal with the racialisation experiences of Indigenous Australians although I recognise that their continuing socio-economic deprivation poses the greatest challenge to any effort to combat racism in Australia (Gould 2002; Legg 2002; Paradies 2005). I also did not tackle issues relating to refugees or asylum seekers since their experience is very different from that of ordinary Asian immigrants to Australia.

I focused on ordinary people rather than those in the academe or those belonging to anti-racism advocacy groups since my goal was to understand how racialisation is encountered and countered in the everyday by people from all walks of life. I gave voice to ordinary people who are often sidelined, hoping to ground the concepts of racism and anti-racism by looking at the ways ordinary people understand and negotiate these twin issues. I foregrounded race-related issues but this does not mean that I do not recognise that race intersects with gender, class, sex, age, and other variables.

I gave voice to ordinary people by hearing their stories of racism and by analysing how they cope through their discourse and actions. I privileged the perspective of targets of racism since research on racism and anti-racism has been criticised for focusing more on the perpetrator (Dei, Karumanchery & Karumanchery-Liuk 2004; Denney 1997; Lamont & Fleming 2005; Lamont, Morning & Mooney 2002; Mellor 2003; 2004a; 2004b). To some extent, this gap is surprising since one can imagine that those who have directly experienced racism would have an informed view on the issue and would therefore be able to provide insights on how best to counter it. As Essed (2004: 120) has suggested, ‘targets of racism can offer knowledgeable insights when it comes to defining when, where and how racism is manifest in everyday life’. In addition, minority groups have ‘presumed competence to speak about race and racism’ because racism is part of their daily experience (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 8).
Insights from this study were used to expand the definitions of everyday racism (originally developed by Essed 1991) and everyday anti-racism (as introduced by Lamont & Fleming 2005). The term everyday is used here to signify banality or ordinariness rather than frequency. Another major concern was to investigate the immediate and long-term impact (i.e., the multifarious effects or consequences) of racialisation in relation to participants’ health and well-being and their identity and sense of belonging.

Anti-racism is defined as the repertoire of strategic responses to multiple forms of racialisation. These responses include overlapping discourse and actions that ordinary people draw upon to deal with the effects of being racialised. Discourse includes the argumentative patterns that racialised subjects use to explain, deflect and resist racialisation while, action refers to the behavioural strategies used to deal with racialisation.

1.3 Research rationale

Why undertake yet another research on race-related issues? The answer to this question lies in the theoretical and practical outcomes expected from this research.

It is generally accepted that racism is entrenched in Australian history (Castles & Vasta 1996; Collins 1993; HREOC 1991; Jayasuriya 2001, 2002a; McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1989; Vasta 2005). While Indigenous Australians have always borne the brunt of racism, Asian immigrants also have been targeted intermittently (Browning & Jakubowicz 2003b; Callan 1983; Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, Ramia & Sawir 2004; Matthews 2002b; Mellor 2004b; Sundeen 2002).

However, the vast sociological and psychological literature on racism and anti-racism has not considered fully the ways in which Asian Australians experience, understand, and respond to being racialised. There are only a handful of Australians studies that have focused specifically on Asian Australians’ experiences of racism (e.g. Ang 1996; Loosemore & Chau 2002; Matthews 2002b; Mellor 2004b).

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the number of empirical investigations on how racism has affected different minority groups in Australia (e.g. Dunn 2003; Dunn, Forrest,
However, because of the complexity of the issue, more research is needed, especially those that are sufficiently informed by theory.

This study has been prompted by the marked absence of theories on anti-racism and the attendant dearth of empirical investigations that focus specifically on understanding how ordinary people deal with race-related issues. Many studies stop at examining racist experiences and seldom follow through with recommendations on how to deal with the problem. Researchers often deal with anti-racism as an afterthought, relegating it to the list of ‘areas for future research’. I argue that a better understanding of the processes underlying racist incidents can provide more insights into anti-racism (or on how people respond to racialisation) and a better appreciation of the immediate and long-term impact of being racialised.

Denney (1997: 92) asserted that anti-racism can ‘become empty polemical statements of intent’ if it only ‘make[s] elaborate critiques of existing practices, whilst offering few practical possibilities for the future’. I will present a case for reconstituting anti-racism so that it is made more relevant to the lives of those directly affected by racialisation (Denney 1997). I sought to make visible the lived experiences of Asian Australians and to analyse the strategies they use to counter their everyday racialisation. I used a qualitative approach and relied mainly on data from interviews and focus groups with 64 Asian Australians. I hope to move the discussion beyond merely denouncing the injustices faced by victims of racialisation towards a more systematic analysis of the different types of strategies they use to deal with the issue.

Instead of the usual focus on ‘examining broader macro-level anti-racist practices within organizations or social movements’ (Lamont & Fleming 2005: 5), I concentrated on how racialised subjects combine personal coping strategies with outside support mechanisms to combat racialisation. As such, I am hoping to provide insights into the strategies that ordinary people use to bridge or cross racial boundaries to deal with the effects of being racialised, excluded and treated as inferior. I hope to contribute to anti-racism theorising and research by focusing on ordinary people’s responses to everyday racialisation.
Towards the end of this thesis, I will offer an integrated model for understanding the total racialisation experience. I will also suggest an alternative way of conceptualising everyday racism and will make recommendations to strengthen the concept of ‘everyday anti-racism’. These theoretical outputs constitute the original contributions of my thesis.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter serves as the springboard for the rest of the thesis which consists of eight more chapters.

I situate my study in the context of previous research through the next two chapters. Chapter 2 provides a contextual review of the literature on racism and anti-racism in Australia. I limited this to reviewing empirical studies on race-related issues in the Australian context. While there are numerous empirical studies on anti-racism, these are not sufficiently informed by theory. This highlights the need for an alternative way of looking at the problem of race, racism and anti-racism. What will be proposed is that the concept of racialisation be used as framework for understanding experiences of racism from the perspective of those directly affected.

In Chapter 3, I review how the concepts of race, racism and racialisation have been used and contested in contemporary sociological and psychological literature. I summarise key areas of contention in the debate on the analytical value of race, trace the origins of racialisation, before discussing the commonalities between racism and racialisation. I argue that the diversified but mostly unelaborated ways racialisation has been used and contested in contemporary literature highlight the need for a theoretical and empirical study such as this. I also discuss in this chapter stress-coping theory as framework for analysing the impact of racialisation. A significant portion of the Chapter is also devoted to discussing the theories that guided my examination of anti-racism and the different types of responses to racialisation. I drew insights mainly from Lamont’s concept of ‘everyday anti-racism’ and Mellor’s taxonomy of responses to racism. I also present a diagram of the elements that anchored the thesis.

In Chapter 4, I describe the research design and provide a profile of the 64 study participants who were selected because they identified themselves as ‘Asian’ in the general sense of the word, they had experienced racism (or were involved in anti-racism work) and were permanent
residents of Australia. I used interviews and focus groups to solicit retrospective accounts of racist experiences. I relied on oral narratives to interrogate how ordinary people counter the multiplicities of racism, in the hope that nuances of the method might access issues of subjectivity, consciousness and agency that are otherwise unreachable (Karumanchery 2003). The qualitative approach I took yielded rich and context-based data that I analysed for themes and patterns. I also discuss how I situated myself in relation to the study, identifying myself as part of the racialised other and provide personal reflections on how this might have influenced my data analysis.

I wrote up my ethnographic data using what Wainwright (1997) called a ‘narrowing and expanding focus’ style of writing that oscillates between micro and macro analysis. This follows on from his suggestion that qualitative data be written up so that the ‘analysis moves backwards and forwards between specific observation and consideration of broader structural issues’. Thus, I interjected mini-discussions within the main body of the four data chapters (Chapters 5 to 8) in order to interpret right away specific findings and to show how these relate to the literature. In each data chapter, I also discussed the implications of my findings vis-à-vis my framework by presenting separate diagrams of the main elements of the theoretical model I was building.

I have organised the data chapters to correspond to the main concerns of the study: process, impact, and response. In Chapter 5, I used the notion of racialisation to reveal and understand the different processes that occur when individuals experience racism. Thematic analysis of participants’ stories of racism experiences revealed a complex web of processes of racialisation that underlie racist incidents. Numerous examples are given to show how Asian Australians are treated differently, marginalised and excluded, devalued and dehumanised because of their skin colour, looks, accent, language and culture.

Chapter 6 examines the impact of racialisation using stress-coping theory. I present data that show how exposure to racism stressors impacts negatively on the health and well-being of racialised subjects. The data provide compelling evidence of the insidious and multifarious negative effects of racialisation.
In Chapter 7, I show how Asian Australians have responded to their racialisation experience through their discursive, cognitive and behavioural strategies. I used the notion of ‘repertoire of responses’ to organise these individual-level strategies. In Chapter 8, I analyse the different anti-racism intervention strategies and external support mechanisms that are meant to mitigate the impact of racialisation. I argue that ordinary people cope with the stress of their racialisation by drawing from their personal repertoire of ‘everyday anti-racism’ strategies.

Finally, in Chapter 9 I discuss the implications of my findings vis-à-vis the theoretical framework I used. I highlight three main arguments put forward in the study regarding the value of using racialisation to understand racism experiences in terms of process, impact and response.
Chapter 2
Racism and Anti-racism in Australia
(A Contextual Review of the Literature)

This chapter provides a contextual review of the literature on racism and anti-racism in Australia. I begin by describing the historical backdrop of modern-day Australian ethnic and race relations, and highlight the key milestones in Australian history that relate to the experience of Asian immigrants. Against this backdrop, I discuss general trends and gaps that emerged from a review of the literature on racism research in Australia. I also highlight the need for research on anti-racism and on the experience of ordinary Asian Australians.

2.1 Australia’s ‘racial’ history: A brief overview

A cursory review of Australia’s history is necessary to properly understand and appreciate Australia for what it is today. The brief review in this section is confined to the historical milestones that relate to Asians in Australia since this is the focus of the present study. Before proceeding, it is important to acknowledge that the Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Australia and their history as traditional owners of the land dates back to over 300,000 years (Jayasuriya 1997), long before the arrival of the British colonisers in 1788.

Most of the literature acknowledge explicitly that racism is entrenched in Australia’s history (For comprehensive historical accounts, see Jayasuriya 1997; Markus 1994; McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1989; Zelinka 1996). The earliest but most obvious manifestations of Australian racism can be traced to the exclusionary and dehumanising treatment that the Aboriginal people received at the hands of British colonisers. Early relations between the Indigenous inhabitants and British invaders were ‘characterised more by genocide than by a desire for co-settlement’ (Collins 1993: 5). However, it was the ‘non-European migration and settlement in the 19th and 20th centuries, beginning with early forms of imported and indentured labour from the Pacific, the Melanesian (Kanaks) labour and Indians, and later the more
substantial Chinese intakes of labour in the 1850s, that proved to be more crucial in the development of Australian racism and ethnic intolerance’ (Jayasuriya 1997: 54).

The Gold Rush in the middle of the nineteenth century attracted large numbers of Chinese to work in the many goldfields all over Australia. The sheer number of the Chinese sojourners, their distinct appearances, and unfamiliar customs caused Anglo Australians to fear, distrust and eventually reject the Chinese (Jayasuriya 1997: 55). In addition, writers and cartoonists of the time created racist stereotypes based on the way the Chinese dressed, their eating habits, religion, culture, and even sexual preferences (Collins 1993: 6), adding fuel to the already extremely volatile situation. The strong antagonism between the Anglo Australians and the Chinese led to race riots in 1857 where many Chinese workers were injured and killed.

Anglo Australians resented the Chinese for their diligence and capacity for hard work. They were seen as competing for jobs and regarded as a threat. But economic competition was not the only reason behind the strong antagonism towards the early settlers from Asia.

It would be wrong to conclude that it was just economic competition, or the threat to living standards, British institutions and accepted social practices that evoked the racism of the Australians against the Chinese. Importantly, it was also the apparent threat to racial purity, fuelled by stories of illicit sexual relations between Chinese men…and white women, that provoked the fear of miscegenation. In fact this was considered to be far more dangerous than the contact of white men with Aboriginal women. (Jayasuriya 1997: 55)

The ‘fear’ factors cited above spurred the introduction of the ‘White Australia Policy’ (WAP), which had as its legal foundation the 1901 Immigration Restriction Bill. The Bill received unbridled support across all sectors of Australian society at that time (Collins 1993) and was enacted when Australia became a Federation in 1901. It was clearly exclusionary since it explicitly banned the importation of Asian and Chinese labour and required would-be immigrants to pass a dictation test which effectively eliminated individuals unfamiliar with the British tongue. According to Ang (1997), the colonisers wanted Australia for themselves, or exclusively for ‘the white man’.

The very idea of a ‘white Australia’ was an assertion of racial and spatial symbiosis, or least the desirability thereof. The fantasy was that the entire territorial space of Australia was to be for one race only, the white race. The presence of all those who were not white was considered undesirable. Measures
were therefore put into place to ensure, as much as possible, their removal from the continent. (Ang 1997: 191)

The WAP was successful in prohibiting more Chinese from entering Australia. As a result of natural attrition, outward migration, and the total ban on new immigrants, the number of Chinese dropped from 30,000 in 1901 to just 9,000 by 1947 (Collins 1993: 6). By the end of World War II, Australia's population had become 90 percent British and 8.4 percent of European origin (Collins 1993: 7).

‘The post-war process of decolonisation and the emergence of a postcolonial world unsettled the political, not to speak the moral legitimacy of Australia’s policy of racial exclusivism. … But the emotional attachment and ideological commitment to a White Australia was so great that they remained a dominant factor in postwar population policies’ (Ang 1997: 195). During that period, it was widely believed that Australia had to shore up its population or face annihilation; in other words, it had to ‘populate or perish’. Thus, the government launched a large-scale immigration program with the end in view of increasing the total population by one percent per year but at the same time ensuring that the composition of the migrant intake would maintain Australia’s racial purity (Collins 1993: 2003). As history has revealed, only the first objective was met. In order to fill immigration targets, the plan to get only British and Irish immigrants had to be shelved due to the low number of takers. The government was forced to also take Eastern European immigrants.

While this historical review focuses mainly on the racism experience of Asian Australians, this is not to say, however, that non-Asians were not targeted. As noted in the HREOC (1991) report on the National Inquiry in Racist Violence in Australia, Europeans who arrived in Australia after World War II also reported having experienced racism. Non-white refugees who had entered Australia during the World War II were eventually allowed to stay. In 1957, the Australian government granted citizenship to non-Europeans who had at least 15 years of residency in Australia. Under the revised Migration Act of 1958, references to questions of race were avoided, a simpler system of entry was introduced, and the controversial dictation test was abolished (DIMA 2006b).

The 1960s saw migration levels in Australia at its peak, with the intake in the latter half of the decade averaging 104,228 per year (Collins 2003: 7). This was partly due to the easing of
immigration restrictions, which signaled the start of the abolition of the WAP. Non-European settler arrivals rose from 746 in 1966 to 2,696 in 1971, while part-European settler arrivals rose from 1,498 to 6,054 (DIMA 2006b). The government also gave small concessions by allowing Asian students to train in Australian educational institutions under the Colombo Plan (an aid programme jointly funded by Australia and other Commonwealth countries). ‘Distinguished and highly qualified Asians’, as then Immigration Minister Sir Alexander Downer called them (DIMA 2006b), were allowed to settle permanently in Australia. But the number of Asian immigrants was very small, constituting only eight percent of the average immigrant intake in the sixties (Collins 2003: 7).

The total abolition of the WAP in the early seventies ushered in a new era in Australian immigration history. It led to a resurgence of large scale Asian immigration to Australia. In the wake of the Vietnam War, the Australian government allowed thousands of Indochinese refugees to settle in Australia. However, this decision to allow Asians into Australia ‘was made in the context of high-level international pressure’ (Ang 1997: 196). The influx of Asians to the country transformed Australia from a white to a multicultural society. This was ‘an unintended consequence of developments beyond the nation’s own control; it was not something actively willed by the Australian community itself’ (Ang 1997: 196).

The WAP was replaced with assimilation and integration during the post-war period till the sixties. But this proved ineffective and was replaced in the seventies with the policy of multiculturalism that is still in effect to this date. Following the formal abolition of the WAP in the early seventies, Australia also enacted the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) as its first anti-racism legislation.

Significant changes to the immigration policies were also made in the seventies and eighties. A points test was adopted as the system for selecting immigrants instead of the old system of selecting on the basis of racial origin or appearance. A business migration visa category was also introduced and this attracted highly educated and skilled immigrants mainly from Asia. Total immigration intake figures were also increased. As a result, Asian countries became the top sources of immigrants for the first time in 1982-83. Over a third (36 percent) of the total intake for that year came from Asia, surpassing the 27 percent contribution from Britain (Collins 2003: 9).
After more than 100 years of White Australia, ‘the wheel had come full circle: an immigration policy designed to keep the country white and British had achieved exactly the opposite, turning Australia into one of the world's most culturally-diverse societies’ (Castles, Foster, Iredale & Withers 1998: 110). From 3.8 million at the start of the 20th century, Australia’s total population is now estimated at 20 million (as at June 2006). While this exponential growth is due mainly to natural causes, one-third of this total growth is a result of net overseas migration (ABS 2005). The proportion of overseas-born Australians to the total population increased from 10 percent after the Second World War to 23.9 percent in 2000. Today, one in four Australians had been born overseas.

Immigrants to Australia have come from different parts of the globe representing more than 180 nationalities (Collins 2003). In 2003-04, the top ten source countries for permanent settlers were: the United Kingdom (23,958); New Zealand (14,425); China (13,316); India (11,359); South Africa (7,578); Malaysia (5,101); Philippines (4,705); Sudan (4,604); Indonesia (4,393); and Singapore (3,114) (HREOC 2005a). These figures indicate that while immigrants from Britain and New Zealand still dominate, a significant portion of the migrant intake comes from Asian countries. In fact, proportionally, Australia has one of the world’s highest Asian-born populations in the world (ABS 2001). Over one million Asian immigrants have settled in Australia in the last three decades (Collins 2003: 13).

Australia’s relative success as a provider of international education has also made it a prime destination for Asians seeking to further their education. Since the Colombo Plan began in the 1950s, over 40,000 Asians have been sponsored to study in Australia (Downer 2005). A total of 174,787 visas were granted to overseas students in 2004-05 (DIMA 2005), with China providing 20 percent of total overseas student enrolments in 2004, followed by South Korea, India and Malaysia (Downer 2005).

These figures highlight the central role that immigration has played in shaping present-day Australian society and point to the growing presence of Asians in Australia. The Australian immigration experience has produced a highly diverse and pluralistic society. The advantages and disadvantages of this multicultural make-up have been the focus of vigorous debates on the implications of immigration. These debates, which erupted at various points in Australia's modern history, have been sparked by comments made by politicians and academics, most...
controversial of whom were Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey in 1984, then opposition leader (who later became Australian Prime Minister) John Howard in 1988, then Parliament member Pauline Hanson in 1996, and most recently, Law Professor Andrew Markus in 2005. The literature on these different debates is voluminous [See for example, Healey (2002) and Ricklefs (1997) for succinct overviews].

As a result of these debates, Asian Australians have become the targets of anti-immigration attitudes. A clear example of this open declaration of anti-Asian sentiment can be found in internet sites maintained by so-called Australian Nationalists (Anderson 1998) that openly oppose Asians migrating to Australia. Interest on racism towards Asians in Australia reached its peak in the period following the controversial rise to fame of Pauline Hanson. The book, *The Asianisation of Australia? Some Facts about the Myths* (Jayasuriya & Kee-Pokong 1999) tried to counter the myths and stereotypes about Asian immigrants. Similarly, the Australian Government has published materials designed to ‘dispel myths about immigration’ (e.g. HREOC 2005a).

What was significant about these debates is that these were not confined to immigration issues but eventually took on a race angle. These debates consistently problematised the presence of Asians in Australia. The discourse on the ‘spectre of Asianisation’ was a recurring theme, feeding on ‘a politics of fear’ about the future of Australia (Ang 1997: 197). As was alluded to earlier, this fear of Asians provided the impetus for the passage of the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1901, which was unquestionably racist. This fear still underlies the psyche of Asian Australians to this day as evidenced by the results of empirical studies that will be discussed in the next section.

### 2.2 Racism research in Australia

According to Jayasuriya (2002), racism has been ‘a running sore in the [Australian] body politic’ for a long time. However, racism research in Australia is characterised by ‘a paucity of thinking’ and [I might add] an absence of theorising. It was only in the early 1970s that ‘racism entered the Australian public consciousness’ (Jayasuriya 2002b) with the publication of Frank Steven’s three volume book entitled *Racism, The Australian Experience: A Study of Race Prejudice in Australia* (1971; 1972.). These books became a major turning point in generating
an increased awareness of the problem of racism and in developing a scholarly understanding of race-related issues in Australia (Jayasuriya 2002).

Racism and anti-racism research in Australia have traditionally focused on two major groups: (a) Indigenous Australians or the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island (ATSI) peoples and (b) immigrants particularly those of Non-English Speaking backgrounds (NESB). This separation is necessary, Vasta (2005) argues, due to reasons that are both historical and political. Vasta asserts that ‘both in research and in policy, the position of Indigenous Australians requires separate attention as their experiences and needs, on the whole, have been and continue to be different from that of immigrants’ (p. 5-6). This focus on the immigrant experience meant that racism research is closely tied to immigration research and vice-versa. Multiculturalism is also almost always discussed alongside immigration and racism issues. Thus in terms of topical coverage, ethnic and racial studies often revolve around what can be called the trinity of racism, immigration and multiculturalism. A prime example of this triple focus can be found in the book *Immigration and Australia: Myths and Realities* (Castles et al. 1998).

A critical review of recent work has revealed a number of general trends. First, there is a vast array of essays and discussion papers about race-related issues both in academic-oriented publications and in popular media. For example, the literature is full of discussions about multiculturalism as an immigration policy and as a strategy for anti-racism. But there is a dearth of empirical research, especially those that are theoretically informed.

Second, most of the literature acknowledges explicitly that racism is entrenched in Australian history. Historical accounts (Collins 2003; Hollinsworth 1998; Jayasuriya 1997; Markus 1994; McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1989) and background literature included in most empirical research refer unequivocally to the White Australia Policy as exclusionary and racist. Even government issued reports and publications do not deny that Australia had a racist past (e.g. HREOC 1991). But the question that needs to be considered is whether racism is really a thing of the past? This question has been the central concern of many recent investigations. Their results confirm that racism is still a problem that plagues Australian society to this day. For example, the collection of papers and studies included in the seminal book *The Teeth are Smiling: The Persistence of Racism in Multicultural Australia*, (Vasta & Castles 1996) provides
compelling evidence that racism is pervasive in Australia despite the government’s avowed adherence to multiculturalism and the existence of several anti-racism legislations.

There are also a small but growing number of empirical studies on racism that used the discursive approach. But most of these have focused on how racist discourses are reproduced in the public space. In these types of studies, racist discourses are analysed to show how hegemony or the domination of the majority group is perpetuated through media, policy and political rhetoric. These include investigations on race talk and aboriginal issues (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley 1999; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale 1999; Augoustinos, LeCouteur & Soyland 2002; McCallum 2003) and racialised reporting by the Australian media (ADB of NSW 2003). Two other studies examined the role of media in promoting racist discourse (Dreher 2000; Teo 2000). Mathews (1997; 2002a; 2002b), also used discourse to investigate the intersections between racism and sexism in Asian students’ identities. These studies have generally focused on racist discourse and very few have analysed the discourse of those directly affected by racism.

The next three subsections will look at three aspects of racism research in Australia: targets, manifestations and experiences of racism.

2.2.1 Targets of racism

Many studies have been undertaken to investigate which groups have become targets of racism. Generally, results indicate that Indigenous Australians continue to be the prime targets. This is shown consistently in the results of various opinion polls and surveys on attitudes towards different minority groups (e.g. Dunn 2003; Dunn, Forrest, Burnley & McDonald 2004; Pedersen & Walker 1997; Pedersen, Griffiths, Contos, Bishop & Walker 2000). However, even Europeans who arrived in Australia after World War II experienced racism.

But Arab and Muslims, both in Australia and in other parts of the world, appear to be the new object of racism, or more accurately of religious intolerance. The most recent reports issued by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), Australia’s peak agency for monitoring violations of anti-discrimination legislation, confirm that after the September 11,
2001 terrorist attack in the USA, there was an increase in violent attacks towards Arab and Muslim Australians (Cahill, Bouma, Dellal & Leahy 2004; HREOC 2004a; Poynting & Noble 2004). Anecdotal evidence also suggests that anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments are growing and hostile attacks on these groups are increasing.

Apart from negative attitudes and feelings towards Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians, survey results show that anti-Asian attitudes continue to be held by those in the dominant majority group (e.g. Callan 1983; Deumert et al. 2004; Dunn et al. 2004; Matthews 2002b; Mellor 2004b; Sundeen 2002). This confirms the findings of previous surveys conducted in 1994 and 1996 where 90 percent felt that there were too many Asian immigrants in Australia and that the proportion of Asians in the migrant intake be reduced (ACNielsen 1996 cited in Dunn & McDonald 2001: 34-35).

Corollary surveys have also been used to analyse public attitudes towards diversity and multiculturalism (Ang, Brand, Noble & Wilding 2002; Ang, Brand, Noble & Sternberg 2006) and to measure public opinion towards racism related issues such as the rise of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation political party (e.g. Ben-Moshe 2001; Davis & Stimson 1998; Gibson, McAllister & Swenson 2002; Goot & Watson 2001). In a rare study of children’s attitudes towards different groups, children of European descent were found to positively evaluate their own groups and to negatively evaluate Aboriginal Australians more than Asian Australians (Gutman & Hickson 1996). On the whole, the surveys reveal the persistence of negative attitudes towards Asian Australians. This, I believe provides enough justification for the present study’s focus on the Asian Australian experience, a point which I will discuss in full at the end of this chapter.

2.2.2 Manifestations of racism

The other basic question that concerns most investigations on race-related issues is how racism is manifested in different contexts. Many studies have been mainly concerned with identifying the causes of and measuring the extent of racism in different spheres. For example, Chan’s (1997) study reveals that racism is endemic in the police culture. There also seems to be a perceived need to prove that racism exists in Australia, thus the resurgence of interest in establishing the extent of racism through surveys of racist attitudes and racism experiences.
Theorists have argued that the expression of racism has changed over the years from overt to more subtle forms, and that old racism or the belief in the hierarchy of races has now been replaced with ‘new racism’ that problematises cultural differences. However, research in Australia has shown that both types are still prevalent (Dunn et al. 2004; Sanson, Augoustinos, Gridley, Kyrios, Reser & Turner 1998; Walker 2001). For instance, in a recent review of empirical research on attitudes of majority groups to Indigenous Australians, Walker (2001) found no clear, identifiable transition from old to new racism over time. This means that old and new racisms continue to co-exist in Australian society. This finding is confirmed by the results of a telephone survey conducted in 2001 (reported in Dunn et al. 2004) to measure the extent of racist attitudes in Australia. Old racism was operationalised in the survey using questions about: (a) belief in a racial hierarchy; (b) in racial separation; and (c) in the concept of race itself. On the other hand, new racism was defined in terms of four dimensions: (a) intolerance towards specific cultural outgroups; (b) attitudes towards cultural diversity; (c) the extent to which respondents recognised racism as a problem in Australia; and (d) the extent to which respondents recognised that Anglo Australians enjoy a privileged position. The study concluded that ‘the old racisms, based on socio-biological forms of racial logic, have not disappeared, although it is clear that the new racisms are more pervasive in contemporary Australian society’ (Dunn et al. 2004: 425). The study also revealed that most respondents recognise that racism is a problem in Australian society (Dunn et al. 2004).

Racism in the labour market is one sphere of racism that has received considerable research attention over the years. Many studies have taken an economic approach to analysing racial discrimination in the labour market with some using econometric analysis of census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The majority of studies confirm that NESB immigrants and Indigenous Australians continue to be the main victims of racial discrimination in the labour market. In a report for the International Labour Office, Foster et al. (1991) reviewed the evidence on racial discrimination in Australian workplaces and concluded that despite the existence of significant anti-discrimination legislation ‘there is ongoing and systemic evidence of discrimination at the general workplace level, involving in particular immigrants from NES [non-English speaking] countries’ (cited in Collins 1996: 75). Collins (1996) reached similar conclusions from his own review of research evidence to the early 1990s. NESB immigrants and Indigenous Australians continue to suffer from disproportionately high rates of
unemployment. There is also a disproportionate concentration of NESB in lower-paying, inferior jobs compared to others of equal ability or equal human capital (Collins 1996). Indirect racial discrimination is also evident in the way the skills of NESB immigrants are unrecognised and unrewarded.

But even more disturbing is the finding that the very signs that should indicate to potential employers that workers possess cultural skills—an accent, hinting knowledge of at least one other language; cultural knowledge, indicating an ability to deal with a multicultural or multinational market; or knowledge of Aboriginal culture—trigger negative responses in employers or labour market gatekeepers. Viewed through the ideologies of racism and sexism, these cultural skills are reinterpreted in the eyes of these gatekeepers as ‘poor communication skills’, ‘high training costs’ or ‘unreliability’. (Collins 1996: 76)

An interesting insight from Collins’ review relates to his finding that the changing and uneven patterns of racialisation of Asian immigrants have led to different ‘opportunity structures’ for more recently arrived NESB immigrants (Collins 1996: 84-85). He found that as a consequence of reduced immigration intakes, entry to Australia as permanent residents has become very competitive and increasingly limited to those with the highest skills and qualifications. This is evident in the fact that many Asian immigrants who arrived in the 1990s were highly skilled and qualified professionals and eventually managed to move into managerial, professional and technical occupations. But at the same time, there remains a large sector of the Asian immigrant population who are stuck in low-skilled jobs. He concludes by saying that the economic restructuring and the ensuing changes in immigration policies have had an impact on patterns of labour market segmentation.

We have seen that many new Asian immigrants are highly qualified and find employment in well-paid white collar jobs, often in professional and managerial and administrative occupations. While patterns of market segmentation have exhibited these changes, it is strongly apparent that many NESB immigrant men and women are still employed in jobs below their ability, or are without jobs at all. This advantage cannot be fully accounted for by ‘meritocratic’ factors such as English-language ability or education. Racial discrimination of the indirect or direct kind clearly plays an important, if elusive, role. (Collins 1996: 89)

A more recent study (Parr & Guo 2005) on the occupational mobility of Asian immigrants using data from 1996-2001 revealed that Asians are highly diversified in terms of occupational concentration and mobility. ‘Almost all the groups experienced some degree of upwards occupational mobility from 1996 to 2001’. Importantly, after controlling for extraneous
variables, the study found that ‘the participation of most groups in the managerial and professional occupations is shown to be below that of the Australia-born’. The study concluded that ‘the high occupational status of most Asian groups does not mean they are advantaged’ (Parr & Guo 2005: 351).

New studies conducted in the last five years reveal that the problems identified by Collins and earlier reviewers are still as pressing as before. NESB immigrants (particularly Asians) still experience unequal treatment in the workplace (Borooah & Mangan 2002; Forrest & Johnston 1999; Hawthorne 1997; Junankar & Mahuteau 2005; Junankar, Paul & Yasmeen 2004; Loosemore & Chau 2002; Queensland Government 2001). Research has also found that Asian immigrants in New Zealand face the same labour market disadvantages (McGrath, Butcher, Pickering & Smith 2005).

2.2.3 Experiences of racism

Collins’ (1996) review highlighted the need to analyse accounts by immigrants of their experiences of racism in the workplace. According to him, ‘racism in the labour market and elsewhere in society is an elusive phenomenon to document and demonstrate’ partly due to the absence of hard data and the tendency to deny any acts of racism (Collins 1996: 74-75). He stressed the need for studies that assess the impact of racial discrimination in the labour market using not only measures of earnings differentials but also those that take into consideration the impact of more complex forms of institutional racism.

It is only very recently that researchers have shifted their focus from measuring racist attitudes to understanding experiences of racism. For example, two major nationwide surveys documented experiences of racism (reported in Browning & Jakubowicz 2003a, 2003b). Both surveys found that many Australians have experienced different forms of racism. Other studies have focused on the experiences of Indigenous Australians (Mellor 2003, 2004a); Vietnamese (Mellor 2004b); and Arab and Muslim Australians (HREOC 2004a; Poynting & Noble 2004). An ongoing project is attempting to map the experiences of racism by different groups across Australia, the preliminary results of which have been presented by Dunn et al. (2005).
An emerging trend in the study of ethnic and racial studies in Australia is the focus on the spatial dimensions of race and racisms. Racial studies within the field of geography is well-established in the USA (Peake & Kobayashi 2002) and the United Kingdom (Bonnett 1996) but research in this field is still in its infancy in Australia. Recent empirical research in this area has focused on the spatial variations of racist attitudes (Dunn & Geeraert 2003; Dunn et al. 2004). One study found that ‘areas of high diversity were more likely to host widespread racism when they were characterised by a disadvantaged socio-economic environment’ (Geeraert 2003). Another study examined patterns of residential concentration of ethnic groups in metropolitan Sydney (Johnston, Forrest & Poulsen 2001). Analysis of data on birthplace groups and language spoken at home revealed unevenness in the geographic distribution of ethnic groups. The study concluded that ‘Sydney is characterised by ethnic mixing rather than ethnic separateness’ (Johnston, Forrest & Poulsen 2001: 156) and that ‘there are no examples of extreme concentration of any group into exclusive ethnic ghettos’ (Johnston, Forrest & Poulsen 2001: 160). This finding is significant since it dispels the myth that Asian Australians are concentrated in ethnic enclaves. Again, these studies serve to confirm that racism is happening in different spheres in Australia. However, only a few of these studies offered suggestions on ways to address the problem of racism.

2.3 Anti-racism research in Australia

Despite Australia’s long ‘history of racism’, there is a marked absence of theorising and empirical research that focuses on anti-racism. An important aspect that has not been researched systematically but which is of considerable concern and source of debate within the community is the extent to which government support services and anti-racism measures are effective in assisting victims of racism.

Recent reviews of the literature on anti-racism (Paradies 2005; Pedersen, Walker & Wise 2005; Sanson, Augoustinos, Gridley, Kyrios, Reser & Turner 1997; Sanson et al. 1998) highlight this marked absence of Australian studies on anti-racism. Because of the dearth in Australian studies, all three reviews had to expand their scope to research done overseas. One review (Sanson et al. 1997, 1998) of psychological approaches to racism/anti-racism theorising and research listed several recommendations that can be implemented by
governments, institutions, groups, and individuals to address racism-related problems. A significant recommendation highlighted in the review was ‘the need for psychology, along with other disciplines, to examine its own role in relation to racism and prejudice’ (Sanson et al. 1997: 5). In fact, the Australian Psychological Society acknowledged that psychology as a discipline and profession may have contributed to racism by emphasising the ‘deficits’ and ‘problems’ of minority groups, rather than their competencies (Sanson et al. 1997: 5). It outlined possible future directions for the discipline and profession, and called on psychologists to ‘consider seriously the nature of their role when working with indigenous or migrant groups in either research or professional contexts’ (Sanson et al. 1997: 37).

Pedersen et al. (2005) reviewed published and unpublished reports on anti-racism strategies and found that most can be categorised as either individual or interpersonal strategies. Individual level strategies focus mainly on changing the attitude of the racist perpetrator (through awareness raising, inducing dissonance and invoking empathy) and generally were found to have limited effect. Interpersonal strategies include facilitating intergroup contact, providing consensus information, enhancing intergroup dialogue, and using advertising campaigns. The review revealed that providing consensus information and enhancing dialogues on racial issues were effective anti-racism strategies. Based on their review, Perdersen et al. (2005) suggested that anti-racism intervention strategies be used to combat false beliefs and misconceptions about different minority groups. They stressed the importance of having open discussions on racism, invoking empathy, and emphasising commonality and diversity. Anti-racism should also focus on changing not only attitudes but also behaviour.

There are only a handful of empirical studies on anti-racism in Australia (e.g. Chambers & Pettman 1986; Ward 2002). Those evaluating cross-cultural awareness and other anti-racism training programs point to their general failure to produce long-term attitudinal and behavioural change (Hill & Augoustinos, 2001). A few Australian non-government organizations have published on the web their anti-racism kits such as: ‘The Australian Community Action Kit on Racism’ (Australian NGO Working Group 2001); and ‘Achieving Harmony through Religious Understanding: A Resource Manual for Teachers’ (Australian Multicultural Foundation 2000). There are also government-funded websites that provide information and links to resources on racism/anti-racism (e.g. Racism No Way website).
Anti-racism has also been studied using a legal approach with a number of recent publications critically examining anti-racism legislation (e.g. Law Reform Commission 1992; Legg 2002; McNamara 2002). But studies on the activities of anti-racism advocacy groups in Australia are virtually non-existent (except for Vasta 1997).

However, in recent years, there has been a significant increase in the amount and quality of information on Australian racism and anti-racism. This is due in large part to the initiatives and support provided by the HREOC. Numerous HREOC reports have confirmed that racism and prejudice continue to be serious problems in Australian society. For example, HREOC’s Report on the National Inquiry into Racist Violence in Australia (1991) was a landmark study of the extent of racism experienced by NESB immigrants in Sydney and Melbourne. The study revealed that, ‘People of non-English speaking background are subject to racist intimidation and harassment because they are visibly different. For recent arrivals, unfamiliarity with the English language can exacerbate the situation’ (HREOC 1991: 388).

The Australian government is now more cognisant of the value of documenting and analysing systematically the experiences of racism of ordinary people as evidenced by the number of commissioned studies on racism. The results of these studies are now widely available through the internet (HREOC 2001, 2004a). The HREOC also initiated a number of consultations with different sectors of the community to prepare for the United Nations sponsored world conference against racism in 2001. These consultations were well-documented, the results of which are available on HREOC’s website (e.g. HREOC 2001, 2002). These reports are important because of their wealth of information. They provide a synthesis of recommendations for improving race relations as put forward by different groups. A significant finding of these consultations is the ‘widespread acknowledgment that Australia’s colonial history is the principal cause of the racism experienced today’ (HREOC 2001: 3).

There was also general consensus that racism is still prevalent in Australia and is caused by the legacy of colonialism, ignorance, fear and a lack of understanding of cultural differences, and the unequal power relations in Australian society (HREOC 2001: 4-5). Among the many recommendations made was for the Australian Government to support more independent research into all facets of racism in Australia.
2.4 Asian Australians as part of the ‘other’

Current research on Asians in Australia focuses more on immigration issues and settlement patterns but neglects the issue of racism. This overemphasis on macro level demographics does not take into account the impact of racialisation on the lived experiences of Asians in Australia. Discussions of Asians in Australia also appear regularly in the media but scholarly debate is lacking. Much of the extant literature deal with opinion polls on attitudes towards migration in general (e.g. Callan 1983; Morris & Heaven 2001) and on attitudes towards Asians in particular. There is very little research on racism experiences of Asians in Australia (e.g. Loosemore & Chau 2002; Mellor 2004b), much less on how racism has affected them.

The term ‘Asian’ as used in this study recognises that the collective called ‘Asian Australian’ is in itself diverse or that it is not a homogenous group. This diversity is reflected in the large number of subgroups that can be subsumed under the term ‘Asian’. Among these subgroups, the Chinese and the Vietnamese have received the most attention in research. This is probably due to their larger presence and their longer history of settlement in Australia. The presence of Chinese in Australia ever since the late nineteenth century is well documented in the literature. One of the key studies in this area is a historical analysis of the changing patterns of migration and racialisation of the Chinese in Australia from 1945 to 1994 (Collins & Reid 1995). More narratives are also beginning to emerge about encounters between Indigenous Australians and the early Chinese settlers (Edwards & Yuanfang 2003). A number of studies have also focused on how racism has impacted on the lives of Chinese Australians including: an examination of how racialisation has shaped the identity of multi-generational Chinese Australians (Tan 2003); and an analysis of internalised racism as reflected in the work of Chinese Australian artists (Leong 2002).

Research on Vietnamese Australians also abound (e.g. Matthews 1997; Mellor 2004b; Morris & Heaven 2001; Teo 2000; Thomas, M 1999; Williams, I 2003). But research on how racism has affected other specific Asian sub-groups is few and far between. In the case of Filipino immigrants, the focus of discussion and research has been on how being stereotyped as ‘mail-order brides’ have impacted on the lives of Filipino women in Australia (see for example, Saroca 2002).
More research on Asians is needed because Asians are normally just lumped with the ‘others’. This treatment of ‘Asians’ as a homogenous group obstructs a deeper understanding of the ‘astonishing degree of ... diversity encapsulated by the term “Asian”’ (Matthews 2002b: 196). As Ang et al. (2000) have suggested, ‘the hybrid category of “Asian Australian” is a contradictory site of cultural struggle for membership’ (Ang, Chalmers, Law & Thomas 2000: xvi) in Australian society.

Most studies look at the experience of NESB immigrants in general, with immigrants from Asia lumped together with those of European backgrounds. Because Asians are subsumed into the generalised other, the problems they face as racialised subjects are usually dismissed. The use of all-inclusive categories such as ‘immigrants’ or NESBs has led to Asian people’s needs not being met and their achievements and success not being recognised.

Theorising that subsumes Asian Australians under the general category of non-whites tend to ignore the distinctiveness of Asian Australians. Asians are neither ‘black’ nor ‘white’ but they are still characterised in those terms, and this tendency impedes the development of new and compelling ways to examine current race relations’ (Park & Park 1999: 289). But as Bobo and Dawson (2004) have asserted, the growing complexity of societies around the world points to the urgent need to look at racial issues beyond a black-white binary.

Asian Australians experience racism much like Indigenous Australians. But unlike Indigenous Australians who are generally acknowledged as the true ‘owners of the land’, Asian Australians are still regarded as inassimilable foreigners because of their distinct cultures and physical attributes (Wong, L 2002). Unlike their European counterparts, they are seen more as Asian rather than Australian. Thus, Asians who have long been living in Australia are still often assumed to be non-citizens. Asians in Australia are also considered as outgroups. This was confirmed by the results of a 2001 telephone survey conducted in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland which found that 33 percent of the 5056 respondents believed Asians ‘did not fit into Australian society’ (Dunn et al. 2004). The survey also found that 27.5 percent of respondents ‘would be concerned if a relative were to marry a person of Asian background’, indicating a disturbing degree and persistence of intolerance towards Asian Australians. This general tendency to see Asian Australians as ‘outsiders’ is also linked with the general perception that they are competing with other Australians for jobs ('Three per cent of migrants
say Australia is racist: survey' 2002). Asians in general are stereotyped as the model minority group (Wong, L 2002). However, at the same time, they are generally regarded as a threat to Anglo Australians because they are perceived as competing for jobs. And so like Asian Americans, Asian Australians 'are both praised and resented, complimented and derided' (Pyke & Dang 2003: 150).

Many Asians are also mistaken to be non-English speakers even though most are fluent in English. Asians are categorised as non-English speaking, but as Hawthorne (1997: 397) has rightly pointed out, ‘the term masks highly differential levels of English [competence].

Many…had been wholly or partially educated in English, either within their country of origin or through completion of tertiary or postgraduate degrees in Western countries such as the UK, USA or Australia. … The term ‘NESB’ may therefore signify cultural and racial differences in immigrant professionals rather than [imply] substantial deficits in English. (Hawthorne 1997: 397)

This contextual review has revealed that there is a pressing need for more research on racism and anti-racism that is specific to the Australian context. Anti-racism is an area that has barely been researched. We know a great deal about the strong anti-Asian sentiments prevalent in Australia as has been shown in various opinion polls and recent empirical studies (Dunn & Geeraert 2003). But we are no closer to understanding how ordinary people cope with racism. More specifically, social researchers have yet to explore how Asian Australians use discourse to respond to racism. Apart from a handful of studies (Loosemore & Chau 2002; Matthews 1997; Mellor 2004b), there also have been very few attempts to reflect on the impact of racism on the everyday experiences of ordinary Asian Australians.

There are specific issues relating only to the experience of Asian immigrants that cannot be subsumed under the experiences of the general racialised ‘other’. Immigrants have a unique view of social reality in Australia. We must therefore examine how racism has impacted on the life chances and opportunities of Asian Australians of the present. By focusing on their experience of racism, we can expect to be able to produce a richer analysis of the situation of Asian immigrants in Australia that can inform public policy and programs.
Chapter 3
The Racialisation Problematic
(Theoretical Framework)

The complex nature of racism, the lack of conceptual clarity of anti-racism, and the urgent need for practical solutions to address social relations problems necessitate that studies go beyond the confines of particular disciplines or research paradigms. What is needed is a theoretical framework that is able to integrate concepts from different perspectives in investigating the processes by which racism happens, and to examine the strategies people use to mitigate its impact. This chapter represents my attempt to contribute to the development of a racialisation problematic or a paradigm that allows different (and even competing) perspectives to advance our understanding of the core concepts of racialisation, racism and anti-racism. In this chapter, I discuss the theories that guided my empirical investigation of the racialisation experience of Asian Australians.

I will first discuss the theories that inform how I conceptualised race, racism and racialisation in this study. I will also elucidate on the close links between racism and racialisation by identifying common threads between the two concepts. I will then discuss the different perspectives on racialisation provided by its main proponents in order to highlight racialisation’s focus on processes and to support my claim that racialisation is useful conceptually and empirically in understanding racism and anti-racism.

3.1 Race, racism and racialisation

As key concepts within the social sciences, race, racism, and anti-racism have attracted considerable attention. The concepts, their meanings and the ways in which these have been

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3 Sociologist Stephen Small (1994) defined the ‘racialization problematic’ as ‘a paradigm within which competing theories can be advanced for an understanding and explanation of the creation and variations in racialised barriers, boundaries and identities in various socio-historical contexts’ (Small 1994 cited in Murji & Solomos 2005: 16).
and can be operationalised are a major source of debate, criticism and research. As such, there is a vast array of literature on the subject. Indeed, there is a relatively long history of theorising and research on race, racism, and anti-racism, spanning many continents from Europe, the USA to Australasia. However, ‘throughout this history..., there has been intense debate about what the focus of such research should be and on the appropriateness of conceptual and methodological tools for analysing the changing and evolving patterns of race and ethnic relations in contemporary societies’ (Bulmer & Solomos 2004: 2-3). A wide and diverse range of theoretical perspectives and methodologies has emerged both from within and outside sociology and psychology over the last two decades, so much so that according to a recent review, ‘no one theoretical perspective is dominant at the present time’ (Bulmer & Solomos 2004: 7). According to Solomos and Back (2001:154), ‘the theoretical engagements of the early 1980s cannot adequately conceptualise racism in the 1990s’ (2001: 154). This is because ‘no monocausal or one-dimensional theory can encompass the breadth and complexity of racism-related issues’ (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 18).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to detail the different racism theories that have been developed over the years. [For more detailed reviews on theorising on racism: (a) from a European perspective, see Bulmer & Solomos 2004; Gann 2000; Miles 1993; 1999; Solomos & Back 2001; (b) from an American perspective see Jones, JM 1997; Winant 1998; and (c) from an Australian perspective see Jayasuriya 2001; 2002a.] What is evident from these reviews is the need for theoretical integration across disciplines. What we need is an approach that is able to bridge the gap between micro and macro levels of analysing racism. We also need a theory that not only considers the impact of social structures on social relations between dominant and subordinate groups but also ‘consider[s] the role of everyday interaction in creating, sustaining, and transforming social structures’ (Hollander & Howard 2000: 348). This study attempts to fill this need.

### 3.1.1 The contentious issue of race and how racism is correspondingly defined

The social sciences have been concerned for decades now with definitions of the term ‘race’ and its different permutations. Despite this, there is still no general consensus on its definition
(Reisigl & Wodak 2001). The term still has considerable potential for conceptual development. There is still continuing debate on what race means and what constitutes racism. The issue has been confounded further by the emergence and subsequent popular use of the concept of racialisation.

So, what is race? At one extreme, race is viewed as something objective and fixed (whether biologically determined or reified as culture). At the other extreme, race is seen as something socially constructed.

**Race as objective and biologically determined.** The view that race is fixed, natural or objective dominated much of the early literature in anthropology, sociology and psychology. Biological determinists sought to legitimise the use of race as an analytical tool through an appeal to science, biology and genetics. They argued that humans can be divided into subgroups based on biological differences, relating either to genotype (physical differences on the ‘inside’) or phenotype (physical differences on the outside or those relating to physical appearance) (Collins 1993: 3). The more common way of delineating racial categories was to use skin colour or looks as markers of difference.

Racism from this perspective is seen as resulting from the belief in some form of racial hierarchy between groups and that different ‘races’ were unequal, with the so-called ‘white’ or Caucasian race superior to all others. Historians and social scientists generally blame this belief in a racial hierarchy as the rationale used for the Holocaust, (and the almost parallel fate suffered by Indigenous Australians at the hands of early settlers to Australia). However, academics, policy-makers, and social scientists have questioned this belief. In addition, the United Nations became increasingly cognisant of the ill effects of racism. Thus, it has adopted a number of declarations relating to racism and prejudice. In particular, the United Nations Education and Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated in its 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice that the belief in the inherent superiority of particular groups has ‘no scientific foundation’ and is morally and ethically wrong.

Any theory which involves the claim that racial or ethnic groups are inherently superior or inferior, thus implying that some would be entitled to dominate or eliminate others, presumed to be inferior, or which bases value judgments on racial differentiation, has **no scientific foundation** and is contrary to the moral and ethical principles of humanity (Article 2, UNESCO 1978; emphasis added).
This declaration was widely accepted by the world community and resulted in a paradigmatic shift in racial studies.

Racism from a biological or scientific perspective has been referred to as old racism. In contrast, more progressive theorists have suggested a newer form of racism where race is seen as akin to ethnicity or culture. This way of conceptualising race and racism was used predominantly in the Australian race debates of the 1980s and the 1990s (Burnett 2001). From this perspective, culture (and not skin colour or looks) was seen as the more important signifier of difference or incompatibility between groups (Burnett 2001; Donald & Rattansi 1992). Racism was no longer about questions of superiority and inferiority but more of a question of difference. The problem was of social cohesion rather than inequality or social injustice. The new targets of racism became ‘the cultural groups who are perceived as incapable of, or unwilling to, assimilate into the mainstream’ (Cole 1997:108). In most studies using this approach, race is operationalised as culture and treated as an independent variable. But this view is still limited since culture is seen as something fixed and inherent in groups, rather than fluid and evolving.

**Race as socially constructed.** The paradigm shift that resulted from the general rejection of the biological theory spurred vigorous attempts to offer alternative theories of race. British sociologist Robert Miles (1982; 1989; 1993; 1999; Miles & Brown 2003) was one of the leading theorists who developed fully an alternative view.

Drawing from a neo-Marxist perspective, Miles consistently argued against the reification of race as an analytical concept, stating that:

> There are no ‘races’ and therefore no ‘race relations’. There is only a belief that there are such things, a belief which is used by some social groups to construct an Other (and therefore the Self) in thought as a prelude to exclusion and domination, and by other social groups to define Self (and so to construct an Other) as a means of resisting that exclusion. Hence, if it is used at all, the idea of ‘race’ should be used only to refer to descriptively to such uses of the idea of race. (Miles 1993: 42)

Miles contends that race should be dispensed with as an analytical category because use of the term reproduces and gives legitimacy to a distinction that has no status or validity. Miles argues that since there are no natural race categories then, this means race is a social
construct. In other words, there are no racial categories in nature, only in the way we as human beings view the world. The categories we use to differentiate one group of people from another are just based on human conventions and have no scientific basis. Following Miles and other social construction theorists, the word ‘race’ is now commonly placed in inverted commas to avoid this problem of reification and to highlight the ‘concept’s ideological, rather than scientific, content’ (Collins, 1993: 4). However, critics point out that while Miles rejects the use of race as an analytical concept, he accepts without question the analytical value of class and class relations, concepts that are also socially constructed. Dei (1996; 1999a; 1999b; 2000) in particular, emphasise the saliency of race.

There is some consensus now among those in sociology and psychology that race is socially constructed. This implies that race categories are ever changing, not fixed or static. These are constantly being formed and transformed. However, the view that race is biologically determined or a question of culture or ethnicity is still commonly used in our everyday understandings of racism.

**Everyday racism.** As with critical race theory (Delgado 1995a; Delgado & Stefancic 2001), a basic premise in this thesis is that racism is part of the everyday experience of ordinary people from minority groups. As such, racism is ‘not aberrational [but part of] “normal science”, [or] the usual way society does business’ (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 7). Akin to this notion of the ordinariness of racism is Essed’s (1991; 2002) concept of ‘everyday racism’. In her book *Understanding Everyday Racism, An Interdisciplinary Theory* (1991), Essed interviewed highly educated black women in the Netherlands and the United States regarding their perception and experiences of racism. Using insights from psychology and sociology, Essed developed a theory of everyday racism that is able ‘to cross the boundaries between structural and interactional approaches to racism and to link details of micro experiences to the structural and ideological context in which they are shaped’ (Essed 1991: 288). Her theory suggests that racism becomes a part of everyday situations through cognitive practices (prejudices) and behavioural practices (discrimination) that become familiar and repetitive and reinforce the power imbalance in ethnic and racial relations. Everyday racism does not consist of distinct events but exists as ‘a complex of cumulative practices…that infiltrate everyday life and become part of what is seen as “normal” by the dominant group’ (Essed 1991: 288). Essed
(1991) identified three interlocking ‘mechanisms for racism’ (which she also referred to as ‘general processes of racism’). These processes or mechanisms are: (a) marginalisation or the perpetuation of a color hierarchy; (b) problematisation of minority people’s perception of social reality, their cultural experiences and intellectual qualifications; and (c) containment in the form of patronising, aggression, denial of racism and suppression of efforts to challenge racism.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Essed’s study is her systematic conceptualisation of the use of accounts for empirical investigations of racism. Her landmark study laid the foundation for theorising and research using the perspective of those at the receiving end of racism. Her theory of everyday racism has been widely accepted and has been used in a number of Australian studies (e.g. Mellor 2004b; Mellor et al. 2001; Pedersen & Walker 1997).

Types of racism experiences. Mellor compared the racism experiences of 34 Aboriginal Australians (reported in Mellor 2003) and 50 Vietnamese Australians (reported in Mellor 2004b) by interviewing them about experiences that they interpreted to be racist. From his thematic analysis, Mellor developed a taxonomy of racism experiences consisting of four basic types. These include: (a) verbal racism such as name-calling, abuse or racist remarks; (b) behavioural racism in the form of ignoring, avoidance, looking, assault, patronization, harassment, mockery, gestures and unfriendliness; (c) discrimination in terms of denying, excluding or restrictive actions and selective application of laws, rules and disciplines; and (d) a more general community-level racism in the form of cultural domination and the perpetration of misinformation and stereotypes (Mellor 2004b). The first two categories encompass racism that is individual in nature while the last two types are more institutional in nature.

Mellor’s taxonomy is useful for this study since it captures the different forms of everyday racisms experienced in diverse situations by two minority groups in Australia—Indigenous Australians and Vietnamese Australians. More importantly, his research is valuable since it foregrounds the perspective of the victim rather than the perpetrator.

The division of racism into categories such as blatant and subtle gives rise to the sense that contemporary racism is milder, more tolerable, and benign than it once was. Unfortunately, this argument seems to apply only when the perpetrators of racism are the focus of study because from the accounts of the victims, it seems that racism still impinges on daily life in a complex manner. (Mellor 2003: 484)
I agree with Mellor’s assertion that we need to look at race-related issues from the perspective of those directly affected, but also with a framework ‘that acknowledges that there is a perspective on racism [and anti-racism] other than that of the dominant group’ (Mellor 2003: 474).

Mellor’s taxonomy points to the different ways racism is manifested but it does not capture the dynamic processes by which racism happens. The concept of racialisation, with its distinct emphasis on processes may be able to provide new insights that could be used to expand Mellor’s taxonomy.

3.1.2 Origins of racialisation

Academics are still debating fiercely on whether the focus of social scientific analysis should be on race relations, racism, or racialisation. I will not detail the different arguments in this continuing debate since these are well documented in sociological literature (see for example, Banton 1987; Bulmer & Solomos 1999; Gilroy 1998; Goldberg 1999). Instead, I will discuss the origins of racialisation.

Barot and Bird (2003) traced the genealogy of the concept of racialisation from the 1800s to contemporary times. What was evident in their review is that a lot of questions plague the concept of racialisation. These questions include, what is racialisation? How different is it from race and racism? How has it been defined and used in the literature? How does it work?

Racialisation was used sporadically in the early 1900s but disappeared for quite some time (Barot & Bird 2001). It later re-emerged in sociological literature in the late 1970s to the early 80s and has been applied to a wide range of issues ever since even beyond racial and ethnic studies. Examples of recent applications of the concept include studies on: racialisation of ethnic youth and of crime (Collins, Noble, Poynting & Tabar 2000); racialisation of Australian immigration (Collins et al. 2000; Vasta 2005); racialised schooling (Matthews 2002b); racialised reporting by the Australian media (ADB of NSW 2003); the ‘racialisation of desire’ in relation to Asian homosexual men’s marginalisation (Jackson, PA 2000); and racialisation of
the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (or SARS) (Wong, V 2003). A dominant theme is the use of racialisation in studies relating to identity formation (see for example Lewis, AE 2003; Phoenix 2005) and discourse (e.g. Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley 1999; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale 1999; Teo 2000; van Dijk 1992; Wetherell & Potter 1992).

While there is a rich mix of studies that have used the concept, racialisation is often mentioned just in passing and neither fully defined, clearly explained nor systematically analysed. Murji and Solomos, who edited a recent book (2005b) that aimed to address this very issue noted that:

there is still some confusion about what exactly is meant by racialization in every instance where it is used. … Textbooks in ethnic and racial studies often provide more detailed examples that suggest how racialization occurs and the variety of ways in which it can be applied, though not always an account of why and how it is useful conceptually. … This increasing, common, and unelaborated uses of racialization as a problematic, a framework, or as a process has led to some rather frustrating catch-all use of it descriptively, and a lack of development conceptually. (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 2 & 4)

Most writers (e.g. Barot and Bird 2001; Murji & Solomos 2005a) attribute the development of the concept of racialisation to British sociologist Robert Miles (Miles 1989, 1993, 1999; Miles & Brown 2003). However, Miles himself acknowledged the writings of French psychiatrist Frantz Fanon (1967) and of fellow British sociologist Michael Banton as the impetus for his own work.

Fanon mentions only briefly the phrase ‘racialization of thought’ in his book The Wretched of the Earth (1966), which according to Phoenix (2005: 103) ‘documents how colonizers and colonized are inextricably linked in the relational process of racialization’. Fanon used racialisation to describe how Eurocentric colonialism and the imposition of a white culture on the colonised influenced native intellectuals into treating blacks and Africans as the same and thinking of them in terms of the racial category called ‘Negro’. Fanon cautioned native intellectuals against adopting ‘quasi-racial categories such as “African culture” rather than

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4 SARS refers to a severe form of pneumonia that appeared as an outbreak in early 2003. Dubbed as the ‘modern day yellow peril’ (Wong 2003), the virus was believed to have originated in China and affected many countries, mostly in Asia but also included Canada. The uncontrolled spread of the SARS virus and its lack of cure created a global public panic that led to Chinese (and other Asians) being feared and seen as possible carriers of the disease.
proclaiming their own national culture’ (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 7). He urged anti-colonialists not to imitate such European models of thinking that placed emphasis on categorising people using scientific or biological conceptions of race. Although Fanon did not develop fully his concept of racialisation, Murji and Solomos (2005: 7) contend that ‘the wider legacy of Fanon’s work…draws attention to the relationship between the psychic and social dimensions, and the ways in which subjugated identity positions can be internalized, even while they are in flux and being contested’. Fanon’s contribution to the development of the notion of racialisation lies in ‘his analysis of the mental states of the dominant and the subjugated’ (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 8-9). Fanon’s writings also suggest that it is possible to resist racialisation’s effects on both the body and the psyche. However, he advocated a violent or revolutionary approach to resistance that is largely unacceptable in contemporary times.

Banton introduced the term racialisation into sociology. In his book *The Idea of Race* (1978: 18), he referred to racialisation as ‘a mode of categorization’ by which peoples and nations are divided into ‘races’, based on somatic or biological differences. He did not however, pursue this line of theoretical development. Instead, he maintained the position in most of his writings (Banton 1978, 1987, 1988) that the focus of study should be ‘race relations’ (as a type of social relations) and not racism or racialisation. He discounts the value of the racialisation problematic by stating that ‘the use of racialisation in analyzing intergroup relations still has not given us a way out of the difficulties caused by the multiplicity of meanings given to the word race’ (Banton, 1997 cited in Barot & Bird 2001: 616). This is where he differed markedly from Miles.

Throughout his many writings (e.g. Miles 1989, 1993, 1999; Miles & Brown 2003), Miles emphasised that race as itself is an ideological category. As such, race requires explanation and therefore cannot be used for either analytical or explanatory purposes. In line with this, he espoused a theoretical framework that used racism and racialisation (rather than race or ‘race relations’) as central analytical concepts. Miles viewed racism as ‘an ideology with a historically specific origin in colonialism’ (Miles & Brown 2003: 7). He stressed the importance
of analysing how the ideology of racism operates within specific historical contexts. He also talked about the fluid and dynamic nature of multiple forms of racism⁵.

Miles is generally credited for developing the concept of racialisation. In his seminal book *Racism and Migrant Labour* (1982), he defined racialisation as:

> a process of delineation of group boundaries and of allocation of persons within those boundaries by primary reference to (supposedly) inherent and/or biological (usually phenotypical) characteristics. ... The concept therefore refers to a process of categorisation, a representational process of defining an Other, usually, but not exclusively, somatically. ... The concept of racialisation, by highlighting the process of categorisation as one of attributing meaning to somatic characteristics, presumes a social psychological theory that explains the nature and dynamics of the process. (Miles 1982: 157)

We can deduce from this definition that Miles used the concept of racialisation as a synonym for racial categorisation. But in subsequent writings, Miles (1989: 75) expanded the scope of his definition referring instead to racialisation as, ‘those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities’. Miles maintained that the focus of analysis should be on the dialectical process by which meanings are attributed to real or imagined human characteristics rather than on the physical differences in itself, and on how that process of signification structures social relationships (Miles & Brown 2003: 87).

In an updated version of his seminal book *Racism*, Miles (with Brown 2003) clarified the relationship between racism and racialisation by arguing that ‘the expression of racism is an integral component of a wider, historical process of racialisation that is interlinked with exclusionary practices and with the expression of other forms of exclusionary ideology’ (Miles & Brown 2003: 113). Miles differentiated racism from racialisation by stating that, ‘racism…presupposes a process of racialisation but is differentiated from that process by its explicitly negative evaluative component’ (Miles & Brown, 2003: 104). According to him, racism is part of the wider process of racialisation. In other words, racialisation is an essential component of racism. Racialisation becomes racism when a negative evaluation is made.

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⁵ It is now generally acceptable to use ‘racisms’ (in plural rather than in singular form). For a comprehensive list of the different types and definitions of racism which have appeared in the literature see Jones (1997: 369-370).
Explaining his view on the links between racism and racialisation, he wrote that ‘the concept of racism [can be used] to denote a particular form of (evaluative) representation that is a specific instance of a wider (descriptive) process of racialisation. As a representational phenomenon, it is analytically distinguishable from exclusionary practices’ (Miles & Brown 2003: 109). Miles insisted on differentiating racism from exclusionary practices because (a) racism is ideological; and (b) exclusionary practices (e.g. being intentionally or unintentionally excluded from the labour market) do not necessarily imply that such practice was motivated by racism or is expressive of racism. According to him, ‘this must always be demonstrated rather than assumed to be the case’ (Miles & Brown 2003: 109). Thus, he consistently cautioned against the conceptual inflation of racism.

Some have criticised Miles heavily on his insistence that racism be understood as a purely ideological phenomena, separate from exclusionary practices. In addition, others have argued that while Miles rejects the use of race as an analytical concept, he accepts without question the analytical value of ‘class’ and ‘class relations’. Interestingly, Miles and Brown (2003:104) have noted that the ‘too many of the contributions to the debate about the nature of racism as an ideology have a fascination with the writing of fellow intellectual practitioners but maintain a silence about the way in which representations of the Other have been created and reproduced in everyday life’. This adds support to my contention that the focus should be on how racial categories are formed and transformed in the real world.

### 3.1.3 Commonalities between racism and racialisation

The literature is full of instances where the terms **racism** and **racialisation** are used interchangeably. This is not necessarily a weakness but merely indicates that the two concepts are closely related. ‘Racialisation is synonymous to racism in that it embodies the different sub-processes through which differences are naturalized and legitimated’ (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 7).

The tendency to use racialisation in conjunction with racism may be explained by the fact that a thin line separates the two concepts since there are more similarities than differences in their basic premises.
Both racism and racialisation share the basic premise that while race is socially constructed, it continues to have salience as markers of difference in everyday life. In addition, both concepts argue that although race is not ‘real’ at least in the biological sense of the word, it has real effects. Many theorists now agree that we should not abandon the use of race as an analytical construct because race remains a central principle on which societies are organised (Barot & Bird 2001). To deny the significance of race dismisses the fact that racism has real effects and that it impacts on the lived experience of many people. Race continues to be socially significant because inequalities are reproduced through practices of racism and racialisation (Lewis, G & Phoenix 2004).

[R]acial categories are not merely sociological abstractions but are potent social categories around which people organize identities and behavior and that influence their opportunities and outcomes. … Racial categories are socially real; they are powerfully material in their consequences for people’s lives. (Bulmer and Solomos, 1998 cited in Lewis, AE 2003: 302)

In fact, ordinary people still hold the belief that humans can be divided into groups based on stereotypes or ascribed differences relating to race signifiers such as appearance, culture, religion, and language. These ascribed differences are often used as the bases for judging one group as superior to the other.

Another common thread between the two concepts is that an inherent power differential between socially constructed groupings is always implied when discussing racism and racialisation. ‘What groups should be called, who has the right to define them and who should be included within particular terms have all been hotly debated because they describe and define unequal social power relations as well as similarities and differences between people’ (Lewis, G & Phoenix 2004: 118). And it is precisely because of this unequal distribution of power that ‘race has become reified from an imprecise classification scheme to a meaningful reality’ (Operario & Fiske 1998: 39). Power is defined here as ‘the disproportionate ability of some individuals or groups to control other people’s outcomes’ (Operario & Fiske 1998: 47). Dei et al. (2004) clarify further that this power is largely unearned privilege that is in the hands of majority groups.

Racism lives through the applications of prejudice and power—uneearned power. We make this particular clarification because power from unearned privilege may appear to
be strength—when actually all that such power allows is the privilege to dominate or escape complicity. (Dei et al. 2004: 155)

This unequal power distribution results in inequitable access to resources and partly fuels racial tensions.

Another premise shared by the concepts of racism and racialisation refers to their dynamic nature. Both concepts emphasise that because of the socially constructed nature of race, racial categories and race-thinking processes are uneven and constantly changing. ‘Races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient’ (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 7). These are malleable and permeable (Bonilla-Silva 1997), and not fixed, inherent or objective. This implies that the meanings attached to terms used to denote a particular racial category (e.g. White, black, Asian, Indigenous) are dynamic and can change over time and these meanings are context-specific or are different in different contexts (Lewis, G & Phoenix 2004). Racialisation is ‘dynamic in that attempts to label, contain and regulate are met with attempts to resist and transform these processes’ (Collins et al. 2000: 18).

The last premise relates to the dialectic or reflexive nature of both concepts. Racism almost always involves a process of differentiating one’s self with the ‘other’ or between one’s ingroup with the outgroups. The significance of a term to denote a racial category depends on how people define who they are in relation to other groups. For example, the meaning attached to the racial category ‘Asian’ is created through its relation to and difference from (white) ‘Australian’. In addition, racism implies a negative evaluation of this ascribed difference and usually this judgment is in accord with the dominant or hegemonic viewpoint (Reisigl & Wodak 2001), which in turn is usually associated with whiteness.

Racism and racialisation share a number of common threads. However, the two concepts differ in the sense that racialisation embodies more adequately the notion of process.

3.1.4 Multiple, highly divergent views on racialisation

What is racialisation? There is wide but divergent use of the concept of racialisation in academic literature within sociology, political sciences, cultural studies, literary theory and post-colonial studies. Murji and Solomos (2005a) provide a comprehensive but succinct
discussion on the main debates surrounding the use of racialisation in sociological literature. In this section, I elucidate on how racialisation has been conceptualised by pointing out areas of agreement as well as identifying points of contention among theorists.

Theorists generally agree on three basic points. First, racialisation involves social and psychological processes, the most basic process being racial categorisation. Second, racialisation is founded on the notion that race is socially constructed, not biologically determined. Third, the process of racialisation is dynamic and complex and requires ‘an inclusive and historic framework if it is to be understood and then meaningfully countered’ (Kushner 2005: 222). Unfortunately, this is where the consensus ends for there are more points of disagreement (than agreement) among theorists.

For one, the literature is silent on whether the term ‘process’ as embodied in the concept of racialisation refers to one process (particularly racial categorisation) or multiple processes. There is also a lot of ambiguity regarding this issue since these so-called processes cannot be easily inferred, measured or observed. If we accept that racialisation involves more than the process of racial categorisation, then what other processes are we talking about? Phoenix (2005) in particular, explicitly states that we have to specify what processes are being invoked with the use of the concept of racialisation. There is a ‘need to specify the ways in which it is employed and to clarify what it adds to the understanding of everyday practices’ (Phoenix 2005: 103). Another area of disagreement is on the limits of racialisation. Many theorists also criticise that the concept of racialisation is overused and has been applied inconsistently. Barot and Bird (2001: 615) contend that, ‘although racialization has great advantages as a basis for understanding issues of race, it has a bewildering variety of connotations’.

Barot and Bird (2001) are most critical about the value of racialisation, saying that it does not provide an adequate framework for analysis. Banton maintains that there is a lack of clarity about who is and what is doing the racialising. He also critiqued the way ‘Miles extended and expanded the usage of the idea of racialization, so that it can be seen as occurring whenever its effects can be observed’. According to him, this becomes problematic because we need to consider whether racial categorisation is in itself racist.
One of the harshest criticisms come from Goldberg (2005), who in his book *The Racial State* mentions his view that racialisation has become a cliché, too easily invoked and used in discussion and academic papers, yet rarely explained or assessed rigorously. Goldberg (2005: 88) even admitted that he has ‘avoided using the very notion, both warning my students that “racialization” has no purchase and refusing it as an analytic in my own work’. In addition, Rattansi astutely pointed out that ‘racialization encounters a serious problem [because] it is parasitic, for its meaning(s), on prior definitions of race and racism (Rattansi 2005: 272). Criticisms such as these reveal the concept’s lack of clarity and its ambiguous use.

Murji and Solomos (2005) also point out that the relationship between ethnicisation and racialisation have not been explored systematically. The differences between racialisation and racism are not clear although some writers have offered some thoughts on this issue. We need to distinguish racialisation from its analogous construct, ‘ethnicisation’ (Essed 1991). According to Miles and Brown (2003), racialisation is ‘a specific modality of ethnicisation’, in the sense that for racialisation, groups are differentiated mainly on the basis of somatic features or physical attribute. On the other hand, ethnicisation refers to ‘the dynamic processes that construct people as belonging to a particular ‘ethnic’ group on the basis of assumptions about culture, national origin, or language (Lewis, G & Phoenix 2004: 125). For Lewis and Phoenix (2004), ethnicisation works in the same ways as racialisation in highlighting the contingent and constructed nature of differences.

To understand the relationship between these different concepts, Rattansi (2005) suggested that we visualise these concepts as situated at different points in a continuum, with racialisation in between race and racism. We can expand this by adding ethnicisation and looking at it as falling in between racialisation and racism. However, instead of using a continuum, I have used in Figure 1 an ‘onion diagram’ to visualise that the different concepts make up a system of concentric circles. Race is situated at the innermost circle to suggest that it is the core concept. Both ethnicization and racialisation are also conceptualised as processes underlying racism. Thus, racism is shown in the diagram as forming the outermost layer to suggest that racism may be seen as outward manifestations of the three other concepts.
The criticisms against the use of the concept of racialisation are linked to the contentious issue of race as discussed earlier. Rattansi explains this by stating that ‘racism is an “essentially contested” notion. [As such] consensus on its meaning is unlikely. ... The result is a chronic instability and potential vacuity at the very heart of the concept of racialization. It nevertheless is a seductive, indeed irresistible addition to the theoretical vocabulary of sociology’ (Rattansi 2005: 272).

While critics abound, there are many theorists who assert that racialisation is a useful analytical tool. Several point out that the wide and divergent use of racialisation is not necessarily problematic (Kushner 2005; Murji & Solomos 2005a; Phoenix 2005; Rattansi 2005). According to Phoenix (2005: 103), the concept of racialisation is ‘a welcome advance on other ways of theorising race and ethnicity’. It is able to accommodate the ‘apparently contradictory perspectives’ that on the one hand, contend that race (at least as defined in terms of biology) is not real, and yet on the other, have to deal with the reality that racism is
‘ubiquitous and durable’ (Phoenix 2005: 103). The concept is able to cut across such constructed binaries as white/black (Kushner 2005: 222).

Rattansi also declared unequivocally the value he places on the concept of racialisation. In his opening statement to his chapter contribution to the book *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (2005), he asserted that:

> It is my view that whatever its limitations, the concept of racialization is indispensable and marks an advance in the study of what is generally called ‘race’ and ethnic relations. It cannot replace other concepts. But it functions to open up avenues of inquiry and understanding than the blunt attribution of ‘racism’ has a tendency to close down. (Rattansi 2005: 271 emphasis in original)

He added that the diverse usage of racialisation is not a weakness but a strength.

‘Racialization is about analysing a panoply of related issues and processes. The value of the concept lies precisely in pointing not just at race and racism, but beyond them in their manifold imbrications’ (Rattansi 2005: 273). However, he also posed the provocative question, ‘what role does this leave for the concept in substantive analysis? (Rattansi 2005: 273). In other words, it is all very well to debate on paper but we also need to consider how racialisation can be fully explored in empirical research.

### 3.1.5 Racialisation as everyday race-making

A way out of the conceptual quagmire discussed above is offered by Omi and Winant (1989) in their racial formation theory and by Lewis (2003) who defines racialisation as a process of boundary setting at the micro-level of interpersonal relations.

According to the racial formation theory:

> Racialization signifies the extension of racial meanings to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group. Racialization is an ideological process, an historically specific one. ... Racialization becomes racist when the subject is treated as inferior and devalued. (Omi & Winant 1989)

Omi and Winant (1989: 61) asserted that ‘race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and re-formed’.
The way Omi and Winant defined racialisation is similar to the way Miles conceptualised it. Both emphasise the historical specificity of racialisation, that is, historical events and social structures (e.g. capitalism, class relations, etc) influence how people attach meanings to racial categories. Both conceptualisations also imply that societal structures are the ones who are doing the racialising, with individuals and groups as the ones being racialised. But how can this be empirically investigated? How is such formulation relevant to the lives of those who have directly experienced racism?

Expanding on Miles' formulations and Omi and Winant's racial formation theory, Lewis linked her conceptualisation of racialisation to the notion of boundary setting, arguing that 'racism is not merely about the representation of difference; it is about inclusion and exclusion' (Lewis, AE 2003: 285). She argues that people use socially constructed racial categories to draw boundaries between who are similar or different, or who is part of the ingroup or the outgroup (as well as who is superior or subordinate).

Lewis stressed the importance of understanding everyday race-making or 'the practices and processes involved in the construction and reconstruction of racial boundaries in daily interactions' (Lewis, AE 2003: 283).

Individual actors are involved everyday in negotiating and contesting racial boundaries and, in the process reproducing and challenging them. Racialization is an ongoing process that takes place continually at both the macro- and micro-levels and involves questions of who belongs where, what categories mean, and what effect they have on people's life chances and opportunities. (Lewis, AE 2003: 285)

Three key points are evident in the quote above: (a) that individuals are constantly engaged in forming racial categories; (b) that these racial categories or boundaries are not static or fixed but can be contested and changed; and (c) that racialisation impacts on people's lives.

According to Lewis, racialisation as race-making is part of the everyday experiences of individuals and groups. She defines racialisation as the practices and processes involved in the construction and reconstruction of racial boundaries in daily interactions. This process of boundary setting using racial categories becomes racist when these categorisations are used to determine who are included or excluded from a range of institutions, activities or
opportunities. She argues further that these boundaries are not fixed but are constantly negotiated, reinforced or bridged.

I agree with Lewis' contention that racialisation is not something that happens to people and institutions but that people and institutions are also racialising agents (Lewis, AE 2003: 284). She also suggests the need for more studies on the ‘everydayness of race’ since racial ideology and racial structures are constantly produced and reproduced in day-to-day events.

The rules of racial discourse have changed as new colourblind or laissez-faire ideologies have become dominant. ... This does not mean that racial categories have lost their salience. What it does mean is that in trying to understand and explain how it is that race is produced and contested in the everyday, it is required that we give our analytical attention to subtle and implicit processes as well as those that are overt and explicit. (Lewis, AE 2003: 286)

Lewis' conceptualisation of racialisation is attractive for two reasons. It considers how racial categorisation or the attachment of racial meanings to race signifiers becomes problematic. It also looks at racialisation mainly at the micro level but also acknowledges that racialisation also occurs continually at the macro level.

We can conclude from this discussion that there is an absence of a clear consensus on ‘the value of racialisation as a critical tool for analyzing how “race-making” occurs’ (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 24). The central question that needs to be asked then is whether racialisation provides a better way of understanding the crucial issues of race, racism and anti-racism (Murji & Solomos 2005a: 23). Or does the concept merely add to the litany of nominalisations that have tended to obfuscate already complex issues such as racism and anti-racism?

The multiple and highly divergent views on the value of racialisation may lead to two courses of action. Some may opt not to use the concept altogether to avoid the criticisms already discussed. The other course of action, which I am taking, is to take up the challenge of using theoretical and empirical research to clarify the concept, especially in terms of specifying what specific processes are being invoked when we speak of racialisation.
3.2 Impact of racialisation

Majority of the empirical research on the impact of racism has focused on African Americans or on Indigenous Australians. Very few studies have systematically addressed how racialisation has affected other minority groups. With this framework in mind, this study sought to examine how Asian Australians coped with the cumulative impact of their different stress producing racialisation experiences. The literature is also replete with discussions and empirical investigations of the impact of immigration. However, the impact of racism has so far barely been researched. From international research, it is known that racism affects the health and well-being of victims of racism in at least three distinct ways: health status, access to health care, in quality of health services provided. In Australia, the focus of research has been on the impact of racism on Indigenous health but not on any other minority groups.

Barot and Bird (2001: 612) point out quite astutely that, 'The emphasis on process and on ideological constructions of racial difference typical of those understandings of racialization within the mainstream of sociology have tended to lead sociologists to ignore the implications of such process for those who experience racism'. 'Racism is often confused with prejudice, discrimination or violent acts involving aggression and hostility. But racism is not so much a psychological or personal problem as a relationship of domination and subordination, of inclusion and exclusion' (Stephenson 1997). Thus, racism is quite distinct from prejudice in that its effect is undeniably oppressive. These effects include: denial of choices, denial of the right to human agency (Reicher 2001), racial conflict, inequality, injustice and social exclusion. Regardless of the motives behind racism and whether or not the perpetrator is aware of being racist, racism’s effect on the victim is to varying degrees unjust and undesirable. As a social ill, racism has ‘immense personal, social, political and economic costs’ (Collins 1993: 1) and is the greatest barrier to social cohesion in any society. Racialisation plays a role in determining ‘life chances’ (Lewis, AE 2003: 284).

Harrell, SP (2000) provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the way racism is experienced and impacts on the health and well-being of racialised subjects. Using stress theory, Harrell argued that racism impacts on individuals’ health and well-being both by increasing the overall stress burden and by constraining coping choices. She defines racism-related stress as, ‘the race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their
environment that emerge from the dynamics of race, and that are perceived to tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being’ (Harrell, SP 2000: 44).

Based on this definition, she identified six types of racism-related stress: (a) racism-related life events; (b) vicarious racism experiences; (c) daily racism microstressors; (d) chronic-contextual stress; (e) collective experiences of racism; and (f) transgenerational transmission of group traumas (Harrell, SP 2000: 45-47).

The most obvious sources of stress are racism-related life events or direct personal experiences of racism, which is the focus of this study. Examples include being verbally abused or physically attacked, being unfairly dismissed or being bypassed for promotion or training. These types of racism experiences may happen infrequently and only for a limited time but these usually have the greatest impact because of their direct and overt nature.

Secondly, individuals can also be affected by stress from vicarious racism experiences or by witnessing or learning about racism experienced by family and close friends or even by just hearing about those experienced by strangers (e.g. such as those reported in the media). For example, when Australian media revealed how Australian Immigration Department officials mistakenly labeled two of its Asian-looking citizens as illegal immigrants—resulting in the wrongful deportation of Philippine-born Vivian Solon-Alvarez (‘Alvarez deported on health grounds’ 2005; Higgins & Stewart 2005; Keaney 2005; Migrante Melbourne 2005; ‘Woman deported because of looks: lawyer’ 2005) and the illegal detention of another Chinese Australian citizen—many Asians in Australia feared that the same could happen to them or any other Asian-looking person (Barlow 2005).

The third type of racism-related stress results from exposure to daily racism microstressors or subtle, covert forms of racism that occur more commonly but in a more insidious way. These racism experiences are what Pierce (1995 cited in Harrell, SP 2000: 45) referred to as ‘microaggressions that include subtle, innocuous, preconscious or subconscious degradations and putdowns’ that serve as constant reminders of one’s racialised status. The fourth type of racism related stress called ‘chronic-contextual stress’ results from the unequal distribution of resources and the limited opportunities available to members of non-dominant groups. As Harrell (2000) pointed out, this influences the living conditions and quality of life of racialised groups. In addition, individuals may experience racism-related stress by identifying with the
collective experience of racism of their ethnic group. Though people do not have direct or vicarious experiences of racism, they can still be ‘affected by observations of how racism affects the lives of others with whom they feel a sense of connection and identification’ (Harrell, SP 2000: 46). Closely related to this is the stress that results from ‘transgenerational transmission’ of the effects of historical trauma experienced by one’s minority group. For example, the long history of racial oppression suffered by Indigenous Australians has adversely affected the lives of present-day generations.

Harrell (2000) noted that individuals do not need to have direct experiences of racism to be affected by racism related stress. ‘However, living in a society where the occurrence of any of these things is at all times a distinct possibility can create stress above and beyond the generic stresses of life’ (Harrell, SP 2000: 47). She also emphasised that the impact of racism-related stress is cumulative and can affect the well-being of individuals in five general domains: physical, psychological, social, functional, and spiritual.

3.3 Anti-racism or response to racism/racialisation

There is considerable literature from different disciplines and theoretical perspectives on the causes and manifestations of racism (see for example Reisigl & Wodak 2001 for a good overview from a discourse analytical perspective). However, most research stop short of analysing racism and seldom follow through with recommendations on how to deal with the problem. Research and theorising on racial issues often deal with anti-racism but not as part of the main agenda but more as an afterthought and addendum. Put simply, most studies devote considerable space to discussing race and racism but discuss recommendations relating to anti-racism in the conclusion or as part of the implications of research. Of the few journal articles for example that deal with anti-racism as the main topic, most are theoretical discussions on one extreme, or descriptions of anti-racism projects on the other. There seems to be a significant gulf between these two extremes.

Anti-racism is commonly defined by ordinary people and in the literature as an opposition to racism. However, Lloyd (1998) has stressed that anti-racism cannot be considered simply as something opposed to racism because of the growing emphasis on the different forms and plurality of racism. She states that because ‘antiracism is rarely taken as a positive movement
in its own terms and has tended to remain negatively defined in terms of what it opposes... using a simplistic definition becomes increasingly untenable’ (Lloyd 1998: 4). Furthermore, Anthias and Lloyd (2002: 4) have stressed that ‘far from being simply an organised opposition to racism, antiracism [must be] expressed [as] an alternative social project, a different conception of society’.

3.3.1 Prejudice reduction

Duckitt (2001) provides a very useful framework for categorising the different strategies used to combat or reduce racism. He has identified four causal levels at which interventions can be made to reduce prejudice or counter racism: (a) perceptual-cognitive, (b) individual, (c) interpersonal, and (d) societal-intergroup. These are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptual-cognitive</th>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Interpersonal</th>
<th>Societal Intergroup</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changing social categorizations</td>
<td>Changing individual susceptibility to prejudice</td>
<td>1. Changing social influence</td>
<td>Changing social conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Decategorization</td>
<td>1. Prejudiced attitude</td>
<td>i. Media persuasion</td>
<td>1. Conflict reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recategorization</td>
<td>2. Personality</td>
<td>ii. Support norms of tolerance</td>
<td>2. Liberal democracy</td>
</tr>
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5. Minority empowerment and intergroup equality

6. Integrative multiculturalism

7. Cooperative education

8. Managing workplace conflict

9. Social justice and stability
**Perceptual (social) cognitive approach.** At the most fundamental perceptual cognitive level, it is assumed that prejudice and racism result from the natural tendency to identify with and favour one's ingroup. While this tendency cannot be changed easily, the kind of categorisations that are salient for people can be modified. The perceptual cognitive approach argues that anti-racism efforts should be directed at changing the way social categories are formed. A great deal of research has examined how making social categories salient affects group identification and intergroup attitudes. In particular, four kinds of categorisation have been investigated: decategorisation, recategorisation, subcategorisation and crosscutting categorisation. According to the decategorisation approach (Brewer and Miller 1984 cited in Duckitt 2002: 260), intergroup bias can be reduced if people interact with each other as individuals and not as members of an undifferentiated outgroup (Duckitt 2002: 260). This approach suggests that it is best to structure intergroup situations so that category distinctions are less salient and outgroup members are known as individuals. On the other hand, the recategorisation or superordinate identity model (Dovidio et al, 1998) suggests that making members of different groups identify with one larger ‘superordinate’ group can reduce intergroup distinctions.

The social cognitive perspective or social categorisation theory seeks to understand individual level manifestations of racism. Instead of focusing on personality disorders, however, the latter views racist attitudes and behaviour as consequences of human irrational and (albeit) faulty cognitive processes. Based on Gordon Allport’s (1954) groundbreaking treatise on prejudice, this perspective assumes that humans need stereotypes to simplify the world and that social categories are vital to human cognitive functioning. Operario and Fiske (1998) distinguish between the cognitive and affective elements of racism. They argue that, ‘Roughly, racial stereotyping represents the cognitive component of racism while racial prejudice represents the emotional and evaluative components’ (Operario & Fiske 1998: 45). These two components overlap but not completely. From this perspective, both racial stereotyping and racial prejudice are viewed to be practically inevitable.

There has been extensive research using the perceptual cognitive perspective. However, critiques also abound. In particular, critics point out that social cognition researchers view society as static and a-historical and context-insensitive (Reisigl & Wodak 2001). By assuming
that stereotyping is inevitable and cognitively ‘useful’, social cognition researchers ‘risk playing
down and even—at least implicitly—justifying racism as a ‘survival strategy’” (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 11). ‘The social categories which structure thought about other people are seen as
simplifications, but they are also taken as direct and accurate perceptions of features of the
ways in which people are naturally divided in reality’ (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 40). Despite
these limitations, this theory is important to the present research because ‘most popular
discussions about ‘race’ are really about social categories and lay understandings of group
differences’ (Sanson et al. 1997: 11). Thus, the social cognitive approach to understanding
racism will help clarify the confusion that often results with this tendency to loosely equate
biogenetic designations of ‘race’ with social categorisations and popular understandings
(Sanson et al. 1997).

**Individual level strategies.** Counter racism strategies at the individual level focus on the
racist perpetrator, rather than the target or victim of racism. These strategies constitute the
mainstream approach to anti-racism all over the world. Anti-racism strategies using this
framework typically focus on the ‘perpetrator’ using what Jones (1997: 302) has termed the
‘salvation approach’. This approach assumes that prejudices can lead to racist behaviour and
so the goal is to change attitudes to prevent or minimise discriminatory behaviour. Anti-racism
strategies using this approach include stereotype reduction workshops and racism awareness
training (see for example, Katz & Taylor 1988). Race awareness programs have, however,
been criticised for providing just a reification of already existing ‘race’ categories rather than
raising awareness on how racism is about the unequal social distribution of power (Anthias &
Lloyd 2002). Furthermore, empirical studies have found that these have limited impact. For
example, Hill and Augoustinos (2001) measured prejudiced attitudes towards Indigenous
Australians before and after a three-day cross-cultural awareness program. They found the
program successful in increasing knowledge about Indigenous issues. But, while the program
also resulted in a decrease in stereotyping and prejudice, this was only evident right after the
program and was not sustained in the long-term. Strategies oriented toward the individual are
generally effective for combating the old form of racism. However, indirect strategies that
benefit from people’s genuine motivation to be non-prejudiced may be more effective for
reducing contemporary forms of prejudice (Dovidio & Gaertner 1999:101).
interpersonal interventions. Closely related to the perceptual cognitive approach are a number of theories that seek to explain racism and intergroup relations. These include: social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979), realistic group conflict theory-RGCT (Levine and Campbell, 1972 cited in Esses, Jackson & Armstrong 1998), and group prejudice theory (Bobo 1999).

The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986) posits that part of an individual’s self-concept derives from his/her membership in a group, together with the value and social significance attached to group membership. This theory builds on the perceptual social cognitive approach by emphasising the role of socialisation and group experiences in the formation of social categorisations. ‘People have a fundamental need to feel positively about themselves, and often satisfy this need through bolstering their group or social identities’ (Operario & Fiske 1998:46). Social identity theorists argue that people automatically display a positive bias towards their ingroup and ascribe negative traits to those who are in their outgroup.

Building on the social identity theory, the realistic group conflict theory posits that prejudice and discrimination are often based on conflicts of interest between groups (see Jackson, JW 1993 for a thorough review). The premises of this theory most relevant to the present discussion are as follows (LeVine & Campbell 1972 cited in Esses, Jackson & Armstrong 1998:):

First, ... intergroup threat and conflict increase as the perceived competition for resources increases between groups, and as the conflicting groups have more to gain from succeeding. Second, ... the greater the intergroup threat and conflict, the more hostility is expressed toward the source of the threat. This hostility helps justify the conflict and the unfavorable treatment of outgroup members. Finally, ... when competition over resources is present, proximity and contact increase intergroup hostility.

In other words, when group goals are compatible, positive relations are likely to exist, whereas when group goals are incompatible, conflict and negative intergroup attitudes and behaviour result. Considerable research evidence has been found to support these premises (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong 1998).

It is important to note that the basic premises of this theory do not require that actual competition over resources exists. Rather, it is the perception of competition that leads to
conflict and intergroup hostility and this conflict is assumed to occur at the group level rather than at the individual level. That is, it is the group’s interests that are at stake and being protected, rather than solely the interests of individual members of the group (i.e., oneself) (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong 1998). While competition for resources such as money and power are the focus of RGCT, social identity theory proposes that positive group identity and self-esteem are at stake.

Both social identity theory and realistic group conflict theory have considerable merit for the present research. Both theories have been used to explain how immigrants are perceived not only as belonging to the outgroup but also as a threat to jobs and other resources. However, these theories do not adequately explain how individuals determine who their ingroups and outgroups are. The approach assumes social groups are givens and tends ‘to treat them as unexamined terms—as static features of a pre-defined macro-sociological landscape understood in a structuralist-functionalist manner’ (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 74). Given this perspective, the anti-racism project then becomes almost impossible since it is difficult to change something, which is universal and inevitable.

**Societal or intergroup interventions.** There is considerable research on the different strategies used to combat racism at the societal intergroup level. Duckitt (2001) has grouped these strategies into two categories: (a) those that seek to create favourable intergroup contact experiences, (b) those that aim to change individuals’ exposure to social influence.

The preceding discussion revealed that anti-racism strategies that seek to reduce prejudice blame racism on individuals. However, on the other end, are programs that lay the blame on institutions. Because of this tendency to look at racism as either individual or institutional, anti-racism solutions offered tend to concentrate on prejudice reduction or changing the perpetrator, or dealing with institutional racism through legislation and social policy approaches. The challenge is to broaden our understanding of anti-racism and allow for personal anti-racism strategies to be included.
3.3.2 Repertoire of responses

Bonnet (2000: 85-86) identified several broad forms of anti-racist practice or ways by which racism can be countered: (a) everyday anti-racism or the practices designed to oppose racism and inequality that form part of everyday popular culture; (b) multicultural anti-racism or the affirmation of multicultural diversity as a way of engaging racism; (c) psychological anti-racism or ‘the identification and challenging of racism within structures of individual and collective consciousness’; (d) radical anti-racism or efforts to identify and challenge the structures of socio-economic power and privilege that foster and reproduce racism; (e) anti-Nazi and anti-fascist anti-racism or efforts to challenge extreme right organisations and their ideas; and (f) policies and practices that seek to create organisations representative of the ‘wider community’ and therefore actively favouring the entry and promotion of previously excluded ‘races’. What seem to be missing in this typology are the personal strategies used by individuals to cope with everyday racism. These personal strategies may be subsumed under Bonnet’s third category called ‘psychological anti-racism’ but the label does not really capture the essence of efforts by individuals to use internal and external resources to counter racism and to mitigate its negative impact. Personal coping strategies are also not considered as part of anti-racist efforts.

A concept that is useful in organising the different responses to racialisation is the notion of ‘repertoire’ that in its generic form is defined as the entire range of devices, resources and options used. The idea of having a repertoire of responses is not new since many authors (e.g. Allport 1954; Simpson & Yinger, 1985) have written about this. In particular, Feagin and Sikes (1994) suggested that the repeated experience of racism shapes not only the individuals’ way of living but also their life perspective. The racialised subjects’ life perspective comes to embed a repertoire of responses to hostile and racist acts. More recently, Silber (2003) argued that the idea of repertoire is useful ‘in conveying the image of a structure that is both enabling and constraining, limiting but also flexible, and relatively stable yet never utterly static or closed (p. 431, emphasis added). The notion of having a repertoire of responses to racialisation that is ‘both enabling and constraining’ suggests that racialised subjects have resources both within and outside their personhood that can enable or empower them to deal
with racism. Yet, they may also be constrained by limited access to such resources. The idea of repertoire:

has the double advantage of connoting the ready enactment and concrete performance of **practical and practicable options**; and of allowing for a measure of **individual meaning and agency** in mobilizing and choosing a specific configuration of cultural [and other] resources, while also stressing the public, and publicly available nature of those resources. (Silber 2003: 431; emphasis added)

This implies that racialised groups have choices and resources that they can use to deal with racism. Their choices can be in the form of selective avoidance or confrontation while their resources include internal coping mechanisms and outside support mechanisms. This conceptualisation emphasises that racialised subjects have agency and that they can choose to respond using a combination of ‘practical and practicable options’. In relation to anti-racism, this repertoire of responses can include discourse and action to effect social change (Dei 1996).

### 3.3.3 Anti-racism discourse

Dei (1996) defined anti-racism as:

> An action-oriented strategy for institutional systemic change. It is a critical discourse of race and racism in society that challenges the continuance of racializing social groups for differential and unequal treatment. Antiracism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity, rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety. (Dei 1996: 252)

Similarly, Anthias and Lloyd (2002: 16) defined anti-racism as, ‘a set of polycentric, overlapping discourses and practices which combine a response to racism(s) with the construction of a positive project about the kind of society in which people can live together in harmony and mutual respect’ (Anthias and Lloyd, 2002:16). Key to this definition are the terms (a) ‘polycentric and overlapping’ and (b) the notion of combining discourses and practices. The first point acknowledges that there are many forms of racism everywhere. Since the issue of racism intersects with issues of gender, class and ethnicity, anti-racism proponents should use multiple frameworks to gain a better understanding of the oppressive effect of racism and other forms of discrimination (Keating, 2000). The second point stresses that to counter racism, one
must combine discourse and practice. This aspect of the definition suggests that it is important to analyse how people use discourse to address racism and to examine the practices or strategies used to counter racism.

Discursive psychology is an excellent option for combining micro and macro level analyses of racism and social conflict. The discursive approach is especially useful in analysing contemporary forms of racism since it circumvents direct reference to race (Hanchard 2004: 326). The discursive approach starts with the argument that racism is both an ideology and a social practice that manifests itself in discourse. 'On the one hand, racist opinions and beliefs are produced and reproduced by means of discourse; on the other hand, through discourse, discriminatory exclusionary practices are prepared, promulgated, and legitimised' (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 1). This approach locates the causes of racism in society itself, in institutional practices and discourse. Rather than measuring people's prejudicial attitudes and beliefs through the use of traditional questionnaires and scales, discursive psychology analyses what people actually say in everyday communication. It is also interested in analysing the rhetorical organisation of what is said (Augoustinos & Reynolds 2001). This tradition of research argues that the language of contemporary racism is contradictory, ambivalent and inconsistent, making the categorisation of people as either racist or non-racist highly problematic (Augoustinos & Reynolds 2001).

From this perspective, language is seen as 'deeply social, intertwined with social processes and interaction' (Wodak 1999: 186). Language is also viewed as interaction that always involves power and ideologies. Because discourse is used synonymously with interaction this suggests that discourse must always be viewed in its historical context and linked to other communicative events. Wodak (1999: 187) refers to this as the 'intertextuality' and 'recontextualization' of discourse.

There are a small but growing number of empirical studies using the discursive approach. But most of these have focused on how racist discourses are reproduced in the public space. These studies are valuable in helping our understanding of the causes and manifestations of racism. However, from the perspective of anti-racism, there is a greater need to analyse how discourse 'serves to criticise, deligitimise, and argue against racist opinions and practices' (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 2).
Two recurring themes have emerged from the literature relating to goals of anti-racism. Both are aligned to the assertion of equality as a main goal of anti-racism. The first approach, universalism, asserts that all people are equal and should therefore be accorded the same rights and opportunities (Bonnett 2000: 19). Universalist anti-racism appeals to reason, the law, the rights of man, citizenship and equality between individuals (Bonnet, 2000). From this perspective, anti-racism’s goal is to ensure that everyone, regardless of ascribed or inherent differences has equal access to opportunities and that human rights are upheld. As enshrined in Article 5 of the International Convention for the Eradication of Racial Discrimination, these human rights include the following: (a) right to equal treatment before the law, (b) right to security and protection by the State, (c) right to vote, (d) other civil rights, (e) economic, social and cultural rights, and (f) right of access to any public place or service (UN OHCR 1965).

The second approach to anti-racism centres on the notion of relativism or ‘the idea that cultural and/or physical differences between races should be recognized and respected; that different does not mean unequal’ (Bonnett 2000: 13). From this perspective, racism may be countered by appealing to the ‘golden rule’ of Christianity commonly expressed as, ‘Do not do onto others what you would not want them to do onto you’. This runs parallel to the notion of a universal morality or an ethics of reciprocity or the shared belief among almost all religions, ethical systems and philosophies that each person should treat others in a decent manner (Religious Tolerance.org Website 2005).

This concept of relativism is one of the central tenets of Australia’s multicultural philosophy which ‘recognises, accepts, respects and celebrates…cultural diversity’ (Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity 2003). Multiculturalism then in the Australian context leans more heavily towards the goal of affirming diversity rather than eradicating racism. Thus in Australia, multiculturalism has tended to be interpreted as a celebration of cultural differences, and ‘not as a necessarily subversive program’ (Bonnett 2000: 90). ‘In most cases the practice of employing culture as a euphemism for “race” or “ethnicity” remains a central disposition, as does the assumption that the practice of valuing “other cultures” challenges or prevents racism’ (Bonnett, 2000: 91).

Critiques of relativism point out that diversity should not be looked at as a problem that needs to be managed or tolerated (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998) since this tendency to look at
diversity as a problem is what the ‘tolerant majority’ tends to share with the extreme right. ‘We are confronted with a set of social assumptions, an ideology, as well as a complex of institutional and everyday social action in which human diversity is at once celebrated and qualified as dangerous, threatening and problematic’ (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998: 3-4). Critiques also argue that the emphasis and affirmation of differences tend to encourage racial exclusion and denigration instead of enabling racial equality. This critique may have led the Australian Government to revise its multicultural policy so that there is now a particular emphasis on ‘the goal of community harmony and social cohesion’ (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005: 1).

3.3.4 Everyday anti-racism

French Canadian sociologist Michele Lamont used methods of cultural analysis to develop new ways of thinking about racial inequality. Lamont and Fleming (2005) tackle anti-racism head-on by exploring the criteria used to compare racial groups and to establish their equality. The authors define anti-racism as ‘the micro-level responses that individuals use to counter racist ideology’ (Lamont & Fleming 2005: 3). More specifically, ‘everyday antiracism’ is defined as ‘the rhetoric and strategic resources deployed by individual members of stigmatized groups to rebut the notion of inferiority in the course of their daily life’ (Lamont & Fleming 2005: 12).

In her two major books (Lamont 1992, 2000) and numerous journal articles, Lamont used a boundary studies approach to the study of race, ethnicity and immigration. In general, Lamont used interviews to reconstruct the mental maps or symbolic boundaries which individuals use to define who are ‘us’ and ‘them’. Her inductive analysis has revealed that people draw boundaries using moral, cultural and socio-economic principles. Her work is discussed in detail here since it provides a solid conceptual base for understanding how discourse is used to counter racialisation.

In *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (2000), Lamont examined how ordinary people think about similarities and differences between various categories of people. She compared the responses of black and white workers in the United States, to white and North African workers in France by asking 150 interviewees to describe in concrete and abstract terms the type of people they feel similar to
and different from, inferior and superior to, close to and distant from, in the context of their work, neighbourhood and communities. Her results revealed that working class men used moral, cultural, and socio-economic principles to distinguish between ‘races’ and classes. One key finding is that only white low status workers considered racial boundaries as a significant determinant of who is part of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Racial boundaries were not salient among upper-middle class men from both countries (Lamont 1995). In particular, Lamont found white-American workers tend to clearly differentiate themselves from blacks and the poor but were relatively widely accepting of immigrants who were perceived as pursuing the American dream. French white workers on the other hand considered the poor and blacks as ‘part of us’ citing Republican and socialist ideals to justify their arguments. But North African immigrants were considered part of the other and were often presumed to be fundamentally different and immoral (Lamont 2000).

Lamont used subsets of her original interview data to publish several journal articles on different aspects of her findings. In one of these journal articles, Lamont et al. (2002) examined how ordinary victims of racism rebut racist beliefs encountered in daily life or communicated to them by the mass media. They argued that ordinary people, i.e., those of working class status (as opposed to the elite) and those who are unaffiliated with activist organisations (as opposed to members of organised activist groups), usually rely on their own ‘cultural tool-kits’ or ‘repertoire of arguments’ to counter racism. Following Scott (1990), they suggested that as part of the process of resistance, ordinary people develop ‘de facto’ this repertoire of arguments in the process of having to cope daily with racism. This repertoire of arguments consists of folk theories and rhetorical devices to demonstrate to themselves and others that racism is wrong and should therefore be resisted (Lamont et al. 2002: 392). In particular, they found after interviewing 30 blue-collar North African immigrants from France that ordinary North African immigrants develop very different themes when constructing their anti-racist arguments.

First, they refute racism by culling evidence of universal equality from their daily lives, pointing to traits shared by all human beings, such as common morality, human needs, biology and destiny. Second, they alternatively refer to explicitly particularist and differentialist arguments and to conceptions of moral universalism informed by the Koran to disprove their inferiority in the eyes of the French. (Lamont et al. 2002: 393)
This is in contrast to Lamont’s previous findings (1997) that White French workers oppose racism partly in the name of solidarity and that immigrant organisations equate anti-racism with Republican universalism. And so ‘while elite and popular forms of French anti-racism draw on universalistic principles informed by the Enlightenment and Republican principles’ (Lamont et al. 2002: 390), North African (black) immigrants rebut racism primarily by citing evidences of universal equality from their daily experience. For example, interviewees demonstrated that people of all nations and religions are equal because human beings have similar needs and physical characteristics. They also mentioned that just as there are good and bad people everywhere, there are racists everywhere (Lamont et al. 2002: 403).

Whether pointing to morality, universal human needs, physical characteristics, universal human destiny, or intelligence, North African immigrants find evidence of equality in elements of daily life. These elements are generally constant ‘facts’ whose timelessness gives weight or truth to arguments. (Lamont et al. 2002: 397)

In addition, North African immigrants rebut racism by providing evidence that they are morally upright. For example, interviewees asserted that they have never been in trouble with the police and that they do not do anything but work. In describing their moral values, interviewees argued that: they conform to the moral criteria valued by the society; and they are guided by the Koran. This tendency to draw on a moral universalism informed by the Koran or Islam is what the authors have called ‘particular universalism’ or the ‘cultural repertoires of universalism that are differentially available to individuals across race and national context’ (Lamont & Aksartova 2002: 2).

Lamont and Aksartova (2002: 1) also developed the concept of ‘ordinary cosmopolitanism’ defined as ‘the strategies used by ordinary people to bridge boundaries with people who are different from them’. They asked workers to describe the types of people they feel superior and inferior to, and the types of people they like or do not like. The results were then analysed by looking for the types of arguments different groups used to show that all humans are the same or should be construed as the same. The results revealed that when asked to evaluate other groups and themselves, interviewees from both the United States and France establish racial equality by suggesting several important differences and similarities between people (Lamont & Aksartova 2002:17). For example, both black and white American workers argue that people of all ‘races’ are equal because all have a capacity to earn money and so market mechanisms
become ‘the ultimate arbiter of the value of people’ (Lamont & Aksartova 2002:4). In contrast, French workers articulated around arguments pertaining to human solidarity and to the equal dignity of human beings but did not use market-based arguments. Another important finding is that minority (non-white) working class men from both countries use a much broader range of arguments than their majority counterparts (the Whites) because ‘the task of rebutting racism is more central to their daily lives’ (Lamont & Aksartova 2002: 17). In particular, working class men claim that all humans are equal because of shared characteristics such as being all children of God or having the same physiology (same red blood) or having similar human needs (we all need to eat).

Lamont and Aksartova (2002) suggest that researchers should shift theoretical attention from identity to boundary work. The focus should not only be on how boundaries are constructed but also transcended, crossed or bridged. More importantly, they argue that a new framework be developed that recognises the value of ‘everyday practical cosmopolitanisms’ or the strategies used by ordinary people to bridge racial boundaries.

3.3.5 Anti-racism practice or actions

Aside from, or in conjunction with discourse, individuals and groups also respond to racism and racialisation through practice or actions. The actions individuals and groups take in response to racism and racialisation may be explained in part by the psychosocial stress-coping paradigm. Psychosocial stress refers to the socially derived, socially conditioned, and socially situated psychological processes that stimulate subjective distress. A major attribute of psychosocial stress, as opposed to physiological stress, is that the response depends on how the person interprets or appraises (consciously or unconsciously) the significance of a harmful, threatening, or challenging event (Adams 1991 cited in Mellor 2004a: 56). Coping is defined as ‘efforts, both action-oriented and intrapsychic to manage environmental and internal demands, and conflicts among them, which tax or exceed a person’s resources’ (Cohen & Lazarus, 1979: 219 cited in Hill, CV, Neighbors & Gayle 2004: 92).

Mellor (2004a) recently reviewed the different ways by which coping with racism has been conceptualised and categorised. According to him, coping mechanisms are ‘actions that serve the purpose of avoiding or reducing the threat posed by stressors such as racism’ (Mellor
2004a: 60). Based on data derived from in-depth interviews of Indigenous Australians, Mellor developed a taxonomy of approaches to coping with racism summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Approaches to Coping with Racism (Mellor 2004a: 61)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of Energy</th>
<th>Protecting the self</th>
<th>Self-control</th>
<th>Confronting racism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Displaying acceptance</td>
<td>Ignoring</td>
<td>Teaching-educating the perpetrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal / escape</td>
<td>Contained response</td>
<td>Contesting the racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resignation to fate</td>
<td>Imagined response</td>
<td>Asserting one’s rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of further contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>Asserting Koori’s identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in cognitive reinterpretation of events</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taking control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using social support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using external supports—authorities to address racism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying identity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking revenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempting to achieve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempting to make children strong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mellor (2004a) classified the different verbal and behavioural responses to racism stressors in terms of the purpose and focus of energy and came up with the three major categories. The first group of coping responses is aimed at protecting the self. These include: acceptance of racism; reinterpreting the situation; seeking social support; denial of identity; attempting to achieve or excel; and attempting to make children strong. In the second group of strategies, there is more self-control in that individuals ‘make a conscious choice’ to ignore the racist incident, to contain their response, or to respond in an imaginary way (Mellor 2004a: 62-63). In the third group of responses, the focus of energy is in challenging racism or in confronting the racist perpetrator. This action-oriented approach approach include: teaching the perpetrator; contesting racism; asserting one’s rights; asserting one’s identity; taking control; using external support; and seeking revenge. Mellor’s taxonomy of responses provides a useful framework for empirical investigations such as this on micro level approaches to anti-racism.

In the next section, I will synthesise the different theories that I have discussed by presenting the theoretical framework of the study.
3.4 The theoretical framework of the study

The study sought to understand the racialisation experience of Asian Australians by analysing the processes underlying racist experiences, by exploring the impact of racialisation, and by examining responses to racialisation. Since no single theory can adequately provide a framework for addressing these aims, I have combined meaningful elements of the different theories discussed in this chapter to develop the framework shown as Figure 2.

3.4.1 Racialisation process

The upper portion of the diagram starts with the basic premise of the study—that race is socially constructed. While race is not real in the biological sense, race signifiers (e.g. skin colour, looks, language, accent, and culture) are still important markers of difference in everyday life. Race as a social construction is also at the core of racism and racialisation. The arrow linking racism and racialisation indicates that the two concepts are closely linked because of the commonalities that they share. Both concepts suggest the existence of power differentials in society between the majority (dominant) and minority (subordinate) groups. Both are dynamic, context specific and intersect with other forms of oppression.

Drawing from Essed's theory of everyday racism, racism is defined in this study as a system of beliefs, behavior and practices that perpetuates and legitimates the dominant hold of particular groups on power and on socially valued resources. Racism is dynamic, fluid and manifests itself in plural and complex forms (Solomos & Back 2001: 156). Racism is used in the study to refer mainly to the racist incident, or any instance or experience that targets regard as racially motivated. This conceptualisation stresses that the subjective interpretation of a racist incident from the perspective of the target is crucial in determining what constitutes racism and what racialisation is all about.
Figure 2: Theoretical Framework for Understanding Racialisation: Process, Impact and Response

- **RACE**
  - Socially constructed
  - Salient marker of difference

- **RACISM**
  - Essed’s everyday racism
  - Multiple forms, dynamic

- **RACIALISATION**
  - Racial categorisation
  - Processes and practice
  - Lewis’ everyday ‘race’making

- **IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**
  - Experiences of racism increase overall stress burden
  - Harrel’s typology of racism-related stress and domains of impact

- **ANTI-RACISM REPETTOIRE OF RESPONSES**

  - **DISCOURSE**
    - Lamont’s Everyday anti-racism
    - Universalism and relativism

  - **ACTION**
    - Mellor’s approaches to coping with racism

- **Ordinary People’s Experiences**
The everyday, dynamic and fluid nature of racism can be understood better if analysed through the lens of racialisation. Miles’ theory of racialisation and Lewis’ concept of everyday race-making provided the basic framework for understanding racialisation in this study. Racialisation is used here to refer to the dynamic social and psychological processes by which signifiers of difference (e.g. skin colour, accent, language, culture, religion) are used arbitrarily as the bases for categorising people and for subsequently excluding or treating them as inferior. As Lewis (2003) has suggested, people are engaged in everyday race-making or use socially constructed racial categories to draw boundaries between ingroups and outgroups and to determine who is to be excluded or included. These racial boundaries are not static or fixed but can be contested and changed both by the racialising person and the racialised. The processes of racialisation are assumed to be taking place continually at both macro and micro levels. But it is unclear what specific processes are being invoked when we speak of racialisation. This study addressed this issue.

The upper portion of the diagram also indicates that racism and racialisation are manifested in the racism experiences of ordinary people. J.W. Scott asserted in her discussion of the ‘evidence of experience’ that:

It is not individuals that have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. (Scott, JW 1991: 779-790)

It is expressly the knowledge that we can derive from analysing experiences that I am mainly concerned with in this thesis. It is the experiential knowledge and the ‘voice of color’ (Delgado & Stefancic 2001) of Asian Australians that I examined. For any study of racism/anti-racism must include an analysis of actual experiences of racism. Without this element, we risk being accused of merely theorising or ‘floating above’ the lives of those directly affected by these real social problems.
3.4.2 Impact of racialisation

The study sought to examine the immediate and long-term impact (i.e., multifarious effects or consequences) of racialisation in relation to participants' health and well-being. I concur with Essed that narratives on racism experiences provide the best bases for analysing 'the simultaneous impact of racism in different sites and in different social relations' (Essed, 2002: 178). The link between experiences of racism and impact of racialisation is shown through the downward arrow between the upper and middle portions of the diagram. This arrow suggests that the experience of being racialised can adversely affect the health and well-being of individuals.

Using Harrell's (2000) assertion that exposure to racism-related stressors increases the overall stress burden, the study explores the impact of racialisation on the health and well-being of targets of racism. Harrell identified six types of racism related stress: racism-related life events; vicarious racism experiences; daily racism microstressors; chronic contextual stress; collective experiences of racism; and transgenerational transmission of group traumas. She also identified five domains in which racism has the potential to affect well-being: physical, psychological, social, functional, and spiritual. In analysing the impact of racialisation, this study emphasises that racism experiences result in stress. The cumulative impact of racialisation also has long-term oppressive effects.

3.4.3 Anti-racism

The study was also designed to address the need to develop more fully the concept of anti-racism by examining how Asian Australians have responded to their racialisation experience. Anti-racism is used in this study to refer to the repertoire of strategic responses to multiple forms of racialisation. Silber's (2003: 431) idea of repertoire as a 'structure that is both enabling and constraining, limiting but also flexible' has been used to organise the different responses to racialisation.

A downward arrow between the middle and lower portions of Figure 2 suggests that because of the impact of racialisation, ordinary people are spurred to deal with their racism experiences.
using various forms of discourses and actions. These two elements are constantly juxtaposed in practice.

The study uses Lamont’s notion of everyday anti-racism defined as ‘the rhetoric and strategic resources deployed by individual members of stigmatized groups to rebut the notion of inferiority in the course of their daily life’ (Lamont & Fleming 2005: 12). The focus is on examining the discourse of targets of racism (rather than understanding the racist discourse of the perpetrator). I examined the discourse of Asian Australians for insights on how they view racism and their racialisation and the type of discourse they use to justify the need for anti-racism. Discourse is defined in this study as the argumentative patterns that racialised subjects use to explain, deflect and counter racism. The concepts of universalism and relativism (Bonnett 2000) as goals of anti-racism will frame the analysis of why anti-racism is necessary.

The study examines not only discourse but also the actions or behavioural responses to racism. Mellor’s (2004a) taxonomy of approaches to coping with racism is particularly useful as springboard for analysing the behavioural strategies or actions that Asian Australians took in response to their racism experience. He classified the different behavioural responses to racism stressors in terms of the purpose of the actions and the focus of energy. He identified three approaches to coping with racism: protecting the self; self-control or contained response; and confronting racism. What is perhaps lacking in this taxonomy is a deeper analysis of why people respond that way. While stress coping may provide some clues, I propose that an understanding of the racialisation processes may also provide insights on how and why people respond differently.

These theories guided my empirical investigation of the racialisation experience of Asian Australians. The methodology adopted for this study is detailed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4
Researching as Part of the Racialised
(The Study Methodology)

In this chapter, I explain the qualitative research design that I used for my study. I discuss in detail my sampling procedures and describe the profile of study participants. I then describe the different data gathering techniques used before discussing the challenges and limitations of the study.

4.1 Qualitative approach

This study sought to deconstruct stories of racialisation experiences and to examine the different ways Asian Australians have responded to their racialisation experience. I used a qualitative research design for several reasons. I wanted to explore the different processes involved in racialisation and the multiplicity of responses to these. The qualitative research methodology can yield rich and context-based data and is most appropriate for investigations on race, racism and anti-racism because it allows for a naturalistic investigation. It also provides ‘a way to link theory and understanding about race and racism from critical perspectives to actual practice and actions going on’ (Parker & Lynn 2002: 18). Such an approach is ‘required in order to obtain adequate historical reconstructions, actual diagnoses and anticipatory prognoses, all of which are necessary to developing promising anti-racist strategies’ (Reisigl & Wodak 2001: 18).

This research sought to provide ‘detailed insight into grounded and often fluid experiences and responses to otherness’ (Wise 2005: 185). I relied on oral narratives to interrogate how ordinary people counter the multiplicities of racism in the hope that nuances of the method would access issues of subjectivity, consciousness and agency that are otherwise unreachable when using quantitative approaches (Karumanchery 2003).
4.2 Participants

4.2.1 Sampling procedure

I used three broad criteria for selecting the study participants. First, participants must consider themselves to be Asian in the general sense of the word. Second, they must have experiences of racism or are involved in anti-racism work. And third, they must be permanent residents of Australia. By following these criteria strictly, I was able to define the scope of my study while at the same time make my sample size big enough (total of 64) to generate sufficient wealth of information.

I screened participants by asking if they have experienced and/or witnessed any form of racism. It is important to note here that I did not define what being Asian means nor did I specify what I meant by 'racism'. I had to ascertain that the participants themselves were the ones who self-identified as being Asian and have experienced racism since I was interested in how they constructed these two concepts. I also limited my sample to only those who are permanent residents of Australia since part of the aim of the study was to explore participants' sense of belonging, an issue that is more contentious for and more relevant to the experience of immigrants rather than transients. In recruiting study participants, I tried to get immigrants from each of the three Asian sub-regions (Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and Southern Asia). However, I purposely did not include Asian Australians from predominantly Muslim countries (e.g. Malaysia and Indonesia) in order to control for religious affiliation as the primary cause of discrimination.

I recruited participants in three ways: (a) through my personal network by casually mentioning my research project to relatives and friends; (b) by getting referrals from officers of ethnic community groups; and (c) by 'advertising' electronically and using traditional media. The first approach of using my personal networks yielded right away a number of willing participants but all of whom were fellow Filipinos. Since I wanted to get participants of other ethnicities as well, I approached officers from four ethnic community organisations: the Blacktown Filipino-Australian Senior Citizens' Group; the Philippine-Australian Community Services, Inc. (PACSI); the Chinese-Australian Support Services (CASS), Inc.; and the Centre for Philippine Concerns-Australia (CPCA-Brisbane). The first three organisations provided leads to
interviewees and focus group participants in New South Wales (NSW) while CPCA-Brisbane provided referrals for interviews conducted in Queensland. One interview was conducted in Canberra.

I also tried to recruit participants using a one-paragraph ‘media release’ indicating that I was seeking interviews with anyone aged 18 and over who is: (a) Asian; (b) has witnessed or experienced racism; and/or (c) works with victims of racism or implements anti-racism strategies. The media release also indicated that the interviews were being undertaken as part of my PhD research on anti-racism strategies. The announcement was worded in such a way as to ensure that it was in keeping with my methodological requirement that it was the participants themselves who identified themselves as being Asian and as having experienced racism. I posted this announcement in an ethnic community newsletter and in the University’s electronic news bulletin. These did not generate any leads.

However, I also emailed this announcement to several people whom I had already interviewed who then forwarded this to people in their own mailing lists or list serves systems. The announcement generated interest from ten individuals who emailed to say they were willing to be interviewed. This relatively good response rate indicates that people are eager to have their voices heard. I confirmed this by asking the ten volunteers what motivated them to participate in the study even though I did not know them and I could not offer any compensation or reward for their time and effort. All ten said they wanted to share their experiences because they saw the value and importance of contributing to research on anti-racism strategies. When I said that I could not offer anything in return for their time, several said that talking about it (i.e. their racism experiences) was enough ‘reward’. Of the ten who volunteered, only six were eventually included in the sample. Two were not included because they were not permanent residents of Australia while the other two could not be interviewed face-to-face since they were based in Melbourne.

The study acknowledges that there is potential bias in the sampling process used since only those who have experienced or witnessed any form of racism were selected as participants. This, in effect excludes the possibility of having disconfirming accounts. The process of recruiting participants was made difficult by the fact that there were several people who fit the
sampling criteria but were reluctant to be interviewed because they did not want to put much significance to their experiences of racism.

4.2.2 Profile of participants

I wanted to ensure that I had adequately captured the range of possible types of informants (based on ethnicity and other demographic variables) and the types of racist incidents reported. To do this, I kept a tally of participant characteristics as the number of participants grew, and organised data on their racism experiences using a matrix. I used this matrix to gauge when it was time to stop recruiting participants since I had already exhausted all possible types of informants. I can say confidently that I had a good selection of participants as can be seen in the participant profile described in the succeeding paragraphs.

Sixty-four Asians living permanently in Australia participated in the study. The sample included 23 males and 41 females, aged from 18 to 81 years old. The ethnic distribution of the interviewees reflected to some extent the population distribution of Asians in Australia. Each of the three sub-categories of Asians were adequately represented: (a) Northeast Asia – Mainland China (14), Hong Kong (3) and Korea (1); (b) Southeast Asia – the Philippines (35), Singapore (2) and Vietnam (1); and (c) Southern Asia – India (6) and Sri Lanka (3). [The Vietnamese were underrepresented in the sample, considering that they represent a large segment of the Asian community in Australia. But this is balanced by the fact that many other studies on racism in Australia have focused solely on this ethnic group (e.g. Dreher 2000; Dunn 1998; Matthews 1997; Mellor 2004b; Morris & Heaven 2001; Thomas, M 1999; Williams, I 2003).]

The overwhelming majority of participants were first-generation immigrants with only two born in Australia. These two second-generation immigrants were the only ones whose families migrated to Australia as refugees or humanitarian entrants. From this, it can be inferred that majority of the study participants chose to migrate to Australia or were not forced to migrate by negative social, economic and political conditions in their former home country. This is consistent with recent findings that ‘most migrants come to Australia as an active choice rather than because their circumstances at home are bleak’ (National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University 2004: 6). Asian immigrants come to Australia out of their own volition.
Their length of residency in Australia ranged from one to 42 years. Majority (90%) have become Australian citizens except for six newly arrived immigrants and two elderly Chinese who still have not decided on whether they would take up citizenship.

Because I wanted to interview ordinary people from all walks of life, I tried to get participants from a diverse range of occupations. As such, those interviewed included: housewives, unemployed people, first year university students, a Catholic priest, a filmmaker/writer, a businessman, factory workers, a fast-food operator, a waitress, and several women involved in cross-cultural relationships. Two interviewees were openly homosexual and attributed part of their racism experience to this. Most of the elderly interviewees were retired with some now working as volunteers for their ethnic organisations. Almost all did most of their schooling overseas except for the younger ones (aged 18-22) who grew up and studied in Australia. Majority had undergraduate degrees obtained from universities in their home countries. In addition, three had PhDs from the Philippines while another three had master degrees from the United States of America. Some of the Chinese elderly who participated in the focus group discussions were former school/university teachers in their home provinces.

Of the 64 people who participated in my interviews and focus group discussions, eight (mostly elderly) needed help in conversing in English (six Chinese and two Filipinos). Through a university grant, I was able to hire an interpreter who facilitated the focus groups with the Chinese. I could not afford to hire the interpreter to assist during one-on-one interviews with Chinese. Thus, I was left with little choice but to interview only those who could at least converse in English even though I knew that immigrants who are not competent English speakers are the ones potentially more vulnerable to being racialised.

Since I am fluent in both English and Pilipino, I did not have any problems communicating with fellow Filipino participants, many of whom freely spoke in the native language. In fact, the focus groups with the Filipinos were peppered with jokes and anecdotes, which indicated that the participants were very comfortable about sharing their experiences and ideas with someone of the same cultural background. Use of the native language allowed the participants to express their feelings and thoughts in more nuanced terms. This enabled me to capture the subtle meanings of racism and anti-racism as revealed in their narratives and discourses. This would not have been possible if I used a survey or took a quantitative approach.
4.3 Data collection and analysis

Data for the study were collected from July 2004 to February 2005 through a combination of in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and focus groups.

4.3.1 In-depth interviews

I purposely sought to engage with people who have directly experienced racism in order to be able to critically gaze at the issue from their perspective and to get their views on anti-racism. I told the 28 people I interviewed that the main purpose of my research was to hear stories of their experiences of racism and how they responded to being racialised. By informing them that I will be asking them to recount stories of racism, I allowed them to recall and reflect on their experiences. This direct approach differed from previous studies where stories of racism came out as offshoots only of answers to broader questions not directly related to racial issues. [See for example, studies by Bell 2003; 2002; Matthews 2002a; Raby 2004.] I believe this approach of interviewing people who self-identify as having experienced racism has the distinct advantage of putting racism at the centre of analysis. By limiting the sample to people who have experienced racism, I was confident that I was drawing data from people who can be regarded as the ‘experts’ because they had first-hand experience and presumed knowledge about the issue.

I used the interview guide approach (see Appendix A) and so many of my questions were semi-structured and naturally flowing. Pilot-testing helped me develop and refine interview questions that dealt with but were not limited to the following key issues: (a) experiences that the interviewees themselves identified as being racially-motivated; (b) accounts of how they responded to the racist incident (in terms of feelings, decisions made and actions taken); (c) their explanations for racism; (d) justifications for anti-racism; (e) sense of identity, belonging and hope. The length of the interviews ranged from 40 to 200 minutes, excluding preliminaries and debriefing. In a couple of instances, follow-up interviews had to be conducted since the first interview was just spent on stories of racism.

I was very conscious of the need to hold the in-depth and key informant interviews in places most convenient for the participant. I was also conscious that the interviews be conducted in
places where there is some degree of privacy since recounting stories of racism experiences can be emotionally upsetting and the information provided are most of the time confidential. Thus, I held most of the interviewees in the participants' houses or in public cafes. Some participants were interviewed in groups of two or three because they felt more at ease with this arrangement or it was more practical to do the interviews together. With interviewees who did not know me at all, there was comfort found in the presence of the friend or relative who provided the referral. This 'third party' stayed with the participant throughout the interview and also provided some support in terms of being able to corroborate some elements of the racism story.

As indicated earlier, I did not offer any concrete definition of racism but left it to the participants to determine whether an incident they experienced was racist or not. Because of this, people would often begin their accounts with a cautious, qualified introduction, such as: "I don't know if you consider this incident as racist or not but..." The interview method allowed victims of racism to voice out their unspoken feelings and thoughts about their experiences of being discriminated against and this proved to be cathartic for many. A number of them admitted to having not talked to anyone at all about their racism experiences for fear of reprisal as well as fear of being branded as being oversensitive. In the midst of rekindled anger, those interviewed expressed feelings of relief that they were justified in thinking that they had been treated unjustly. Many rushed into telling their story and did not need prodding. The eagerness to tell their stories of racism is perhaps indicative of a burning desire to have their stories out in the open—such that these stories just came spilling out of their system.

4.3.2 Key informant interviews

Part of my research aim was to examine the strategies Asian Australians use to respond to racism in relation to the anti-racism strategies initiated by government and community organisations. Thus, I sought interviews with ten ethnic group leaders and service providers so that they could provide a broader perspective to my analysis of anti-racism strategies. Again, the interview guide approach was used to solicit information on their concept of racism, their views on the effectiveness of existing anti-racism strategies, and suggestions on how to improve these (see Appendix B). Interestingly enough, in the course of interviewing them
regarding these issues, they revealed that they also had personal experiences of racism although I did not purposely ask them to talk about these.

4.3.3 Focus groups

Focus group discussions were conducted to complement the interviews. These were aimed at exploring participants' attitudes and views on three broad concepts: racism, anti-racism and their sense of identity, belonging and hope. The focus group guidelines (detailed in Appendix C) framed the discussion but I asked mostly open-ended questions to stimulate participants' train of thoughts and to encourage exchange of ideas. Before beginning the discussion, I asked each focus group participant to provide information regarding their personal background by answering a short questionnaire (see Appendix D).

I coordinated with officers from three ethnic associations in identifying and recruiting participants to the four focus groups I conducted. Participants were chosen on the basis of two selection criteria: (a) they must be first-generation Asian immigrants who have lived in Australia for at least a year; and (b) they must have experienced or witnessed a racist incident. Participants were informed of the topics for discussion before coming to the focus group sessions. This gave them time to recall and reflect on their experiences and/or views on racism and anti-racism. An AUD$30 allowance was provided as a token of appreciation. Some participants said they did not want to accept any monetary reward because they "enjoyed" participating and they were glad to have come even without compensation.

Focus group with Filipinos. I conducted two focus group discussions separately with five Filipino women and 11 Filipino elderly. PACSI, a Filipino non-government organisation helped recruit the five Filipino women and provided the venue for this focus group. An officer of a Senior Citizens' Association helped me recruit the 11 Filipino elderly who took part in the focus group discussion held at my residence. Both focus groups were conducted using a combination of English and Pilipino since I was conversant in both languages. This, I believe greatly facilitated group interaction. Jokes were exchanged without hesitation since the homogeneity of the group in terms of ethnicity and language gave some assurance to participants that there was shared understanding. All the participants also knew each other previously since they were all members of the recruiting organisations. The Filipino elderly
participants in particular appeared to be very much at ease with having me as focus group moderator since I shared the same ethnic background. I also spoke their language, literally and figuratively.

**Focus group with Chinese.** Through the help of another non-government organisation, the Chinese Australian Support Services, Inc. (CASS), I was able to conduct two separate focus groups with seven Chinese elderly and five Chinese women. Both sessions were held in one of CASS’ NSW offices, a place regularly frequented by most of the participants. Since not all participants could speak English, I hired a Chinese interpreter/translator to facilitate discussion, which was conducted mainly in Mandarin. I also asked the interpreter to review the transcripts of the focus group discussions.

All four focus groups were held in NSW with each lasting for about two to three hours. A number of the focus group participants were also interviewed in-depth about their personal experiences of racism at a later date.

The use of focus groups is particularly useful for my research since it was ideal in stimulating discussions on anti-racism issues such as the group's awareness of and attitudes towards anti-racism strategies initiated by community organisations and the government. The focus group technique is especially appropriate in this case since victims of racism may sometimes feel that problems relating to their racism experience may be a result of their own inadequacies. As such, they feel 'dismayed' and are therefore often reluctant to give negative feedback. By interacting with other victims of racism, reticent participants were drawn into discussing more openly their personal experiences of racism and became more forthright about expressing their views about what should be done to address racism. But it must also be acknowledged that focus groups may potentially facilitate confirmation bias or group thinking processes.

### 4.3.4 Data analysis and write-up

I used a digital voice recorder to tape all the interviews and focus group discussions. I then transcribed these audio recordings and then coded the transcripts using NVIVO, a software for qualitative data analysis. I had initially identified some predetermined categories for coding
based on Mellor’s (2003; 2004b) taxonomy of racism experiences and categories of responses to racism (Mellor 2004a). But I added more codes to the initial list as more transcripts were analysed and as themes emerged from my data. Through iterative analysis, I was able to establish relationships among the themes generated. I then used evidence from the literature to support the categories and relationships that I presented as my findings.

I wrote up my ethnographic data using what Wainwright (1997) called a ‘narrowing and expanding focus’ style of writing that oscillates between micro and macro analysis. Thus, I interjected mini-discussions within the main body of the four data chapters in order to show how specific findings from this study relate to those in previous literature. In each data chapter, I also discussed the implications of my findings vis-à-vis my theoretical framework by presenting separate diagrams of my elaboration of the theoretical model I was building.

4.4 Challenges and limitations

The challenges and limitations inherent in this project are three-fold and relate to: (a) issues of rigour and validity; (b) difficulty of getting people to talk about their racism experiences; and (c) ethical considerations.

The first challenge related to issues of rigour and validity. Since I took a qualitative approach to this study, my intent from the very start was to provide an in-depth analysis of racism stories and anti-racism strategies using rich data generated from the interviews and focus groups. The data gathering techniques I used enabled me to collect data that is closer to reality (Lamneck 1988) than data obtained through quantitative techniques. The aim was not to generalise to a larger population but to provide rich data that reflect the opinions and actual experiences of the participants.

Another challenge was getting more people to talk about their racism experiences. Given the sensitivity of the topic, it was essential that I establish trust with my participants from the onset. I had to establish my credibility and trustworthiness as a researcher and make participants appreciate the potential benefits of participating in the research project. The fact that I was PhD student from a well-known university helped establish my status as a credible researcher. I built on this by letting participants know that my research had already received a stamp of
approval from the University’s ethics clearance committee, who reviewed and approved my research methods and instruments. I also gave participants a copy of the informed consent form (Appendix E) that contained a brief description of the purpose and scope of the study. Using the informed consent form, I emphasised to participants that I am duty bound to follow the University’s code of ethics for the conduct of research. This means that I could not force them to participate and that if they decided to participate, everything they said would be treated as confidential and that they would not be identified in the research report.

The third challenge related to issues of confidentiality. Quite a number of participants were very concerned about maintaining confidentiality and of preserving their anonymity. Those who recounted experiences of workplace discrimination were especially afraid that any leaks regarding their identity would put them in greater trouble or would affect their future employment or career prospects. A couple of victims of domestic abuse were also concerned that people would know about their innermost secrets and stated that they felt they were exposing their private lives by talking about their personal problems. I tried to assuage these fears by reiterating my guarantee of confidentiality and by explaining that I would safeguard their privacy by using pseudonyms in the report.

In general, study participants did not hesitate to talk openly about their experiences of racism and their views about anti-racism. This may be attributed to the fact that I was successful in establishing rapport right away. Even those who expressed initial concerns about confidentiality and anonymity eventually opened up and became less reticent. Many also seemed eager to talk to someone who was interested in hearing about their racism experiences and expressed a sense of relief at finally being able to tell someone about something that they have kept bottled up inside. As a result of this general willingness to share their experiences and views, I was able to generate a wealth of information that exceeded my expectations. By emphasising that participating was a way for them to have their voices heard, people became more enthusiastic about being interviewed. A few participants even called months later to recount more racist incidents that they had experienced recently. Several acknowledged afterwards that they enjoyed telling their stories and that they hoped they were able to contribute to what they saw as a “worthwhile” or “valuable” undertaking. Fourteen
participants expressed interest in getting a summary of my research findings after the project was completed. I had taken note of these requests and will deliver as promised.

Researching on experiences of racism poses a lot of challenges because of the sensitive nature of the topic. This stems primarily from the difficulty of ascertaining whether an experience can be accurately interpreted as being racially motivated. In addition, recounting stories of racism may pose some potential ‘harm’ or ‘emotional disturbance’ for participants because of the need to recall and relive the trauma of their racism experiences. For instance, participants who told stories of being physically abused or humiliated were visibly upset and tearful. One participant who revealed that he had never told anyone about his racist experiences before became angry and very agitated while recounting his story. He said he felt dizzy just talking about what happened over 20 years ago. In cases such as these, I immediately stopped recording and asked the participants if they would like to discontinue the interview. I reiterated the fact that they could withdraw participation anytime (See Appendix E for sample copy of ‘Revocation of Consent Form’). None of the participants withdrew. On the contrary, a few even contacted me months after the interviews were conducted to recount fresh experiences. Some interviews passed on my contact details to other friends who had similar stories to tell. Thus, long after I had completed my data gathering, I was still getting fresh (unsolicited) reports from the field, so to speak. To me, this confirmed my supposition that the participants valued the chance to tell their stories. Ordinary people want to be heard.

4.5 The researcher as part of the racialised

Ezzy (2002) suggested that ‘it is better to acknowledge how our subjective preconceptions and biases shape the research, and to deal with these biases openly and honestly, rather than to pretend they do not exist’ (p. 53, emphasis added). Likewise, Arber (2000: 46) reminds us that as narrative researchers, ‘we must properly define the place from which we speak, the person we are, and the way we might affect, or be affected, by the interpretations inscribed within ethnographic texts’.

Following Arber’s (2000) exhortation, I now define how I position myself in this work. I am a woman, an immigrant from a developing country. My looks mark me as obviously of Asian descent. I also locate myself as bi-lingual or more accurately, as a person of NESB based on
the Australian government’s system of categorisation. I also position myself as married, heterosexual, a practising Roman Catholic, and of working class status. I am aware that my being a PhD researcher affiliated with a well-known university positions me as inherently privileged relative to some participants. But this power differential may not have been as discernable since most of the study participants had university degrees themselves.

It is difficult to say to what extent these personal characteristics may have had a ‘material impact’ (Punch 1998: 162) on the way I conducted the study and interpreted my research findings. Nonetheless, I admit this research undertaking was not ‘a sterile project’ (Karumanchery 2003) because it was difficult for me to remove myself from the research context I was investigating. For like the study participants, I too am Asian with multiple experiences of racism. I too have been categorised as part of the ‘other’ because of my looks and accent. I too have been racialised.

Like the study participants, I too am grappling with my multiple identities and am still coming to terms with my sense of belonging with Australian society. Thus, my story is intimately connected to the stories of those who willingly shared their experiences of racism. So, in a way, I am an insider looking inwards. For I know what it feels like to be ‘othered’. For I am one of ‘them’.

I conducted the in-depth interviews and focus groups with ‘conscious partiality’ (Mies cited in Bergen 1993:201). This involves guarding against the potential effects of the researcher on the researched. I tried to minimise these effects by ensuring that my questions were non-directive and by refraining from expressing my personal opinions during dialogues with participants. This conscious partiality also involved listening to participants with empathy (rather than detachment) and treating them as subjects with real feelings (rather than as objects to be studied). To me, my conscious partiality strengthens (rather than weakens) this study since I can be considered a ‘competent insider’. Because of my Asian-ness, participants gave me license to closely scrutinise their private lives, their actions, feelings and thoughts. My ethnic background also made me more aware of the cultural nuances of interviewing on sensitive topics such as racism. As a racialised subject myself, I have the distinct advantage of being able to ‘penetrate the intersubjectivity of people of color’ (Stanfield 1993: 9) which is not readily
accessible to non-racialised researchers. This combination of strengths provided a more sensitive and informed approach to interpreting the research findings.

Just like the participants, I too am part of the racialised other. But I cannot claim to be able to speak for them. I will let them speak for themselves through illustrative quotes that have been selected for the quality of the insights that they reveal and for their explanatory power. For as Wainwright (1997) has written:

The rationale for conducting in-depth interviews [or ethnographic studies in general] is that people involved in a phenomenon may have insights that would not otherwise be available to the researcher, and it is the quality of the insight that is important, rather than the number of respondents that share it.

In the next four data chapters, I will examine racialisation in terms of process, impact, and response and in relation to the anti-racism strategies that are available in Australia.
Chapter 5
Unpacking the Processes of Racialisation

To fully understand ordinary people’s racist experiences, it is necessary to examine the three essential elements that make up the experience: process, impact and response. This chapter describes the different circumstances in which Asian Australians experience racism. I argue that stories of racism can be understood better if analysed using the broader framework of racialisation. Thus, I used the notion of racialisation in conjunction with racism in order to reveal and understand the different processes that occur when individuals experience racism.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I begin by claiming that negative stereotypes about Asians abound and strong anti-Asian attitudes and feelings persist in Australia. I support this claim by providing evidence from the literature and then I highlight the need for more in-depth investigation into Asian Australians’ perception and experiences of racialisation. Second, I present data on the racialisation experiences of those who participated in my semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The themes that emerged from data analysis are discussed and supported by illustrative quotes. Finally, I interpret and synthesise my findings and then present a more developed model for understanding the processes of racialisation.

5.1 Elucidating racism and racialisation

One of the main propositions of this study is that racialisation is an essential property of racism. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the two concepts share common threads but are not quite the same. Both racism and racialisation are based on the premise that the categories used to classify people into ‘races’ are socially constructed. As such, these categories are not fixed but are dynamic or change over time. Both constructs take into consideration the link between individual beliefs and practices to wider social and institutional norms and practices. Both concepts suggest the existence of power differentials in society between the majority (dominant) and the minority (subordinate) groups. Both racism and racialisation are context-specific and intersect with other forms of oppression. But racialisation differs from racism in that racism is traditionally viewed as outward manifestations of prejudiced beliefs. Racialisation
conjures images of processes that are not readily apparent or are presumed to lie beneath these expressions of racism. There is a need, however, to clarify what processes are being invoked by the use of the term racialisation (Phoenix 2005: 103). This is the central goal of this chapter.

5.2 Social construction of ‘Asian’

The racialisation experience of Asian Australians occurs within a specific socio-historical context. I argue in this section that historical and political forces have influenced when and how being Asian becomes salient or rendered problematic. I begin by presenting data from the literature on how Asians are constructed in terms of both positive and negative stereotypes. I then assert that these stereotypes have largely influenced current attitudes towards Asians in Australia.

A basic premise of this study is that race is a social construction. Racial categories are used to differentiate one group of people from another but these categories are based mainly on human conventions and have no scientific basis. That these racial categories are not fixed and immutable but can change is clearly evident in the different ways the term ‘Asian’ is defined in the British, American and Australian census systems. In Australia in particular, the term ‘Asian’ was previously used for migration and census purposes to refer to all peoples from the whole continent of Asia. Since July 1990 however, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has limited the use of the term ‘Asian’ to refer to people from northeast, southeast, and southern Asia. A separate category was created to classify people from Western Asia or the Middle East (e.g. Lebanon, Turkey, Iran and Iraq) (Millbank 1996).

From this discussion, it is clear that the term ‘Asian’ (like other racial categories) has no precise or single definition. Cognisant of this fact and aware of the possibility that even people of Asian ancestry might not look at themselves as ‘Asians’, I did not offer a concrete definition of what being Asian means when choosing my participants. Instead I left it to the participants to determine if they see themselves (even partly) as Asian. All my participants categorised themselves loosely as being of Asian descent although many quickly pointed out that this label should not exclude them from being considered as ‘Australian’ also.
How are Asian Australians described in the literature? What are some of the popular conceptions and misconceptions about Asian Australians in general? The literature points to both positive and negative stereotypes regarding Asians. Alexander (2002: 532) suggests that Asian communities (in Britain as in Australia) are largely invisible in the sense that they are not presented as complex subgroups but only as ideals or stereotypes. Like Asian Americans, Asian Australians ‘are both praised and resented, complimented and derided’ (Pyke & Dang 2003: 150). Asians are stereotyped as the model minority group (Wong, L 2002) because of their perceived industriousness. They are generally expected to do well in school because they are perceived as smart, quiet and diligent (Matthews 2002b). Asians are also stereotyped as hardworking and shrewd with money. However, at the same time, they are perceived as a threat to job security.

The Chinese, in particular are stereotyped as ‘incompetent, stupid and outlandish’ because of the popularity of the image created by movie makers of ‘Jackie Chan’ as ‘a clever but ridiculous, pompous, comical…a good Chinaman trying to be a second-rate Westener’ (Major 1986: 3). There is also a mistaken notion that Asian men are involved in ethnic gangs and that there is a general climate of lawlessness in Asian ethnic enclaves (Collins et al. 2000). Asian women are constructed as perfect partners because they are ‘submissive, passive and servile yet sexual beings’ (Saroca 2002: 7). Filipino women who migrate to Australia are stereotyped as ‘mail order brides’ who would do anything to escape from poverty (Saroca 2002). This stereotype suggests that Filipino women are ‘commodities’ that can be ordered or bought through catalogues. At the same time, Filipino women are regarded as opportunists. As Saroca (2002) noted in her study of domestic violence against Filipino women:

While Filipino women are constructed as representing masculine fantasies of desire, they are also constructed in terms of male-defined images of fear—hence the stereotypes of Filipino women as insatiable, manipulative, and exploitative of (‘first world’) men’s emotions. … Filipino women are thus constructed as ‘beautiful young brides’ and at the same time ‘gold-digging opportunists’ (Saroca 2002: 7-8 and 13).

These positive and negative stereotypes have influenced mainstream attitudes towards Asian Australians. In particular, the negative stereotypes have fueled debates regarding immigration intake (Healey 2002; Ricklefs 1997) both in the private and public domains. In turn, these debates have polarised Australian society, which is evident in the results of opinion polls and
academic surveys that have been conducted over the last few decades. Research
documenting actual experiences of racism have revealed not surprisingly that Asian
communities remain one of the targets of racism (Browning & Jakubowicz 2003b; Dunn &
McDonald 2001; Dunn et al. 2005; Jones, GW 1997). In a recent study on racism attitudes,
majority of the respondents of a randomised telephone survey conducted in Queensland and
NSW were found to have strong anti-Asian sentiments (Dunn & McDonald 2001). In this
survey (conducted in 2001), intolerance of people with an Asian background was found to be
very high among both urban and rural Australians. This confirms the findings of previous
surveys conducted in 1994 and 1996 where 90 percent felt that there were too many Asian
immigrants in Australia and so the proportion of Asians in the migrant intake should be
reduced (ACNielsen 1996 cited in Dunn & McDonald 2001: 34-35). This concern about the
supposedly high levels of intake of Asian immigrants is typified in Pauline Hanson’s remark
‘that Australia is being swamped by Asians’ (Hanson 1996). Anti-Asian groups, such as the
Nationalist Organisation (Anderson 1998) have also used this as justification for pushing for
the decrease in migrant intake. However, the fact is, Asian-born Australians only comprise 5.6
percent of the total Australian population (HREOC 2005a).

Ang (2000) argues for a move away from a ‘politics of numbers’ which problematises whether
or not there are indeed too many Asians in Australia.

The constant repetition of the question whether there are ‘too many’ Asians or not …,
only legitimises the framing of the issue in this way. As a consequence, the issue of
‘Asians in Australia’ is reduced to a politics of numbers, in which the voice of Asians
themselves is completely absent. In this discourse of reassurance, Asians are reduced
to the status of objects to be counted; they are excluded from active participation in a
conversation which implicitly takes it for granted that the overall whiteness of Australian
identity should not be jeopardised, not now nor in the future (Ang 2000: 127; emphasis
in original).

This brings to fore the need for a more in-depth analysis of racialisation from the perspective of
Asians in Australia. It is my contention that there are specific issues relating only to the
experience of Asian immigrants that cannot be subsumed under the experiences of the
general racialised ‘Other’. I believe Asian immigrants have a unique view of social reality in
Australia and so their voices need to be heard. In the next section, I give voice to Asian
Australians by analysing their accounts of how they were racialised.
5.3 Context of racialisation experiences

Data presented in this chapter are informed by the main question that I asked the study participants: “Have you experienced any form of racism or discrimination which you attributed to your being Asian?” It is important to note at the outset that I did not define what ‘racism’ (or discrimination) means nor did I specify what I meant by being ‘Asian’ since I was interested in how the participants constructed these two concepts. As I suggested in my discussion of the link between racism and racialisation, racialisation is an essential part of racism. Based on this proposition, I used the terms ‘racism’ and ‘discrimination’ instead of ‘racialisation’ in asking study participants to tell their stories because laypersons would not be able to understand the latter. Only those who indicated that they have experienced racism were interviewed. Thus, a noteworthy feature of this study is that most of the stories told were first-hand accounts of racist experiences.

Stories of racist experiences provide a rich source of insights into how Asian Australians negotiate everyday experiences of being treated as different and therefore part of the outgroup. When asked if they had experienced any form of racism, participants would often begin their accounts with a cautious, qualified introduction, such as: “I don't know if you consider this incident as racist or not but ….” But the importance of their retrospective accounts of being treated differently does not lie in the accuracy of whether an incident was indeed racially motivated or not. Neither was it crucial that they be able to recall and recount the specific details of their experiences. What was important is that their reflections on the experience provided insights into the different ways that they had come to consciousness that their Asian-ness has implications on the way other people see and treat them. While the stories were told in detail, only relevant extracts are presented here since the main concern is with presenting a taxonomy of racialisation experiences based on the themes that were derived from data analysis. The examples given are designed to illustrate the kinds of processes involved in racialisation and are not meant to be representative of how racialisation works for all people in all places. Participants revealed how their different experiences of being
seen as ‘Asian’ mainly by Anglo Australians\(^6\) became problematic and impacted negatively on their lives. Their narratives provide insights into the multiple processes involved in racialisation.

In presenting the narratives, I used pseudonyms that still reflect the ethnicity of the participants in order to make the stories more realistic but at the same time preserving their anonymity. After each name, I indicated in brackets their gender [whether male (M) or female (F)], age category [Young Adults (Y) = 18-30; Mature Aged (MA) = 31-59; and Old Adults (O) = 60 and older], and ethnicity [Chinese (Chn); Filipino (Fil); Indian (Ind); Korean (Kor); Singaporean (Sng); Sri Lankan (SrL); and Vietnamese (Vtn)]. For example, Linda who is a female, mature-aged Filipino is referred to as ‘Linda (F/MA/Fil)’, while ‘Jackson (M/Y/Kor)’ is a male, young Korean. By providing information on the ethnicity of each interviewee, I seek to emphasise that while I use the term ‘Asian’ here to describe the participants as a collective, it does not mean that they all have the same cultural backgrounds, have common physical attributes, or have similar migration histories. Asians are a heterogeneous group but as the data will show, racialisation disregards this within group heterogeneity.

Participants told stories of racism that happened as recently as a month before the interview, to something that happened as long as 25 years ago. Many reported experiencing several incidents of racism at different points in their life. Their stories also included accounts of racist incidents that they witnessed or learned about from different sources (including the media).

The context or the situation where the racist incidents occurred may be categorised into two types of sites. First are the **sites of frequent interaction** that I defined as those places that the participants went to regularly or habitually as a matter of necessity. These include the participants’ workplace, home, neighbourhood, school or place of worship. In such ‘sites of frequent interaction’, more often than not, the interviewees had some degree of familiarity with the ‘racist perpetrator’ (e.g. a workmate, supervisor, teacher, classmate, or non-Asian partner). Second are the **sites of infrequent interaction** that I defined as those places where participants were with strangers, such as public transport (e.g. trains, buses), public places

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\(^6\) This term is commonly used in Australia to refer to people born in the country who are of British or Irish descent (Vasta, 2005: 12). However, I have used this phrase in this study as a substitute for the term ‘White’ which is what most participants used to describe the ‘racist perpetrator’. Thus, this term is used very loosely in this thesis since it can also include other immigrants of European descent.
(e.g. streets, shopping malls, restaurants), and government offices (Centrelink, family court). In these situations, both the participants and the racist perpetrators usually did not know anything about each other. Participants gave richer and more detailed accounts of racism experienced at ‘sites of frequent interaction’. This may be explained in part by their familiarity with the people involved in the racist incident and with the context in which it happened. However, the data seem to suggest too that racism experienced in sites of frequent interaction were not as easily forgotten and consequently had a greater impact on the individual.

Having discussed, albeit in abridged form, the extent and context of the racism stories told by my participants, I turn now to demonstrating the use of the concept of racialisation in understanding the racist experiences of Asian Australians.

Several themes emerged from the analysis which revealed that racialisation involves several processes including: (a) racial categorisation, differentiation and outgroup problematisation; (b) marginalisation and exclusion; (c) inferiorisation, devaluation and dehumanisation. These processes are linked or interrelated, and multiple processes may be occurring simultaneously in any one incident of racism. These categories emphasise the way Asian Australians are treated. Examples will be provided to support the claim that Asian Australians are racialised when their being Asian (as determined by their looks, accent, and skin colour as seen in the eyes of the racialising person) becomes the basis for being treated as different and undesirable, being treated as if they were inferior, being regarded as not Australian, being restricted access to opportunities and services, and being disrespected or not valued.

5.4 Racialisation as racial categorisation, differentiation and problematisation

5.4.1 Ingroup-outgroup differentiation

Two fundamental, linked processes underpin the notion of racialisation. They are racial categorisation and racial differentiation, both essential to racialisation. Racial categorisation refers to the ways in which somatic and cultural markers of difference are used to group individuals into socially constructed ‘races’ or ‘ethnic groups’ (such as ‘Asian’, ‘White Australian’, ‘Black Negroid’ etc.). These markers of difference include, but are not limited to
skin colour, looks, accent, ethnicity, religion, and national origin. Racial categories can either be externally assigned (‘racial ascription’) or self-defined (‘racial identification’) (Lewis, AE 2003: 283-284). In this section, racial categorisation is discussed as a process of racial ascription rather than as a process of self-identification. Racial differentiation, on the other hand, refers to the process of using race categories to determine who is part of the ingroup or the outgroup. The process of racial differentiation emphasises distinctions between ‘races’ and ignores common characteristics. It is often implied in both racial categorisation and racial differentiation that a White-centric standard should be used as norm (i.e., If you are not White and of European descent, you are ‘different’. Therefore, you should be categorised as belonging to the outgroup).

In this study, interviewees reasoned that they experienced racism because they were categorised as ‘Asians’ and not as Australians even though all of them are living permanently in Australia (with 90 percent already naturalised citizens). Their White, and European-descent counterparts still saw them as ‘different’ because of their skin colour, looks and accent. As one interviewee said succinctly, “You can feel that they see you differently. You can feel that they are treating you differently. It’s subtle but it’s definitely there” (Bea, FYY/Sng). As Asians, they were seen by racialising persons as positioned on the other side of the white/non-white colour divide. This tendency to lump people into racial categories on the basis of physical attributes is clearly manifested in situations when even those born in Australia are still subjected to racism because of their Asian ancestry. As one key informant pointed out:

Even my nephews who were born here and have been living here for the past 21 years, experience subtle, very subtle racism. These kids are very articulate, but they still get discriminated for being Asian. (Edith, FMA/Fil)

That Asians are treated as people of colour probably accounts for their tendency to also look at people through a coloured lens. Those interviewed commonly referred to perpetrators of racism as the ‘Whites’ or ‘White Australians’. A number of participants also described themselves and other Asians in terms of their skin colour. For example, interviewees used terms such as ‘yellow-‘, ‘brown-‘, and ‘dark- or black-‘ skinned to describe those of Chinese-, Filipino-, and Indian-backgrounds respectively. This suggests that both the racist perpetrator and the racialised subject can be involved in racial categorisation and differentiation. That is, even Asian Australians use skin colour to differentiate between groups. Interestingly, some
interviewees were quick to point out that not all Whites are racist and not all racists are White. In addition, rarely do Asian Australians refer to themselves as ‘black’. Instead, they talk about being Asian or use their ethnicity as identifiers.

Asians are also constructed as ‘different’ because of their looks. Those of Chinese descent reported that they have been ridiculed because of the shape of their eyes. For example, Jasmine (F/MA/Chn) recounted how her co-worker called her “ching-ching-chong” while trying to mimic her slit-like eyes (by using one’s fingers to pull upwards the eyes’ outer corners). She said, “And I didn’t know what it meant. I felt so stupid and I even smiled back at her.” Even Filipinos with small, hooded eyes get mistaken as Chinese or Japanese and get the same treatment (Cora, F/O/Fil).

In addition to skin colour and looks, two other race signifiers are people’s attire and accent. Arabs and Muslims get subjected to racism because of their distinct ethno-religious attires (Poynting & Noble 2004). But most Asians wear western-style clothing (except for some Indian subgroups who still wear traditional costumes). As such, those interviewed said that for Asians it is more their accent (and not their attire) which becomes problematic. For example, a number of participants said they were rejected right away when applying for jobs, simply because they sounded ‘foreign’ over the phone. “When I applied they said, ‘We don’t want someone who speaks English with an Asian accent’” (Greg, M/O/Chn). This illustrates what Lewis (2003: 292) refers to as instances ‘when language itself racializes (e.g., certain ways of talking can mark one as racially ‘other’).’

But growing up in Australia and acquiring an Australian accent did not guarantee that one would be exempt from being racialised. Anthony (M/MA/Fil), who migrated here as a child in the seventies recounted how he was made to realise this. Anthony used to work as an automated teller machine (ATM) technician and his job required him to take calls from bank employees who then would ask him to service their malfunctioning ATMs. Having grown up in Australia, he spoke like a real ‘Aussie bloke’; thus, his being Asian was not readily apparent over the phone.

   Ladies would even flirt and joke with me on the phone when they ask me to come to their branch to service their machine. But when they see me in person and they realise that the ‘Anthony’ that they thought was a White Aussie is in fact a short, dark-skinned
Asian, their friendliness disappears. Some are even downright rude. They ignored me. They treated me like dirt! (Anthony, M/MA/Fil)

A similar case of being judged on the basis of looks and skin colour was given by Arshun (M/MA/Ind), a newly arrived immigrant who was looking for work at the time he was interviewed. He narrated how difficult it had been for him to land a job. He said in a span of five months, he was short-listed and called to interviews 45 times but he was never able to get the middle-management job he had been aiming for.

I'm very creative. I come from a field where I have to be dynamic and flamboyant and my curriculum vitae and covering letters are. And [because of this] people want to meet me. And I know that there are jobs available because they've advertised for it. [But] the minute they meet me, they look at me. Right away, I can sense that I've lost the battle when they've looked at me. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

These poignant stories are multiplied many times over and are common in the experiences of those I interviewed.

Another important insight into the stories of racialisation told by those interviewed is that not only do Anglo Australians see Asians as different to them; for Anglo Australians, all Asians are the same. This provides support to the assertion I made earlier that racialisation tends to disregard the within group heterogeneity of Asians. Thus it was common for Asians to be asked “How did you come here?” with a veiled suggestion that since they are Asian, they must have come to Australia by boat just like the Indochinese refugees from Vietnam (Anggie and Fely, F/O/Fil). In other cases, young interviewees who were born here told of how they were asked when they are going back to their country of origin since they were incorrectly assumed to be one of the many international students from Asia who are here on a temporary visa (Bea, F/Y/Sng).

The examples cited show how racialisation involves the linked processes of racial categorisation and racial differentiation. The mere act of assigning individuals into racial categories (e.g. Asian) and looking at how these racial categories differ is not necessarily wrong. However, overemphasising differences between Asians and Anglo Australians, and then ignoring similarities between the two become negative when Asians are cast as the
outgroup, ergo undesirable. In short, the process of racial categorisation and differentiation turns negative when outgroup problematisation follows.

### 5.4.2 Outgroup (Asian) problematisation

Outgroup problematisation refers to the process of treating the racial category designated as not part of the ingroup, as undesirable. Power is an important component in this process with the dominant ingroup having the disproportionate ability to determine when and what characteristics of the minority outgroup are construed as problematic (Reicher 2001). Outgroup problematisation is important in understanding the concept of ‘differential racialization’, which simply means that the ‘dominant [group in] society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs’ (Delgado & Stefancic 2001: 8).

The experience of Asians as a minority group in Australia provides evidence for this. Many participants believed that being categorised as part of a collective group called ‘Asians’ carries with it negative connotations that result in their being treated as outsiders or perpetual foreigners in Australia. The message that seems to be conveyed is: ‘since you are Asian, you’re different, you will never be one of us’.

Historical and political forces have influenced when and how being ‘Asian’ becomes salient or rendered problematic. All the participants knew that there was a time in Australian history when Asians were not welcome in Australia because of the White Australia policy. But having been ‘allowed’ to migrate here, interviewees said they did not expect to be treated differently. Several participants said they already consider Australia as their home having lived in the country "for years" or all their lives (i.e., 42 years). Thus they got shocked when they were "all of a sudden" verbally abused or told to go home to their country or thrown things at for no apparent reason. Many reported that they observed an increase in brazen acts of racism during the time media gave much attention to Pauline Hanson and her right-wing One Nation party. "But it’s not so much now…", according to those interviewed. The focus of such negative sentiments and behaviour has now shifted to the Arabs and Muslims in Australia (Poynting & Noble 2004). However, interviewees believed that racism towards Asians is still a problem even though the manifestations are less obvious.
In fact, quite a number of participants expressed doubts about the sincerity of Anglo Australians in dealing with them. This seems to suggest a belief that there is latent or inherent racism among Anglo Australians. Interviewees spoke of the difficulty of putting ‘your finger on the pie’ or of being sure that an incident is racially motivated when they stated, “You know it, you can feel it but you can’t prove it” (Bea, FYISg). According to Carmen (F/MA/Chn) who migrated from China 42 years ago: “I have met a lot of Australians and they are very nice. But sometimes you can feel that it is only lip service. But underneath what they think about us, we don’t know.” The same sentiments were echoed by others like Nelia (F/O/Fi) who said, “Some are very friendly to us but when we turn our backs, they talk badly about us”. Similarly, Mary (F/O/Chn) remarked, “sometimes, you think they’re friendly towards you but in fact, they’re not [sincere]--not really from the bottom of their hearts. The government workers are friendly but deep inside, some are prejudiced”. (Mary, F/O/Chn)

For the most part my experiences were subtle but insidious in that they don’t do anything overt or outrageous. … You can’t point your finger and say that is racism but they do it in subtle ways. As a consequence, you feel that it really is happening but you can’t really report it. So I think that’s the worse thing because it happens but you feel disempowered at not being able to do something about it. (Bea, FYISg)

When outgroups are problematised and power imbalances come into play, racialisation becomes more than just categorisation and differentiation. It can then be said that the processes of marginalisation and exclusion also become part of racialisation.

5.5 Racialisation as marginalisation and exclusion

Racialisation involves the process of marginalising or pushing people to the sides so that they are curtailed in exercising the right to economic mobility and the right to fair treatment before the law. Racialisation can be seen also as a form of exclusion or curtailment of: the right to have full access to resources and services; the right to be heard; the right to participate in the dominant culture; and the right to practice one’s culture.
5.5.1 Discrimination or unfair treatment

Racialisation poses as one of the major barriers to economic mobility for Asian Australians (Loosemore & Chau 2002; Queensland Government 2001). Being treated unfairly at work marginalises Asians. This may occur at any stage of employment, including the initial hiring, promotion, layoff, compensation, benefits, job assignment, training, or termination of employment, or may be manifested through racist comments or harassment at work. Following are examples of unfair treatment at work based on the experiences of interviewees:

- Not being considered for training and promotion (Indira, F/MA/SrL)
- Being pressured to move to another branch (Linda, F/MA/Fil) or to take up a redundancy offer (Cynthia, F/Y/Fil)
- Not being paid for performing higher duties (Anthony, M/MA/Fil and Allen, M/MA/Fil)
- Being asked to always “do the dirty job” (Buddy, M/MA/Fil)
- Being given more work, as compared to the Anglo Australians (Suzy, F/MA/Chn)
- Being relegated as floating staff or having their job description changed after returning from leave or claiming work compensation (Arshun, M/MA/Ind and Cecile, F/MA/Fil)
- Being harassed through excessive monitoring and supervision (Nelia, F/MA/Fil and Linda, F/MA/Fil)
- Not being consulted for changes in job description (Allen, M/MA/Fil)
- Not being considered for a managerial position because he was of a different race (Gerry, M/MA/Fil)
- Being unjustly blamed for mistakes and poor performance (Linda, F/MA/Fil)

While there are barriers to economic mobility, many Asians do manage to get into higher positions through hard work and perseverance. In fact, a commonly cited explanation for racism is that Asians are perceived as a threat and their relative success as a source of envy.
among Anglo Australians. One participant recounted how this feeling of envy affected him at work.

Racism was certainly very strong especially when I joined a public hospital. Those who were in higher positions were mostly Filipinos and that was the source of envy. They would often ask, “How come Filipinos get into higher positions?” Just like in the wards, there were nurses who were in senior positions who had Whites as subordinates. That’s why these Whites picked on us. Especially when I worked as a wards man, I was really picked on. Many times, when they tell you to do something, you even have not done the first thing they ask you to do, there’s already something else lined up. It’s like they’re really provoking you to answer back or react. (Buddy, F/MA/Fil)

Buddy’s account is commonly experienced by Asians who are new on the job. It provides some insights into how Asians are racialised every step along the way up the employment ladder. The many stories told of workplace racism suggest that while there are policies designed to provide equal employment opportunities and protection to all, these policies, according to many participants, are “just effective on paper”. While these anti-discrimination policies dictate that everyone, regardless of their looks and background, be given the same opportunities to advance, interviewees said most of the time, preferential treatment is given to Anglo Australians, leaving non-Whites (including Asians) struggling very hard, with others just opting to give up.

Asians are also marginalised through discriminatory practices and actions that curtail their right to equal treatment. This form of racialisation is manifested in the way different standards or policies applied to Asians and Anglo Australians, as well as being seen as untrustworthy. This is also manifested in how law enforcers treat Asians as untrustworthy or suspicious.

Nelia says she gets the feeling that her supervisor does not trust her and so this supervisor closely monitors her.

My manager usually picks on me, on anything I’m doing. She always tells me that my desk is very messy. … She criticises everything that I do…. She has been my manager for four years and for four years. I have been suffering a lot. She watches my time. I’m the only one who is required to let her know when I need to leave the floor, where I am going, what’s the extension number, etc. Even my lunchtime, when I go over for a few minutes, I have to stay back in the afternoon. (Nelia, F/MA/Fil)
Likewise, Linda (F/MA/Fil) recounted that while working as an English teacher at a secondary school, her Anglo Australian supervisor always tried to find fault in her.

He asked me to move my class beside his room so he could monitor what was going on while I was teaching. But he could not find anything wrong. … But he still was always putting me down and finding fault. (Linda, F/MA/Fil)

Both Nelia and Linda reported that because of this constant monitoring and lack of trust shown daily by their supervisors, they felt ‘so stressed’ at work that they eventually developed psychosomatic illnesses, which eventually forced them to quit work.

Some interviewees also complained of being singled out in public places by policemen and other security personnel. Kamil (M/Y/SrL) reported that because he had very dark skin, “They (security personnel at trains and policemen) always scrutinise my stuff more. They always pick on me more, and I get stopped in the street more often than others.” Other participants told of similar experiences:

I wasn’t the only Asian; there were other Asian kids at my school. Most of the other Asian kids were kind of nerds though. They were very academic oriented and they hang out with the other academic nerds. Although I was quite good at school, the friends that I went out with had a bad reputation at school. That is, they were looked upon as delinquents or even criminals. But it’s not true! We were not criminals. We were just into funk rock music and so we dressed differently and we looked different, kind of more alternative lifestyle. Because I hung out with this people, people naturally thought I was a gang member or something like that. (Jackson, M/Y/Kor)

These accounts suggest how easily Asians are typecast as rebellious and delinquent.

Other interviewees recounted how they felt doubly victimised when the very people who they expected to protect them treated them unfairly. For example, Asha (F/Y/Ind) said, “Whenever anyone got annoyed at me they used race as a way to put me down. Whenever I complained about it, it never got dealt with. Like one time I was the one who got into trouble even though I didn’t do anything. The other kids conspired and told stories about me.”
5.5.2 Exclusion through curtailment of rights

Closely akin to marginalisation but still distinct enough to warrant a separate discussion is the notion of racialisation as exclusion. This is based on the premise that:

> differences between races are the basis for, or lead to, irreconcilable cultural differences, with the result that the culture of the racialised group is perceived to constitute a threat to that of the racializing group. In this perspective, there is no room for the Other within society; he must be kept at a distance, segregated, and in the most extreme cases expelled or eliminated (Wieviorka 1997: 143).

Exclusion includes ways by which the dominant ingroup draws rigid boundaries to effectively keep out minority groups. It involves curtailment of: the right to be provided with good service and full access to public resources; the right to be heard; the right to participate in the dominant culture; and the right to practise one’s culture.

**Poorer service and limited access to public resources.** Exclusion occurs when the racialised subject is provided with poorer service and limited access to public resources. For example, interviewees, especially the elderly, reported being treated rudely by service staff. Grace (F/O/Chn) told of how staff at the train ticket counter was not as accommodating to her as with other non-Asians: “Maybe it’s because we’re Chinese that’s why he thinks he can scold us and be rude. These people who are supposed to provide service to the community, they will serve you but they treat us differently to the Whites.” Lillian (F/O/Chn) who does not speak fluent English spoke of a similar experience: “When we go to Centrelink, we ask people just general questions, but they are not polite to us Asians. But when it is the western people asking questions, they are polite.”

Similarly, others talked of being provided with poor service by not being allowed to board a bus: “It’s probably because I was Asian that’s why he did not stop. Maybe if I were a Western person, at once he would stop and let me get on the bus” (Mary, F/O/Chn). Others reported being asked to get off a bus for no apparent reason. “When the driver saw that we were Chinese, the driver said, ‘get down, get down’ for no reason. He didn’t say why? So, we were angry and we asked why. We said we don’t know where to go and all he said was get down” (Tina, F/O/Chn). Other stories include: not being given a fare discount or being treated rudely for using a concession card; not being given a good table at a restaurant and being served last
or even being totally ignored by counter staff. “When these [supermarket] check-out ladies see you’re an Asian that’s when they start counting the coins or they put up the ‘Register closed’ sign.” (Cora, F/O/Fil).

Likewise, Asians are marginalised through actions and policies that deny them access to ‘life opportunities’ (Lewis, AE 2003). For example, Edwin (M/O/Fil) recounts how he had to fight for his son’s right to be admitted to an Australian university.

My eldest son completed two years at a top university in the Philippines before we migrated to Australia. But when he applied for admission at a university here, they rejected his application even without the benefit of interviewing him. And so, I went straight to the registrar and asked why my son’s application was rejected. The only reason that the university registrar could give me was what he regarded as my son’s “lack of knowledge of the English language” since he said my son came from a country where English is not the first language. I told the registrar, “Without the benefit of an interview you cannot presume that he can’t speak English.” I insisted that he interview him first, because it was most unfair! He agreed so my son was admitted after being interviewed. (Edwin, M/O/Fil)

Edwin’s story highlights the need to stand up for one’s rights in Australia. As Linda (F/MA/Fil) aptly summarised, “I’ve just realised that here, you have to fight for your rights every step of the way.”

**Non-recognition.** That Asians are not allowed to have a voice is exemplified in the experience of one interviewee who was not ‘heard’ in the family courts. Charito (F/Y/Fil) told of how she struggled for years to get sole custody of her son who was being sexually abused by her estranged partner. She told of how frustrated she was at how badly her case was handled by her pro bono lawyer and at how the magistrate simply ignored her when she tried to speak for herself during hearings before the Family Court. Charito told of how she eventually lost the case. She said despite evidence from police records that her partner sexually abused her son, the judge ruled in favor of granting custody of their child to her partner. (But it cannot be discounted that there might more to the story than racialisation.)

**Ignoring, avoidance or rejection.** Participants’ stories of racism revealed that because of their looks and accent, they were regarded as not Australians and were thus ignored or avoided. Jasmine (F/MA/Chn) who is married to an Anglo Australian describes how her neighbours refused to acknowledge her presence even though they often came face-to-face.
Participants told of instances when people deliberately refused to deal with them since they were not Anglo Australians or because they had distinct accents. Those who worked as counter staff in government agencies commonly cited experiences of clients refusing their services since they were perceived as “non Australian”. According to one interviewee, “They’ll tell it to you to your face. Some of them have said to me, “I can’t understand your accent. I do not want to deal with you” (Mala, F/M/A/Ind). Similarly, because of their Asian looks, clients refused their offer of help, demanding instead to “speak with an Australian”. This is exemplified in the story recounted by Anggie (F/O/Fil), a former counter staff at a government welfare agency.

A person came to the counter, which I was manning at that time. He demanded right away “to see an Australian”. He said, “I want to speak with an Australian. I don’t want to speak to a person who rode on a boat!” So I asked with a bit of sarcasm, “Excuse me? What kind of Australian do you want, a natural born or a naturalised Australian?” Fortunately, our manager (who was White) came and told him, “Are you looking for Australians? We’re all Australians here because you cannot work in government if you’re not a citizen.”

Note that the racist perpetrator referred to Anggie as a person who rode on a boat, despite Anggie being a Filipino Australian. This reveals a tendency for racialising persons to lump all Asian looking people as Indo Chinese or Vietnamese refugees, which indicates how stereotypes can fuel racist attitudes and behaviour.

The ways by which Asians are sometimes regarded as ‘un-Australian’ were also seen in instances when Asians are pressured to adopt what interviewees perceived as ‘Australian ways’ such as “going to the pub after work” (Mandy, M/M/A/Ind) and even “sleeping around with co-workers” (Indira, F/M/A/S/L). The message that Asians do not belong in Australia is all too clearly conveyed in chance encounters where Asians get shouted at with things like: “Asians go home” or “we don’t want you here!” or “Go back to your country”. These are also commonly seen as graffiti.
One of my friends was in the supermarket when an Australian tapped him on the shoulder and said, “Hey you Japanese you better go home to Japan. We don’t want you here!” Just like that. My friend turned around and said, “Excuse me, but first of all I am not a Japanese. I am a Filipino! Secondly I went to school here and thirdly, I am as Australian as you are!” (Cora, F/O/Fil)

Another aspect of the idea that Asians have no right to be in Australia can be inferred from stories told by interviewees that they have been accused of coming into Australia as illegal immigrants or as ‘queue jumpers’ through statements alleging that they arrived in Australia by boat.

One of my students said to me, “Go home to your country! And so, I told him, “Why? Do you have a document saying that you own Australia? Show me the document and I will go home!” I reported the incident and this student was reprimanded by the head teacher. From then on, he did not bother me anymore. (Linda, F/MA/Fil)

Some interviewees reported being stared at when there were very few dark-haired people around. One woman (Gina, FY/Fil) who used to bring her son to a childcare centre in rural Tasmania reported that whenever she dropped off her son (who looked more like his Anglo Australian father), some mothers and their children looked as if they were frightened of her because she was visibly different, being short in stature, with dark, long hair and brown-coloured skin. The staring became so uncomfortable that she came to a point when she did not want to bring her son to the centre anymore. Another woman (Cynthia, FY/Fil) reported a similar situation when she felt that she was being sized up by a group of teenagers while she was lining up to buy food at a take-away counter. These types of non-verbal behaviour where Anglo Australians seem to be questioning the interviewee’s presence suggest that the Asian is seen as someone who is out of place or not supposed to be in Australia.

A Catholic priest who was interviewed recounted a clear case of overt rejection. Fr Dan’s⁷ stories of racism revolved around his very short stint as a parish priest of a predominantly Anglo Australian community. Since he was the first Asian to be assigned there, he said the parishioners were probably not used to having a non-Anglo Australian as parish priest.

⁷ Because his case is unique, I have used a pseudonym for him but I did not specify his ethnicity to protect his identity.
However, Fr Dan said he did not expect the blatant racism he encountered during his time in that parish. He mentioned that he had lived in Australia for over 11 years and had previously been assigned to different parishes all over the world. He said, "I have never had a problem with racism before, never, only now." Fr Dan learned that even before he arrived to take up his posting, some parishioners had already objected to having a non-Anglo Australian person as their parish priest. Some had even written to the Bishop asking that Fr Dan's appointment be cancelled. When he took up his posting, several long-time members of the parish council greeted him with open animosity. Several parishioners decided to transfer to another parish while those who remained made it clear to him that they did not like his accent, his looks, his being Asian. For example, Fr Dan said he made it a habit to go out after mass to meet and chat with parishioners. But some people would refuse to shake his hand or not acknowledge his greetings. There were other instances of blatant rejection, which eventually forced him to resign and transfer to another parish.

**Curtailment of the right to participate in the dominant culture.** Asians are racialised by actions that imply that they have no right to participate in the dominant Australian culture, which is assumed to be Anglo-centric and western-styled. One interviewee told of how she was made to realise this when she was growing up in Australia. "It was made pretty clear to me early on that I was being targeted and singled out as different because I am Indian. For example, I was not included in gangs and things like that. And I heard people debating about whether it was worth making friends with me" (Asha, F/Y/Ind).

The premise that Asians have no right to participate in the dominant culture is also manifested in interracial dating or relationships. For example, Asians are seen as suitable partners for fellow Asians only (Drummond 2005). This racist construction is obvious in the way some people in the gay community advertise their preferences for partners on the internet. Tommy (M/MA/Chn), who has been working to raise awareness of racism in the gay community, cited the following examples of personal ads that regularly appear on the internet: ‘No GAMs (no Gay Asian Males)’; ‘not interested in arrogant, effeminate guys, Asians or guys with attitude’; and ‘seeking other similar good-looking masculine guys, no fems, no Asians please’. Other derogatory terms are commonly used on the internet to refer to Asians and their partners, including: ‘Potato Queen’ to refer to Asian gays or lesbians who prefer Anglo Australian
partners; ‘Rice Queen’ to refer to Anglo Australians who prefer Asian partners; and ‘Sticky Rice’ to refer to Asians who prefer other Asians (Sexual Racism Sux website). This kind of name-calling minces no words in sending the message that Asians are undesirable and should therefore be excluded or rejected.

There’s a lot of prejudice and in the gay community, it could be a bit harsh. I think Asian men here experience a lot of racism when they meet people in the gay scene. People can sometimes be very open about saying, “I don’t want any Asian men” or “I’m not attracted to Asians”. Some probably don’t realise it is being racist but not examining that to me is a form of racism. (Tommy, M/MA/Chn)

Kamil (M/Y/SrL) also spoke about how he was made to realise at an early age that dating a White person was simply taboo. He recounted the humiliation he suffered in Year 5 as a result of this.

I had a crush on this girl and I think she also actually had something for me and so we used to write notes to each other, nothing but that. When her father found out about it, he went to school and talked to my teachers and the principal. Because of this, they went to all means to do all sorts of just horrible things to me. Like once, they found one of the notes that I wrote to the girl. What my teacher did was she ripped it up into pieces then she threw it into the bin. But then afterwards she told me to pick up all the pieces, tape it back together and take it up to the principal. I did just that because I had no choice. Then they suspended me for five days. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

Kamil also recounted how one of his classmates invited him to his birthday party but when he turned up, his friend’s mother upon seeing him refused to let him come into the house.

Q: What did she actually say?
Kamil: She just didn’t want me in the house.
Q: No explanation or no apologies?
Kamil: None. She simply said, “Just don’t come into the house”. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

In a similar case, Gina (F/Y/Fil) recalled how she and her Anglo Australian husband were the only ones not invited to their neighbourhood’s Christmas party, which she attributed to her being an Asian. Although it can be argued that such exclusionary practices do not always necessarily imply that these were motivated by racist intent, these examples suggest Asian Australians are excluded or not allowed to participate in the dominant culture simply because of their non-Australian characteristics. According to Sanson et al. (1997: 11), ‘hostility towards
new waves of migrant groups in Australia has seen shifting definitions of “non-Australian” characteristics over time, but the power to decide the criteria for “Australian” and “non-Australian” always lies with the dominant group [in this case, the Anglo Australians].

**Isolation and suppression.** Another form of exclusion is isolation or suppression of the right to celebrate one’s culture. Asians are racialised through behaviour and messages that suggest that Anglo Australians disapprove of certain aspects of their Asian culture. For instance, interviewees recalled how Anglo Australians would look seemingly with disdain at what Anglo Australians call Asians’ “smelly and disgusting pig food” (Edith, F/MA/Fil). They also cited how Anglo Australians act irritated when Asians talk loudly in their native language. Thus, it was common for Asians to get abused for speaking in their native tongue in public transport. Some interviewees acknowledged that it was impolite to converse in a language not readily understandable by all who are within hearing distance. However, others believed that Anglo Australians have become “paranoid” (Judy, F/O/Fil) into thinking that whenever Asian Australians speak in their native language, they are saying bad things about non-Asians. Participants also argued that they speak in their own language for convenience and not because they are not fluent in English. Therefore, this occasional use of their own language should not be misconstrued as a refusal to integrate.

Exclusion was also manifested in three cases of domestic violence. Interviewees told of how their Anglo Australian partners isolated them from relatives and friends. They were not allowed to maintain close contact with fellow Filipinos and were not even allowed to eat their own foods. In one case, Gina (F/Y/Fil) told of how her husband forced her to live in Tasmania where she felt she stood out like a sore thumb because there were scarcely any Asians around. “I was so unhappy there. Aside from the fact that it was always cold, I did not feel comfortable about going out because I always get stared at as if I’m weird or an alien.” Gina added that she eventually left her husband to settle (with her young son) in a NSW suburb where many Asians live. Explaining why she chose to move, she said: “Here [in Blacktown] I am free, I can do anything, I can go outside without having to be conscious of my being Asian. Here I don’t think or feel that I’m different because there are so many Asians like me” (Gina, F/Y/Fil).

A key informant for this study confirms how this isolation can have a debilitating effect on the individual.
It is common for Filipino women [with Anglo Australian partners] to be isolated from other Filipinos. It's like a divide and rule principle. If you're by yourself, you would feel quite vulnerable because you have no one to turn to in case of domestic violence, it would be so easy to crunch your spirit. I see that as not only being sexist but also being racist because isolating you from people who you feel you belong with is actually a way of killing you, a way of taking your identity out from you. And not even being allowed to speak in your own language. What can be more racist than that? (Judy, F/O/Fil)

This isolation can also produce significant psychological distress.

5.6 Racialisation as devaluation and dehumanisation

5.6.1 Devaluation

“Just because you are different, they think you are lower than them” (Indira, F/MA/SrL). This statement goes right to the heart of seeing racialisation as a process of inferiorisation or devaluation. The stories of being racialised that fall under this theme reveal that participants attribute their being seen as Asians as the primary reason Anglo Australians treat Asians as though they are inferior or subordinate to them. This inferiorisation process is evident in racist incidents where Asian Australians are treated in a condescending manner both overtly and covertly. Many also cited instances of having their qualifications belittled. Others talked about being underestimated.

Patronising attitude. Asians are deemed inferior and are therefore treated in a patronising or condescending manner. Participants reported that they can sense that ‘Whites have an attitude’ in that they look at themselves as more superior to non-Whites including Asians (Armie, F/MA/Fil). This air of superiority is expressed through subtle forms of racism as exemplified below:

They [Anglo Australian co-workers] tend not to talk to you. If you ask questions or you talk to them, they look at you from head to foot. It's just actions. Although they don't say anything, their movement and body language seem to imply that they are better than us. (Cynthia, F/Y/Fil)

More commonly, interviewees reported being treated as if they were inferior in an overt, often abusive way. Two volunteers in a health centre for senior citizens aired these sentiments:
These White people, they seem to be always looking down on us. ... They ignore us and sometimes they would shout at us as if to say that we don’t know what we’re doing or implying that we have difficulty understanding what they’re saying. They can be quite unkind. Sometimes they use terms that are so harsh and hurtful! And so [it makes] you think, who are they anyway? (Susan & Dolor, both F/O/Fil)

These examples illustrate that interviewees perceived that they were being treated as inferior not only because of the way things were said and done but also because some things were left unsaid or not done.

Another example of being patronised was given by two Filipino women (Gina & Cynthia, both F/Y/Fil) who were previously involved with Anglo Australian partners. They spoke of how their Australian partners would show them off during social gatherings, not like prized possessions but more as a curiosity or novelty. During such occasions, they get asked all sorts of questions about “where did you come from?” and “how did you meet?” or “how did you end up with him?”. According to Gina and Cynthia, they were embarrassed by this type of questioning because it contained a veiled suggestion that their partners rescued them from poverty and that they would not be living permanently in Australia if their partners had not taken pity on them.

Underestimation. That Asians are treated as if they are inferior to Anglo Australians was evident in how their qualifications were belittled and how their skills and capabilities were underestimated. Based on the stories told, it was common for newly arrived Asian immigrants to get their first ‘baptism of fire’ (i.e., their first experience of racial discrimination) when they apply for jobs and realise that their overseas qualifications and experiences are not recognised or even dismissed in Australia. Many told of how they had sent “hundreds” of job applications, but only a few were acknowledged as having been received and reviewed. Unfortunately, most of the time acknowledgement came in the form of a one-sentence rejection letter. Some suspected that their job applications got rejected right away as soon as those in charge of processing these saw from their resume that they had Asian sounding names or that they graduated from Asian universities.

Linda (F/MA/Fil), who worked for years as a principal of an international school in the Philippines spoke of how she had her first taste of racism when she applied to get a teaching license as soon as she arrived in Australia. With a Masters degree from an American
university and a PhD from the Philippines, Linda thought applying for a job in Australia would be simple and straightforward. However, when she got her credentials assessed by the Education Department, she was told that she would have to enroll first in an undergraduate English course, after which she can come back with her grades to have her credentials re-assessed. Her experience is indicative of weaknesses in the system of assessing overseas qualifications.

Still others who had postgraduate degrees from overseas (including the USA) recalled being shocked after hearing they were not qualified for menial jobs simply because they did not study in Australia.

Ten years ago, when I first came to Australia, I did try to get a proper job related to what I did in China. I was a certified engineer and so I applied for a job. When I went for the interview, I saw right away the [racist] attitude of the employer. First, they were very surprised that I am a Chinese and then I am a woman. They probably were thinking: how could a Chinese woman apply for this position? But it was clear that the position required very simple tasks, such as installing electrical items, things like that. But they still refused to consider me for the job. So, it was clear that it was discrimination; they were discriminating against me because I am Chinese and I am a woman. (Suzy, F/M/A/Chn)

Suzy’s experience was not unique since many interviewees told similar stories of having to ‘start from scratch’ or ‘from below’ since their overseas work experience was not considered at all. For example, several interviewees who were professionals in their country of origin have ended up just doing unpaid volunteer work. Others have been forced to take on menial jobs (e.g. as factory work) in order to earn a living.

Edwin (M/O/Fil), who migrated to Australia after working at senior management level in Hong Kong recounted why he gave up looking for work altogether, expressing frustration at always losing out to less experienced job applicants.

The usual scenario was out of more than 100 applicants I would find myself in the short list for final candidates. Then I would undergo a series of job interviews. … I always was among four or three finalists [or those short-listed]. But guess what? The other three candidates are Whites, younger and with more recent experience. [Compared to him who was an Asian, relatively older, with a lot of overseas but no local experience.] And so, I do not get the job. I would say that the colour of my skin was really a major consideration. (Edwin, M/O/Fil)
Several participants expressed frustration at being told repeatedly that the only way they can qualify for a job in Australia is if they have ‘local experience’. “But how can we have local experience if nobody wants to hire us (newly arrived immigrants) in the first place?”, said Arshun (M/MA/Ind). Some interviewees who used to occupy managerial positions in their country of origin said they followed the advice of other immigrants and revised their resumes so that their managerial experiences are not included. They said it was the only way they could get any job without being rejected for being “overqualified” (Mandy, M/MA/Ind). One participant reacted strongly to this: “That’s just their way of saying ‘we don’t like Asians’ without being branded as racist. Because there’s no such thing as being ‘overqualified’! You’re either qualified or not qualified” (Arshun, M/MA/Ind). “I think they’re just making excuses” (Ann, F/MA/Fil).

Interviewees noted that while they could not prove that they were not hired because of racial discrimination, others were told blatantly that it was their Asian accent that made them unsuitable for the job (Arshun, M/MA/Ind), or that they did not have the ‘look’ that was required. These findings parallel the results of recent empirical studies on discrimination against Asian immigrants (Borooah & Mangan 2002; Junankar, Paul & Yasmeen 2004) that reveal that “the main problem faced by Asian men is simply that they are Asian and this is compounded, to a degree, by their relative [or perceived] lack of proficiency in English” (Junankar, Paul & Yasmeen 2004: 46).

But even those who are lucky enough to land a job quickly do not escape from being racialised as was the case of Josephine (F/MA/Fil) who after being hired right away for a senior position was told by a co-employee, “I wonder why they gave you the job when your qualifications were obtained in the Philippines?” She made that remark even if she did not know my qualifications were assessed as being equivalent to a degree here.”

Many interviewees mentioned that Anglo Australians were often very surprised to learn that Asians have university (even postgraduate) degrees. This underestimating attitude towards Asians can be discerned from surprised reactions to Asians being able to “do simple maths without a calculator” or “top a national Science competition” (Kamil, MY/SrL) or being able “to pay off my home loan in only a couple of years” (Suzy, F/MA/Chn). Interviewees also reported that because of their Asian looks, people assumed that they would find it difficult to
understand, let alone speak English. For instance, Elsa (F/MA/Fil) who worked as a salesperson at a big retail store recounted how a customer asked if she spoke English and then spoke to her very, very slowly “as if addressing a child” implying that Elsa would not be able to understand her if she spoke at a normal rate. Other interviewees reported how co-workers were really surprised at how well most Asians are able to spell and write grammatically correct English (Mala, F/MA/Ind). But some interviewees also told of instances when they could not understand right away what was being said because they were not yet accustomed to the Australian way of saying and pronouncing things (Dolly, F/MA/Fil). Unfortunately, during such instances, Anglo Australians would attribute this difficulty to the wrong perception that Asians are incompetent or unintelligent.

Thus far, I have provided examples of participants’ stories of being treated as if they were inferior to Anglo Australians. Many participants told of stories of having their qualifications belittled or not recognised as highly as those of non-Asians. This result confirms evidence from previous studies (Junankar, Paul & Yasmeen 2004) that Asian immigrants are discriminated against when applying for jobs. And it is partly because the system makes it difficult for Asian immigrants to enter the labour market right away that they become marginalised.

5.6.2 Dehumanisation

Dehumanisation as part of the racialisation process implies that the racialising person perceives the racialised subject as having little worth that justifies treating them with little respect. Dehumanisation involves ‘words that wound’ (Delgado 1995b: 159) or acts that are offensive primarily because they violate the universal human right to be treated with dignity and respect. The racism stories that fall under this theme include those in which participants perceived the racist act to be: (a) an assault on their honor and dignity; (b) a complete disregard for their property rights; and (c) a threat to or direct attack on their physical and emotional well-being.

Assault on one’s honour and dignity. Participants recounted how they were publicly humiliated through the racist jokes and slurs directed at them. Interviewees reported being mocked, often with the racist perpetrator copying or mimicking the way they spoke or acted. This was a common complaint aired especially by interviewees of Chinese descent.
That’s typical among youngsters. I’ve come across a lot of this type of racist behaviour. They say “ching-ching-chong-chong-chen”, which means they’re copying how you talk and that they are looking down on you. (Carmen, F/MA/Chn)

Even those of Filipino ancestry get mistaken as Chinese and then ridiculed.

My children look Chinese because of the shape of their eyes. So, one time my son was on the train together with his female cousins and they were just talking [in Pilipino]. There were two White teenagers in front of them who started teasing them by copying how the Chinese talk, then laughing aloud. My son stood up and said, “Hey mate, we’re not Chinese, you idiots!” The White teenagers just looked at him and kept silent. (Elsa, F/MA/Fil).

In addition to being made fun of, participants were screamed at or verbally abused for trivial (or no apparent) reasons mainly because they were identified as Asians.

Two days ago when I was driving, I was a bit slow and the driver of the car behind me started yelling at me. Probably because he saw that I was an Asian. (Peter, M/O/Chn)

They can’t understand the way we speak English and so they say bullshit to us. The first thing I learned to do here was swear. That’s the first thing I learned because that’s what I always hear from them. (Buddy, M/MA/Fil)

Many participants also recounted being subjected to name-calling, a form of verbal abuse where the racialised subject is referred to in derogatory terms. For example, Asians in general are referred to as ‘bloody Asians’ or ‘fuck you Asians’. Interviewees of Chinese descent (including those from China, Vietnam, Singapore, and Korea) reported being called derogatory terms such as ‘ching-chong’ or ‘Chinaman’, or ‘boat people’ or ‘Chinese pig’. Lillian (F/O/Chn) explains why being referred to as a ‘pig’ is insulting, especially to the Chinese.

In China, it is rude to say ‘pig’. It shows that you don’t respect your elders! I did not complain or react to her insult because she is an older woman. (Lillian, F/O/Chn)

Indians and Sri Lankans, on the other hand, are referred to as ‘nigger’, ‘gook’, ‘black shit’ or ‘turd’ (an obscene term for feces)—all of which allude to their dark skin. “Since I came to Australia, my school life was always like that. My teachers always looked at me as a black student before they noticed anybody else” (Kamil, M/Y/SrL).
On the other hand, Filipino women are referred to as ‘bar girl’, ‘prostitute’, ‘gold digger’, ‘mail order bride’ or ‘mother fucker’—mainly in reference to the stereotype that Filipino women use their sexuality to allegedly lure Australian men into bringing them to Australia so that they can escape from poverty in the Philippines. A more insidious way of devaluing Filipino women is to liken them to their notorious countrymen. Gina (F/Y/Fil) recalled being the object of ridicule because her teacher used to call her and another Filipino female classmate, not by their real names but by referring to them as ‘Imelda Marcos’ (a former Philippine First Lady made infamous because of her shoe fetish and corrupt ways) and ‘Rose Hancock’ (a Filipino immigrant who became infamous for her lavish lifestyle after marrying a much older Australian mining magnate). According to Gina, she and her other classmate could not object to this name-calling because most of her classmates “thought it was funny” and she did not want to be seen as being “oversensitive”.

Racist talk can be more insidious than verbal abuse or name-calling because it comes ‘in the form of complaints, insinuations, and gossip … integrated into casual conversations or presented as casual comments’ (Essed 1991: 257). For example, Indira (F/MA/SrL) told of how she was the subject of racist talk at her workplace. She said some of her co-workers gossiped about her being a single mother, with some insinuating that she could not find a partner because of her Asian-ness. She said this started when she refused to sleep with her White supervisor, and this went on for years. “I could have manipulated my womanly powers and slept with them. I could have, but I did not” (Indira, F/MA/SrL).

Because racist joking, name-calling and racist talk are quite commonplace, some interviewees implied that they accept this as part of life in a predominantly White society.

Sometimes you have to get used to it. Here you get picked on for how you speak, your intonation, and because of the food you eat. It is not so much for how you dress. There’s also that wrong perception that Indians eat just curry…and I think there was just a little bit of that, but not a significant amount. [These are] … mostly in terms of jokes like with cricket or in terms of sports. But like I said, I never took it to a point of being upset about it. (Mandy, M/MA/Ind)

**Disregard for property rights.** Racialised subjects experience being dehumanised when racist perpetrators show a total disregard for their property rights. While not very common, some participants recounted experiences of having their property vandalised. Asha (F/Y/Ind)
recalled how terrified she was when “kids would come over to our house after school and tear off our garden”. Likewise, Lillian (F/O/Chn) talked about how an old Australian man living in the building where they had parked threw dirty water at their car not just once but twice. According to her, there were a lot of other cars parked beside their car but it was only their car that was attacked. Therese (F/MA/Chn) described how their Anglo Australian neighbours grabbed part of their land by pushing their things halfway over their boundary line.

First, they put their potted plants and stuff halfway over the boundary line and then later they put more stuff on our land. And so, although we couldn’t speak fluent English, we tried to argue with the neighbours. They said, “We are Europeans, you are Asians. You should not come here to Australia. This is our land.” ...We called the police…but the police couldn’t do anything. (Therese, F/MA/Chn)

Interviewees remarked that these attacks were not random but were directed clearly at their being Asian and could be explained only as being racially motivated.

**Physical and emotional attack.** This subcategory includes reports of physical attacks with some causing serious bodily harm. Interviewees said these assaults were often unprovoked. Some interviewees reported being spat at (Indira, F/MA/SrL) and being thrown things at like eggs and water bombs (Cora, F/O/Fil; Therese, F/MA/Chn; Bea, F/Y/Sng, and Gina, F/MA/Fil). Several also recounted how traumatised they were from the experience of being assaulted as young kids in schoolyards or in their neighbourhoods. In one case, Jackson (M/Y/Kor) was mistakenly accused of being part of a Chinese gang and was subjected to racial harassment at school so much so that he contemplated committing suicide to escape the daily torment. Another interviewee told of how he got into fights at school because he was constantly bullied: “I had long hair, so I was always teased by classmates. But one day, a kid started pulling my hair so I punched him. Then I got into trouble, ‘major league’ for that” (Kamil, M/Y/SrL).

While it was common to hear stories of Asian boys and teenagers being involved in fights, stories of Asian elderly being attacked are potentially more shocking especially when the attacker is male and much younger, thereby stronger. Such was the case for Fely (F/O/Fil) who said that she was just going around the shops with her son and daughter-in-law when a young man kicked her for no apparent reason.
I instinctively kicked him back and he fell to the ground. And I told him, “You have no respect! I’m already old!” He said, “so what?” I said to him, in our country, we respect our elders. And he said: Why should I? You’re an Asian?

Three victims (all FYFi) of domestic violence also recounted how they were physically and verbally abused by their (now estranged) Australian partners. The trauma of their experience was clear in how distressed and emotional they were when they were telling their stories. Cynthia (FYFi) tearfully recalled how the police had to intervene and ‘rescue’ her from her abusive Anglo Australian partner. She said that up to now, she is afraid that her estranged partner would take away their son and/or kill her. Another victim of domestic abuse explained how a low regard for Filipino women provides impetus for the violence.

I left my husband because I did not want to die. I divorced him because I don’t like to be intimidated. I don’t like to be put down always. I came from the Philippines, from a good family, and we’re educated. But here in this country, we’re treated like we never had any education. Especially my husband, because he wants to always be the boss. … I know a lot of Filipinas. You know what happens to Filipinos when they are treated like this [battered]. For them it is okay because they were able to get out from the poverty in the Philippines. They’re out of hardship; they don’t care how they’re treated here…. But that cannot be tolerated! (Gina, FYFi)

These findings add more support to recent empirical evidence that Filipino women in intercultural relationships are more vulnerable to domestic violence. In fact, research indicates that Filipino born women aged between 20 and 39 have a homicide victimisation rate 5.6 times higher than that of other Australian women in the same age group (Cunneen & Stubbs 1997:122).

Judy (F/OFi), a key informant who has done considerable research on the issue of domestic violence among Filipino women explains why this occurs.

We found that extreme forms of violence begin to occur when the woman says, “I’ve had enough!” The woman begins to differentiate, begins to disagree, begins to part or has already actually parted. Consequently, these men will then react very, very violently because they regard women as their possessions. And often times, they also kill the children to hurt the woman. (Judy, F/OFi)

To justify the violence, the Anglo Australian partner tries to defend himself by painting an image of the Asian as a self-seeking, manipulative partner (Cunneen & Stubbs 1997) whose primary motivation for being in the relationship is to siphon off her partner’s money for her own
capriciousness or to send back to the Philippines. Cunneen and Stubbs (1997) explain further how racialisation becomes part and parcel to domestic violence against Filipino women.

The nature of abuse can be understood within a general context of male violence, however the particularized image of Filipino women within first world male fantasy is equally important. First world men construct third world women within the framework of racialised femininities. Images of Filipino women have been constructed around racialised notions of ‘Asian’ women’s sexuality and personal characteristics displaying compliance and loyalty to the male. (Cunneen & Stubbs 1997: 122; emphasis in original)

This example provides evidence of how racialisation combines with other forms of oppression due to gender, class and age, further devaluing the racialised subject.

5.7 Discussion

This chapter focused on accounts of racist experiences. The many stories told by participants confirm previous research findings that racism is still a problem in Australian society (e.g. Mellor 2003, 2004a; Mellor et al. 2001). Participants reported multiple experiences of racism but they tend to highlight those that were overtly racist in nature. There was general agreement among participants that while blatant acts of racism are not as common as before, they and other Asian Australians continue to be racialised.

Interviewees expressed some ambiguity about whether an experience they encountered was truly racially motivated or not. Unlike the experience of Aborigines as detailed in Mellor’s (2003) study—where participants were quite certain that they were being discriminated—the Asian Australians interviewed for this study had some doubts about the racist nature of some of their experiences. Many instances cited were prefaced with expressions of doubt as to whether the incident was indeed racist or not. This uncertainty may be explained in part by the participants’ lack of situational and general knowledge of racism. As Essed (1991, 1992) suggested in her model of how the interpretation of racism proceeds, without such knowledge, it is difficult for individuals to recognise racist behaviour as it is. This uncertainty could also be due to the public discourse that Australia is truly multicultural and therefore supposedly more tolerant of differences. It is plausible that the interviewees believed that Australia is a multicultural society, a land of promise where everyone is given equal opportunity. And so,
when they experience racism, they may experience cognitive dissonance in that their initial beliefs in the egalitarian nature of Australians come in conflict with their cognition that this is not true. As will be revealed in the next chapter on the impact of racialisation, racialisation creates anxiety, sometimes leading to self-doubt and depression.

The study acknowledges that using racialisation as explanatory mechanism for racist experiences must be accepted with caution. Because of the very nature of racialisation processes as underlying mechanisms, racialisation cannot be observed but only inferred from participants’ stories of racist experiences. Inferences from retrospective accounts have to be accepted with the caution that narratives are subject to participants’ interpretation and recall of events. It can be argued also that participants may not be correct always in attributing a racist intent to the behaviour of the perpetrator. In the same light, motivations behind other people's behaviours cannot be determined accurately unless the individuals themselves are the ones reporting their own motives. But very rarely will you find individuals who will openly admit to having racist intent. I argue further that the more important question to ask is not whether the experience recounted was racially motivated but whether interviewees felt or believed that they were treated unfairly and excluded because they were categorised as ‘Asian’. Thus, my emphasis is on the racialised subject's perception and interpretation of the incident. As Anthias and Lloyd (2002: 17) have asserted, ‘We do not always need to find a racist intentionality or a racist imagination to be able to refer to racist practices and racist outcomes’.

In Chapter 3 I stressed that racialisation is an essential element of racism. Racialisation and racism share commonalities in that both concepts signify the socially constructed nature of racial categories. Both concepts imply that these categories are fluid, are constantly formed and transformed, and that a power differential exists between groups. The findings confirm this close link between racism and racialisation. The stories point to racialisation as an ongoing fact of life for some (probably many) Asian Australians.

It is difficult to quantify the extent to which participants experience racialisation because I took a qualitative approach. But stories of racist incidents that happened as recently as a month before the interview to as long as 25 years ago suggest that anti-Asian attitudes have persisted through time. The racialisation experience of Asian Australians reveal that race remains a salient social and political construct. Asian Australians are treated differently, judged
inferior or lacking, and marginalised or excluded on the basis of their skin colour, looks, culture, language and accent.

The stories of racism provided a dynamic picture of the processes involved in racialisation. The participants experienced being racialised in different ways and at different points in their life in Australia. The data suggest that many did not expect that being seen as Asian in Australia could be problematic. Many reported being bewildered at why their being Asian was not an issue before, and then all of a sudden, they were made painfully conscious of their skin colour and race when they were subjected to racial innuendos and attacks. In essence, the experience of racism led or jolted them into an awareness of being racialised. Participants reported different experiences of becoming conscious that they are categorised as ‘Asian’ even though they themselves do not put much significance to their own ethnicity or cultural background. Many reported having lived in Australia for “a long time” and so they did not expect to be treated differently. Their experience of racism made them realise that they are still seen as ‘foreigners’ or not Australian, implying that they are on the other side of the invisible line that demarcates who is part of the ingroup and the outgroup. Racialisation inscribed in the participants their Asian-ness or made them more aware that their being Asian in a society where power is in the hands of Anglo Australians has material consequences as well.

The findings lend support to Essed’s (1991) assertion that everyday racism infiltrates the everyday lives of minority groups and reinforces the power imbalance between racial groups. In addition, the racialisation processes that I have identified parallel what Essed (1991) called ‘mechanisms for racism’ which include marginalisation, problematisation and containment. The data also showed that Asian Australians experience not only verbal racism (e.g. name-calling, abuse or racist remarks) but also other behavioural manifestations of racism (e.g. ignoring, avoidance, patronising) that Mellor (2003) found. Discrimination, especially in the workplace was a significant problem faced by many participants in Mellor’s and in the present study. However, community-level racism (or the perpetuation of racist stereotypes) was not as pronounced for Asian Australians as it was for the Aborigines in Mellor’s study (2003).

The finding that racist incidents jolted participants into an awareness of their racialised status is consistent with the results obtained by Tan (2003) in her exploration of the childhood experiences of multi-generational Chinese Australians. She found that Chinese Australians
first realised that being of Chinese descent positioned them as ‘different’ and ‘other’ within a white Australian society.’ Tan explained this differential process within which this ‘othering’ occurred as a result of the ‘process of racialisation that Chinese Australians were subjected to on account of their Chineseness and the various societal meanings with which Chineseness (and/or ‘Asianness’) was imbued’ (Tan 2003).

How different is the racialisation experience of Asian Australians from other racialised minority groups in Australia, such as the Aborigines and Arab or Muslim Australians? In general, the data suggest that accent, culture and looks are more significant markers of difference for Asian Australians than skin colour is for Indigenous Australians. For the latter, skin colour can become what Delgado (1995b: 159) calls ‘a badge of inferiority and a justification for the denial of opportunity and equal treatment’. In addition, ethno-religious identity is not as crucial as a race signifier for Asian Australians as it would be to Arab or Muslim Australians. In a sense then, Asian Australians are less disadvantaged than Indigenous Australians or Arab or Muslim Australians since Asian Australians do not have permanent or clearly visible race signifiers or markers of difference.

I argued in the beginning that racism experiences can be understood better through the prism of racialisation. The findings support this contention. Deconstructing stories of racism using the lens of racialisation allowed us to see that racist incidents that produce either direct or vicarious racist experiences are but outward manifestations of the multi-layered linked processes of racial categorisation, racial differentiation and outgroup problematisation, marginalisation and exclusion, devaluation and dehumanisation.

Figure 3 illustrates the multiple processes involved in racialisation. The diagram suggests that involvement in racist incidents or the experience of racism makes individuals more aware of their racialisation. It also implies that underlying the experience of racism is a complex web of multi-layered processes of racialisation, the most basic process of which is racial categorisation. As Miles and other theorists have argued, racialisation involves categorising individuals using racial signifiers as the most salient marker of difference. These racial signifiers are usually associated with skin colour but often also include looks, religion, culture, language, and accent. Racial categorisation can thus be defined as the process in which
somatic and cultural markers of difference are used to group individuals into socially constructed categories.

But racial categorisation is in itself not racist and is not the only process involved in racialisation. Racial categorisation becomes racist when racial meanings (negative evaluation) are attached to the labels used to group people. This occurs when racial differentiation takes place or when race categories are used to determine who is part of the ingroup or the outgroup. Closely related to racial differentiation is the process of outgroup problematisation in which those belonging to the outgroup are considered undesirable or problematic. The boundaries between the ingroup and the outgroup are nebulous. In other words, people are constantly engaged in forming, contesting, and bridging these racial boundaries.

Figure 3: Multiple Processes of Racialisation

- **RACIST INCIDENT(S)**
- **Racial Categorisation**
- **Racial Differentiation & Outgroup Problematisation**
- **Devaluation & Dehumanisation**
- **Marginalisation & Exclusion**

- Differentiating ingroups from outgroups
- Outgroups regarded as problematic or undesirable
- Discrimination
- Non-recognition
- Avoidance & rejection
- Curtailment of rights
- Suppression
- Patronising
- Underestimation
- Assault on honour or dignity
- Disregard for property rights
- Physical & emotional attacks
The specific manifestations of these different processes are detailed in the boxes attached to each sphere. Thus, racial differentiation involves delineating who is part of the ingroup or outgroup and then treating the outgroup members as undesirable or problematic.

Figure 3 shows that racialisation is also about marginalisation and exclusion, plus devaluation and dehumanisation. Marginalisation and exclusion involves discrimination, non-recognition, avoidance and rejection, curtailment of rights, and suppression. On the other hand, devaluation involves patronising and underestimation, while dehumanisation involves assault on honour or dignity, disregard for property rights, and physical and emotional attacks.

These processes are represented as contiguous spheres with a three-way arrow in the middle to indicate that these interlock. This means that the different processes are all part and parcel of the racialisation experience. It also implies that they may occur separately or concurrently. This diagram links up with the impact of racialisation to suggest that being subjected to these multiple processes of racialisation compounds the overall stress burden of members of minority groups.

In conclusion, participants provided rich accounts of their multiple experiences of racialisation. Data presented in this chapter demonstrate the value of using the concept of racialisation in providing a more nuanced understanding of the multiple, linked processes behind racist incidents. By looking at the problem as one of racialisation, we can better appreciate that there are different processes that racialised subjects have to contend with each time they become targets of racism. We are able to recognise that the problem is not only about a single (or a few) racist incident(s) that one should ignore or just try to forget. Racialisation also enables us to see that we are all implicated in intricate webs of unequal social relations by virtue of living in a culturally diverse society. As Dei et al. (2004) asserted:

> We must be able to transmute experiences of racism ‘from the moment as personal attack to the moment as part of a larger system of racial oppression, impacting one and all in the same moment. It is in such moments of critical clarity that we begin to glimpse ourselves as part of the great otherhood of oppressed peoples and not as lone victims of racism and discrimination (Dei et al. 2004: 169; emphasis in original).

The next chapter will examine the racialisation processes further by looking at their impact on the racialised subject.
Chapter 6
Impact of Racialisation on the Racialised

As proven by example after example in Chapter 5, Asian Australians are racialised in multiple ways. As a result, they are exposed to levels of stress higher than that experienced by non-racialised groups. This chapter presents data that show how exposure to racism stressors impacts negatively on the health and well-being of racialised subjects, in terms of immediate affective and physiological effects as well as the long-term psychosocial and economic impact. In addition, it also explores the possible impact of racialisation on identity and sense of belonging.

6.1 Impact on health and well-being

The stress-coping paradigm provides a useful framework for assessing the impact of racialisation on health and well-being (Harrell, SP 2000). There is compelling evidence in the literature that racism produces stress (Harrell, JP, Hall & Taliaferro 2003; Harrell, SP 2000; King 2005; Morgan, Beale, Mattis & Stovall 2000). This stress can be the result of different types of racism experiences including: racism-related life events; vicarious racism experiences; daily racism microstressors; chronic-contextual stress; collective experiences of racism; or transgenerational transmission of group traumas (Harrell, SP 2000).

Chapter 5 suggests that participants tend to be affected more by racism-related life events (i.e., direct personal experiences of racism) and to a certain extent, by vicarious racism experiences especially if these involve immediate family members. Participants tend to dismiss daily racism microstressors and chronic-contextual stress. Compared to Indigenous Australians and Arab Australians, Asian Australians are arguably not as affected by collective experiences of racism, nor do they worry too much about transgenerational transmission of group traumas.
The multiple processes of racialisation can separately or simultaneously affect those at the receiving end of racism. Insights into these racialisation processes can also help us understand better how people react to their experiences of racism and why they respond in different ways to being racialised. The impact of being racialised can be better appreciated if one is aware of the complex and dynamic processes that are involved in racialisation.

In the next sections, I explore the impact of the different processes of being marginalised, excluded, inferiorised, devalued and dehumanised in terms of the immediate affective and physiological effects and the long-term economic and psychosocial consequences.

### 6.1.1 Affective impact

A significant but often overlooked aspect of the experience of being racialised is its affective impact. Exploring this dimension of racialisation is important since as Harrell (2000: 44) has suggested, ‘the subjective judgment of the individual is the critical point of analysis in understanding the impact of racism on well-being’. Feelings influence the way people respond to their racialisation experience and determine the impact of the experience on the racialised subject. Emotions and cognition play key roles in coping strategies and should therefore be taken into account.

It is important to examine the feelings of the racialised subject because from the perspective adopted in this study, the motive behind a racist incident is not the main thing to consider. It is how the racialised subject interprets the incident and the motives behind it, and how they felt about it. In this section, I analysed reports of how interviewees felt at the time of the racist incident. The affective dimension of one’s racialisation experience determines in large part one’s judgment of whether an incident is tinged with racism.

> You cannot define what constitutes racism solely by looking at the perpetrator’s actions. You also have to consider the victim’s feelings about the incident. If you sense that you are being treated differently in a bad way and you have a very strong instinct or gut feeling that it is because of your race, rather than because of your other individual traits, then I think that feeling in its own right defines what constitutes racism. (Bea, FY/Sng)

The impact of the racist incident on the racialised subject’s emotions also forms a significant part in determining the merits of a complaint of racial discrimination or vilification. In fact, ‘some
of the statutes expressly refer to the availability of damages for injury to feelings or embarrassment' (Andrades 1998, emphasis added). In addition, it is accepted and provided for by law that 'general damages' may be awarded in discrimination cases for 'harm such as humiliation, loss of dignity and self-esteem, and loss of enjoyment of life', all relating to the affective dimension of the racialisation experience.

Based on the stories recounted by the interviewees, the stress they experienced from being racialised produced feelings of: (a) shock and disbelief; (b) distress and fear; and (c) humiliation, anger and frustration.

As was shown in Chapter 5, their racism experiences jolted many interviewees into a realisation that they are othered or treated as an outsider or part of the outgroup. Many interviewees said they were caught unaware by the racist incident and so they were momentarily paralysed and were thus unable to act to counter the racist abuse or attack.

I was not prepared to handle my first experience of racism. I never thought it could happen to me because I'm always obedient. I'm always nice. Never, ever in my life did I have a fight with anyone. Never, ever in my life did I answer back to my parents. That's why I couldn't understand why a complete stranger swore at me in front of everybody, telling me to go home to my country. I couldn't react right away. I couldn't even scream back. I just thought, "What's happening? What is going on? Why is he treating me this way?" It was only after I got home that I let the anger out. (Gina, F/Y/Fil)

The feelings of shock and disbelief may be attributed in part to the general expectation that Australia is a tolerant and accepting country because of its avowed strong adherence to the principles of multiculturalism. Thus, those who became victims of direct and overt racist acts experienced ‘cognitive dissonance’ [or ‘a feeling of psychological discomfort stemming from a perceived incompatibility among beliefs’ (Pedersen, Walker & Wise 2005: 22)] when they realised that Australia is not as welcoming as it purports to be. A young interviewee who was attacked with a water bomb by several teenagers said, “How could this happen in this day and age? I thought Australia is a much more tolerant country than any other place I’ve been. That incident made me realise that racism is still ongoing” (Bea, F/Y/Sng). Similarly, a Catholic priest who became the object of racism from his Anglo Australian parishioners said he had previously been assigned to different parishes in various parts of the world but “I never had a problem with racism before, never, only now” (Fr Dan, M/M.A). A woman who suffered at the
hands of her abusive partner said, ‘My family knows, they know that compared to my sisters, I’m a strong woman. But look at what happened? I don’t know. I never, ever thought it could happen to me, never ever. I just wanted to die’ (Cynthia, F/Y/Fil).

The shock and inability to act may also be attributed to the ambiguity of racism stemming from the difficulty of interpreting racist situations (Essed 1991). Often, the racialised subject finds it difficult to comprehend what occurred and struggles to make sense of the experience. This is especially true for young interviewees who suffered racism at school. For instance, Kamil (M/Y/SrL) only realised that his teachers and classmates were being racist towards him many years after the incidents happened.

The thing is that I didn’t actually know I was getting racism. I would just come home and cry sometimes. Once when these guys spat at me, I instinctively spat back. But I didn’t actually understand [why it was happening]. It was only recently, when I thought about it that I realised I was being alienated, I was getting racism. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

There was a strong sense of disbelief among many participants perhaps because Asian immigrants are not ‘socialized’ into racism in the same way that Indigenous Australians or Black Americans are. Because of the long history of racism suffered by both Indigenous Australians and Black Americans, racism has become part of their everyday experience and so they are less surprised when they become victimised. On the other hand, Asian immigrants are less equipped to handle racism because they do not normally expect to be racialised or to be made to feel different because of their race. Very few also expect to be targets of verbal abuse and racially motivated violence. And so, when Asians are subjected to racism, they experience strong feelings of distress and even fear.

For participants who experienced being verbally abused or physically threatened, the overriding emotions were distress and fear. Some interviewees were clearly still traumatised by their experiences and were visibly distressed when recounting the incidents. An elderly interviewee (Fely, F/O/Fil) could not hold back her tears as she recounted her experience of being physically attacked on the streets. Two victims of domestic violence cringed visibly as they recalled the abuse they suffered. Others told of how badly they feared for their personal safety. For example, “after this White old lady threw a tomato at me for no reason at the supermarket,” Cora (F/MA/Fil) said she begged her husband to move to America because the
incident made her feel unsafe in Australia. An elderly Chinese Australian couple told of how nervous they became when their Anglo Australian neighbours harassed them by throwing eggs at their front porch every night. “We called the police but they didn’t do anything about it so we had no choice but to just keep our doors and windows locked at night” (Mary, F/O/Chn). Another interviewee (Jackson, M/M/A/Kor) feared so much for his life that he contemplated suicide to escape from the threats he was subjected to in school. These examples show how fear of victimisation heightened feelings of discomfort and perceived lack of security.

In addition to fear and distress, interviewees said the racist incidents left them feeling humiliated, disrespected or devalued. Participants who recounted experiences of being embarrassed or humiliated in public gave a strong indication that it was the ‘loss of face’ that hurt them most. Interviewees also spoke of how their distress turned into anger, especially when they felt that they were treated with little dignity or respect. Take the case of 45-year old Armie (F/M/A/Fil) who was verbally abused by a nine-year old Anglo Australian.

I felt so little because in my country, no kid will ever answer back like that or say things like that to you. In my country, older people are respected. But here, there’s no such thing as respect. That kid even gave me the dirty finger. I was shaking! I was so angry because never in my life have I been treated with such disrespect by a kid! (Armie, F/M/A/Fil)

Several young interviewees recalled how they felt rejected and out-of-place at school because they were treated differently as a result of their Asian-ness. They spoke of how they were left scarred from the taunts and bullying they experienced from classmates in predominantly Anglo Australian primary and secondary schools. They cringed in recounting that when they reported such incidents of racism, their principals and teachers punished them instead. They spoke of feelings of being let down after being told “to just ignore it” or “to not be a trouble maker”.

For others, being humiliated was “the last straw” that made them really angry and drove them to do something about racism. For example, Linda (F/M/A/Fil) recalled how her Anglo Australian head teacher started “a smear campaign” against her by cajoling students and parents to sign a letter that in effect, debased her reputation as a teacher. “I was really angry because he humiliated me”, she said. Likewise, Buddy (M/M/A/Fil) recounted how he reacted strongly when a bank teller refused to serve his elderly mother, speaking to her rudely and treating her “as if she was a criminal. … I just couldn’t let him do that to my mother! I complained right away to
Both Linda and Buddy confronted their racist oppressors successfully. However, in most cases, feelings of frustration set in when actions taken to seek redress are not as productive.

The perception and feeling that they were put to shame by the racist perpetrator may account for why many interviewees were still visibly angry when they were narrating their experiences. The interview method allowed the participants to voice their unspoken feelings and thoughts about their experiences of being discriminated against and this proved to be cathartic for many. In the midst of rekindled anger, some interviewees expressed feelings of elation and relief that they were justified in thinking that they had been treated badly.

In addition, interviewees said they thought Australia, as their host country would be a land of opportunities. Many came confidently expecting to secure appropriate work without having to deal with any problems. But many participants said the experience of not finding gainful employment right away left them feeling disappointed and demoralised. Many interviewees expressed frustration at being pre-judged as inferior or lacking just because one is Asian. Interviewees who perceived that they were being patronised or treated as if they were inferior said they felt insulted by this. Arshun (M/MA/Ind), for example, expressed frustration at how he has to “struggle much, much harder” to get a job simply because he is Asian. He said he applied for senior management positions but soon realised after being rejected again and again that “nobody is willing to consider an Asian man as manager because it’s not considered normal”.

Obviously, we Asian immigrants have to try ten times harder to find jobs. When I came here and couldn’t find work for the first three months, I was told to go work at a gas station. [Consider that he was an executive for a major airline company before migrating to Australia.] But I had no problems with that. I don’t think it is a bad job and I would have done it. It’s not that I worry about what job I take. Personally, I like working. But the thing is I came here with high hopes and aspirations that I would be able to find work in the industry where I had developed my skills. … Interviewers have told me I was right for the job. But there’s always been one excuse or another, so that eventually I’m told, “Oh, but…” There’s always that ‘but’ at the end. That’s what is killing me! I know I have tried very hard, and I am confident I will succeed because I am very determined. But it’s taking such a long time and it’s been very hard! \textit{It would have been easier for me if I was White.} (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)
Arshun's experience and that of other interviewees lend further support to Hawthorne's (1997) study where interviewed managers admitted to making assumptions about the qualifications of NESB engineers. The study found that managers judged the capability of NESB engineers on the basis of their ethnicity. ‘Quite apart from factors such as English language competence and level of professional skills, the study documents that ethnicity and cross-cultural differences appear to significantly influence employment outcomes [of NESBs] within the preliminary settlement years’ (Hawthorne 1997: 411-412).

Those who experienced racial discrimination at work aired initial feelings of ‘being trapped’, or of feeling powerless to do anything to counter their racialisation, especially since they feared that they would lose their jobs if they complained. But many indicated that they were able to minimise this feeling of helplessness by finding out more about their rights. Knowledge of the law and access to grievance procedures emboldened them and made them more assertive.

6.1.2 Physiological impact

Data on participants' affective reactions to their racism experiences suggest that the more serious the incident, the stronger their feelings were about it. Their experiences of being racialised evoked strong negative feelings that for some, translated into psychosomatic symptoms such as hypertension, unexplained weight loss, headaches, dizziness. Many participants could not forget the trauma they felt. Recounting their experiences rekindled negative feelings that to them were as strong as though it happened recently. In describing his racism experiences as “something he will never forget”, Anthony (M/MA/Fi) said reliving the moments made him remember the pain and the trauma. “It's making me feel dizzy just talking about it now!” It was obvious that the negative feelings evoked were still with him, perhaps just pushed to the recesses of his mind in a bid to forget the hurt and pain. In telling his story, Anthony was taken back emotionally, psychologically and physiologically to the time when he felt small and helpless. In effect, this is similar to what Dei et al. (2004: 136-137) described as being 'transported back to the confines of childhood powerlessness and experiencing a return to the fear, horror of those initial traumas'.

Another participant who was abused by her Anglo Australian partner said, “It was terrible! I don't want to go back there [to that kind of abusive situation]. I couldn't stand it anymore! To
tell you honestly, even just watching a similar situation on TV makes me feel sick” (Cynthia, F/Y/Fil). Another spoke of how she developed hypertension because of the stress of having to deal with her racist supervisor on a daily basis. “Just seeing her makes my blood pressure shoot up. Even if she doesn't talk to me directly, I get affected” (Nelia, F/Ma/Fil). Another interviewee described how the thought of facing her racist supervisor made her sick in the stomach everyday.

I stayed in the job for eight months but the last few months were really awful! I remember I used to tell my husband that I had severe stomach pain whenever I woke up in the morning. I really didn't want to go to work. But the thing is I needed the money so I stayed on. When they offered some compensation for voluntary redundancy, I immediately took it. (Dolly, F/Ma/Fil)

Similarly, Linda (F/Ma/Fil) recounted how she lost a lot of weight from the stress she experienced while waiting for the outcome of the anti-discrimination case she filed against her head teacher. Linda reported getting compensation in the form of paid stress leave after she won her case.

The physiological impact of having to deal with racism-related stressors at school was obvious in the case of Kamil (M/Y/SrL) who suffered from stress headaches as a result of the humiliating treatment he got from his racist teacher and the verbal abuse and racist jokes he got from classmates.

I was put in advance class in Year 6 but it was the worst year for me because I had this really old, extremely parochial, racist teacher who constantly picked on me, alienating me in class, doing just extreme things to me. Once, I didn't have my shirt tucked in so she made me go up in front of the class and said, “This is an example of a delinquent boy. This isn't what you want to become!” And then she tucked my shirt in front of the class and safety pinned it to my pants.

I actually developed stress headaches and missed a lot of school because of it. The thing is, nobody really knew why [I was getting sick]. Also, I was unconsciously always grinding my teeth. I later learned that it was because of stress and anxiety. I didn't realise it had become so bad until our dentist told me, “I have never seen a kid at your age get this kind of stress!” When we realised that it was because this teacher was always mean and racist to me, my mom asked the principal to transfer me to another class but the principal refused to do it. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)
Kamil’s case provides further support to the contention that racial abuse or vilification in itself is harmful (McNamara 2002). Its negative effects are real and immediate for victims. Other studies on the impact of racist speech have also found that victims experienced physiological symptoms such as fear in the gut, rapid pulse rate, difficulty in breathing, and recurring nightmares (Matsuda, 1989 cited in McNamara 2002: 24).

Secondary analysis of data from a 1993-94 national survey of ethnic minorities (Indians, Pakistani or Bangladeshi, and Caribbean) living in England and Wales also revealed that those who experienced racism were 60 percent more likely to report having fair or poor health compared with those who said they have not experienced racism. In particular, the study found a significant positive association between diagnosed hypertension and experiences of racism (Karlsen & Nazroo 2002a: 13). Taken together, these studies provide compelling evidence that direct experiences of racism impact negatively on the physical health (Karlsen & Nazroo 2002a, 2004) and well-being (Harrell, JP, Hall & Taliaferro 2003; Harrell, SP 2000) of racialised subjects.

### 6.1.3 Psychosocial impact

Racialisation not only produces immediate affective and physiological reactions, it also results in **long-term** psychosocial and economic consequences. While the initial reactions of anger, surprise, distress, and humiliation may be fleeting, the effects on the mental health and social functioning of racialised subjects are more serious and more difficult to overcome. The affective and physiological impact of being racialised may be seen as pre-cursors to more serious psychosocial disorders. In fact, North American research has clearly established a link between exposure to racism-related stressors and the mental health and well-being of minority groups (Harrell, JP, Hall & Taliaferro 2003; Hill, CV, Neighbors & Gayle 2004; Karlsen & Nazroo 2002a, 2002b, 2004; McKenzie 2003; US Department of Health and Human Services 2001; Williams, DR, Neighbors & Jackson 2003). In particular, the US Department of Health and Human Services (2001) has found that exposure to stress-related racism places minorities at risk for mental disorders, including depression, anxiety, low job and life satisfaction.

The process of migrating and settling into a new country is already quite stressful. In fact, psychologists consider a change in residence or living conditions to be one of the most
stressful or disruptive events that can occur in one’s lifetime (Richardson 2002: 197). The ‘acculturative stress’ (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok 1987) that immigrants experience in the process of adapting to a new culture tend to be strongest during the first three years of arrival in the new host country (Vega & Rumbaut, 1991 cited in US Department of Health and Human Services 2001: 30). This stress can be exacerbated by the experience of being racialised that can aggravate further the psychological distress that new immigrants may experience.

This observation was confirmed in a longitudinal study of two cohorts of immigrants to Australia (National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University 2004; Richardson 2002). The study found that while majority reported having very good health on arrival, 26 percent reported having ‘symptoms of significant psychological distress’ which is significantly higher than the eight percent figure for the general Australian populace.

In the present study, interview data showed that the emotional and economic setbacks experienced as a new immigrant clearly affected the mental health of participants. For example, participants who had their job applications rejected reported being demoralised and consequently having low self-esteem. This becomes more difficult for Asian men because they are expected by their culture to be the primary breadwinners in the family.

My wife works; I don’t. So I am like a kept man. It’s not a good feeling because in our relationship, I have always been the better breadwinner. Suddenly I have become a non-performing asset or more of a liability for her. I don’t like it and I’m sure she doesn’t like it too. But she is very understanding and is very patient. We talk a lot and she understands. But she also feels bad that I am going through this. But she cannot do anything about it. She’s helpless. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

Participants who reacted passively to their racist experiences reported becoming withdrawn, reclusive and enmeshed in feelings of fear, worthlessness and self-doubt, feelings that lingered even long after the time the racist incident occurred.

I just stayed at home for eight months. I was really frustrated. My self-worth was really down. I was really devastated. And I was always crying. … I confided mostly in my sister who is a psychiatric nurse. I told her the Counselor told me to drink Prozac, an anti-depressant. But my sister, being a psych nurse told me not to take it because I would be dependent on the drug. She told me to do some gardening instead and that helped me a bit. (Linda, F/MA/Fil)
Like Linda, Gerry (M/MA/F) suffered depression after he was forced to quit his job due to conflicts with his supervisor.

A lowered self-esteem was evident in the tendency to blame oneself for being racialised and to be ambivalent about one’s self-worth and identity. Being repeatedly told that ‘it’s only in your mind’ contributed to feelings of self-doubt about one’s sanity. “I just cried for no reason. ... I thought I was going crazy!” (Gina, F/Y/MA). Others developed ‘hyper-awareness’ (Karumanchery 2003) or a sense of being on guard always characterised by strong feelings of anxiety resulting from the fear of being victimised or targeted again. For example, Indira (F/MA/SrL) spoke about how her many experiences of racism made her more wary of the likelihood of being victimised again.

Our new manager realised that I had been bypassed so many times so he eventually promoted me. I finally got that little bit of recognition that was long overdue. I am happy but I am still aware that certain people still put me down behind my back and even to my face. ... I am mindful of all that but I am not losing sleep over it anymore. But I know I have to be on guard all the time. (Indira, F/Ma/SrL)

Many interviewees said they will “never forget” their racism experiences. Several interviewees (e.g. domestic violence victims) were still clearly affected by the trauma of being dehumanised through frequent verbal abuse and physical attacks. One even spoke of how just talking about her experience made her look at herself as someone “shamed and without dignity” (Gina, F/YA/F/). As recent research has found, ‘racial stereotypes and negative images can be internalized, denigrating individuals’ self-worth and adversely affecting their social and psychological functioning’ (US Department of Health and Human Services 2001: 39).

From the narratives of those who suffered racism at an early age, it was obvious that their experiences left an indelible mark on their psyches. This was apparent in the case of Asha (F/Y/Ind) who admitted that her early experiences of being racially excluded as a child have made her wary of being victimised again. She already anticipates that after she finishes her degree from one of Australia’s top universities, it can still be difficult for her to get a job because of discriminatory hiring practices.

The bigger worry for me would be about how my being Asian would limit my employment opportunities. I am worried that when people see the undeniably Indian name in my resume, they will right away assume that I don't speak English very well.
and that I won't be qualified for the job. I am worried that because I am Indian, people I meet are going to expect me to think and feel a certain way. Because I am Indian, I am worried that friends are not going to really understand what my life is like or how I live and that they will assume that I won't have that much in common with them. (Asha, F/Y/Ind)

Both the actual experience of racism and the perception that one is part of a racialised group can potentially impact on the way racialised subjects relate with other people. As shown by the findings of this study, racialisation can have long-term adverse effects on the social functioning of interviewees. One interviewee said she felt so uncomfortable whenever she went out with her Anglo-looking son because “people stared at me as if I’m an alien” (Gina, F/Y/Fil), so much so that most of the time, she just stayed at home. Another participant said she refused to attend parties organised by her Anglo Australian partner’s side of the family since she felt out-of-place or unwelcome at these social gatherings (Jenny, F/MA/Chn), even though this caused a lot of tension between her and her husband. In addition, being tagged as a member of a minority group and ascribed negative traits made it difficult for some participants to form close interracial relationships and hindered interracial dating (as was the case for several young interviewees). There is also a stronger tendency to stick to one’s ethnic group since it is “safer, easier, and more convenient” (Linda, F/MA/Fil).

Children who are racialised may develop a dislike towards their own ethnic group and a dislike towards their own selves, as evidenced by this study. They may also associate their colour as being undesirable and whiteness as desirable (Delgado 1995b).

As can be deduced from the excerpt below, Kamil (M/Y/SrL) who was constantly teased for his dark skin reveals that what may be considered as playful banter at the schoolyard often leaves a lasting mark on the object of ridicule.

A mere kid couldn't fathom all of that. I was not sure about what I did to deserve that kind of treatment. On retrospect, I didn't realise how bad I was being teased. Actually, what happened was, these friends I supposedly had, were always teasing me, and calling me names. They got me to do these outrageous things. I would act like an idiot and be made fun of just to make friends because I didn't realise what was going on then. Sometimes they spat on me... [They were] all Whites. And the worst part about it was I young and I couldn't understand why they were being mean to me. They said they're my friends...[but] they say racist things ...and they said I'm different and they kept teasing me because of this. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)
In Kamil's (M/Y/SrL) case, his experiences of being excluded by classmates because of his skin colour made him question his own identity and self-worth.

I feel lonely and alone. I don't have many friends. I'm different and that feeling will never go away. I am different and I'm finding it hard to relate to people because of this. I always think people I don't know and even my friends see me firstly as a black person before they see me as myself. That's why I'm always asking myself, how much of what they make of my personality has to do with the **novelty** of me being black? How much is it just straightforward Kamil? That really bothers me. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

As Dei et al. (2004: 114) have suggested, 'teachers’ expectations of student ability have powerful mediating influences on self-concept, hope for the future and personal/academic success’. Adolescents and young adults from ethnic minority groups may be perceived as being especially prone to violent behaviour and stereotyped as being members of ethnic gangs. This stereotyping produced a Pygmalion effect or became a self-fulfilling prophecy for two young interviewees (Jackson, M/Y/Kor and Kamil, M/Y/SrL) who admitted that they took to drugs and became delinquent in school but mainly as a reaction to the racist bullying they experienced. In particular, Kamil (M/Y/SrL) said his experience of being humiliated repeatedly by teachers and being told constantly that he was a deviant drove him to rebel. According to his mom Indira (F/MA/SrL), “It [racism] ruined his life”.

By the time I was in year 8, I just went off the rails. I was seen as an intelligent [but] black kid so they went about trying to alienate me. … By that age, the more they prodded me the more I rebelled. And they got more and more frustrated. Being young then, I didn't have a sense of boundaries so I really just kept pushing them to the limit. That's why I got expelled eventually. I got into drugs and my life went off track for several years. It was only recently that I was able to pull myself back together. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

Kamil's reaction to his racist experiences is common. Children who are bullied because of their race sometimes are forced into fighting back both physically and psychologically. When they turn to aggression to 'defend' themselves, they 'are marked by their teachers as troublemakers, adding to the children's alienation and sense of rejection' (Delgado 1995b: 164). This tendency to rebel as a way of fighting back may be explained in part by the results of a recent study that documented how children feel and react when classmates subject them to verbal abuse. Using data from in-depth interviews of 145 sixth graders in an Israeli primary school, the study found that children tend to react violently when subjected to verbally abusive...
messages that centered on characteristics that were permanent or unchangeable, such as their ethnic origin or skin colour. The study concluded that:

whenever verbally aggressive messages targeted any object or characteristic that is at the core of the student's sense of self or identity, they triggered extreme emotions of humiliation, pain, and anger and physiologically aroused the student making him or her ready to fight the abuse. In short, students can rarely endure attacks on disabilities or features that are essential to self-concept and beyond the students' control to change, such as their parents or [their own] ethnic background. (Geiger & Fischer 2006: 353)

6.1.4 Economic impact

The long-term impact of racialisation is more acutely seen in how racialisation imposes barriers to the successful settlement into Australian life of Asian immigrants, and in how it deters economic advancement and undermines careers.

Recent research on workplace discrimination in Australia have found that NESB immigrants experience severe labour market disadvantage (Hawthorne 1997; Junankar & Mahuteau 2005; Junankar, Paul & Yasmeen 2004; Queensland Government 2001). Research comparing the labour participation rates of skilled immigrants in New Zealand has also revealed that underemployment is more prevalent among NESB immigrants than amongst those who are native English-speakers (McGrath et al. 2005). The findings of the present study lend further support to these observations. The examples below clearly show how the inferiorisation and devaluation of Asian immigrants' skills make it doubly harder for them to feel settled in Australia.

The economic impact of racism can be seen in the opportunities lost because the system makes it difficult for newly arrived NESB immigrants to get a job. Interviewees expressed dismay at having to go through the process again of proving that they are qualified for jobs, despite having complied with stringent entry requirements for migration to Australia.

We had to pass through the eye of the needle when we applied for migration here. They already assessed my credentials when I applied. But now, I have to pay a lot of money again just to get another piece of paper certifying that my qualifications are equivalent to an Australian degree (Gerry, M/MA/Fil).
This certification was no guarantee, however, that they can find jobs right away which are commensurate to their skills and knowledge. For example, Linda (F/MA/Fil) who has a masters degree from the US and a PhD from the Philippines said she arrived in Australia expecting to be able to work right away and was sorely disappointed when her overseas qualifications and work experience were not recognised. She said she felt “insulted” when her credentials were assessed to be equivalent only to a three-year undergraduate course. She said she could not believe it when she was asked to take a short course in basic English even though her curriculum vitae showed that she had over 10 years experience as principal and teacher at an international school in the Philippines.

Workplace discrimination also has a detrimental impact on the financial viability and economic stability of the immigrant’s family. New immigrants are in greater financial need and the pressure to earn some income immediately forces them to accept positions that offer less remuneration and less responsibility than their education or experience warrants (McGrath et al. 2005). Many of those interviewed came highly qualified but were unable to find jobs that used their overseas training and experience. Many said they were forced to start from scratch or to accept any other job just to survive. Thus, it was quite common to hear that interviewees had to start out as nursing home attendants, cleaners, hotel chambermaids, gas service attendants, taxi drivers, and process workers. They said it was difficult to find work in their area of expertise and so they were forced to work in jobs of a lower status than the previous jobs they held in their countries of origin. Among those interviewed were an engineer from China now working as a factory hand, a mineral scientist now working as a quarantine inspector, a former ground stewardess now working as a waitress, and a former principal at an international school now working as a clerk for a government department.

There was also a high incidence of unemployment among mature aged interviewees who said they were previously employed in senior executive positions in their countries of origin. They said they tried countless times to look for jobs but were rejected repeatedly. According to some, this may be partly because of their age, but more so because their overseas qualifications and experience were not recognised. Among those who had given up finding work were a former offshore banking executive and several former university professors from China, most of who are now doing unpaid voluntary work to keep themselves occupied.
Several interviewees said they decided to apply for less senior roles but were dismayed when they were then told that they were ‘overqualified’. One interviewee who held a senior managerial position before migrating to Australia was told that the only way he could get a job was to hide the fact that he was very qualified.

I couldn’t understand why I couldn’t get a job. I was thinking, if I had all these experience, and I’m asking for a basic job why wouldn’t they give it to me? But they wouldn’t. One of my friends said, “The people who are interviewing you know that you are more qualified than them. And so, they’re afraid that if you get into the company, you’ll take their jobs away from them. So, I’ll give you a tip. Take your resume, cut everything out and just say you’ve been a technician for ten years.” And I said, “Are you joking?” He said, “No, take it or leave it.” I decided to follow his advice then got a job soon afterwards. (Mandy, MMA/Ind)

One newly arrived interviewee said he even offered to work for free just so he can have some “local experience” but was not allowed to do so.

Arshun (MMA/Ind): I told them I was willing to work for free but no one ever took up my offer. I told them, “You don’t have to pay me anything. Just try me out for three months and if I have not contributed to your till and you’re not happy, you can sack me. But if I have, give me the job.

Q: And why do you think no one took up your offer?
A: Because I will prove to them that I’m effective. I am a very determined person and if I say something, I mean it and I’ll make sure that it happens.

Arshun’s experience shows the limited opportunities made available to Asian Australians.

Many interviewees expressed disappointment at being forced to change career paths in Australia. They also expressed frustration at the time and opportunities lost because they had to learn new skills or re-enroll in order to get a job. In many cases, having to study again added more stress because of the need to invest substantial time, effort and resources into completing course requirements. But as Hawthorne (1997: 409) found in her longitudinal case study of the racial discrimination experienced by Asian engineers, enrolling in such courses may be necessary ‘to maintain both morale and job-seeking focus. … [Studying may] represent an opportunity to convert waste time to an investment in their professional futures, including (in many cases) preparing the ground for career conversion’. Like the participants in Hawthorne’s study, interviewees in this study found that earning a degree from an Australian University did not guarantee economic advancement. Moreover, Garnaut (2002: 151-152)
found that migrant incomes in Australia commence below those who were born in Australia. ‘They rise slowly, but never quite catch up. [In contrast,] the incomes of immigrants to the United States rise much more rapidly, and eventually to a higher level than the United States-born’. Another recent study (Junankar & Mahuteau 2005) investigating the quality of jobs held by recent immigrants found that Asians are less likely to hold better jobs despite improved labour market conditions and higher quality immigrant intake, which the authors attribute to racial discrimination.

The impact of a drop in socio-economic status due to racial discrimination is likely to be greater on participants who had previously been relatively well off in their homeland and who enjoyed higher social status than those who came from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. None of those interviewed in the present study migrated to Australia as humanitarian refugees. Thus, most, if not all migrated to Australia by choice. In fact, several participants said they chose to live in Australia even though they also had the option to go to America or Canada. This confirms the findings of a landmark study of the early settlement experience of recent immigrants to Australia which found that ‘most migrants come to Australia as an active choice rather than because their circumstances at home are bleak’ (National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University 2004: 6). The findings of this study dispel the common stereotype that economic factors drive migration.

Racism at work has more deleterious effects because it poses as a threat to job security and advancement (Morgan et al. 2000). Many interviewees spoke of how the fear of losing their jobs kept them from fighting for their rights. Many expressed frustration at how they could not do anything about the unfair treatment they were getting. “You can see it (the racism), but what can you do?” (Indira, F/MA/SrL). Several interviewees said they had no choice but to resign due to the stress of having to cope with racism at work (Linda, F/MA/Fil, Nelia, F/MA/Fil, Buddy, M/MA/Fil, Gerry, M/MA/Fil). Some spoke of how they got demoralised with the experience of having their ambitions tossed in the wind and their belief in egalitarianism badly damaged. This was quite obvious in Fr Dan (MMA) who decided to take an indefinite leave from his congregation because of the hurt he felt when his religious superiors did not defend him after Anglo Australian parishioners petitioned for his removal as their parish priest.
Racialisation also inhibits or constrains the economic mobility and career prospects of racialised subjects and restricts their socio-economic attainment. For example, one interviewee told of the many times she was overlooked for training and promotion.

I was in the same department for years and years. In spite of my strong performance and outputs, I was not made lending manager. People who were usually White and male were being promoted here and there. But I know I am better than them because I was the one who trained them. But they just bypassed me. It's because I'm Asian. I don't drink or smoke. I don't sleep around. Therefore, I was not in their clique. My unit manager basically hated me. I could just feel it. My immediate supervisor even asked me to sleep with him but I refused and he used this against me. (Indira, F/MA/SrL)

Low regard for Asians and the failure to acknowledge or reward positive contributions at work often deaden their motivation. And so, they become underachievers and just settle for jobs that do not really maximise their potentials. This could lead to a low level of personal fulfillment. High achievers then become mediocre performers who just try to get by day by day. Participants who experienced daily microaggressions by being constantly degraded or inferiorised said they eventually lost their motivation to excel in their field. The lack of recognition of their efforts and underestimation of their capabilities dampened their readiness to work hard and weakened their desire to contribute to organisational growth. This is apparent in the no-care attitude that some interviewees developed because of the frustration they felt.

I always feel that they think that they're smarter just because they're White. They don't say it but they make you feel it. Like in the office, they don't really ask us for inputs or suggestions. And even if you try to contribute by saying something, they act as if they did not hear it. So, I say to myself, why should I bother? (Linda, F/MA/Fil)

Another interviewee said he no longer felt as enthusiastic “as before” about his work because his efforts have not been rewarded.

I used to be more enthusiastic than the rest of the people at work that's why eventually I quickly learned different skills without formal training. I can do all the work in all the sections of the factory whereas the others only know the tasks assigned to their section. Even now, I have more skills than most people at my work and yet I am still in the same level as they are. The company should be paying me more! And yet, they don't recognise that. I don't have any incentive. Before, I used to work Sundays and do double shifts. Now I just go in, do my work, do my hours, that's it. Then I go home. Before, I didn't take a lot of time off. But now, I take sick leaves here and there even if I'm just feeling lazy. I don't care anymore. (Anthony, M/MA/Fil)
Taken together, the findings of this study and of previous studies provide ample evidence pointing to the deleterious effects of racialisation on the economic advancement of Asian Australians.

6.2 Impact on identity and sense of belonging

In this section, I analyse how participants defined their identity and sense of belonging in light of their racialisation experience.

Lewis suggested that identities can either be externally assigned (‘racial ascription’) or self-defined (‘racial identification’) (Lewis, AE 2003: 283-284). In Chapter 5, we saw how racialisation involves racial ascription or the process of assigning individuals into socially constructed categories using race signifiers.

I asked interviewees to define their identity in their own terms since I wanted to explore whether racial categories were salient to them. I was also seeking to interrogate possible links between their racism experiences and their identity and sense of belonging. But before I present my findings in relation to these, I will explain briefly the line of questioning I took in order to highlight the social constructionist framework I used.

The basic question I asked of participants was: ‘How would you identify yourself?’ I purposely started with a very general question in order to examine if people would right away describe their identities using racial terms or labels. Most participants replied by asking “in what terms?” While I wanted to avoid having to use racial categorisations, I was forced to clarify my question with the following subsidiary question: ‘Do you see yourself as an Australian, a Filipino (or Chinese or other ethnicities) or both? Or do you consider yourself as Asian?’ Still others questioned the use of the label ‘Australian’ by asking: “What do you mean by Australian? Who is Australian anyway?” (Don, M/O/Chn). Since I was more interested in their social construction of such terms, I threw the question back to them by asking: “What do you think?” The ways by which interviewees answered these basic questions provided interesting insights into their understanding of how they saw themselves in light of how other people see them.
Interestingly, several key informants were clearly reluctant to define their identities in terms of their ethnicity, ancestry or race. As one interjected, “I've never thought about that question because I've never seen myself in those terms. To me those are not important” (Cora, F/O/Fil). This explicit statement alerts us that we cannot assume that race is inherently central to the identities of minority people (Phoenix 2005). Some key informants argued that identities cannot be tied down to a single factor, that individuals have multiple identities that are constantly being formed, contested, and transformed—an argument that is borne by the literature (e.g. Lewis, G & Phoenix 2004; Rattansi & Westwood 1994). This indicates an awareness of the complex processes involved in the formation of hybrid identities.

### 6.2.1 Hyphenated identities

Majority of the interviewees used hyphenated labels or compound words to describe their identity and sense of belonging, using phrases such as “Filipino Australian”, “Indian and Australian” and other interesting variants such as “Filipino at heart, Australian in paper” (Linda, F/MA/Fil; Linda, F/MA/Fil; Edwin, M/O/Fil). Another participant called herself, “a Filipina with an Australian passport” (Edith, F/MA/Fil). This sense of having a hybrid identity was strongest in participants who grew up in their countries of origin. They said their values and way of thinking have been shaped by their culture and the way their families brought them up and so they are first and foremost, either Filipino, Chinese, Sri Lankan, or Indian. Even though they had already spent most of their adult lives in Australia and most have taken up Australian citizenship, many still felt ambivalent about whether or not they consider themselves Australian. Many migrated to Australia since they already had family members living here. They indicated that more than anything else, these strong family ties defined their sense of belonging to Australia. Others defined this in terms of the advantages of living in Australia (e.g. clean environment, health benefits, welfare support). But to some, they were Australian simply because they have the papers (e.g. certificate of citizenship, passport) to prove it.

This dualism or a sense of hybrid identity parallels what Jenkins (1994 cited in Lewis, G & Phoenix 2004) referred to as two aspects of identity: the ‘nominal’ or identity in name and the ‘virtual’ or identity borne of one’s experience. Thus, for these participants, they were Australian in name (nominal identity) but they also had an ethnic ‘virtual’ identity because their values and
way of thinking are still rooted in the experiences they had growing up in their countries of origin.

6.2.2 “I am Australian”

Very few Interviewees stated explicitly that they are Australians (as opposed to being ‘Asian Australian’ or ‘Asian’ only). Those who did, explained that they felt they belonged in Australia because they “have lived here for many years” (e.g. Carmen, F/MA/Fil; Tony, M/O/Fil), and because they “have adopted Australian ways” (e.g. Mandy, M/MA/Ind; Anthony, M/MA/Fil; Allen, M/MA/Fil). The first line of reasoning pins the sense of identity and belonging to notions of space and time, implying that they have developed an affinity with Australia because of the time they have stayed in this country. This is closely related to the second line of reasoning in which interviewees defined their Australian-ness in terms of developing a liking for Australian sports and adhering to the so-called Australian value of ‘giving everyone a fair go’ (Mandy, M/MA/Ind). A newly arrived elderly migrant (Greg, M/O/Chn), however, argued he is Australian because he has consciously defined himself as one.

6.2.3 “I don’t belong here.”

Very few defined their identity solely in terms of their ethnicity. Three key interviewees expressed reservations about being called ‘Australian’ since they did not want to be identified as being part of “Australia’s racist history” (Edith, F/MA/Fil; Josephine, F/MA/Fil; Judy, F/O/Fil).

I hold an Australian passport, but I don’t consider myself Australian. In terms of belonging, I can easily belong to any culture that respects diversity, that includes me in decision-making and that respects differences (Edith, F/MA/Fil).

Some said their racialisation experience convinced them that they do not belong in Australia. For instance, one interviewee who participated in Harmony Day activities as a schoolgirl said these activities tend to highlight differences rather than promote unity.

I participated in these activities in primary school but to me, they actually didn’t achieve or mean anything. Why? Because my impression was basically that I was on display. That people marked me as a curiosity rather than accepted me as a person. The
activities served only to highlight differences rather than promoting unity or a sense of community. (Asha, F/Y/Ind)

Asha’s feeling of being treated as part of a ‘side-show’ is very similar to the experience of Australian filmmaker Lisa Wang as analysed by Tan (2003; 2004) in her study of Chinese Australians’ racialisation experiences. Wang, who grew up in Melbourne in the 1950s, told of how she was ‘expected to “entertain” her peers through the outward performance of her Chineseness, [by] demonstrating her strangeness and peculiarity’ (Tan 2003). Like Asha, Wang described her childhood memories as filled with ‘feelings of not belonging, confusion and sadness’.

Another interviewee commented that being racialised made her conclude that she will always be perceived as a perpetual foreigner in this country. “I really find that they (the Whites) treat us differently, especially those who are uneducated. I get annoyed but I’ve accepted it as a fact that we will always be treated as if we are foreigners in this country” (Linda, F/MA/Fi).

Another candidly said: “I might be enjoying some benefits from living in Australia but I still feel that I don’t belong, specially since I’ve had so many experiences of racism. And so often I ask myself, why am I here?” (Gina, F/Y/Fi). While several interviewees expressed a desire to return to their countries of origin to live there permanently, they said this was more wishful thinking than a concrete plan for the foreseeable future. They recognised that despite the challenges they have to face as racialised subjects in Australia, they are able to enjoy the better life that they aspired for.

Not surprisingly, the sense of not belonging was strongest among interviewees who admitted to having difficulty communicating in English. For example, a woman who migrated from China in the 80s indicated that, “I like Australia and I’d like to talk to Australians so that we can have common ground. … But my cultural background and my inability to speak English restrict me from thinking that I’m Australian. I don’t feel I belong” (June, F/MA/Chn). This points to the importance of having a shared language in establishing a sense of connection with people of diverse backgrounds.
6.2.4 Neither here nor there

Several elderly participants, who migrated to Australia after being successfully petitioned by their children, expressed feelings of being in limbo since they felt they were neither Australian nor Chinese.

We don't know who we are because we can't go back to China. We don't belong in China because we have retired and the Chinese government doesn't have a good social security system for the elderly. Not like in Australia. So, it's not practical for us to go back to China. (Lily, F/O/Chn)

We can't go back to China because before we migrated to Australia, we resigned from our jobs. So, it would be difficult to go back especially now that the Chinese people have become very materialistic. If we can bring home a lot of good material stuff to give away, we will be looked up to. Otherwise, we will be looked down upon. The system here enables us to live comfortably, so we have to stay here. We have no choice. (George, M/O/Chn)

In Australia, we have lower economic status in comparison to our previous status in China. There, we were better off than most people we know so we got more respected in society. But here we have a lower social status. We get abused for not being able to speak English well. Some people don't treat us as Australians. So, we feel that we don't belong to any group. (Therese, F/O/Chn)

These elderly participants did not readily identify themselves as Chinese even though they had lived in China for most of their lives and had obvious difficulty communicating in English. But a closer reading of the quotes above suggests that the participants' physiological and safety needs influence their sense of belonging. Thus, it could be said that the difficulty they are experiencing in ascertaining where they fit in stems from the tension of not having their basic needs met.

6.2.5 Colour-coded labels

Four interviewees who were visibly dark skinned described themselves using colour-coded labels. As a prime example, Kamil (M/Y/SrL) spoke of how his skin colour affected his sense of identity, an account that speaks to the pain he suffered from being racialised.

Before, I didn't see myself as being different or as being Sri Lankan. I sort of thought of myself as the same as everyone else. But when I experienced racism from these white
people, I felt hurt. I couldn’t cope with it. I didn’t realise that it is actually negative and I just kept trying to be friends with all these people. But now, when I look in the mirror, I see myself as black. ... I actually never think I am Australian. In fact, more often than not, I don’t identify with the Australian culture. But I am Australian. I can’t deny it. I’ve spent so much time here; I feel it’s my home. (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

Kamil’s description of himself as black reveals a seemingly dichotomous perspective of his identity from both his own and others’ perspective. To himself, he is Australian but he realises that he must always contend with his ascribed identity as ‘not one of them’, as someone who because of his looks will always be regarded as not wholly Australian.

In the preceding section, I tried to assess the impact of racialisation on the sense of identity and sense of belonging of participants by asking them to reflect on whether their racialisation experiences influenced how they defined their identity and sense of belonging. Although it is impossible to conclude from the qualitative data obtained whether or not there is a direct link between their racialisation experiences and sense of identity and belonging, we can safely deduce that participants did not uniformly attach significance to their racism experiences or to the racial categories ascribed to them. In fact, many were hesitant to define their identity in terms of racial categories. Put simply, for these participants, race was not salient to their sense of identity. This implies that we cannot assume the salience and impact of race and racism-related experiences for all peoples of colour (Harrell, SP 2000).

An important caveat must be made in relation to the data on identity and belonging. I had originally intended to explore participants’ sense of identity and belonging based on Phoenix’s (2005) assertions regarding the links between racialisation and positioning. It was difficult to demonstrate clearly how participants formed and transformed their sense of identity in relation or in reaction to their racialisation experience. I would have wanted to explore in more detail whether participants detected changes in their sense of identity and belonging before and after they had experiences of racism. However, time constraints during the interviews and focus groups simply did not allow further exploration of this issue. This presents a challenge for future research.
6.3 Discussion

Harrell (2000) has suggested that direct experiences of racism impact on individuals' health and well-being both by increasing the overall stress burden and by constraining coping choices. This chapter reinforces this theory by providing evidence that the stress of being treated differently, problematised, excluded, devalued, and dehumanised produces immediate affective and physiological effects and long-term economic and psychosocial consequences.

This chapter confirmed the widely held belief that the impact of racialisation is harmful and oppressive. Participants’ initial reactions to racism stressors included feelings of shock, disbelief, distress, humiliation, and fear. These negative feelings build up and can lead to adverse effects on the racialised subjects’ physical and mental health, such as mental anguish, emotional scarring, lowered self-esteem and self-worth. Significantly, many participants spoke of how their Asian-ness marked them as inferior or lacking, making it “much, much harder” to find jobs commensurate to their skills and experience. The frustration of having to deal with the many barriers to their economic advancement has led one interviewee to remark, “It would have been better if I was White!” (Arshun, MMA/Ind)

Racialisation produces negative feelings whose negative consequences can manifest in psychosomatic symptoms or in real physiological effects. Racialisation results in depression, low self-esteem, and for some, may lead to anti-social behaviour. It deters economic advancement, undermines careers and makes it more difficult for Asian immigrants to settle quickly. Racialisation presents significant barriers to Asian Australians reaping the rewards of full participation in the labour force. Indeed, racialisation is an ‘inescapable reality’ (Tan 2004) for Asian Australians.

While it is generally accepted that racism has harmful effects, the difficulty of measuring the extent of this negative impact has cast doubts on accounts of victims of racism. Some may opine that the ‘evidences’ provided here and in other recent research reports (e.g. HREOC 2004a; Poynting & Noble 2004) of racism experienced by different minority groups are ‘purely anecdotal’ or ‘are too subjective’. However, as the data have revealed, the racialisation experience of Asian Australians cannot be ignored or dismissed as something that is just in their minds or a product of their ‘over-sensitivity’.
Figure 4 provides a model for understanding the multifarious impact of racialisation on the racialised subjects’ health and well-being, identity and sense of belonging. Contiguous spheres were used to represent these three dimensions, which are arguably the areas in which the cumulative effects of racialisation are most visible and felt most acutely. The first sphere shows that racialisation has immediate affective and physiological effects on health and well-being. Racialisation also can produce deleterious, long-term economic and socio-psychological impact, and affects individuals’ sense of identity and sense of belonging.

Essed and Goldberg (2002: 6) asserted that the intrinsic value of using racialisation as a lens to understand racist experiences lies in its ability to ‘suggest the ways in which racial conceptions and structural conditions order lives and delimit human possibilities’. Analysing stories of racism through the prism of racialisation has enabled us to better appreciate that ‘the impact of racism is much greater than the sum of individual incidents’ (Feagin 1991, cited in Harrel 2000: 47). It has enabled us to better comprehend that individuals are affected by racialisation in varying degrees. It points to the extent to which racialisation determines the life chances of racialised subjects.
Analysis of the multifarious effects of racialisation has highlighted the enormity, complexity and seriousness of the problem of racism. As was seen in this chapter, the oppressive impact of racialisation can be immediate and direct. But it is also insidious, or slowly and subtly harmful or destructive. This highlights the point that the struggle against racism needs to be addressed from all fronts and at different levels. In the next chapter, I examine individual-level responses to racialisation, an area of investigation that has been largely neglected by research.
Chapter 7
The Racialised’s Response to Racialisation

Chapters 5 and 6 provided evidence that Asian Australians are racialised, and that their racialisation experience has impacted on their health and well-being, and on their sense of identity and belonging. They are regarded as part of the outgroup, excluded and marginalised, treated as inferior and dehumanised. They suffer emotional, physiological, psychological, and economic consequences as a result of their racialisation.

How do ordinary Asian Australians respond to the challenges posed by their racialisation? What strategies have they used to deal with incidents of racism and the effects of being racialised? What factors contribute to people’s decision to act (or not act) against racism? These questions are addressed in this chapter.

As I asserted in the beginning of this thesis, it is vital to study how ordinary people understand racism and anti-racism and how they cope with being racialised. Weaving key concepts from my theoretical framework into the discussion, I present in this chapter participants’ responses to the challenges posed by racialisation. The concept of ‘everyday anti-racism’ (Lamont and Flemming 2005) is relevant in examining the overlapping discursive, cognitive and behavioural strategies and resources ordinary people draw upon to deal with the effects of being racialised. By constructing racialised subjects as being able to draw from their repertoire of responses, I emphasise that individuals respond not only to specific racist incidents but also to the multiple processes of racialisation. Everyday anti-racism is seen as personal strategies for resisting racism and racialisation.

Chapter 5 provided numerous examples of how racial boundaries result in the marginalisation, exclusion, inferiorisation, devaluation and dehumanisation of racialised subjects. However, as Lewis (2003) has suggested, people are constantly engaged in everyday race-making or in using socially constructed racial categories to draw boundaries between those who are similar or different, who are part of the ingroup or the outgroup, as well as who are superior or
subordinate. Racial boundaries are not fixed but are fluid, and are constantly negotiated, contested or bridged. Following this, I have framed each subsection in this chapter to reflect how racialised subjects use discourse and actions to negotiate, contest or bridge the boundaries imposed on them.

In order to advance our understanding of ways to combat racism, we need to turn the critical gaze from the racist perpetrator to the racialised subject and from analysing racist discourse to understanding the discourse of the racialised. In response to this, I used the discursive approach in Sections 7.1 of this chapter to analyse the argumentative patterns that participants used to explain and deflect racism and to justify the need to be treated as equal. In Sections 7.2 and 7.3, I used a boundary framework to analyse the cognitive and behavioural strategies reported by participants. From this perspective, I looked at racial categories as racial boundaries, racialisation as a form of ‘border setting’, and anti-racism as ‘border crossings’. Because racial boundaries are fluid and constantly negotiated (Lewis, AE 2003), racialised subjects have the option to cross or contain themselves within these boundaries. This framework acknowledges three main points. First, race is real and a salient concept in everyday interactions. Second, structures impact on how people are assigned into racial categories but racialised subjects also have agency to negotiate whether to cross or stay within the ascribed borders. Finally, in everyday experiences of being racialised, people respond differently with discourses and actions that reflect these boundary negotiations.

7.1 Discursive strategies

7.1.1 Making sense of racism

Data presented in Chapter 5 revealed that being the target in a racist incident led or jolted participants into an awareness of being racialised. Many participants reported being shocked and bewildered by the way their Asian-ness led them to be excluded, inferiorised, and dehumanised with many remarking that they “never thought it (racism) could happen to them”. In the face of such stressors or in such adverse situations, ordinary people instinctively draw on their stock knowledge or on folk theories (Scott, JC 1990) to try to make sense of their
experience. As Sanson et al. (1998: 166) have argued, ‘the more disturbing the issue, the greater the need for explanation’.

Thus, I explored how ordinary Asian Australians make sense of their racism experiences. How do they explain why some people are racist or why they have been targeted? What types of discourse do they use to explain the causes of racism? How do these constructions of racism affect their views on anti-racism?

Thematic analysis of interview and focus group data revealed patterns in participants’ discourse or argumentation. These patterns can be called ‘hidden transcripts’ (Scott, JC 1990) or counter-narratives that Asian Australians use to explain the causes of racialisation. These patterns are: (a) rationalising racialisation; (b) blaming it on the system; and (c) taking the blame for racism.

“They just can’t help it.” (Making excuses for the perpetrator). When interviewees cited skin colour or looks as the main reason for their unfair treatment, it was usually with conviction that they said: “That is racism!” However, their narratives reveal that more frequently, they struggled to define whether or not something was indeed racially motivated. Often, ‘racist moments’ (Dei et al. 2004: 76) are filled with ambiguity and so racialised subjects struggle to make sense of why they were targeted and why the racist perpetrator acted that way. Many interviewees suggested that perhaps, “They (the perpetrators) just can’t help it.” This discourse reveals a strong tendency to rationalise why they are racialised. Following this line of reasoning, many interviewees asserted that this is due to a combination of factors including: economic rivalry; human nature; the universality of racism; and a sense of history repeating itself.

Many interviewees cited economic rivalry as the main reason for the strong anti-Asian sentiments prevalent in Australian society. Majority commented that Anglo Australians feel threatened by Asians because “They say we Asians work too hard, … and this makes them feel scared because they're lazy” (Sue, FY/Chn). Many concurred with the idea that “basically, racism is driven by a fear of losing one’s job, a fear of being displaced. Personal preservation is the overriding factor in racism. He'll deal with you if he feels safe but not if he feels
threatened” (Delia, F/O/Fi). Another interviewee used the same line of reasoning to explain why he could not get a job.

Arshun (M/M/A/Ind): I’m a consistent performer in all areas. So why then do I get sidelined? It’s because I’m an Asian. There are no two ways about it.

Q: Is there anything else to it?
A: I’m a confident Asian and it doesn’t go very well. They perceive me as competition, very threatening. They don’t think of me as somebody who will do well and as someone who will make them money. They think, “This person is smart! What if he takes my job?” They think, “This person is good, he’s exceptional and I’m not!” This to them is very scary.

Arshun also makes a pointed observation that there are very few dark-skinned people in top positions. According to him, “It all boils down to power—the superiority of one over the other. The power imbalance is very much there.”

Many expressed frustration at right away being problematised as bad competition. However, a number of those interviewed expressed tolerance for racism when seen in the context of this perception of threat. As one summarised it succinctly, “Yes, they say in housing, shops, everything is now all Asian. All the top students in schools are Asians. So I can see why they are all angry” (Greg, M/O/Chn). On a similar tone of tolerance, one interviewee quoted a Filipino proverb that roughly translates as ‘he who has more wisdom should try to understand more’ implying that Asians should try to empathise with those who “don’t know any better” (Anggie, F/O/Fi).

Interviewees also explained that Anglo Australians regard Asians a threat because they perceive Asians as intelligent and successful academically. While this is a positive stereotype, this perception has become more problematic than beneficial for some. For example, Kamil (M/Y/SiL) found that getting a high distinction in a national science competition exacerbated the racialisation he was subjected to at school, “because after that, I was regarded as a bigger threat to them.” The importance placed on economic rivalry as an explanation for racism is related to the realistic group conflict theory (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong 1998; Jackson, JW 1993) which posits that perception of competition over resources leads to conflict and intergroup hostility.
Many interviewees also argued that racialisation occurs because it is natural or part of human nature—people prefer their own ingroups and tend to look less favourably on those belonging to the outgroup. This explanation is supported by social identity theorists who have established that people have a fundamental need to feel positively about themselves, and that people are automatically positively biased towards their ingroup (Operario & Fiske 1998). Consistent with this view, interviewees reasoned that Anglo Australians see Asians as phenotypically and culturally different. Because of this, Asians are categorised as non-White and are deemed not worthy of being considered part of the dominant ingroup. Nelia (F/MA/Fil) asserted that this is why she thought there was no point in reporting the racist behaviour of her supervisor. “They’re all Whites and Whites will side with Whites no matter what anyway”, she said.

Interviewees reasoned further that a fear of the unknown drives people to stay within the comfort of their ingroup—a natural tendency in all groups of people. Participants acknowledged that even Asians prefer to be amongst fellow Asians. They admitted that most of the time they stuck to their own ethnic groups in social gatherings and conversed in their own language even in the company of those who could not understand. Some interviewees saw this as being equally rude or impolite and at the extreme, as a form of discrimination (Don, M/O/Chn).

Corollary to the belief that it is natural to prefer one’s ingroup, many interviewees argued that racism happens not only in Australia but in many parts of the globe as well (e.g. Indira, F/MA/SrL). Many also argued that “there’s good and bad people everywhere” (Cynthia, FYA/Fil). This is consistent with the findings of Lamont et al. (2002) who showed that North African immigrants use the same line of reasoning to explain and rebut racism. But many interviewees were quick to point out that those who openly express racist sentiments or discriminate overtly are in the minority. According to Mandy (M/MA/Ind), “It’s not just in Australia. In every part of the world, you have people like this but they don’t make up the majority. They don’t constitute this country; we constitute this country.”

Interviewees also cited instances of discrimination within their own ethnic groups as support to the claim that racism is universal. “Everyone has a potential to be racist. Even Filipinos are racists. When I was young I was racist against Black Americans because I used to think that we are superior to them” (Ann, F/MA/Fil). Other participants admitted to having prejudiced
attitudes towards other Asian groups. Some also told stories of being treated badly by fellow Asians. This finding lends support to the notion of ‘intraethnic othering’ that Pyke and Dang (2003:152) used to describe the specific othering processes that occur among co-ethnics in subordinated groups.

Interviewees saw racialisation as a continuing occurrence especially in multicultural countries like Australia. Citing the clichéd expression, “history just repeats itself” (Edith, F/MA/Fil), interviewees claimed that groups that are oppressed today could become the oppressors of tomorrow. Interviewees gave as example how British born Australians discriminated before against fellow White but non-British immigrants (e.g. Italians, Greeks, etc.). They claimed that the latter are now the ones also discriminating against Asians. Some interviewees also suggested that Asians also discriminate against newer groups of immigrants such as those coming from Arabic or African countries. According to Jackson (MMA/KG), “It seems like we are constantly playing musical chairs as to whose turn it is to cop it.”

Based on the explanations for racism discussed so far, it can be said that some participants showed a tendency to rationalise or tolerate racism. By saying that racism cannot be avoided because it is part of human nature, and it happens everywhere and all the time, participants seem to display a passive acceptance of the inevitability of racialisation.

Another set of explanations for racism offered by interviewees revolves around the hypothesis that racist perpetrators “don’t know any better” because they are ignorant or uneducated and have limited or no exposure at all to other cultures. According to a key informant, “Ignorance is the grease which oils prejudice” (Judy, F/O/Fil). Similarly but with a bit of sarcasm, Anggie (F/O/Fil) remarked, “These people are not exposed. They have not even gone out of Australia. They’ve only gone out to the beach, into the shallow waters of the Pacific.” These statements are consistent with the literature on racism (e.g. Jonas 2002) which often cite ignorance as a primary cause for racist behaviour. For instance, Morris and Heaven (2001) investigated possible explanations for the strong anti-Asian sentiments in Australia by conducting a survey on attitudes and behavioural intent towards Vietnamese refugees. They found that people who have had less formal education tend to have more prejudiced attitudes and to behave in a more racist way.
Aside from ignorance, interviewees attributed racism to the personal imperfections or weakness of character of the racist perpetrator. For example, one interviewee (Bea, F/Y/Sng) did not feel the need to report the incident when teenagers threw a water bomb at her because she saw it more as a juvenile prank. Some proposed that perhaps, the racist perpetrator “was not in a good mood”, or “was just being rude”, or “doesn’t know what is right or wrong”, or “doesn’t know the difference between an insult and a joke”. But other interviewees described Anglo Australians in more negative terms (e.g. “lazy”, “uncouth” or “paranoid”), revealing a tendency to also generalise or stereotype.

In summary, participants made excuses for the perpetrator by explaining that their racist behaviour was due to economic rivalry, human nature, the universality of racism, and a sense of history repeating itself.

“But what can you/we do?” (Blaming it on the system). Participants’ discourse also revealed a strong perception that the struggle against racism is like ‘swimming against the tide’. Interviewees reasoned that racism is part of Australian history and that it is so ingrained in the system so much so that sometimes “some people do not know they are doing something bad or wrong” (Sue, F/Y/Chn; Carmen, F/MA/Chn). For instance, Tommy (M/MA/Chn) said people in the gay community who put out personal ads that explicitly exclude Asians sometimes do not realise that they are being racist. “To them saying that they are not interested in dating Asian men is the same as saying that they do not like to date people who are fat or older. To them, this practice is seen as just an expression of personal preference” (Tommy, M/MA/Chn). Tommy explained that the use of this kind of language is so commonplace that it has become acceptable in the gay community.

Others pointed to a general lack of political awareness and insensitivity to racial issues. Judy (F/O/Fil) said that whenever she raises the issue of racism, people prefer not to talk about it. Some have said to her, “It’s all in the past, dear. Why do you still want to bring these things up? You’re just being a trouble maker!” Edith (F/MA/Fil) added that the problem is difficult to solve because “Australia does not recognise its racist, genocidal, violent history”. Likewise, another participant reasoned that:

In Australia, the whole language of racism/anti-racism has been mainly about Aboriginal issues. It’s all narrowed down or limited to that. So, in a way, most Australians, whether
they are Whites or non-Whites, without realising it are not very used to talking about racism. They are not politicised. (Tommy, M/MA/Chn)

Only a few interviewees recognised the role of institutions (e.g. government policy, media) in perpetuating power differences between racial groups. The White Australia Policy was mentioned frequently as the source of prejudiced attitudes towards Asians. This policy was also commonly cited as the reason why older Anglo Australians tend to be more racist. One interviewee tried to explain why she was verbally abused: “He was really old. Probably he was still thinking that Australia is only for the White people. ... Maybe he’s a loner. He’s probably used to dealing with his own tribe only” (Anggie, F/O/Fil). Interviewees frequently commented that young people tend to be more accepting of differences because they were brought up in a multicultural environment, unlike the older Anglo Australians. Many interviewees believed that racism will be diminished when ‘a changing of the guards’ happens in Australian society as the older generations pass away.

But a number of interviewees commented that racism would be difficult to eradicate because discriminatory values of older Australians can be passed on to the next generations. These interviewees attributed the racist behaviour of young people to parents showing bad examples and not inculcating good values in their children.

Anybody can get a scholastic degree, but education is an all-round process. It starts with your upbringing. It starts with your tolerance levels. I think education begins at home. And I've been taught at home to help others, to try to be concerned about your neighbours. Even if you don't like them, stay clear but if they are in need, help because it's the good thing to do. ... Unfortunately living as a society is not taught here. We are just taught how we can make it for ourselves. There's a little selfishness that comes from that attitude of being concerned only with oneself. They want everything to have something in it for them. But life doesn't work like that. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

Many were also quick to cite racism as the result of political instigations, especially from Pauline Hanson.

Before there was racism but it was more or less simmering down. But with Hanson, she put more fuel into the fire. Hanson really escalated racism. She made it acceptable to be racist especially with her open comments that the media readily picked up. Her comments often made it to the headlines! And people thought that her ideas were right. That's why even at the office people thought it was alright to be racist. (Linda, F/MA/Fil)
Others cited a lack of political will to address the issue of racism as the primary reason why racism continues despite claims that Australia is a multicultural society.

There's always a cover-up. They easily manage to get around the issue. It's the law of the land. … We have a non-tolerant government. They will never fix it. They are not tolerant, they are not accepting. In reading that about them, it's as if they're saying, “We'd like things on our terms. If you like it, stay. If you don't like it, leave. We didn't ask you to come here. You came here on your own.” They don't think of it as: “We [Asian immigrants] have chosen Australia over other countries.” No. They are not tolerant; they are a non-tolerant government. What do you expect when the head of state is non-tolerant? Obviously, your subjects will follow the teachings he imparts. So, it comes from the top. I am not saying John Howard is racist but he's not tolerant. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

Comments such as these suggest that some interviewees are able to acknowledge the structural causes of racialisation. But majority had a limited analysis of the causes of racism. There was a stronger tendency to blame it on the individual rather than on social and political structures.

I think the problem was people were just focusing on her [Pauline Hanson] as an individual and it's a bit like, get rid of her as an individual but the essence or the philosophy or the racism fascist ideology is still there. That's what you've got to deal with, not just the individual. (Judy, F/O/Fil)

Only a few interviewees commented on media's role in creating negative images of Asians. Also, very few interviewees explicitly explained racism as resulting from power imbalance, which is a common explanation for racism used in academe.

“Maybe it's my/our fault.” (Taking the blame for racism). The explanations for racialisation that have been presented thus far point the finger at the racist perpetrator. In contrast, a number of interviewees took the blame for their racism, suggesting that maybe they were just over-reacting or were being over-sensitive. Some said they might have allowed the racism incident to happen. Others also cited examples of Asians behaving inappropriately or breaking the law to explain why Asians are targeted.

Racist discourses often suggest to racialised subjects that, ‘that's all in your mind’ or ‘it's just your imagination’ (Karumanchery 2003). No wonder then interviewees questioned themselves on whether they were just being over-sensitive. According to Gina (F/Y/Fil), “I think we have become over-sensitive because we already have in our minds that we are different from them.
That’s why sometimes we over-react.” Some also recounted how their racialisation experience made them start to doubt if there was something wrong with them. For example, Cynthia (F/Y/Fil) who was violently abused by her Anglo Australian partner talked of her internal struggle: “You know what? I thought this is crazy! What’s going on? Am I crazy? Or is he crazy? Was I doing the right thing? Or was he right? Did I do something wrong? What did I do?” This tendency to doubt oneself is not surprising since ‘Human beings…whose daily experience tells them that almost nowhere in society are they respected and granted the ordinary dignity and courtesy accorded to others will, as a matter of course, begin to doubt their own worth’ (K. Clark cited in Delgado 1995b: 160). Cynthia, who at the time of the interview was still suffering from her trauma, said just recounting her experience left her feeling “full of shame” and “without any dignity left”.

Some interviewees also blamed themselves for allowing racism to happen or for giving people the opportunity to put them down. For example, Gina (F/Y/Fil) in explaining why her Australian partner abused her said, “I think it’s because when I got married to him I spoiled him with a lot of attention.” But those who suffered racism as youngsters said they did not realise that name-calling and ‘joking around’ at school can be racially motivated and should therefore not be tolerated.

The thing is I didn’t really know I was getting racist comments. I didn’t really understand. Sometimes, I would just go home and cry. It was only recently [several years after the racist incidents happened] when I thought about it, that it dawned on me that I was being alienated. I was getting racism! But back then, I didn’t realise what was going on. A mere kid couldn’t fathom all of that! (Kamil, M/Y/SrL)

Others said, “If you allow yourself to be trampled upon, they will abuse you” (Anthony, M/M/A/Fil; Armie, F/I/A/Fil; Edwin, M/O/Fil). Many explained that when they knew their rights, they became more assertive and did not allow the racism to continue.

Many interviewees also commented that sometimes Asians are to blame for being treated rudely or being stereotyped in a negative way. These interviewees cited offensive practices such as spitting and talking loudly in public places, or not obeying traffic and sanitation rules, as examples of why Asians are sometimes looked down upon. According to Carmen (F/O/Chn), “It is hard to blame the Australians when they discriminate us because we Asians also break the law.” Moreover, some interviewees spoke very negatively of fellow Asians with statements
(e.g. citing “those” Asian gangs in Cabramatta, “those” mail-order-brides) that give a sense that these interviewees were trying to distance themselves from “those undesirable Asians”. Some also blamed the tendency of Asians to look at anything associated with the Western culture as something always better (Delia, F/O/F), a belief that then reinforces feelings of being subordinate or inferior to Whites.

The explanations cited so far reveal a strong tendency for participants to put the blame for racism on individuals and groups. Such ‘a person centred analysis’ has also been the approach taken in mainstream anti-racism efforts (Burnett 2001). However, we must exercise caution against this way of thinking. By blaming racism on the personal imperfections of the racist person, we may be unconsciously exonerating the perpetrator (Reisigl & Wodak 2001). By blaming it on one’s self, racialised subjects may be implicating themselves and may be accused of being complicit in their racialisation. Following Burnett (2001:106), I argue that we should also ‘take into account the influence of cultural and institutional structures in perpetuating racism’.

Having analysed how Asian Australians interpret their racism experiences, I now examine how participants use discourse to establish their universal equality and to challenge mainstream perceptions about Asian Australians.

7.1.2 Establishing universal equality

The first step in dealing with racism is to recognise that there are multiple perspectives on what anti-racism is all about or on why racism must be resisted. Lamont et al. (2002) have suggested that individuals usually rely on their own ‘cultural tool-kits’ or ‘repertoire of arguments’ to counter racism. Following Scott (1990), they argued that as part of the process of resistance, ordinary people develop de facto this repertoire of arguments in the process of having to cope daily with racism. These repertoires of arguments consist of folk theories and rhetorical devices to demonstrate to themselves and others that racism is wrong and should therefore be resisted. Using this as framework, I discuss in this section the types of arguments participants used to justify why racism must be countered or why they should resist their continuing racialisation.
Majority of the participants justified the need to resist racialisation because of a strong belief in universal equality or the belief that all human beings should be treated as equal because they have a common physiology, similar needs, and a common destiny. Many participants asserted that, “We’re all basically equal because we’re all human beings. ... They (the Whites) are not God! So why do they think they’re superior to us?” (Linda, F/MA/Fil). Similarly, Armie (F/MA/Fil) asserted that, “We’re all creations of God. We were all created equal.” In addition to stressing that all of humans are mortals, Linda argued, “Whatever race or colour we have, we have the same basic human needs. We all have to survive.” Armie (F/MA/Fil) shared this belief: “We breath the same air. We all have to eat. We all have to work. Some people might be born with a golden spoon. But most of us still have to work. If we don’t work, we can’t survive.” Another pointed out that all human beings will eventually die and when that happens, “You can’t tell anymore who was white, brown or black. We’ll all turn to dust anyway” (Anggie, F/O/Fil). These statements are aligned with the universalistic approach to anti-racism where racism is countered using the argument that everyone is equally part of humanity and should thus be accorded the same rights and opportunities (Bonnett 2000: 19).

Other participants stressed that because of this universal equality everyone should be treated with respect. One participant tried to emphasise this to Anglo Australian husbands who abuse their Filipino wives.

I ask them, “Why did you marry her?” And they would say, “Because she is going to be a good wife; she will be loyal to me; she will serve me and all that.” I say to these people, “You are wrong to treat her like that. You have no right to marry a Filipina and treat her like a slave. We are all human beings regardless of where we came from.” (Cora, F/O/Fil)

Several participants also argued that everyone has an ability to rise up. Therefore, everyone should be given equal chances and be rewarded commensurate to the effort they put in. For instance, Anthony (M/MA/Fil) said his Anglo Australian co-workers supported him when he refused to do work for which he did not get paid for.

When I’m team leader and the supervisor is not around, there’s more production, because there’s more harmony. There’s no tension. We just work together. ... We workers tend to stick together versus those who are in higher levels. They [fellow workers] know how hard I work, and how good my skills are. They understand my gripes
against management because they are workers themselves. They know that I deserve to get a higher pay. (Anthony, M/M/A/Fil)

Don (M/O/Chn) used the same line of reasoning in arguing for equal chance to participate in the dominant culture. He said his community organisation had been trying hard to be recognised as being equally competent in providing aged care services to all Australians, regardless of race and colour. But because most of the members and officers in their organisation were of Chinese descent, they were stereotyped as being capable only of servicing the needs of fellow Chinese. Don added that this stereotyping has made it difficult for them to be recognised as a mainstream provider.

Q: How long have you been trying to change the system so that your organisation can also be accepted like any other mainstream provider?

Don: We have been doing it for the last three years. I have to say that we are making some progress but it is very, very slow and there is a lot of resistance, not only among the Anglo Australians but also within our own community. They say, “You have not even fully served the needs of your own (Chinese) community. So, why are you so keen to serve other people?”

When they advertised their services as open to all Australians (regardless of race), Don said they were not taken seriously.

Don: Even those in government circles are surprised. They ask us, “Why are you so keen to serve everybody else. Why?”

Q: And how do you respond to that question?

Don: I say, “Anglicare is an Australian organisation, but so are we. We are registered under the Australian law. They are Australian. We’re Australian too. So why should you brand us, as Chinese and they, as Australian, just because they’re Anglo Saxon?”

Q: And so, how do they react to that?

Don: They get stunned. They can't answer. This is something that I think they may not have thought of before. Then they realise, I've got a point. They know I am right. But they still have reservations when we ask them to accept this as a fact and to treat us equally. We have been trying to assert this point, “Why should we only serve Chinese Australians? We should be able to serve anyone. If we have the expertise, the capability and the infrastructure, if we recognise ourselves as an Australian entity, we should serve everyone ... just like mainstream service providers. Yes, we can, and we want to. But the problem is that deep-seated attitudes are prohibiting us from serving others. It is fundamentally is about touching the power base. If given a chance, we can do well. We can even overtake the mainstream providers or organisations. They are probably afraid of having to face the challenge that we might pose.
Don’s argument runs parallel to what Lamont and Aksartova (2002: 1) found in their study of ‘ordinary cosmopolitanism’ which they defined as ‘the strategies used by ordinary people to bridge boundaries with people who are different from them’. They found that Black and White American workers argue that people of all races are equal because all have a capacity to earn money (Lamont & Aksartova 2002:4).

Many participants also cited their rights as citizens to justify why they should be treated as equal before the law. One lady who was verbally abused for not speaking in English inside a train rebuked her aggressor by emphasising that she can do whatever she pleases because she is as Australian as any other. Highlighting the point that she is a taxpayer, she added, “I am probably paying for your upkeep, you bludger” (Mina, F/MA/Fil).

Interviewees stressed that even though Anglo Australians regard Asians as non Australians because of their looks and accent, they are “in fact Australian citizens” and as such, they should be given equal access to public resources and should be provided the same level of service. Many questioned why Anglo Australians seem to get better service in restaurants, government departments, and public transport, while Asian Australians are ignored, treated rudely, or denied access to public facilities. In such cases, interviewees argued that they have the same rights as Anglo Australians with many reporting that when they became more knowledgeable about these rights, they did not hesitate anymore to contest the different treatment or discrimination that they experienced.

Two key informants explained that they have volunteered to fight for the rights of Filipino women who became victims of domestic violence because of an unspoken moral responsibility to help those who are oppressed.

In an ideal world, if we are to live ethically, we should always have at the back of our minds this moral obligation that we should do our part as members of this society. I’m not going to say that racism is okay just because no one is actually acting on it. For me, I would rather be able to do something about it even on my own personal level. (Edith, F/MA/Fil)

Many times, we are asked, “What do you do it for? Are you paid? Do you do it for money or for glory?” And I say, “It’s for women; it’s for our safety. One woman in danger is me in danger. That’s what it is all about.” (Judy, F/O/Fil)
The explanations for racism offered by participants reveal paradoxes and multiple meanings inherent in the way they interpret their experience of being racialised. Asian Australians justify the need to assert their right to be treated as equal by emphasising sameness or universal human-ness. These findings are consistent with Lamont et al.'s (2002) study of how blue-collar North African immigrants respond to racism in France. Their findings reveal that North African immigrants also ‘refute racism by culling evidence of universal equality from their daily lives, pointing to traits shared by all human beings, such as common morality, human needs, biology and destiny’ (Lamont et al. 2002: 393).

7.1.3 Challenging mainstream discourse

In this section, I explore the neglected question of how ordinary people use discourse to deflect racism and to challenge stereotypes about Asian Australians perpetuated in mainstream discourse. Some of the ways by which individuals cope with racialisation stressors are to reinterpret the racist situation and to use humour.

“It’s their loss, not mine!” (Reinterpretation of events). This strategy includes efforts on the part of the racialised subject to look at the brighter side of the racist situation. According to Mellor (2004a: 62), individuals reinterpret a racist event in order to ‘change the balance of psychological power, by, for example, finding advantage rather than disadvantage in a situation, or reaffirming their senses of self to maintain equality or even superiority over the perpetrators’. Participants who experienced discrimination in finding jobs and getting promotions commonly used this strategy. For example, Edwin (M/O/Fil) found that despite his extensive overseas managerial experience, he always lost out to younger, Anglo Australian job applicants.

Initially I felt very frustrated because in the Philippines I had a lot of respect from people. Here I found myself in a different environment dominated by White people who didn't really know me. I felt so frustrated but eventually, I changed my attitude. I said to myself, “It's not my loss, it's their loss.” (Edwin, M/O/Fil)

Edwin tried to cope with this frustration by reaffirming his self-worth. He said, “I have so much to share and I could make their company grow and they did not want to take advantage of it. They failed to see how much I could contribute to the company based on my experience.”

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Interestingly, Edwin asserted, “I decided I can live without them.” This statement signals a clear assertion of his right to self-determination. In effect, he was declaring that despite the obstacles he faced, he still has power over his own life.

A common strategy adopted by many participants who experienced being patronised or having their qualifications belittled was to assert that they were superior or better than the racist perpetrator. Many participants tried to cope by asserting their superiority over those whom they perceive as racist, by cognitively reinterpretting the racist event.

When they tell me I'm fascinating, I believe them. But I'm disappointed all the time because I still can't get a job. But I don't let that deter me. Because it makes me realise how bad and shallow they are. I realise the problem is not me. And at least it makes me feel better that I know how it is. At least I am not fooled by it. And I say to myself, I'm getting wiser by the day. I am more educated and so I will not stoop down to their level. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

In another case, Armie (F/MA/Fil) said she felt “so small” because she was told that Anglo Australians are better than Asians because they are White. Addressing directly the one who made the racist remark, she said:

The only difference between us is our skin colour. But you Whites are not special because you still have to go out in the sun to get a tan. Whereas we, with our brown skin, we have just the right colour. Maybe you are white, we are brown. But when it comes to brains, maybe some of us are much better than you. I'm not discriminating but a lot of White people I know can speak English but can't write and don't know how to spell! (Armie, F/MA/Fil)

Interestingly, Armie appeared conscious about not falling into the trap of being equally racist by using a lot of ‘maybe’s’ to soften her rebuttal. Like many other participants, she said “I’m not discriminating but...” in an effort to avoid being accused of reverse racism. This demonstrates that racialised subjects also use ‘prolepsis’ (a strategy of defending oneself in advance) (Phoenix 2005: 113) to disavow racism.

The examples cited show how racialised subjects positively reinterpret their experience by looking for faults in the racist perpetrator. This works as a coping strategy in that by attributing weakness of character to the perpetrator, racialised subjects are able to ‘to take the sting out of the racist experience’ by specifically reversing the situation and ‘emphatically evaluating the
perpetrator to have moral deficits’ (Mellor 2004a: 60). In so doing, they are able to reinforce their self-concept or self-worth.

“The joke is on you.” (Table-turning). Many participants told of being subjected to racist jokes. But they also reported turning the tables on their racist perpetrators by rebutting racist remarks with sarcasm and satirical humour. For example, several participants deflected racist remarks by referring to negative stereotypes about Anglo Australians. For instance, Arthur (M/O/Fil) narrated how he was accosted at a train station by two teenage Anglo Australians and then asked if he came to Australia “by boat”. Arthur told them he came here “by plane not by boat”, adding further that he came “with a diploma in my hand, not a chain or a leash around my neck”. According to Arthur, he wanted to press the point that Anglo Australians are descendants of convicts and therefore they are the ones who came on ships with chains around their necks. In a similar case, Edwin (M/O/Fil) alluded to the convict descendants of Anglo Australians to rebut a racist comment. He recounted how he wanted to ensure his family’s security so he went to a hardware store to buy several new locks for the house he was renting.

The owner of the hardware store asked why I wanted so many locks. I said I want to protect myself just in case there are some criminal minds that might want to break into the house. Then this White guy who just happened to be in the store with me at that time butted in and said, “There are no criminal minds in Australia. The problem with Australia is that there are too many Asian migrants.” In response to that unsolicited comment, I told him, “Yes there were no criminal minds in Australia until members of the first fleet came here.” I even added, “Excuse me but the wrinkles on your face show that you are probably one of them!” He looked at me indignantly and left. (Edwin, M/O/Fil)

Edwin’s narrative is particularly telling in that, he makes the expressed point of saying, “If you kick me, I kick back”. This implies that this Asian Australian is not the type of person who will go without a fight.

Similarly, another participant told of how he used sarcasm to rebut the patronising comment of his interviewer when he applied for a job.

My English is impeccable. But do you know an interviewer once told me that I wouldn’t get a job in the industry because of my Indian accent? In response, I asked him, “Is there something about my accent that you didn’t understand? Did you understand all the words that were coming out of my mouth?” He didn’t reply but said instead, “Where did
you learn your English anyway?” And of course, me being me, I said, “On the Qantas flight on the way to Australia.” You have to have a sense of humour—I’m Australian! And he didn’t like that; he didn’t like that at all!

What is significant in these two narratives was the way both Edwin and Arshun used humour to mock their oppressor. Both used their wit to demonstrate that they were not intimidated by the racist remarks. Both asserted that in the end, they were the ones who had control of the racist situation since they were able to effectively silence their oppressor.

Several interviewees also tried to make light of their racism experiences by injecting humour in the stories they told. Others like Linda (F/MA/Fil) used humour in a self-deprecating way such as when she just pretended to be hard of hearing to make her client stop verbally abusing her. Other participants also offered humorous explanations for racism when faced with ambiguity over whether an incident was indeed racially motivated. This was quite obvious in the focus group I conducted with a group of elderly Filipinos. When asked about what they thought could be explanations for people’s racist behaviours towards them, some offered humorous interpretations of racist incidents, possibly as a way of making light of an otherwise emotionally-charged experience. For instance, participants made jokes about how misunderstandings occur between Filipinos and Australians because of the differences in the use of idiomatic expressions, slang words, and pronunciations, despite both groups speaking English.

Many researchers have found the use of humour as a coping mechanism to be positively correlated with health and well-being.

Humor has the ability to act as a tool through which racialised bodies can mock racial stereotypes, to offer an alternative articulation of race, and to act as a form of anti-racist speech. ... Humour functions by exploiting and inverting the familiar, or by tapping into that which is normally repressed. (Alturi 2002: 144)

The use of jokes and sarcastic remarks may also be considered part of what Scott (1990) calls the ‘hidden transcripts’ or what oppressed people use to resist domination. In a sense, joking enables the racialised subjects to voice out their feelings and opinions without fearing the ramifications of their statements. This type of discourse where Asian Australians categorise Anglo Australians in a negative way may reflect an attempt ‘to change the balance of
psychological power’ (Mellor 2004a: 62) or indicate a desire to turn the critical gaze towards their oppressor. This type of discourse coming from the racialised can be interpreted as a form of deflecting racism, in that stereotypes and generalisations about the majority or dominant group are used to explain why some of them discriminate. In the context of Scott’s (1990) notion of hidden transcripts as ‘weapons of the weak’, I see this as a way of fighting back, rather than just taking the sting out of the racism experience. This can also be construed as evidence that hidden narratives or the stories that racialised subjects share among themselves about their oppressors influence the way they perceive the behaviour and characteristics of the dominant group.

7.2 Tactical responses

Many participants reported that they did not say or do anything in the face of racism. This non-response or ‘inaction’ may appear to be a manifestation of a resignation to fate or passive acceptance of racism. However, a deeper analysis of the reasons why participants chose not to respond reveals that this inaction is more of what I call, ‘tactical responses’ to the multiple processes of racialisation. As Scott (1990) asserted in his general theory of discourse and power relations, ‘the powerless are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful’ and ‘powerless groups have a self-interest in conspiring to reinforce hegemonic appearances’ (1990: p. xii). Following this, I argue that Asian Australians cope with being racialised by ‘posing and pausing’, especially in situations where they feel powerless to do anything else. In the face of racism stressors, racialised subjects adopt a strategic pose as they pause to consider their options or best course of action. Racialised subjects may use these ‘tactical responses’ or cognitive strategies to deal with racism or to negotiate the boundaries imposed by their racialisation. These cognitive strategies include: (a) deflecting racism; (b) displaying forbearance; or (c) attempting to be strong or to excel.

7.2.1 Deflecting racism

It is important to note that not everyone that I approached as potential participants had a racism story to tell. This kind of response may be interpreted in three ways. First, these people may have been lucky to have not experienced racism at all or they were not conscious of
racism since this is often subtle and covert. Second, they may not have wanted to participate in my study for personal reasons. A few said they do not want to talk about their racism experiences because they did not want to relive the trauma, it was useless talking about it anyway, and they have already “moved on”. Such was the case of one Filipina who did not want to be interviewed because she feared talking about her experience might cause trouble between her and her Anglo Australian husband. Off the record, she said because her husband’s family disapproved of her very strongly, she suffered a lot during the first years of their marriage especially in the hands of her “meddling mother-in-law”. But she said she asserted her rights and somehow won the respect of her in-laws. Thus, she did not want to “rake up the ashes by talking about her experiences again because, “Now they treat me like God already”. A third and more plausible reason is that some people had no stories to tell because they tried to deflect their experiences of racism. This third reason offers valuable insights into why not many people openly resist being racialised.

Ignoring the coloured lines. A number of participants admitted to not having talked to anyone at all about their racialisation experiences. Many considered their experiences of subtle racism as being not ‘serious’ enough to warrant a reaction or counter action. Many downplayed their racism experiences saying that they did not take these things too seriously, many times treating the racist incidents as just joking around or as stupid acts “because I just can’t be bothered” (Bea, FYISng).

When people make fun of me, I say to them, “I speak better English than you. I can spell more words than you.” But as I said, it doesn’t bother me. When someone makes fun of you because you lack something, that’s fine. But when someone makes fun of you because they’re so ignorant to think that you don’t have it, I don’t worry about it. It’s irrelevant. (Mandy, MMMAInd)

A common reaction was to deliberately ignore the racist incident with the justification that reacting to “such stupidity” or “mis guided behaviour” was “stooping down to their level”.

My attitude was, why would I stoop down to their level? I am more intelligent than they are. I know who I am. I know where I came from. I know my capabilities. Maybe some might say I am being too confident but there’s no point in reacting to them. They are unreasonable and do not know what they’re talking about. (Delia, FMMAFil)
In other cases, participants ignored the racist attack and tried to react in a rational manner, putting aside their feelings because they needed to do their jobs or they had to be “mature or professional about it” (Anggie, F/O/Fil). This is similar to what Mellor (2004a: 63) termed as ‘controlled responses’ or a conscious decision to not react overtly to a perceived racial attack.

Other participants indicated that they deal with racism by “not bothering too much about it”.

They (Anglo Australians) still got that fear of Indians and all other Asians for that matter. Why? I don’t know. But I know that they’ve got that attitude of fear. I can sense it but I’ve learned to deal with it. What I do is I don’t bother too much about it. I don’t have to prove myself to them. I don’t have to explain or justify anything that I do. I just try to deal with life as objectively as I can. (Mandy, M/MA/Ind)

To illustrate his point, Mandy talked about an incident on the beach where he and his friends were verbally abused.

Somebody suddenly shouted at us while we were walking. We don’t even know what his ethnicity was. He said something stupid about cricket that showed how ignorant he was because he assumed we were Pakistanis. [On that day, there was a cricket game between Australians and Pakistanis.] But the thing is, we were oblivious to him and to the fact that he was saying something to us because we don’t see ourselves as different. (Mandy, M/MA/Ind)

This narrative suggests that Mandy tried to ignore the coloured lines that divide racial groups. By not judging people using race signifiers (e.g. skin colour and looks), Mandy was able to deal with racism, which to him was largely an ‘invisible’ problem. However, it is also possible that some may have become too accustomed to racism that they become de-sensitised to it or now feel blasé about it.

I was asking my boss the other day if there is any racism still happening around here. I told him I don’t see anything happening and he looked towards me with surprise. He couldn’t believe that I don’t see any racism going on. Maybe I am now numbed that I just don’t notice it anymore. (Ann, F/MA/Fil)

Some participants said they tried to avoid using ‘race-coloured lenses’ in interpreting people’s actions because there are other factors (such as gender, personality, clique system, class) to consider. They cautioned against always seeing racism in every situation and against being equally racist.

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I take race out of the equation when I am making decisions and when I’m working with staff. I try to show through my dealings that it doesn’t matter who that person or what that person is. I try to stick to the facts and to be objective when I make a decision. That’s how you get a person to realise that’s what should be done. You teach them these values and it works. It takes a while but it’s the only way. Otherwise, it’s all talk and there’s no real demonstration of how you can do it. (Mandy, M/MA/Ind)

This colour-blind approach was commonly adopted by young participants (e.g. Charisse, F/Y/Chn; Paul, M/Y/Chn) who stressed the importance of thinking and acting ‘Australian’. They however stressed that they did this quite naturally since they are not conscious of their ethnicity or ancestry, having lived in Australia for most of their lives.

**Passing as white.** Skin colour or markers of Asian-ness can now be hidden or altered by cosmetic products that enable those who wish to minimise the visibility of their different ancestry to pass as Australian. This strategy was used, albeit unconsciously by a number of interviewees who visibly altered how they looked (e.g. by making their hair colour significantly lighter, or making their eyes look wider, etc.). However, only a handful of participants admitted to using this strategy to minimise being identified as Asian.

This is similar to the notion of ‘passing’ (cited in Mellor, 2004a: 63) where individuals try to deny their identity to prevent being excluded or marginalised or to be accepted as part of the ingroup. One participant tried to explain how this works: “Sometimes when you have to avoid the nasty racism that you know is going to come your way, you play the little game of passing. And for a moment, you'll find a place where you can escape, to work out what happened” (Judy, F/O/Fil). In the same light, Karumanchery (2003) explains the benefits of this ‘tactical response’ by saying that, ‘the oppressed who “go along to get along”, do so because they either consciously or subconsciously feel that identification with the dominant group will, in turn, protect them from further alienation and rejection’ (Karumanchery 2003: 194).

Part of what I call ‘tactical responses’ to being racialised is to deflect racism by trying to ignore the coloured lines that divide. Individuals try to contest the limits imposed on them as racialised subjects by putting race out of the equation. In such cases, the individual tries to exercise control over the racist situation. This type of cognitive response is positive in the sense that individuals channel their energy towards controlling negative emotions and focusing on similarities instead of differences between racial groups. In effect, there is a conscious
effort to try to ‘erase’ in their mind the lines that divide. It is a survival strategy in that people may have a sense that the problem of racism is too much to handle so they try to minimise its potential impact. In a sense, they are saying they might not be able to change the situation, or prevent it from happening again but they can lessen its impact by controlling their emotional and cognitive response to it. This finding is supported by the literature on coping which have established that people minimise personal discrimination so that they can protect their self-esteem and maintain a sense of personal control over their life (Ruggiero & Taylor 1997). As Pierce (1995 cited in Harrell, 2000: 46) noted, ‘most microaggressions have to be allowed to pass, to protect one’s time, energy, sanity or bodily integrity’. Likewise, ‘some degree of denial may help to maintain a belief in a “just world” and the fairness of others, avoid feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability, and conserve psychic and emotional energy’ (Harrell, SP 2000: 45).

7.2.2 Displaying forbearance

Living within the ascribed boundaries. Another type of ‘tactical response’ is to live within the ascribed boundaries or to accept the racialisation but only ‘for the meantime’. In such cases, the racialised subject realises that he or she has limited power to change the situation as yet. And so in the meantime, the individual tries to make the most of the situation. There is less of a sense of control over the situation and so the individual tries to cope by displaying forbearance and patience. This strategy was commonly adopted by racialised subjects who perceived that they were being treated unfairly at work. There is a sense of not having much choice ‘at the moment’ with participants reporting having a strong feeling of being trapped.

For instance, Buddy (M/MA/Fil) said he could not complain about the racism he experienced while working in a nursing home because he came in as an illegal immigrant and needed a job to survive. “I just kept quiet because I thought if I answer back, the more they will pick on me and I might lose my job. Besides, I was still processing my papers. But when I finally got my permanent residency I started to talk back to them.” Like Buddy and several other participants, Indira (F/MA/Ind) spoke of how she was forced to hang on to her job despite the racism she encountered constantly for eight years. She did not report her experiences of being discriminated because she feared it would just make matters worse.
If you report it, how do you think you will be treated? I know they would treat me badly to the point that I would have had to leave my job…. People said, “Why didn’t you just leave and look for another job?” I could have left but I needed the money and financial stability. By that time, I was already in my mid forties. Even though they treated me badly, I had money coming in which I desperately needed because I got kids in university and a home loan to pay. (Indira, F/MA/Ind)

Indira acknowledged that she bore the consequences of not fighting back and was fully responsible for her life choices.

I chose to live in this country for the betterment of my children. I chose to live in this area. It was my choice. I chose this career path, and … took this job because of my family situation then. Circumstances may have forced me to decide to stay on but it was all my choice. So, I had to bear all the consequences of my decisions, including having to deal with racism. When it got unbearable, I took long walks and read philosophical or inspirational books. That was my way of coping with it. (Indira, F/MA/Ind)

It should be mentioned that Indira endured eight years of being bypassed for training and promotions and of being sexually harassed by her Anglo Australian supervisor. It was only when a new manager took over that Indira’s contributions at work were recognised. Although she was eventually promoted, this did not stop her co-employees from being racist towards her. But she said she is no longer as anxious about her situation as before. Expressing a sense of relief, Indira said, “My financial situation has changed, so I am not absolutely nervous about losing my job. I don’t need the money. The girls are independent. If I lose my job, the girls will help me out.”

A key informant tried to explain why people choose to live within ascribed boundaries (at least for the time being). Highlighting the survival value of not “rocking the boat”, she said:

If you feel you are powerless, you have to survive first. I think that ignoring is a common reaction for a lot of people. You first have to get to know where you fit in the system. You don’t want to rock the boat because you don’t want to be kicked out and not be able to participate altogether. That would only be to your disadvantage. (Josephine, F/MA/Fil)

But participants told of how they eventually learned to retaliate and to stand up for their rights. For instance, one participant responded to repeated harassment at work by staying on and not giving up the fight.
My supervisor was constantly at my back, and was always finding fault in whatever I did. She even tried to make me transfer to another unit. I was really depressed before. I just wanted to resign and leave. But I thought if I resigned and left, it would be difficult to get another job. Besides, I love this work. Also, I thought that if I resigned, I would be failing myself because I allowed them to win over me since I would be caving in to their pushing. So, I said to myself, “if they want to fight, I’ll fight!” So, that’s why I decided to stay on. (Nelia, F/MA/Fil)

Nelia stayed in the job for eight years but developed a lot of psychosomatic disorders from the stress of having to put up with her racist supervisor. She developed a heart condition which caused her “to black out and just collapse” at the office one day. It was only then that she followed her co-workers’ advice to get help from their union representatives. Nelia eventually took up a redundancy offer and resigned but not before lodging a formal complaint against her supervisor with the Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB). She reported, eight months after the interview for the study took place, that she eventually won her case especially since other employees backed up her complaint against her supervisor.

Similarly, Anthony (M/MA/Fil) recounted how he had to fight for three years just so he could get the pay rise he deserved. Like many others, he put up with the unfair treatment at work “for the time being” because he had little choice.

The money was good, plus I’ve already put in several years of service. I don’t want to waste that. Plus, I’ve got the mortgage now. I’ve got no choice. I need this job because I have a family already. I have to stay. … As I said, I’m stable in the job already. Even though racism is there, I’ll just have to put up with it and fight it on my own terms. No way am I going to back down because I know my rights. I know there are anti-discrimination laws, anti-harassment laws. They can’t just tell me to do this and that. I know my rights and I’ll stand for it. (Anthony, M/MA/Fil)

Anthony became aware of his rights only after he complained to their union. “Employees are told about these things only when a problem arises. I didn’t even know that we could use their solicitors for free if we can’t afford one,” he added. It is worth noting that Anthony eventually became a union delegate and started helping other co-workers who were also being discriminated.

This strong attitude of forbearance can also be seen in Arshun’s (M/MA/Ind) comments about how he coped with not being able to find work.
Q: Did you ever consider leaving Australia so that you can work where you are better appreciated?

Arshun: Well I was offered my old job before and was told that if I was having problems, I could go back. But I am a fighter. I don’t give up easily and so I am going to stick to my guns here and try to make it work for myself here.

This sense of trying to do it on their own may also explain why majority of the participants said they initially tried to handle their racism experiences by themselves. For example, those who said they experienced a lot of racism in school (e.g. like Asha, F/Ind; Anthony M/Fil; Jackson, M/Kor; Karim, M/Ind) said they did not tell their parents about it because they did not want them to worry. They also did not report it to their teachers because they did not want to be labeled a “dubber” or “tattletale” by their classmates. It is also possible that these young victims chose to suffer in silence because they might not have realised that racism should not be tolerated. But as will be discussed later, one interviewee (Anthony, M/Fil) reached the limits of his patience and eventually retaliated when the constant racial harassment became unbearable or “just too much”. Feelings of ‘having reached one’s limits’ may also explain why people are spurred to seek support from family and friends.

**Turning to spirituality.** Many participants also cited the golden rule of respect as justification for not retaliating against racist persons. This argument is directly linked to an ‘ethics of reciprocity’ or the shared belief among almost all religions, ethical systems and philosophies that everyone should treat each other in a decent manner (Religious Tolerance.org Website 2005). For example, Arshun (M/Ind) says, “I feel there is karma in life. If you do good, something good happens to you. If you do bad, something bad will happen to you. So I don’t want anything bad to happen to anybody.” Likewise, Ann (F/Fil) argued on the basis of her Christian values, speaking about how her exposure to different ethnicities helped her to reflect on her own prejudices.

As Christians, we can’t be prejudiced against anyone just because of how they look. It is not good practice. Before, I didn’t like Aborigines. But I’ve grown spiritually due to my work and exposure to different groups of people. … Now I am more aware that I may be acting based on my prejudices. For me, if I want to be a good Christian, I should strive not to be prejudiced against people. If we want people to change, we have to change ourselves first. (Ann, F/Fil)
Ann’s statements speak to the importance she places on living by her Christian values. More importantly, she asserted that change in attitudes must begin from within one’s self.

For some people, ‘racism experiences can be dehumanizing and [may] threaten the vitality of one’s spirit and faith’ (Akbar 1992 cited in Harrell, SP 2000). However, the narratives of participants of this study suggest that their spirituality or religiosity helped them cope with their racialisation experiences. Some interviewees were philosophical about their racism experiences, turning to their religion and belief system for answers as to why they have been treated unfairly. They sought help and answers from ‘above’ by turning to their religion and belief systems for explanations to make sense of racism. For example, Linda (F/MA/Fil) who is a devout Catholic, found comfort in her belief that she had to go through all her ‘trials’ in order to become stronger and more assertive, arguing that “it was God’s way” of giving her “opportunities to practise humility”. In essence, Linda’s statements reflect the value Christians place on suffering and mortification. This can sometimes lead to a passive acceptance of or resignation to one’s fate. Fortunately in Linda’s case, her many experiences of workplace discrimination spurred her to actively help others.

Like many others who participated in this study, Linda (F/MA/Fil) tried to look at the brighter side of the racist experience. Reflecting on how she had to quit teaching because of her very stressful encounter with her “racist” head teacher, Linda said her experience has enriched her and has made her stronger and more assertive.

Looking back at it, I think maybe it’s God’s way of giving me an easier career because now that I am no longer teaching, I don’t get as much stress. But He had to make it really difficult because I really love teaching and I would not have just given it up just like that! I have so many experiences of racism but I think these have enriched me. I look at all the hardships that the Lord has given me as opportunities to practice humility. The good thing about this is now I can really sympathise with people who are discriminated against or who are harassed because I know how it feels because I’ve been there. I can comfort them and share what I did. (Linda, F/MA/Fil)

Linda’s statements reveal a strong reliance on her religion and spirituality that is also evident in statements made by other participants. One elderly Catholic lady (Fely, F/O/Fil) said she felt depressed and demoralised because she could not understand why there is racism, which made “life so hard in Australia”. She said she sought refuge in prayers and somehow found comfort in the thought that God had a plan for her family and “that there was a reason for
everything”. Another interviewee (Anggie, F/O/Fil) said she could not understand why an Anglo Australian teenager attacked her in a crowded street. She said she did not fight back but “called on the Lord to take retribution” for her.

Other interviewees expressed a strong belief in destiny and karma. For instance, Jackson’s (M/Y/Kor) experience of being falsely accused of stealing left him traumatised and almost made him commit suicide. When asked to reflect on his experience, he said it was all part of his destiny since he believes he is destined to be persecuted all his life.

In a weird kind of superstitious way, I think maybe that it is part of my karma--that I will be persecuted with things that I didn’t do and that people won’t believe the things that I say. This is what a friend said when she read my fortune. I found this really interesting because other things happened subsequently which were similar, although not as extreme as my experience of racial harassment in school. (Jackson, M/Y/Kor)

Jackson’s statement reflects a somehow desperate attempt to make sense of his experiences of “always being mistaken for someone else”. Interestingly, his statements suggest that he is resigned to this kind of fate. In trying to understand why his being an Asian seems to cause his ‘persecutions’, Jackson turns to superstition to cope with the trauma that he still felt.

Other participants said their strong belief in destiny and karma offered guidance on what course of action to take in response to their racialisation experiences (Arshun and Mandy, M/MA/Ind). Several other participants also told of how they turned to prayer to control their anger (Susan, F/O/Fil), their feelings of despair (Fely, F/O/Fil), and the strong desire to take revenge (Nelia, F/MA/Fil; Anggie, F/O/Fil). Another participant said she found strength in the company of a Christian group, made up of fellow victims of domestic violence. Gina (F/Y/Fil) said the emotional and spiritual support she got not only helped her get back on her feet. Knowing there were others in the same plight also gave her courage “to fight back”.

These examples provide evidence supporting Harrell’s (2000) suggestion that spirituality and religion (in addition to worldview, cultural values and racial identity) can mediate the relationship between racism experiences and well-being by providing: ‘(1) a connection with a larger racial, cultural, spiritual community; (2) a sense of meaning and understanding of one’s life and world; and (3) a core foundation offering guidance and a framework for decision-making’ (Harrell, SP 2000). In the examples cited, participants’ strong reliance on their
spirituality and religiosity buffered them against the negative impact of racism. This finding is consistent with recent research that spirituality is a significant moderator between racial stress and negative psychological health outcomes (Bowen-Reid & Harrell 2002). Mellor et al. (2001) have also suggested that the cultural norms of Asians influence the way they interpret their racism experiences. This is also evident in the present study since the spirituality or religiosity of the participants may be attributed to the influence of their culture.

7.2.3 Armouring oneself

Closely linked to displaying forbearance is another tactical response that involves trying to be strong and to excel to go beyond the limits imposed on the racialised individual. Majority of the participants cited this as one of their responses in situations where they are treated as inferior or their capabilities are underestimated.

**Attempting to excel.** A significant number of interviewees reported that being racialised motivated them to exert all effort to excel or become better in order to ‘prove them wrong’. For example, a newly arrived migrant said not being able to find a job because of racial discrimination has made him very angry but equally determined.

> Of course, I'm angry! Who wouldn't be? But I try to channel my anger and frustration towards motivating myself to rise above these childish issues. It makes me feel all the more determined. So, I push myself harder to get what I want. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind).

Like Arshun, most immigrants have to face countless challenges in settling into a new country and majority of those interviewed agreed that being part of a racialised minority group made adjusting all the more difficult. Many said they chose to migrate to Australia because they believed they could have ‘a better life’ here unlike in their home countries where they faced an uncertain economic future. This desire to ensure a better future for themselves and their children has motivated them to strive hard despite the many obstacles posed in their path. In the excerpt below, Mandy (M/MA/Ind) explains why being mediocre is not enough to overcome these challenges.

> I believe that if you want to progress you have to be not just slightly better than the competition because there will always be competition. As I’ve always said to myself, my children and friends, don’t just go slightly better. That’s not enough because you know
they might give the job to this guy who is White and has local experience. You should strive to have the skills that will make you so far advanced whether it’s in studies, or in work, in anything. Let’s be so far ahead that the gap is visible even to a blind person so much so that he’ll acknowledge that really, there’s no competition. This way, they’ll know right away that we’re the better persons for that opportunity. That’s the way I approach life and that’s what I teach my kids. (Mandy, M/MA/Ind)

It should be noted that Mandy at the time of the interview was working in one of the top managerial positions of an equipment servicing company. He attributed his relative success to his persevering attitude and strong determination to excel.

Children of Asian descent also face enormous challenges because teachers tend to mark them for failure simply on the bases of a general low regard for Asians. This was exemplified in the case of Kamil (M/Y/SL) whose teacher remarked, ‘he will not amount to anything.’ In response to this disparaging remark, Kamil’s mother, Indira (F/MA/SL) told him, “You prove her wrong! Prove to her that you can go to university, that you can amount to something. I want to see you prove her wrong!”

Similarly, Asha (F/Y/Ind) coped with being belittled and excluded in primary school channeling her anger and frustration towards excelling as a student. She said her high marks allowed her to eventually transfer to a selective secondary school where she found kindred spirits.

It was very multi ethnic and I made friends with people who shared my values. Their parents were intellectuals and academics. They also believed that racism was unacceptable. ... Because of the kind of values that their families had inculcated into them, they were very outspoken about how wrong and bad racism is. (Asha, F/Y/Ind)

Asha found strength in number and this spurred her to be more vocal about opposing racism, later on becoming involved in organised anti-racism movements in secondary school and university. Thus, in a sense, being racialised spurred many participants into disproving the notion that Asians are inferior.

Raising children’s awareness. Other interviewees stressed the importance of preparing their children so that they are able to overcome the challenges posed by being part of a racialised group. For instance, Therese (F/MA/Chn) said she has made her children realise that they cannot avoid being racialised.
In the higher levels of Australian society and in government, racism is not allowed and people realise that racism is wrong. But in the lower levels of society, they still have these racist views towards Asians because they have had this idea for many years and it is very hard to change. So, I have educated my children to be aware of this. I told them: “Okay, you were born here and you might feel that it’s all good and alright because you don’t experience racism in school. But when you go out to work, you need to prepare yourself. Although you speak very good English people will still see that you have an Asian face and will therefore treat you as Asian. Maybe people will still think less of you because you are Asians.” (Therese, F/MA/Chn)

By making her children aware of the reality of racism, Therese was in effect ‘armoring’ them or trying to develop in them a self-protective strategy against racism (Ella, Bell & Nkomo 1998). This approach is supported by the literature linking parents’ experiences of racism and children’s well-being. Such studies have found that racial socialisation provided by families, teachers and local communities influence the racial identity and acculturation of children and adolescents from minority groups. Pre-school aged children who were made aware of the reality of racism were found to have less behavioural problems than those whose parents had denied their experiences of racism (Caughy, O’Campo & Muntaner 2004).

As has been discussed, participants indicated that they believe that an effective strategy against being inferiorised, excluded or marginalised is to use their intelligence and skills to achieve their goals. This emphasis on the use of intelligence, competence and education as the ‘ticket out of social exclusion’ was also found among elite African Americans (Lamont & Fleming 2005: 8). But participants not only cited intelligence and education but also put a lot of emphasis on family values and moral uprightness. Many interviewees stressed the importance of inculcating good values in the young. For instance, Indira (F/MA/Ind) said being a single parent was difficult but she persevered and worked hard so that she could set a good example for her three children. She also talked to them about her experiences of being discriminated at work in order to help them cope with the reality of racism in Australian society. More importantly, “I told my kids, “be what you want to be but at the same time always do the right thing”” (Indira, F/MA/Srl).

In summary, the findings revealed that most of the participants commonly used tactical responses to mitigate the effects of being racialised. Participants dismissed their experiences of racism in order to protect their self-esteem and maintain a sense of personal control over their life (Ruggiero & Taylor 1997). By attempting to be strong and trying to excel, participants
were able to prove that they should not be underestimated or regarded as inferior. By initially accepting their fate including tolerating their racialisation, participants displayed forbearance in trying to make the best of their situation. As was shown in the narratives, participants indicated this was necessary so that they could weigh their options and muster enough courage to plan their possible courses of action. This strong display of forbearance among Asians is consistent with the study of Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou and Rummens (1999) where it was found that forbearance is the preferred coping mechanism of South East Asian refugees living in Canada.

7.3 Behavioural strategies (Action)

So far, I have discussed how participants responded to being racialised through their discursive and cognitive strategies. In this section, I examine the behavioural strategies that helped them cope with racialisation.

This study focused not only on how racial boundaries are constructed but also on how these are reinforced, contested and transcended. Thus in this section, I have used this boundary framework to categorise the actions or behavioural strategies participants reportedly took in response to specific racist encounters and to the experience of being racialised. Action is defined theoretically as ‘a combination of cognition (intention) and activity’ (van Dijk 1992: 91). Thus, I have analysed participants’ accounts of how they responded in terms of their intentions and the outcomes of their activities. Following this, I have grouped participants’ actions or behavioural strategies into three types: (a) defensive, (b) offensive and (c) pro-active strategies. The first group, which I called ‘defensive strategies’ include actions taken to protect one’s self from further re-exposure to racism stressors. In this case, individuals can be said to be building walls around them or reinforcing the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The second group called ‘offensive strategies’ refer to actions that seek to challenge the boundaries imposed on the racialised subject. The third group of strategies consists of actions that may be considered pro-active in that the racialised subject takes the initiative to “cross the border” or engages in activities to build bridges between racial boundaries. In using pro-active strategies, individuals are in a sense seeking to penetrate the barriers imposed on them.
7.3.1 Defensive strategies

Participants described how they responded to being racialised by adopting defensive strategies or actions designed to protect themselves from racism stressors. These defensive strategies which may be likened to building and reinforcing one’s protective walls may be grouped into either: (a) avoidance and escapism, or (b) boycotting and ignoring.

**Avoidance and escapism.** Participants reported that they deliberately avoided situations that they thought were likely to cause a repeat of racist incidents. For example, Gina (F/Y/Fil) said she stopped bringing her son to daycare because “they always stared at me as if I’m an alien.” In many other cases, avoidance meant having to leave one’s job and thereby facing financial insecurity. Others reported having a strong desire to leave Australia for good (Cora, F/O/Fil) or to go back to one’s country of origin (Nelia, F/MA/Fil).

Those who tried to avoid re-exposure to racism stressors often had a price to pay. In Gina’s case, she ended up separating from her husband because he did not want to leave Tasmania despite her unhappiness there. Likewise, Fr Dan (M/MA) ended up disillusioned when his religious superiors dismissed his complaints of racial harassment from some of his parishioners. He decided to take an indefinite leave from his congregation despite having served in it for 27 years. His radical response to being racialised manifests the traumatic effect of not being heard or being ignored by people he thought shared his concern for justice and equality.

In the cases cited above, **physical** avoidance was used to lessen the likelihood of re-exposure to racism stressors. Other participants reported using what Mellor (2004a: 61) calls ‘psychological avoidance’ in the form of withdrawal and escapism. For instance, Asha (F/Y/Ind) said that in order to survive her “living nightmare” resulting from being bullied and rejected by her classmates in primary school, she withdrew socially and became a loner. In an extreme case, Jackson (M/Y/Kor) said he almost committed suicide since he could no longer face the school bullies who threatened him daily. Another youngster (Kamil, M/Y/SrL) rebelled and turned to drugs to escape the hurt and alienation of constantly being targeted for being a black-skinned Asian. In the excerpt below, Kamil and his mom, Indira (F/MA/SrL) (who I jointly
interviewed) tried to analyse how turning to drugs and being ‘bad’ served to protect Kamil from further racial torment.

Indira: Kamil was a mere child at that time. He felt so alienated at school. He tried to assimilate even though it hurt. He knew all the name-calling and verbal abuse wasn’t right. But he accepted it and probably thought, “Okay it’s alright to be laughed at because then they will accept me as a friend.”

Kamil: And I ended up accepting myself as being lowly.

Indira: Which is the reason he went to drugs. They wanted him to be bad. And he became that. That’s exactly what happened. He became bad and by becoming bad, he created this aura, which made people fear him. When they became afraid of him, they stopped abusing him.

Q: So do you think it was necessary to assume a bad image so that they would not threaten you anymore? So, that they would back off?

Kamil: That’s what happened. And that is also happening to many other kids who are being bullied in school.

As seen in this example, children and adolescents tend to stick to their own ethnic groups as a survival strategy.

Boycotting or ignoring. Others reported ‘boycotting’ or refusing to deal with service facilities and establishments where they were denied access or provided with poor service. For instance, Leila (F/MA/Fil) reported that after refusing to be served by counter staff in a high-priced deli store, she decided “to take my money elsewhere” after that and to tell sympathetic friends not to patronise the store because “they are racist!” By boycotting, racialised subjects are not only able to protect themselves from further re-exposure to racism stressors but they are in some way also able to exact revenge. In another instance, Anthony (M/MA/Fil) admitted that when he was made to perform higher duties but was not given the corresponding increase in pay, he deliberately slowed down the machines he was operating and in so doing affected production in the factory. Boycotting in this sense is seen in an industrial context.

Others responded with a ‘tit-for-tat attitude’ to instances of being ignored, avoided or rejected. Jasmine (F/MA/Chn) felt their neighbours “pretended she did not exist” since they said hello only to her Anglo Australian husband. In response, she said, “If they don’t talk to me, I don’t talk to them too! Afterwards, some of them tried to say hello to me. But because I still have this anger in me, I still ignored them!”
By reinforcing the walls around themselves (through avoidance, escapism, boycotting, ignoring), racialised subjects are able to cope with racism stressors but this type of response does not overtly challenge the racist behaviour. It may provide temporary relief but in the long-term it can create anxiety and ill feeling because the issue is left unresolved (Noh et al. 1999). There is also a risk that this kind of response may push racialised subjects to segregate themselves further. The long-term impact of a passive response to being racialised clearly showed in the anger still felt by some participants.

Anthony (M/MA/Fil): If they're bitchy, I ignore them. I don't help them. I felt, “Bugger you. You don't want to talk to me because I'm different! I won't help you then!”
Q: You still seem to be angry about it even though it happened many years ago?
A: Yes, I do! I still feel angry because it really frustrates me. That old feeling is coming out--all the frustration and the anger from the treatment that I got which I didn't really deserve.
Q: Have you ever talked to anybody about this before?
A: No, basically I just kept it to myself.

It is significant to note that Anthony emphasised that he did not deserve the treatment he got, signaling a strong feeling of being treated unfairly. Anthony’s account also provides evidence that victims of racism usually keep negative feelings bottled up.

7.3.2 Offensive strategies

Interviewees also used offensive strategies in response to being inferiorised, devalued and dehumanised. They countered racism and contested the boundaries imposed by their racialisation by reporting to authorities and by retaliating or confronting the perpetrator verbally and/or physically.

Reporting to authorities. Several interviewees contested the perceived injustice of their racialisation experience by reporting to those in authority or to those whom they assumed would have some power to give them redress. Sixteen participants who experienced workplace discrimination said they did not know anything about grievance procedures until they became victims of racial discrimination. They said their experience forced them “to do their own research” (Gerry, M/MA/Fil) about how to go about asserting their right to fair
treatment at work. They said they referred the matter first to their supervisors, managers or department heads. When they felt that their complaint was not being acted upon, only then did they approach their union representatives or counselors. The seven interviewees who contacted their union representatives said they were very happy with the support they got since their union informed them of their rights, gave them advice on possible courses of action, and provided them moral and emotional support during these "very stressful times". Their union representatives also helped them understand the legal quagmire and provided them support and representation during conciliation meetings before the ADB. Four interviewees whose cases were referred to the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal stressed that they persevered in having their case heard because it was "a matter of principles" and not because they were after financial compensation (Buddy, M/MA/Fil; Linda, F/MA/Fil; Gerry, M/MA/Fil; Nelia, F/MA/Fil). All four were glad to have won their case. Although the Tribunal had directed their employers to reinstate them, they chose not to go back to their old jobs because they felt like they were "marked forever" (Buddy, M/MA/Fil).

Not everyone who complained about workplace discrimination was happy with the outcome of bringing the matter out in the open. Arshun’s (M/MA/Ind) employer made him redundant but he could not get his entitlements until he signed a contract that essentially forbade him from working in the same industry and from contacting the clients that he dealt with.

My lawyer said, "If you make this a public issue, nobody will want to hire you." I don't want compensation. I want my rights. I know I have been unfairly dismissed but at the same time, I know I have to work within the same industry. My skills are geared for this industry. If I have to change the industry where I work in, I have to learn new skills. And at my age, to go back to learning again would be very difficult for me. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

In effect, Arshun had little choice but to drop his complaint.

Participants who suffered racism at school said in most cases, it was their parents and other classmates who reported the incidents to their teachers and principals. Some tried to complain directly but most ended up feeling disappointed in that their complaint was not given importance by their teachers. For instance, Asha (F/Y/Ind) said, "Whenever I told any of the teachers about it, they just told me to ignore it, since according to them, it's not worth bothering about." Similarly, Cynthia (F/Y/Fil) said she "didn't have the guts" to argue with her teacher who was calling her names in front of the class. Interestingly, she reasoned that as a student, she
did not “have the right to argue with her teacher”, signaling a clear awareness of the inherent power differential in the classroom.

**Retaliating.** Some participants said they had no choice but to respond by retaliating verbally and in some cases, also physically. Interviewees said they had to confront their oppressor because “it was just too much” (Buddy, M/MA/Fil) and they “just have had enough” (Linda, F/MA/Fil). By retaliating, they said they were able to assert that the abuse or inferiorisation should not be tolerated.

But retaliation was often used as a last resort and only by some. For example, only a few participants who reported being verbally abused said they ‘reacted’ by also shouting invectives back at the perpetrator. More participants took a more rational and less emotional approach by teaching or educating the perpetrator (to be discussed as part of the pro-active strategies).

Of the 15 participants who said they experienced being physically threatened or attacked, only two reported that they resorted to the use of physical violence. In one such case, Anthony (MMA/Fil) said he eventually confronted three Anglo Australians in primary school who constantly bullied him.

> Initially the bullying affected my studies. … It took me a few months to muster up enough courage to confront them. It was just going on and on. I was always starving because they would always steal my pocket money. And then I just had enough! … I tried to avoid them but I couldn’t. Eventually I confronted them during lunchtime. There were three of them and I was alone. They started circling me. I just hit the first one. When he started crying the two others ran away. So it seems, they were just acting tough. (Anthony, MMA/Fil)

I asked Anthony whether the incident was due to childhood bullying or racism and he was empathic in saying “Oh it was definitely discrimination because they did not hassle anybody else. It was just me and my brothers, because we were the first Asians in our school.” Anthony justified the need to retaliate physically including bringing a deadly weapon to school in order to earn the respect of the other kids.

> Anthony: I was angry because I’ve had enough! But somehow, I had no fear. The blood was just going all over my head.
> Q: Did you feel bad after you beat him up?
A: No, I felt this great release because everybody was patting me on the back, cheering me up because I was able to beat up somebody three times my size.

Q: How did you feel when you confronted them?

A: I felt great! I had no fear anymore! I wanted to teach them a lesson. I had respect. I had power! When I feared them, they had power over me. But when I confronted them, I had the power. Although I was still afraid inside, I was more confident standing up to them and it felt great! I was glad I confronted them. I wouldn’t have it any other way. If you confront these racist bullies, they back off, especially if you beat them up. Then others also respect you. Everyone started to think, “This guy is not going to take shit from anyone”. So all of a sudden, everyone’s your friend because they think you’re this kung fu master. Eventually they were the ones who became afraid of me.

Q: So how long ago was this incident, about 20-25 years ago?

A: Yeah, it’s still very vivid in my mind. You never forget the experience.

In the only other case of violent confrontation, Allen (M/M/A/Fi) said he was forced to defend himself and his dad when they became victims of road rage. He said they were just driving along when three Anglo Australian teenagers blocked their path. Following a heated verbal exchange, Allen said one of the kids tried to hit his father with a steel pipe. He said his fear for his father’s personal safety made his “adrenaline rush to his head”, making him lose self-control. “I beat one of them up before they can do something to us.” Allen justified his actions by saying that “If I didn’t do it, I don’t know what would have happened to us! We would probably be dead by now.”

The ways by which Anthony and Allen responded are an exception in that they were the only ones who mentioned that they resorted to retaliating with physical violence. (In contrast, others who were similarly physically threatened, opted to use withdrawal and escapism as coping strategies.) Anthony and Allen may have reacted violently because they were either simply trying to defend themselves or their emotions of fear and anger may have overpowered their sensibilities. However, on hindsight, both said defending themselves was the sensible thing to do. They said they realised that they could have gotten hurt but they “did not think anymore”. What is interesting in these cases is the fact that both Allen and Anthony were very young when these happened which probably explains their fearlessness. Allen’s response is different from Anthony’s in that Allen reacted to a ‘racist moment’ or a single racial encounter while Anthony responded violently after enduring months of being dehumanised and disrespected.
Factors that influence the use of offensive strategies. Many interviewees reported that they resorted to using offensive or confrontational strategies because they felt strongly that they were being treated unfairly and that they had to do something to correct the situation. But more often than not, this type of response was chosen as a last recourse rather as a first option. From the data, it can be deduced that participants were disinclined to use (right away) such offensive strategies to resist racism because of a combination of the following factors: (a) fear of retaliation or reprisal; (b) lack of knowledge about their rights; (c) lack of confidence in one’s self; (d) lack of access to resources and support services; and (e) frustration at the system of handling complaints. Similar reasons were identified in a study of why Arab and Muslim Australians do not report incidents of racist violence, discrimination and vilification outcomes (Poynting & Noble 2004: 90). These factors are discussed briefly below.

The reasons given for not reporting include; the fleeting nature of the abuse, inability to name the perpetrator, fear of government agencies, a belief that reporting would not help, the ‘insignificance’ of the discrimination, and also - when in the workplace - a fear that reporting would result in dismissal. (Fair Go Australia Website 2004)

For most participants, fear was the overriding factor that stopped them from actively opposing their unfair treatment. As Noh et al. (1999) have suggested, ‘direct confrontational responses reduce the sense of helplessness and victimization, but this type of response may also cause distress through the escalation of the conflict and hostility.’ Many participants who were discriminated at work could not openly protest because of fear of reprisal from their supervisors. Those who became victims of domestic violence were forced to suffer in silence because their husbands threatened to exact revenge by killing them, or harming their children or parents. However, quite a number of interviewees said knowledge of their rights, combined with support from family and service organisations gave them courage to take up the private violation they felt and to make it a public concern.

Others argued that they did not overtly protest because it was not part of their personality to be confrontational. “We were taught by our parents not to argue or not to fight”, said one (Nelia, F/M/A/Fil). While another said, “I’m basically a peacemaker rather than a fighter” (Linda, F/M/A/Fil). These statements indicate how one’s value system provides some guidance on how to act and react during such racist situations.
This is consistent with Noh et al.'s (1999) observation that Asians prefer forbearance as a coping mechanism because 'it reflects the cultural norms and values of this population and the collective nature of their community which gives high value to the preservation of relationships'. However, it is significant to note that quite a number of participants said they were glad they eventually 'learned' to be confrontational and to be more assertive. When asked to assess if they were happy with the way they responded to their racism experiences, many participants said they should have been more assertive and more vocal about opposing the racist treatment they got.

I learned that in Australia, you have to be assertive. You have to be vocal about what you think and feel, otherwise, you will be stepped on. I learned that you just cannot sit back and take all the blows. Before I would just cry and keep quiet, but now not anymore. I've already reached the stage of having to fight in front of a tribunal and won! (Linda, F/MA/Fil)

Some claimed that when they learned to ‘fight’ and to assert their rights, they felt “empowered” (Anthony, M/MA/Fil). According to Edith (F/MA/Fil), “That's actually an area of my personality that I thought would be difficult to change. I didn't realise I could be assertive, but it did happen. And I am glad that I didn’t just keep quiet.”

Collins et al. (2000) suggested that racialisation is ‘dynamic in that attempts to label, contain and regulate are met with attempts to resist and transform these processes’ (Collins et al. 2000: 18). This was evident in how Asian Australians used the offensive behavioural strategies discussed above and in how they took the initiative to use innovative strategies to break down barriers or bridge boundaries.

### 7.3.3 Pro-active strategies

Participants coped with their racialisation using pro-active strategies that may be described as efforts to cross the colour divide. Pro-active strategies are different from the first two categories (i.e., defensive and offensive) in that these involve a conscious effort to address the issue of racism in a positive way.

Most of those interviewed were not actively involved in any organised anti-racism effort. However, many realised that as individuals, they can make some contribution to combating
racism by starting the change from within themselves (Ann, F/MA/Fil; Carmen, F/MA/Chn; Greg, M/O/Chn). “We should not only react but also act; that we should be part of the solution and not add to the problem of racism” (Don, M/O/Chn). Some interviewees emphasised the importance of being conscious about their own behaviour in public. Others stressed the need to examine their own prejudices or racist attitudes, especially towards fellow Asians and Indigenous Australians.

Filipinos can also be racists, especially towards Aboriginal people and I have heard quite a number of people make racist comments at parties. I can see where this prejudice is coming from because, I suppose we are so used to stereotyping the color of the skin. Like in the Philippines, we are concerned with whitening our skin and lotions for these are so popular. I suppose we always think that way and it is somehow so imbued in our society that sometimes we just blurt out racist comments without thinking. But we know as immigrants in Australia that when racism happens to us, it hurts. So why do we think that if we do it to other people, it won’t hurt? We have a moral obligation to ourselves to be aware also of the racism happening not just between blacks or whites but also that, which is happening within our own culture and between ethnic groups. (Edith, F/MA/Fil)

Specific pro-active strategies that participants took include: (a) teaching or educating the perpetrator; (b) building bridges and becoming involved in mainstream activities and organisations.

**Teaching or educating the perpetrator.** A pro-active and positive approach taken by many participants was to teach the perpetrator because they ‘do not know any better’ (see 6.2.2). Participants stressed that people should not turn a blind eye on racism and should instead take on the responsibility to teach the perpetrator, “or else, nothing will happen, it will just go on and on” (Don, M/O/Chn). For instance, Armie (F/MA/Fil) recounted how a boy used to bully her seven-year old daughter as they walked home from school. “Because it was happening outside school, I could not complain to the Principal. What I did was follow the kid home and then I talked to his parents. They apologised and it never happened again.”

Generally, interviewees said that being rational rather than emotional was more effective in teaching “these ignorant people some home truths” because “often, they do not know that what they’re doing is bad” (Edith, F/MA/Fil). “Since we are educated, it is up to us immigrants to make them understand or to explain to them that it’s not just what they hear from local rags”, said another (Carmen, F/MA/Chn). Others said even if there is no sincere remorse on the part of
their offender, at least “I’ve said my piece” (Leila, M/MA/Fil). Those who were able to manage their anger expressed a sense of personal satisfaction from having done their part in addressing the issue of racialisation. In explaining why she does not just ignore racism (anymore), Linda (M/MA/Fil) said, “I just want them to recognise their mistakes. I don’t harbour hard feelings against anyone. But it is important to make them aware that what they are doing is wrong.” On the whole, teaching the perpetrator was seen as a concrete and very effective anti-racism strategy. This strategy can improve the dynamics between the perpetrator and the racialised subject as Linda discovered. “After I confronted this co-worker, we became friends because we had some level of understanding that he cannot put me down, that he cannot just do that to me!”

Building bridges. Another proactive strategy that some participants took can be described as taking the initiative to make friends or building bridges. For instance, Buddy (M/MA/Fil) talked about how he and his wife used reverse psychology to win over those who were constantly harassing and verbally abusing them as they manned their take-away shop. He said he used to be scared because “some White drug addicts” used to come up to their shop, demanding a dollar or two for cigarettes or asking for free food. They gave them food, which was eventually paid back (voluntarily).

We didn’t react at all because I know that they were not in their right minds. They’re high on drugs. In spite of what they did to us, we still gave them food for free and talked to them nicely. One time, I gave one of them $5 worth of food without asking him to pay. Surprisingly, later that afternoon he came back and paid me. Then another time, a guy came up to me and said he wanted to pay me for some food he ate a long time ago. But I couldn’t even remember if he owed us anything! … Before, we had so many bad experiences with Whites. But instead of retaliating, we tried to be nice and good towards them and eventually it worked. Our relationships with these people are more harmonious and peaceful now. (Buddy, M/MA/Fil)

Buddy also stressed the need to change tactics depending on the situation.

In some cases, you don’t just put up with it especially if it’s already too much. I believe that there will be times when you have to speak up about it. But in some cases, you might need to reconsider your approach or view in order for the situation to change. We were nice to them that’s why eventually they treated us right too. You have to learn how to win them over. (Buddy, M/MA/Fil)
Other pro-active and innovative strategies used by participants include: introducing people to their culture through food; taking the first step in befriending Anglo Australians; joining mainstream organisations; being a good role model; and being involved in advocacy groups.

Collins et al. (2000: 18) suggested that racialisation is ‘dynamic in that attempts to label, contain and regulate are met with attempts to resist and transform these processes’. This was evident in how Asian Australians took the initiative to use innovative strategies to break down barriers and to bridge boundaries. Karumanchery (2003) also pointed out that experiences of being racialised can create a sense of ‘hyper-awareness’ characterised by strong feelings of anxiety resulting from the fear of being victimised or targeted again. Data from this study suggest that several participants used this hyperawareness to motivate themselves to excel or to push themselves to prove that they are not inferior.

7.4 Discussion

This chapter examined the different ways in which Asian Australians have dealt with the impact of their racialisation. It showed that Asian Australians have a variety of coping styles or responses to racialisation that form what may be called their ‘personal repertoire of responses to racialisation’.

The findings lend support to Lamont’s theory of everyday anti-racism which she defined as the rhetorical strategies used to rebut the notion of inferiority and to establish equality. Asian Australians constructed their anti-racist arguments around the theme of universal equality similar to how black North African immigrants cited evidences of universal equality from their daily experience (Lamont et al. 2002). Like the North African immigrants in Lamont’s studies, Asian Australians also rebutted the notion of inferiority by asserting that they are morally upright, and have good values and upbringing. In addition, this study expanded on Lamont’s notion of ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ by showing that ordinary Asian Australians bridge racial boundaries using discursive, cognitive and behavioural strategies.

The findings also point to the value of tactical responses, which are strategies that do not directly oppose racism but are nonetheless important coping mechanisms. Many participants spoke of how the impact of their racism experience overwhelmed them so much so that they
did not know what to do or how to handle the situation. As a tactical response, several said they ‘posed and paused’ to consider their best options. This implies that what might appear as inaction or passive acceptance is not necessarily so.

Tactical responses parallel what Mellor (2004) described as ‘self-protecting’ and ‘self-controlling’ coping strategies. The results revealed that Asian Australians tried to lessen the stress of being racialised by deflecting racism. They displayed strong forbearance as they ‘posed and paused’ to consider their options in the face of racism stressors. They used their spirituality and religiosity to make sense of their racialisation experience and to guide them on how to deal with people who have treated them unfairly. The study also provided evidence that Asian Australians have a strong sense of agency. They were conscious of the need to overcome their racialisation by attempting to excel or to be strong, which is similar to what Mellor (2004) observed among Indigenous Australians. This strong sense of agency is also reflected in the pro-active behavioural strategies that participants used. The data provided numerous examples of how Asian Australians negotiated, contested and transformed the racial boundaries imposed on them by racialisation.

The findings highlight the importance of being flexible, resilient and practical in coming up with appropriate responses to deal with the multiple processes of racialisation and in coping with the stress of racialisation. Because racialisation involves multiple processes, it is necessary to have a wide array of responses to racialisation. People respond not only to specific racist encounters or to particular racist moments, but also to the compounding effects of being racialised. The notion of ‘repertoire’ to organise the different responses to racialisation was valuable since it has allowed us to visualise racialised subjects as being able to draw from this ‘tool-kit’ the most appropriate strategy for a particular situation (or time and place) and depending on the internal and external resources available to them. This conceptualisation implies that their choice of strategies is context-specific and may change depending on their circumstances. It contributes to a more cohesive and inclusive theory of anti-racism since it takes into consideration the discursive, cognitive and behavioural types of responses to racialisation. It is able to capture the notion of adopting a strategic pose or using tactical responses as an integral part of the repertoire of responses to racialisation. Acknowledging the value of tactical responses implies that not all responses to racialisation directly oppose it.
Figure 5 encapsulates the different elements in personal repertoires of responses to racialisation. In using the term ‘personal’, I mean those strategies that are meaningful or relevant to the racialised subject at a particular racist moment or period in their lives. The term ‘personal’ is also used to differentiate these individual strategies from the anti-racism interventions and support mechanisms that are available externally to the individual. It shows how responses to racialisation are not limited to discourse and actions but can also include ‘tactical responses’. The major categories of responses to racialisation are discursive strategies, cognitive or tactical responses and actions or behavioural strategies. The three major categories of responses are conceptualised as overlapping circles or contiguous spheres rather than as distinct elements falling on a straight line or continuum. This conceptualisation implies that these categories are interdependent. In reality, individuals use discourse, cognition, and action almost simultaneously to respond to any stimulus. The contiguous spheres also suggest that unlike in a continuum, there is no defined beginning or end. That is, individuals can draw from these subsets of responses depending on the context or specific circumstances relating to their racialisation experience. An arrow in the middle of the three overlapping circles in the diagram indicates that these different responses may influence each other.

Figure 5 also shows the elements within each major type of response. The discursive strategies include making sense of racism, justifying anti-racism by establishing universality, and challenging mainstream discourse. Tactical responses involve deflecting racism, displaying forbearance, and armoring oneself. Behavioural strategies could be defensive, offensive, and/or pro-active.
This chapter highlighted the importance of everyday anti-racism strategies or the personal repertoire of responses to racialisation. But individuals can only do so much to counter racism. Thus, it is important to analyse what external support mechanisms and institutional intervention strategies are available to assist racialised subjects and to counter racism. These will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 8
Anti-racism: The Other Side of Racialisation

Chapters 5 to 7 highlighted the importance of understanding racialisation in terms of process, response and impact. An important aspect that has not been researched systematically but which is of considerable concern and source of debate within the community is the extent to which government support services and anti-racism measures are effective in assisting targets of racism. An analysis of racialisation is not complete if we fail to consider and critique the other side of the issue: the anti-racism strategies that are meant to provide solutions to the problems of racism and racialisation.

What outside interventions or support mechanisms are available to mitigate the impact of racialisation? To what extent do Asian Australians know and make use of these strategies? What other strategies should be in place? I address these questions in this chapter by combining data from participant interviews and focus groups with information from the literature. I describe and critique the range of anti-racism strategies that exist in Australia by drawing mainly from the literature. I limited my discussion to the anti-racism strategies that assist targets of racism since quite a number of studies have already focused on strategies that are designed to change the perpetrator (see for example recent reviews by Paradies 2005; Pedersen, Walker & Wise 2005). I also present in this chapter participants’ views on the effectiveness of the anti-racism strategies they knew and have made use of, and their suggestions on ways to improve them. I also examine participants’ sense of hope regarding the future for anti-racism in Australia.

It is customary to speak of four basic levels at which racism is manifested and at which anti-racism strategies can be implemented: individual, interpersonal, intergroup and institutional. Numerous authors have suggested variations of this classification system. For example, Harrell (2000) argued that the total experience of racism for any individual involves the simultaneous exposure to racism in four contexts: interpersonal, collective, cultural-symbolic, and socio-political. In terms of anti-racism, Duckitt (2001) has identified four causal levels at
which prejudice reduction and other anti-racism strategies can be implemented: perceptual-cognitive, individual, interpersonal and societal-intergroup.

In this study, I have applied the framework that Harrell suggested for classifying the context at which racism is manifested to the issue of anti-racism. Her framework is unique in that she introduced an intermediate level called ‘cultural-symbolic’. If we visualise the different anti-racism strategies as part of a continuum, we could position the cultural-symbolic level between the ‘interpersonal’ and ‘societal-intergroup’ categories that Duckitt has suggested. Thus, I have combined Duckitt’s and Harrell’s classification system and am suggesting that anti-racism strategies be divided into four groups: (a) personal strategies (individual level initiatives); (b) interpersonal/collective strategies (group or community level initiatives); (c) cultural-symbolic interventions (institutional initiatives); and (d) socio-political (structural initiatives). This modified framework incorporates Harrell’s suggestion that individuals are affected by multiple forms of racism at different levels. It also emphasises that anti-racism’s main focus should be on the racialised subject rather than on changing the perpetrator. It also implies that racialised subjects have agency or are able to do something to counter racism or to mitigate the impact of their racialisation.

The personal or individual level strategies were already discussed in detail in Chapter 7. This chapter focuses on the findings relating to the three other categories: interpersonal/collective, cultural-symbolic, and socio-political.

8.1 Interpersonal and collective support

As was shown in Chapter 7, individuals deal with the negative impact of racism by drawing from their repertoire of everyday personal anti-racism strategies. But what interpersonal and collective support mechanisms are available to mitigate the negative impact of being racialised?

8.1.1 Support from family and friends

Most participants mentioned that more than anything else, the support that they got from family and friends helped them cope with their racialisation experiences. Just having someone to talk
to brought some immediate relief and comfort. Talking about their experiences also helped them comprehend what racism is all about and why they were victimised. The reassurance of support from family and friends also bolstered their decision to report the incident to authorities.

Participants said confiding in some friends and family members helped them cope with the stress of their racialisation experience. For instance, Nelia (F/MA/Fil) said she was able to handle the stress of having to deal daily with a racist supervisor by talking to friends at the office. Not only did she get moral support, she also got affirmation from friends.

She [her supervisor] was always trying to make me feel depressed, to feel like an outcast. But I said to myself, I should not allow myself to feel that way. I just put whatever I hear into one ear and out the other. But sometimes it’s just too much! So, I go to my friends on the other floors and talk to them for about ten minutes and then come back again. Just to have a break. A lot of people tell me that I’m efficient and I get a lot of support from my friends. (Nelia, F/MA/Fil)

Gina (FY/Fil) also spoke of how much support she got from friends whom she met when she joined a Christian group.

It was very good. They helped me a lot, that’s why I am still standing up and I was able to get my life back. When they [the racist persons] know that you have support, they will not intimidate you. Just like my husband, I told him that I now have a lot of friends, I know this time what to do, where to go. Unlike before I was totally ignorant, ignorant of what is going on, of what to do, where to go. … There’s a big difference, when you don’t know your rights they will get you, but when you know your rights and you stand by them, they stop abusing you. (Gina, FY/Fil)

Other interviewees said they relied on their network of friends for information on facilities and services that they could access. It was often through this kind of informal referral system that they were able to contact ethnic organisations and other support groups who helped them file formal complaints.

However, a number of interviewees indicated that they did not readily disclose the details of their racialisation experience to their immediate family. For example, three interviewees (Asha, FY/Ind; Anthony, M/MA/Fil; Jackson, M/MA/Kor) who were seriously affected by racist bullying as young kids kept this from their parents because they did not want them to worry and because they were not sure if what they experienced was indeed racially motivated. There was a
tendency to take the blame for racism. Likewise, three victims of domestic violence revealed that they did not let anyone else know that their husbands were abusing them (Cynthia, Gina, Charito, all F/Y/Fil). It was only when their lives were in danger that they decided to seek help from family and friends, and only after the police intervened to prevent further violence. They did not disclose their problems because they were afraid of retribution not only for themselves, but also for their children and immediate family members. In addition, they did not want to let other people know of their marital problems, expressing feelings of “shame” that their marriage was not the ideal partnership that outsiders thought it to be. This finding relates directly to Crenshaw’s (1994) assertion that ‘race and culture contribute to the suppression of domestic violence. Women of color are often reluctant to call the police, a hesitancy likely due to a general unwillingness among people of color to subject their private lives to the scrutiny and control of a police force that is frequently hostile’. This finding also points to the intersectionality of race and gender issues.

What can be done at the interpersonal level to counter racism? According to the decategorisation approach (Brewer and Miller, 1984 cited in Duckitt 2002: 260), intergroup bias can be reduced if people interact with each other as individuals and not look at each other as members of an undifferentiated outgroup (Duckitt, 2002: 260). This approach suggests that it is best to structure intergroup situations so that category distinctions are less salient and that people should get to know each other’s individual traits rather than judging people based solely on stereotypes.

Parallel to this suggestion, several interviewees stressed the importance of developing cross-cultural relationships through intercultural mixing at the personal and group level. Of the 16 interviewees who had Anglo Australian partners, majority said they had good long-term relationships which may be taken as an indicator of how forming intimate relationships can break down racial barriers. Ten noted happily that they could count on their partners to stand up for them. For example, Angie’s (F/MA/Fil) husband defended her against his own brother by rebutting his racist comment. He told him, “You don’t know what you are missing. I have learnt a lot from my wife and from getting to know her relatives. My eyes are now open to other cultures and it is very, very inspiring.” However, not all were fortunate to have supportive husbands, including Ann (F/MA/Fil) who said she could not believe it when her husband “just
stood there and didn’t do anything” when Anglo Australian teenagers threw a water bomb at her in a public car park. Another interviewee revealed that when she talked about her racialisation experiences to her partner, he told her to “not over-react”, “just ignore it”, or “just get over it” (Gina, F/Y/Fil). Participants said this lack of support from people who they thought would be there to comfort them added to the difficulty of coping with their experience.

Another anti-racism strategy suggested was to start with a small circle of family and friends. “I think as individuals, we can educate our friends and family members on why racism should not be tolerated or say something to them to make them realise that they are being racist” (Carmen, F/O/Chn). Others suggested that intercultural mixing be done through sports and social activities. On the whole, interviewees emphasised that every person should take the initiative to cross racial borders by getting to know people more and developing friendships across different groups.

8.1.2 Support from organisations

In general, interviewees expressed appreciation for the support provided by ethnic and community-based organisations (e.g. PACSI, CASS, CPCA). These organisations served as their primary source of information and advice and their first line of defence. Many participants were also happy with the support they got from migrant resource centres, which are government funded organisations that provide a range of settlement services and activities to newly-arrived immigrants, refugees and other established ethnic groups. Several interviewees acknowledged that several staff from these centres were very helpful in providing them with information on their rights to redress and in helping them access free legal services.

For example, Gerry (M/MA/Fil) learned from acquaintances that ethnic organisations and migrant resource centers provide settlement services for newly arrived immigrants like him. While he was able to find a job on his own soon after migrating, he was not prepared for the racial discrimination he experienced from his supervisor. He said he tried to fight for his rights by confronting his supervisor but it resulted in him being summarily dismissed after only a year in the job. The pressure of having to provide for his family and the uncertainty of being unemployed drove him to depression. But he said he needed to overcome this emotional battle so he focused his energy on doing research on the internet about laws relating to racial
discrimination in Australia. At the same time, he approached community workers in his local ethnic organisation who promptly gave him advice on how to go about filing a formal complaint with the Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB), who found that his case had merit. Gerry opted not to get free legal representation and instead, chose to handle the legal matters by himself. Even though he did not have any legal experience, he was able to defend himself successfully before the Administrative Decisions Tribunal (ADT) and was compensated for his illegal dismissal.

In another case, an elderly Chinese couple reported to their ethnic organisation that counter staff at a government office treated them rudely. Upon learning about this, the community worker called the office right away and reported the couple’s experience to the manager who apologised for the incident. Participants who became victims of domestic violence were also very grateful for the social workers and counselors who helped them through their crisis. They said with the help of social workers from government agencies and community organisations, they were able to get free legal advice, temporary shelter, police protection, and psychological and emotional support. They were also able to attend courses for building up their self-esteem and seminars on how to handle divorce.

Some participants argued that they preferred to confide in people who spoke their language since they had difficulty expressing their feelings in English. Some said they went to ethnic organisations for help because they felt more comfortable and could relate to people from the same cultural background. However, others (especially those involved in domestic violence) said they only confided in people they could trust (e.g. family and friends) because they were afraid of losing their privacy or of becoming the subject of gossips. These may explain why individuals do not seek outside support services from counselors or community workers right away. But others may simply be not aware that such services and facilities exist. To counter this, participants suggested that all newly-arrived migrants be informed of the availability of the services provided by the migrant resource centres and the ethnic organisations “so that in times of trouble they know where to go” (Dolly, F/MA/Fil).
8.1.3 Community level anti-racism strategies

Broadly speaking, anti-racism education in Australia has traditionally focused on two target groups: school-aged children and public sector employees. But many interviewees commented on the need for anti-racism strategies focused on educating ordinary people at the local community level. They recounted varied experiences of being verbally abused on the streets or in public transport, of being ignored by service or counter staff, and of being attacked by strangers. They interpreted these experiences as manifestations of deep-seated racist attitudes among the ‘uneducated’ in the community. Participants also tried to explain the rise in incidences of more blatant manifestations of racism at the community level. They said Anglo Australians might be feeling threatened by the growing presence of Asian businesses and homeowners in communities that they used to dominate, an observation consistent with the findings of a recent study (Wise 2005). Noble (2005) suggests that a ‘whole-of-community approach’ is needed so that Anglo Australians do not feel left out or disadvantaged by programs that may appear to be catering only to the needs of minority groups. This means that anti-racism strategies should be inclusive and encourage participation by all segments of the community.

Local communities and organisations should be proactive in promoting positive community relations rather than simply reacting to racist incidents as they occur (Multicultural Affairs Queensland 2001). But a 1996-1997 survey of about 300 local councils in Australia (Dunn, Hanna & Thompson 2001) has revealed that only 29 percent of local councils reported having any kind of anti-racism policy. This is perhaps the reason why it is not surprising that many local councils fail to instigate an official response when incidents of racism occur.

Participants suggested that more resources be provided for supporting local initiatives that encourage community building and intercultural contact. Their suggestions ranged from holding sports activities, multicultural fetes, fundraisers, and similar activities that provide opportunities for people to work for a common goal. Related to this, participants emphasised the need to develop a stronger sense of belonging to the community and to Australia as a nation.

Why do we still call ourselves ‘Chinese’, ‘Indians’, ‘Filipinos’ and only the Whites as Australians? We’re all Australian citizens! Why should we keep on stressing that we are
Chinese or that you are Filipino? We are all Australians. … In fact, we ourselves are the ones who tend to think in this kind of divisive way. The more we think like this the more we are going to emphasise our differences. But when are we going to stop drawing lines between this group and that? (Don, M/O/Chn)

Don’s statement was echoed by other participants who also stressed the need to avoid this insular way of thinking. They highlighted the importance of removing the ‘us versus them’ mentality.

Why are we always isolating ourselves as a group? Why don't we work together as one? I’m not saying that we should live in each other’s pockets. We can’t do that. But we should unify and not identify ourselves as Filipinos, Indians, Thais, etc. That is what is happening in reality. Instead of all of us working together as one, we have complex divisions that do not really help. (Cora, F/O/Fil)

This emphasis on developing a sense of oneness and belonging can also be linked to the universalistic arguments participants used to justify the need for anti-racism. This indicates a need to focus anti-racism efforts on promoting unity in diversity rather than the celebration of differences that multiculturalism tends to emphasise.

8.1.4 Living in Harmony Program

A major anti-racism strategy being implemented by the government is the Living in Harmony Program (LIH), which basically provides funds for projects that promote harmony and address issues of racism in the community. The LIH has three stated aims: (a) to celebrate Australia's multiculturalism; (b) to promote the common values of respect and good will; and (c) to say ‘no’ to racism. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) administers this Program through three complementary national streams: a public information strategy, a community grants program, and a partnerships program.

As part of the LIH’s public information strategy, the government encourages all sectors to mark the observance of Harmony Day on the 21st of March each year, to coincide with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. DIMA produces and provides free materials (e.g. banners, posters, ribbons, brochures, t-shirts) that anyone can use for this event. Harmony Day posters and banners used in 2006 carried the slogan ‘You + me = Us’, a message promoting unity in diversity. The message appears to be based on the
recategorisation or superordinate identity model for prejudice reduction (Dovidio et al., 1998) which suggests that anti-racism efforts should try to reduce intergroup distinctions by encouraging members of different groups to identify with one larger ‘superordinate’ group.

Through the LIH, DIMA also provides small grants to incorporated, non-profit organisations for initiatives that develop local solutions against racism at the community level. Over $12.5 million in grants were awarded to 304 community projects from 1999–2005. The popularity of the program as a source of funds is evident in the large number of applications received each year. Around 3,000 grant applications are processed each year but only ten percent is successful. The priority areas for 2006 included: interfaith issues; new and emerging communities; school and educational organisations; indigenous Australians (DIMA 2006a).

Through the LIH partnerships program, DIMA has formed strategic relationships with major organisations and peak bodies on ‘projects of national and strategic significance to improve social cohesion, tackle racism and generate better understanding, respect and cooperation among all Australians’ (DIMA 2006a). DIMA’s partners include community-based organisations (e.g. the Australian Multicultural Foundation and the Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau), public sector organisations (e.g. the Family Court of Australia), and business organisations (e.g. the Australian Information Industry Association) (DIMA 2006a).

There is no publicly available document that could show proof that the program has been evaluated independently. But a concrete outcome of the program is the growing number of reports on innovative anti-racism strategies that different groups have developed and tested with funding support from LIH. For instance, an information kit has been developed to assist civic and religious leaders develop multi-faith networks in their local communities (Cahill & Leahy 2004). This information kit is an offshoot of research done on religion and social cohesion (Cahill et al. 2004). A similar resource manual, Achieving Harmony through Religious Understanding was produced to help teachers encourage students through a four-week activity program to learn more about the different religions in Australia (Australian Multicultural Foundation 2000). The Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University is also currently undertaking the Building Neighbourhood Community Harmony Project also funded under the LIH program. This action research expects to provide valuable insights into the role of local government in building sustainable community across and between different cultural
communities, and seeks to develop innovative models for promoting community harmony at the local level.

Most of the interviewees were aware of the LIH program, with many saying that they have been involved in various Harmony Day activities. This high level of awareness is due to the government's efforts to assist grant recipients to publicise their activities through its media contacts and through the LIH website. But interviewees were unanimous in saying that Harmony Day activities had limited value since these were only effective as a form of celebration. Most participants acknowledged the value of showcasing different ethnic food, costumes, dances, and products during Harmony Day street parades or fetes. However, only people from ethnic groups participated in these activities. Interviewees said Anglo Australians within the local councils or communities should be encouraged to participate. According to a key informant, “They (the Anglo Australians) are hard to convince but we should put more energy and effort into encouraging them instead of isolating ourselves and saying Harmony Day is mainly for us minority groups” (Delia, F/O/Fil).

Harmony Day celebrations are limited in the sense that very few non-ethnic groups participate. But more importantly, harmony day activities fall short of meeting the other stated objectives of the LIH program—to promote the common values of respect and good will and to say ‘no’ to racism. One key informant (Delia, F/O/Fil) who worked for many years as a senior staff at a multicultural resource centre commented quite forcefully that money being spent for Harmony Day activities is not being used wisely.

Harmony Day has been limited to celebrating cultural diversity because the government doesn't really care. They just give you some money but they don’t even have a clue about what Harmony Day should be. They just say, “Okay here is $10,000 to spend”. So, what do we end up doing? We just have a picnic in the park but really, there’s very little intercultural mixing. (Delia, F/O/Fil)

She added that spending on anti-racism is “a waste of money”, suggesting further that this money should be spent on what she perceives as “more pressing problems” such as health and housing.

Two student leaders made similar comments saying that universities hold Cultural Week activities to coincide with Harmony Day but these are “quite superficial” (Bea, F/Y/Sng), and
more geared towards socialisation rather than encouraging cross-cultural interaction. “Both parties need to get their acts together. Ethnic groups need to engage more with the broader communities instead of isolating themselves. Anglo Australians should also take the initiative to learn about other cultures” (Dave, M/Y/Ind).

In summary, participants valued the interpersonal and collective support they got and recommended a strengthening of anti-racism intervention strategies at this level.

### 8.2 Cultural-symbolic interventions

The term ‘cultural-symbolic’ is appropriate for classifying anti-racism strategies that are neither interpersonal/collective nor socio-political in orientation. Strategies that can be classified under the cultural-symbolic category include those that are designed to counter racialising discourse as perpetuated through news and entertainment media. They also include those that use an institutional approach. In other words, cultural-symbolic interventions can be defined as those strategies that focus on values formation, formal and informal education, and media interventions.

None of the participants mentioned the role of the religious sector in promoting racial harmony and social cohesion. But it must be acknowledged that more and more churches and religious groups are becoming increasingly visible and forthright about their anti-racist stand.

#### 8.2.1 Values formation

A recurring theme in participant interviews was the importance of having good values and the role of the family in inculcating these values. This is different from racial socialisation that Black Americans or Indigenous Australians may adopt as a strategy to strengthen their children’s ‘armour’ against racist attacks. With racial socialisation, parents ‘prepare’ children by making them aware at a young age that they belong to a racialised group. The strategy being suggested by participants in this study is that all parents take responsibility for ensuring that children realise early on that basic human values must be upheld at all times, specially the value of respect towards everyone regardless of background.
The importance of having good values was pointed out especially by several interviewees who explained how their upbringing and value system helped them cope with their racialisation experiences and guided them in their choice of how to respond to racist events.

If you come from a good family and you have been brought up with good values, you will know how to react when someone confronts you with racist remarks or behaviour. Values are developed as a result of good upbringing. My mother taught me early on that if you can't say anything good about people, don't say anything at all. She also said, start believing in yourself and in other people, maybe they will believe in you. … I personally don't think it's religion but more of upbringing. (Arshun, M/MA/Ind)

The Government has also recognised the potential of value formation as a strategy for reducing racial tensions. Recognising that 'education is as much about building character as it is about building specific skills' (Department of Education Science and Training 2005: 1), the Australian government is providing $29.7 million over four years (2004-2008) to implement a Values Education Program, a national initiative designed to foster and support improved values education practice in Australian schools.

The Government has mandated schools to incorporate into its policies and curricula the teaching of nine ‘shared’ values: (a) care and compassion; (b) doing your best; (c) fair go; (d) freedom; (e) honesty and trustworthiness; (f) integrity; (g) respect; (h) responsibility; and (i) understanding, tolerance and inclusion (Department of Education Science and Training 2005).

The Education Department is hoping to inculcate these values into the younger generation by implementing the framework in primary and secondary schools. This is a commendable strategy in that it is a preventive rather than a remedial approach to solving problems in social relations. However, values taught in school need to be reinforced in the home and community environments. ‘Schools cannot go it alone in their attempts to counteract the oppressive effects of racism; what is required is a much broader alliance of schools and community-based groups working for its elimination’ (McInerney 2002). The Government has recognised this need and so as part of its Values Education Program, it is providing funds to support efforts by schools to develop their own approaches to values education in partnership with their local communities.

Education can be used as a tool for value formation. Equally important is how education can be used to directly counter racism. Majority of the participants cited education as a principal
strategy for addressing race-related problems. According to Linda (F/MA/Fil), “No amount of legislation will change racism. What we really need is education starting at the primary level.”

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2001) has documented programs designed to educate youth and children around the world against racism. These programs include anti-racism strategies integrated into the formal educational system and also include informal educational efforts to promote anti-racism through the internet.

8.2.2 Formal education as a tool for anti-racism

In Australia, all schools are mandated to have active interventions that systematically address and counter racism. This is based on the recognition that racism in all its forms has an extremely detrimental effect on student learning and on the ability of teachers to deliver desired curriculum outcomes for all students.

The key elements of school-based anti-racism strategies are: (a) a commitment to schools imparting humanistic values, such as justice, human rights and civic responsibilities; (b) valuing of cultural and linguistic diversity which is reflected in curriculum, resourcing, and teaching practices; (c) a goal to achieve equitable outcomes for students from all backgrounds; and (d) a focus on the school as a community with an internal environment and culture responsive to policy interventions through programs and prescribed practices. (Racism No Way Website)

Under the Education Department’s Anti-Racism Policy, school principals and managers of worksites must ensure that all learning and working environments are free from discrimination and racism. To support this, each school must appoint an Anti-Racism Contact Officer (ARCO) who should be appropriately trained on the procedures for responding to complaints or allegations of racism in the school community. The ARCO is also responsible for assisting individuals put their complaint in writing and for explaining to the complainant their rights and responsibilities.

There is evidence that many schools have already incorporated anti-racism strategies and multicultural policies in their curricula (Multicultural Affairs Queensland 2001). One key
informant who works as a secondary school teacher confirmed this observation as she talked about the small strides she is taking in her efforts to contribute to the anti-racism effort.

We are actually encouraged as teachers, as educators, to have an inclusive curriculum that connects what students are studying to real life problems. For example, as a History teacher, I’m happy that the syllabus has been changed. When I look at it, it’s just a joy for me because that means I can teach peace, social justice issues, and the history of indigenous struggles. I can teach about racial struggles. So, I am glad in that sense that in my area, education is not tokenistic. … Nowadays, I think critical literacy is imbued in the new curriculum. … We teach not only to impart knowledge but also to develop critical thinking in students. We encourage them to be critical about Australian history. So that’s what I think is good about it. (Edith, F/MA/F#)

While anti-racism strategies have not totally eradicated racially-motivated bullying and harassment in school, young interviewees were unanimous in saying that these policies have been effective in making younger generations aware not only that racism is wrong but also that those targeted should not put up with it.

In a review of existing strategies for fighting racism through education in Australia, Kalantzis and Cope (1997) highlighted the need to rethink pedagogy. They recommended that efforts be focused on ‘positive best practice strategies’ such as a thematic emphasis on tolerance, inclusiveness, sharing of core values, and unity-in-diversity. They also emphasised that anti-racism education should focus on improving social access and cultural and linguistic pluralism rather than the assimilation of minority groups into mainstream culture.

8.2.3 Informal education through the internet

The problem of cyber-racism or the proliferation and easy dissemination of racist material through the internet is now a major concern. The almost impossible task of regulating this medium has made it easy for the internet to be used for promoting racist propaganda (1998 Annual Report into Antisemitism in Australia). But a recent government report on cyber-racism (HREOC 2003a) acknowledged that current efforts to regulate racism in Australia are not effective in curbing the spread of racist materials.
However, the internet can also be a powerful tool in spreading anti-racist messages. One interviewee explained how they put up a website (i.e. Sexual Racism Sux) to counter the racist language being used by some members of the gay and lesbian community.

What we're trying to do is make people realise that racist language is not acceptable in the public space such as the net. And people who are in anti-racism work in North America have criticised us as being weak, saying that we should be doing something more than just trying to change the language. But for us, it's the most practical thing. We want to take that kind of language out of the public space, to get people to change the way they talk about race. (Tommy, M/MA/Chn)

Tommy added that they have learnt that using a less offensive approach is better than direct confrontation because people become more receptive to correction.

As a practical strategy, sometimes it is better to avoid defining racism in its strongest form because people react so negatively when you use the word. You can't even talk to them. They get defensive right away and say, “We're not racist!” So, you actually have to use different words even though it's about racism. …You can create controversy without scaring them. You have to increase awareness and soften them so that you are then able to talk to them. We try to appeal to the best in people, such as the stereotype that Australians are a caring people who want to give everyone a fair go. It's quite effective. (Tommy, M/MA/Chn)

Another unique strategy that Tommy adopted was to solicit the support of an Anglo Australian friend to educate or even confront other people about their racist views.

They respond to him with less defence because he's White. Besides, at times, I don't have the energy to engage people in debates about this because I feel that I am personally being attacked. He has more energy because he doesn't feel personally hurt. He feels angry about it because it is a political issue but he doesn't feel hurt. (Tommy, M/MA/Chn).

Similarly, different government agencies in Australia are using the internet as a tool for providing information to counter racism. At the most basic level, government departments are providing information through easy access to electronic copies of research reports and fact sheets that are written with the general audience in mind. A prime example is Face the Facts: Some Questions and Answers about Immigration, Refugees and Indigenous Affairs (HREOC 2005a), a publication designed specifically to dispel myths regarding immigrants and refugees. What is commendable about these fact sheets is that these are written using popular language.
that makes it easier for the public to understand the different aspects of racial discrimination. Similar fact sheets are available through the websites of the ADB and HREOC.

A key resource on anti-racism available on the internet is the government-funded Racism No-Way website, which is part of a larger project that seeks to help those in the educational sector develop or further implement anti-racism strategies. The project emphasises that to be successful in countering racism: action must occur at the system, school and individual level; implementation must occur across the full range of school activities; and a cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation is required (Racism No-Way website). In particular, the website provides materials that teachers and students can use in classrooms, including information on various anti-racism education programs and strategies in place in education systems across Australia and overseas. It also provides guidance on the specific responsibilities of systems, schools and individuals in the task of countering racism, as well as guidelines for planning and evaluating anti-racism strategies.

Another teaching resource on the internet is the website funded by the NSW Board of Studies called Making Multicultural Australia in the 21st Century, which provides multi-media resources on multiculturalism. Designed for upper primary and high school students, their parents, the teachers and the wider community, the website provides information on the contributions that different cultural groups have made to the development of Australian society and on the various views towards immigration and multiculturalism that have historically influenced government policies and programs and transformed the Australian population (Making Multicultural Australia in the 21st Century Website 2006).

A unique effort to reach out to victims of racism through the internet can be found in the Fair Go Australia Website (2004). Developed by a non-government organisation, the website has been designed to break through the isolation and fear that people experience when they have been attacked or harassed. Using messages written in popular language, the website clearly encourages victims of racism to report their experiences either through a confidential online form or through the website chatroom. It also provides information on where victims can get counseling and support.
These websites provide a wealth of information that is extremely valuable for anti-racism education. However, these resources are only accessible to those who have internet. It is not surprising then that only a handful of interviewees were aware of these websites. Besides, people do not surf the internet to look up racism-related sites unless they have been victimised. This implies that these have limited preventative and educative value.

8.2.4 Media Interventions

Strategies that can be classified under the cultural-symbolic category include those that are designed to counter racialising discourse as perpetuated through news and entertainment media. Many critics have accused the media of reinforcing negative stereotypes of minority groups (Sanson et al. 1998). For example, the research report Race for the Headlines: Racism and Media Discourse (ADB of NSW 2003) revealed that:

Racism permeates everyday media practices of news gathering and the narrative structures of news reportage. It can manifest as stereotypical or consistently negative portrayals of Indigenous or non-white individuals or communities, or in their invisibility in mainstream reports, images and narratives. It is reflected in their lack of representation at all levels of media organisations. It is often embodied in the attitudes and practices of those who hold power in those organisations, and in the reproduction of white Eurocentric values and images. It can also appear as the racialisation of social or economic problems. (ADB of NSW 2003)

In particular, the report cited how contemporary Australian media has portrayed Asian Australians in cartoons and sensational articles as ‘a threat to the social and moral well-being of an emerging Australia’ (ADB of NSW 2003). This negative portrayal may account for the persistence of negative attitudes towards Asian Australians as documented in past and recent research.

However, my study participants stressed that media can be used as a powerful tool for anti-racism. In particular, they suggested that media be used to promote the positive contributions of Asian Australians to counteract the negative image perpetuated by imbalanced reporting.

Mainstream newspaper and magazines should feature accomplishments by Asians and not just the negative stuff. Likewise, Asian newspapers should also feature good things about Australians so that eventually, we will get to know the good things about each other and learn to respect each other. (Peter, M/O/Chn)
Some also suggested that television programs should carry anti-racism messages of equality and brotherhood instead of romantic things. “These shows can be used to inculcate values for no amount of pounding can change attitudes. Media should develop more shows that incorporate messages promoting anti-racism” (Linda, F/MA/Fil). Other participants suggested that mass media campaigns be carried out, similar to the ones being done on domestic violence, drink driving and anti-smoking (Indira, F/MA/Ind). They suggested that this might be an effective way of educating the community about racism/anti-racism. However, such advertising campaigns need to be well designed in order not to create a backlash. As one study has found, anti-racism advertising campaigns can be effective in changing attitudes if these stress similarities between mainstream and ethnic groups and portray a number of ethnic groups rather than just one (Vrij et al, 1996 cited in Pedersen, Walker & Wise 2005).

A newly-developed multi-media resource that tackles racism/anti-racism issues is HREOC’s Voices of Australia project (HREOC 2005b). The project features a collection of about 100 real life stories about diversity and living together in contemporary Australia as well as other information about the Racial Discrimination Act, in a range of print, audio and website resources. What is significant about this resource is that it presents both ‘the good and bad faces of race relations in Australia over the past 30 years’. In other words, it does not try to deny that racism affects many ordinary Australians but it also emphasises the positive aspects of race relations in Australia.

A young participant pointed out quite astutely the media’s role in putting anti-racism in the forefront of ordinary people’s consciousness.

Asha (F/Y/Ind): Media’s role is to put issues out for people to talk about. Media can be the site for such debates. For instance, people read the papers in the morning then discuss the news with their workmates, their friends and families. Writers in the Australian media must treat anti-racism as a societal concern. They should make it a newsworthy issue. Anti-racism must become as accessible as other social issues to people so that they can engage with it in productive conversations at the everyday level of their own lives. Unless this happens, anti-racism efforts won’t reach people at all. It won’t affect their consciousness or their behaviour.

Q: Do you see that ever happening?
Asha: Only if the government changes.
8.3 Socio-political interventions

In this section, I will describe the macro-level strategies that are currently in place in Australia. I describe these strategies and provide a critique using data from key informant interviews, as well as a review of the literature. The bulk of the discussion will be on anti-racism legislation, workplace programs, and anti-racism advocacy.

8.3.1 Anti-racism legislation

Racism is not only unacceptable but also unlawful in Australia, as in many parts of the world. Australia is signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which is the first significant human rights instrument developed and adopted by the United Nations in the aftermath of the Second World War. The UDHR asserts that people must be treated with dignity and their basic human rights protected at all times without exception. Member states of the United Nations are not legally bound to this Declaration and ‘it is referred to [more] as an aspirational statement because it describes the human condition to which civilised nations should aspire’ (Racism No Way website). However, the UDHR has provided the ‘blueprint’ for a number of international human rights declarations and conventions that are now legally binding. Those which Australia has ratified include: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978); the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981); and the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (1992).

In particular, Australia is among 155 countries that have ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). The ICERD states that racial discrimination occurs when a person or group is treated differently because of their race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin and this treatment impairs, or is intended to impair their human rights and fundamental freedoms that include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights (Racism No Way website). Civil and political rights include the right to: equal treatment before the courts; protection by the Government against violence or bodily harm; right to participation in elections and to take part in the Government as well as in the
conduct of public affairs at any level and to have equal access to public service; freedom of movement and residence; right to own property alone as well as in association with others; right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion and expression and of peaceful assembly and association. Economic, social and cultural rights include the right to work, housing, health care and social services, education, cultural participation, and access to public places and services (Racism No Way website).

In addition to being party to these international conventions and declarations, Australia has legislated against racial discrimination both at the national and state levels of government. The 1975 Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) states that it is unlawful in Australia to treat someone else less favourably because of his or her race, colour, and descent, national or ethnic origin. The 1995 Racial Hatred Act extends the coverage of the RDA by providing a mechanism for people to complain about offensive or abusive behaviour. ‘Incitement to racist hatred or hostility, or racial vilification, encompasses words, whether speech or writing, and actions and gestures that promote hatred, hostility, contempt or serious ridicule of a person or group of persons on the ground of colour, race, ethnic or national background’ (Australian Law Reform Commission 1992: 159). The Racial Hatred Act aims to strike a balance between two valued rights, the right to communicate freely and the right to live free from vilification.

The HREOC administers at the national level the laws regulating all types of discrimination. As an independent statutory government body, the HREOC is headed by a President while the federal Attorney General is the Minister responsible in Parliament for the Commission. HREOC’s is mainly responsible for inquiring into alleged infringements under four anti-discrimination laws: the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Age Discrimination Act 2004. It is also responsible for inquiring into alleged abuse of human rights, including broad surveillance and reporting.

In addition to Commonwealth laws, the different States have enacted specific legislation, which make both direct and indirect racial discrimination illegal. These laws generally cover discrimination in education, employment, in the provision of goods and services, accommodation, and access to public places (e.g. clubs). Each State also has anti-racial vilification laws. But as McNamara (2002) has found, there is a diverse range of approaches to the regulation of racial vilification in Australia. Statutes applicable in the different States vary.
first, in the way they define what sort of conduct is prohibited or rendered unlawful and second, in terms of the mechanisms adopted for enforcing the law (McNamara 2002: 6). This report focuses on NSW legislation since most of the study participants were based in NSW and since the NSW model is representative of the dominant Australian regulatory approach.

In NSW, the ADB was set up in 1977 to administer the Anti-Discrimination Act. The ADB is mandated to: (a) investigate and conciliate complaints of discrimination, harassment and vilification; (b) inform and educate the people of NSW, employers and service providers about their rights and responsibilities under the anti-discrimination law; and (c) make recommendations to the government about amendments to the anti-discrimination law.

Generally, the ADB does not have the power to initiate investigations into breaches of the Anti-Discrimination Act. It can only take action about specific cases of discrimination or vilification if it receives a written complaint from members of the racial group that is being vilified or being discriminated against. This places serious limitations on the power of the ADB to combat racism. As acknowledged by a former ADB president, ‘Placing the burden of complaint solely on the community, undermines my ability to act in a way that sends a clear and consistent message to the community about what is and isn’t acceptable. The ADB should help the victims of racial vilification, regardless of their capacity to seek help’ (Puplick 2002).

Recently, calls were made to change racial vilification laws to speed up the processing of complaints (Governments urged to change race hate laws 2004). In response to this, the Anti-Discrimination Act was amended in 2005 to streamline the complaints process (ADB of NSW 2005). For instance, the time limit for lodging complaints was extended from six months to one year from the time the incident occurred. In addition, the revised Act now mandates that the ADB help people write formal complaints (especially those who are illiterate, have cognitive or mental disability, or those who cannot read and speak in English). Equally important is the new provision allowing the Board ‘to enforce orders when systemic racism is involved and the individual complainant does not have the resources to bring Tribunal proceedings against the respondent and it appears in the public interest to do so’ (ADB of NSW 2005). This new provision is designed to address previous criticisms that the Act does not address systemic or institutional racism but is limited to providing redress for specific instances mentioned in individual complaints.
The ADB can only investigate complaints of racial discrimination or vilification, but it does not have the power to make a legal judgment on the complaint. Instead, the ADB tries to resolve the dispute by facilitating conciliation between the parties involved so that they can reach a negotiated settlement of the complaint. The ADB provides a mediator free of charge. While most complaints are resolved through the conciliation process, those that cannot be settled are referred to the Equal Opportunity Division of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal (ADT) for public hearing and determination.

The ADT is empowered to hear and make a legal judgment on complaints of racial discrimination or vilification. In cases where the ADT decides that there is merit to the complaint, it can order that the successful complainant be compensated either through monetary or non-monetary means. Non-monetary remedies (such as the ordering of an apology, job reinstatement, changes in contract, etc.) ‘can have an educative effect, assisting to anticipate and eliminate future discrimination’ (Andrades 1998) especially in cases of indirect discrimination involving damages caused to an ethnic group.

The ADT can also decide to order that monetary compensation be provided for losses or damages suffered. However, the law does not clearly specify the criteria for assessing the level of monetary compensation. As such, ‘tribunals have had to devise their own standards for such decisions’ (Andrades 1998). But the law imposes a statutory ceiling on the level of monetary compensation that one can receive for damages caused by discrimination ($40,000 in most states except in the Northern Territory where it is $60,000). This statutory ceiling can deter unscrupulous individuals from making spurious complaints. However, Andrades (1998) criticised this saying that it ‘undervalues’ the harm caused by racialisation.

The damage generated by an act of discrimination is, in a sense, impossible to compensate. But where a system of law provides an avenue for the payment of money to redress the hurt, then the level of damages awarded should not detract from the gravity of the wrong done. ... Where ceilings are placed on the amount of available damages or where tribunals steer an overly conservative course, the trauma of discrimination is compounded by the sense that the legal system itself operates in a discriminatory way, placing one class of litigant above another. This is especially ironic when the instrument which generates the imbalance was itself designed to prevent and eliminate discrimination. (Andrades 1998)
A major limitation of anti-racism legislation is that it covers mainly overt or public acts of racism (e.g. harassment, violence, duress and vilification) and does not adequately provide protection from more subtle forms of racialisation. In fact, the law requires that the racist incident must have ‘occurred within sight and hearing of other people…or in a place to which the general public is invited or has access’ (HREOC 2003b). This requirement has created a mainstream perception that racism has to be *seen* to be proven as real and therefore able to be acted upon. Thus, it is not surprising that the bulk of racial discrimination complaints reported to police and the ADB cover these overt forms only. This requirement in effect dismisses the cumulative impact of racialisation that is caused to a large degree by subtle racialisation.

Another limitation relates to the criterion for determining the merit of a complaint; that is, it must be relatively serious. As described in guidelines formulated by HREOC, ‘The act must have, when considering all the circumstances, caused [the victim(s)] to *feel* offended, insulted, humiliated or intimidated. If the act was relatively trivial, it is probably not unlawful’ (HREOC 2003b, emphasis added). Note that the terms used—that is, ‘relatively trivial’ and ‘probably not unlawful’—leave a lot of room for debate. The lack of clear guidelines on what can be considered as either ‘trivial’ or ‘serious’ places a heavy burden on the complainant to demonstrate the full extent of the impact of racialisation, something which is very hard to quantify or measure objectively.

But as was revealed in the discussion of the long-term consequences of racialisation in Chapter 6, while incidents are often ‘not serious enough’ in terms of the definition provided by law, the psychological and emotional impact can be devastating. Seriousness of a racist incident is a precondition before sanctions are imposed but this requirement dismisses the negative impact of those ‘not so serious’ incidents on the racialised subject. In addition, who defines what is racism and whether an incident was indeed racially motivated? As Dei et al. (2004) have pointedly asked, ‘Whose words have merit when one speaks of racism? Is it the person who experiences it and suffers through it, or is it the person who says, “You’re being too sensitive, you shouldn’t read so much into it”? Corollary questions beg to be asked: What happens if the ADB finds that there is no merit to the case, or that it is not serious enough? Does this mean that the impact of the experience must also be dismissed as ‘trivial’ and not damaging enough? This ambiguity adds pressure on the racialised subject to provide burden
of proof, something which ideally should rest on the defendant rather than on the complainant (Paradies 2005).

Another major limitation of anti-racism legislation is its over-reliance on conciliation as the mechanism for handling complaints and resolving disputes. As McNamara (2002) pointed out, conciliation may be suitable for handling complaints of workplace discrimination since in such cases, the disputing parties know each other or are involved in some sort of existing relationship (e.g. employer/employee, service provider/customer). Conciliation may not be as appropriate for vilification cases since in majority of cases, the disputing parties do not know each other and the racist conduct is not directed personally at the complainant but more towards his ethnic or racial group (McNamara 2002: 56-57).

In a recent review of Australian legislature regulating racial vilification, McNamara (2002) noted that most States use the civil human rights regulatory model where complaints of vilification are resolved mainly through a conciliation process. McNamara considered this approach flawed in the sense that it:

- "Places too heavy a burden on the victim or target group to initiate and pursue enforcement proceedings;
- Purports to rely on conciliation as a process of dispute resolution without adequate regard to either the suitability of this method of handling racial vilification complaints, or the feasibility of conducting genuine conciliation sessions in the significant number of complaints that are received each year;
- Fails, due to its private and confidential nature, to advance the educational and 'standard setting' objectives of racial vilification regulation; and
- Achieves an unequivocal 'good' outcome for complainants in only a small minority of cases." (McNamara 2002: 310)

Despite these weaknesses, McNamara concluded that the civil human rights regulatory model is still preferable than the enforcement of criminal or tort law. Because there are wide differences in the content and application of these racial vilification laws, Reid and Smith (1998) stress that more long-term research is needed to determine exactly what the legislation was established to achieve and the extent to which such goals have, in fact been achieved.

In terms of providing an avenue by which complaints of racial vilification may be adjudicated, civil remedies have, arguably, been of more practical utility than criminal
sanctions. It is questionable, however, whether civil remedies are able to achieve the same symbolic and educative effects as criminal sanctions in providing a clear statement of the unacceptability of racist behaviour. (Reid & Smith 1998: 6)

Data from the present study revealed that participants were just vaguely aware of these anti-racism legislations. Majority of interviewees indicated that they were aware that racism is unlawful in Australia but most were unclear as to how racism is specifically defined by the law. There was obvious uncertainty over what could be considered unlawful conduct relating to racism and a lot of confusion about how racial discrimination is different from racial vilification or racist violence. Many asked if verbal abuse is enough grounds for filing a formal complaint. Or does the racist incident have to be more ‘serious’? While many expressed some knowledge of their rights, most were not aware of grievance procedures and the mechanisms for making a complaint.

One of the key findings of the 1991 HREOC National Inquiry into Racist Violence was that, ‘On the whole, public authorities do not respond effectively to reports of racist violence’ (HREOC 1991: 2). To address this issue, the report recommended that ‘police and other intelligence agencies accord a high priority to the investigation of racially motivated offences and racist groups and assist in ensuring the successful prosecution of such offences’. More than ten years after this recommendation was put forward, it seems that not much has changed since many interviewees in the present study still complained of what they perceived as the police’s lack of interest to take action when racist incidents are reported. Many commented on the futility and stressfulness of reporting their experiences to the police or the HREOC. “They can’t or don’t do anything about it anyway” (Lily, F/MA/Chn). Participants who reported what they considered as relatively serious incidents of racism to the police expressed disappointment. According to Mary (F/O/Chn) whose property was vandalised several times, “We thought the police would be the best people to help us but they did not do anything. They only looked and left. They don’t really care and so these [racist] people are not afraid to keep doing it.”

The difficulty of establishing whether a racist incident was ‘serious enough’ to warrant police intervention also deterred participants from reporting to authorities. In one instance, an interviewee who was attacked with a water bomb explained why she did not act on the matter, “I couldn’t be bothered. Besides, it wasn’t an assault. There was no physical harm but I felt so
humiliated. Those who did it were kids so I looked at it as juvenile crime. It was just a reflection of the values they were being taught” (Bea, F/Y/Sng).

Participants were disinclined to report to the police or other people in authority because of a lack of trust or a general cynicism that their complaint will not be acted upon. Those who contacted the police said they were disappointed because the latter appeared disinterested and largely unable to do anything about their complaints. On one hand, this finding suggests the need to train police and law enforcement agents so that they can be more sensitive to the needs of victims of racial discrimination. However, it is also possible that the police are simply not in a position to act on the complaint because of the limitations on their powers as imposed by the law.

Other participants expressed frustration at having to complete “too much paperwork” when filing a formal complaint. A key informant whose work involved helping individuals write formal complaints of racial discrimination said so herself that the paperwork involved is a real deterrent. “It really is difficult especially when you’re emotionally upset and you don’t know how to go about” (Ann, F/MA/Fil). As McNamara pointed out, ‘the current process does place a heavy onus on the aggrieved individual (or a representative organisation) to initiate the complaint, and [then persevere to] undertake substantial responsibility for the carriage of the matter’ (McNamara 2002: 55, emphasis added). As a result, most people say, “it’s too much hassle”, and just opt to forget about it.

Because of the ambiguity of racism and the difficulty of lodging complaints, it is not surprising then that only five (out of 64) participants said they filed complaints with the ADB. This very low rate of official reporting is consistent with the results of the Racism Monitor Project (Browning & Jakubowicz 2003b) which found that most experiences of racism are unreported because of ‘convoluted bureaucratic procedures, a sense that governments are unsympathetic (especially as resources have been reduced), and the random, fleeting though recurring nature of the experiences’ (Browning & Jakubowicz 2003b). The project recommended that a coordinated national system of recording racist events be put in place so that information from this can be used to make effective policy. As an offshoot of the report, the FairGo Australia website was set up to provide victims a mechanism for reporting their experiences without having to be identified.
Participants acknowledged that anti-racism legislation can protect minority groups from blatant and direct forms of racism and provides racialised subjects with a mechanism for seeking redress. However, some questioned the adequacy and appropriateness of such legislation in addressing everyday racism or the subtle, covert forms of racialisation. According to one interviewee who was excluded in primary school because she was of Indian descent, “You can’t legislate to stop children from being mean to others who are of a different colour. Racist bullying is also something that is not that easy to prevent. While this type of behaviour is certainly socially undesirable, this does not constitute a criminal act and so no amount of legislation can totally eradicate these” (Asha, FY/Ind). A key informant who was a former member of the ADT expressed similar views regarding the limitations of anti-racism legislation.

The ADT is not designed to eliminate or minimise racism. Anything reaching the level of the ADT is already a full-blown case. Both parties are already on a head-on collision. If the case is settled before the hearing, then you can say that conciliation has taken place. But even with conciliation, you can’t remove the deep-seated ill feelings on both sides. And so, when it has come to that end already, it’s not so much about eliminating or preventing racism but only minimising the damage on both sides. (Don, M/O/Chn)

“Whilst national tribunals and laws are appropriate for national issues, they are not appropriate for ‘everyday’ experiences of racism, which may be more appropriately addressed on an individual or local level” (Multicultural Affairs Queensland 2001).

Discussions with participants on the government’s role in combating racism revealed strong discontent about what can be described as a lukewarm and ambivalent approach to anti-racism. Overall, participants acknowledged the government’s efforts to address racism but stressed that not enough is being done. Several interviewees argued that the present political leaders have to be changed in order for anti-racism to prosper (Edwin, M/O/Fil, Carmen, F/O/Chn). “I think the government’s attitudes also influence the lower level of people that’s why we can still see and meet racists in our society” (Don, M/O/Chn).

Others put the blame directly on Prime Minister John Howard who has been vocal about his dislike of multiculturalism. According to Hollinsworth (1997: 136), John Howard finds the term ‘multiculturalism’ disagreeable at the very least. According to one participant, “John Howard doesn’t like migrants so he won’t do much for us migrants” (Jenny, F/MA/Chn). Another
participant drew a direct link between the government’s attitude towards anti-racism and the lack of public support for anti-racism measures.

Some authors have also been quite critical of the present day leadership’s approach to anti-racism. One of the most vocal critics Ghassan Hage has written:

Under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard, Australia evolved from a “tolerant”, forward-looking society into one of the most intolerant and conservative societies in the Western world. Today, Australia’s multiculturalism is only useful as political rhetoric and an instrument of marginalisation. (Hage 2005)

Racism is no longer considered to be very high on the policy agenda as evidenced by the cutting of funding to ethnic agencies and the dissolution of the position of Race Relations Commissioner.

8.3.2 Workplace programs

In addition to the anti-discrimination legislation already discussed, Australia has in place at the Federal and State levels, several laws that are specifically designed to protect workers’ rights. Australia ratified in 1973 the International Labour Organisation Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958). In addition, Australia has enacted the Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act (1987) that requires organisations to ensure fair outcomes in all areas of employment. Within these guidelines, an employee has the right to be chosen for promotion based on merit, to choose an individual career path, to be free from harassment in the workplace, and to have access to grievance resolution procedures.

The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society (1998) aims to ensure that public services are responsive to the needs of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This Charter requires all government agencies to incorporate cultural diversity considerations into its policies and programs and to provide continuing cultural diversity training for its entire staff. The private sector is also expected to observe EEO principles and to have cultural diversity programs. But a recent survey (B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission Inc. 2002) of 190 Australian businesses found that while almost four out of five organisations reported having a culturally diverse workforce, 60 percent of the organisations did not run any
cultural diversity program. Half of these organisations stated that although they support cultural diversity programs in principle, they regard them as unnecessary as there are no serious problems within their company. The study concluded that more needs to be done to ensure that far-reaching programs of social equity are better taken up by industry and commerce (B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission Inc. 2002).

Despite all these legislations, evidence from this study and other previous research reveal that racial discrimination is still a problem in Australian workplaces, especially in the private sector. Sixteen participants who experienced workplace racial discrimination said they were only “vaguely aware” of the laws that are supposed to protect them from unfair work practices and undue harassment. They acknowledged that their organisations have policies on EEO that are supposed to guarantee protection of their rights to equal access to opportunities for training and advancement. However, these guarantees only exist on paper and that the reality is a far cry from the ideal. “In reality, there is a two-tier system where brown-skinned women like me are on the bottom rung of the organisational ladder” (Indira, F/MA/SrL).

According to many interviewees, anti-discrimination laws have effectively put a curb on overt and direct manifestations of racialisation in the workplace. But these laws have not eradicated institutional racism. Many cited the difficulty of proving the extent of racial discrimination, which they believe, is endemic during the hiring and recruitment process. “We [Asians] are at their mercy. We just have to accept the fact that it’s really an uneven contest”, said Arshun (M/MA/Ind) who was quite emphatic in saying that no one should be rejected because of being ‘overqualified’. He suggested, quite uniquely, that anti-racism education should also be directed at those working in recruitment and human resources agencies.

In all of the workplace discrimination stories recounted by interviewees, the perpetrator was the immediate supervisor so interviewees said they did not do anything at first because they were afraid of losing their jobs. This signals an obvious awareness of the power differentials inherent in the workplace organisational structure. But when interviewees learned more about their rights through information provided by their union representatives, grievance officers, and workplace counselors, they became more assertive, especially when they got support and encouragement from their co-workers.
Efforts to address racism-related problems (especially in workplaces) are framed by legislation that requires proof that an individual’s experience is really linked to racism and is serious enough to be considered by the ADB. But this burden of proof lies squarely on the shoulders of the complainant, which is perhaps the primary reason why many choose not to file formal complaints. This underscores the need for workplace counselors, grievance officers, and the Anti-racism Contact Officers in schools to help clients talk about their grievances without minimising or dismissing their complaints.

In general, participants who belonged to a union were happy with the grievance procedures in their workplaces. They said their union representatives were particularly helpful not only inBriefing them of their rights and advising them on the appropriate course of action to take, but also in giving them much needed encouragement and emotional support. Those who did not belong to any union experienced more difficulty coping with the stress of fighting for their case.

Interviewees who filed formal complaints with the ADB were unanimous in saying that the long and arduous process of fighting for their rights was “very, very stressful”, something they wished they did not have to go through. Most decried how they had to replay the racist incident in their minds many times over in order to provide a full account of their racialisation experience. They also bemoaned how they had to relive the negative emotions each time, a process that made some doubt their own interpretation and reactions to their racialisation experiences. As Harrell (2000: 45) suggested, having to relive the racist experience could potentially be more ‘stressful over and beyond the original experience’ which implies that the impact of racialisation goes well beyond the actual incident.

Participants noted that a lot could still be done to improve anti-racism workplace measures. Many suggested that the approach to anti-racism in the workplace should be similar to the way occupational health and safety (OH&S) issues are handled. This means acknowledging openly the potential threat of racism to workplace cohesion and productivity, having in place mechanisms for minimising occurrences of racism and for handling issues when they erupt, and providing regular cultural diversity or racism awareness training for all staff. Cognisant of this need, the HREOC has been providing through fact sheets available in print and in electronic form, information and resources designed specifically to help employers understand and meet their obligations under the various workplace anti-discrimination legislations.
(HREOC 2004b). A central provision in these legislations is the notion of 'vicarious liability' which simply means that employers 'may be held vicariously liable for the actions of employees if they have not taken all reasonable steps to prevent the discrimination and harassment from occurring both within the usual work environment and at [other] employer sponsored functions'. This is a good provision since it emphasises command or collective responsibility and encourages employers to be pro-active in ensuring that racism is minimised in the workplace.

Participants also stressed the need for cultural diversity training especially for service-oriented organisations (e.g. nursing homes, hospitals, bus companies, etc.) where there is frequent contact between staff and clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Citing their various experiences of being treated rudely by service staff in restaurants, buses, shops, and other public places, participants suggested that the HREOC should focus on small businesses since these most likely do not have the personnel and resources to conduct racism-awareness workshops and cultural-diversity training.

8.3.3 Anti-racism advocacy

Fourteen (out of 64) interviewees said they were actively involved in organisations whose purview included dealing with the issue of racism. Many noted that their concerns and activities dealt with the general issues of discrimination and human rights rather than being focused on racism alone. This may indicate that they recognise that racism cannot be addressed in isolation to other issues such as gender, class, age, and sexuality.

An interviewee who suffered a lot of racism in primary school talked about how her experiences spurred her to become an anti-racist activist.

Asha (F/Y/Ind): I think my interest in social and political issues was the offshoot of my racism experiences in primary school. Even at the time, I thought there was something unfair about it. So, through my studies, I have been trying to articulate what exactly went wrong. I have been trying to marry ideas about people’s personal experiences and their subjectivity and their life circumstances and such broader social forces and institutions to try and come up with an idea of what racism is about.

Q: Can you give me more details about what exactly you did as part of your efforts to address the issue of racism?
Asha: Well, part of it was talking with other students, talking about my experiences, explaining why these were upsetting and wrong but also participating in what I thought was a broader social movement. There were a lot of forums at school that I and other people organised and I talked about land rights, restoration, and reconciliation.

When I asked why she volunteered to be interviewed for this study (after learning about it from a blind email), Asha (F/YA/Ind) said, ‘I figured it would be interesting and that it is a worthwhile thing to help out with. I wanted to tell my story since I didn’t want to remain silent and be marginalised. Participating has made me feel that something good has come out of my experience.’

Other interviewees stressed the need to network with individuals, groups and organisations especially in light of the limited resources available for anti-racism work.

The strategy that worked for us as a group is linking with other like-minded people. You don’t have to confine yourself with Asians. You can work with Indigenous people or trade unionists who can actually help you in your anti-racism work. You have to work in a group to strengthen your cause. That’s a good way of fighting racism, by networking, collaborating and linking. But you have to be genuine about it. If you are there for the wrong reasons, then that is when it works against your cause. You have to be really sincere or genuine about it for it to work. (Edith, F/MA/Fil)

In addition, key informants highlighted the need for more Asian Australians to be actively involved not only in their own ethnic organisations but also more importantly in governing and policy-making bodies. According to one key informant who has been nominated as Australia Day Ambassador, this need for more visible representation is as pressing as before.

The fact is while Asian Australians are no longer the focus of racism. In reality, the power imbalance is still there. You only have to look at how many dark-skinned people are in governing bodies to see this. … There are so few of us who get the chance to speak out in behalf of ordinary people. We need to take every opportunity to spread goodwill messages to counter the biased rhetoric in the media. If we don’t make the effort, it will be even worse. And that is why I have persisted. (Don, M/O/Chn)

Another key informant who has been involved in the drafting of policies and legislation relating to multiculturalism and anti-racism stressed the importance of raising the profile of Asian Australians. “Minority group leaders who are known to Australians are treated with high regard and so they see you, not as a Filipino, or Chinese, but as one of them. But it is also, how you
present yourself. … To be respected, you have to respect yourself first. Whatever I do, I always do it to the best of my ability” (Anggie, F/O/Fil).

8.4 Discussion

Many asserted that the government’s policy of multiculturalism has improved race relations in Australia. Many acknowledged the significant changes in Australia’s race relations policies, ‘from one of open racism, through the White Australia Policy and the policy of assimilation, to an official policy of pluralism—multiculturalism—in less than 30 years’ (Vasta 2005: 12). Participants noted that because of these policy changes, the situation is “much better now”. While this finding partly confirms the widely held belief that race relations in Australia is improving, it does not mean that Asian Australians are no longer racialised. In other words, while Asian Australians are no longer the focus of Australian racism, the insidious and long-term effects of being part of a racialised group are still acutely felt.

According to Tommy (M/MA/Chn), ‘social change is very possible. It's just a matter of time. We can educate people to be kinder to each other.” Similarly, Mandy (M/MA/Ind) noted that the younger generations are less conscious of differences between groups.

The next generations are no longer taking notice of differences but are instead valuing the diversity. And some in our generation are already starting to value the diversity. It is possibly those in this generation who are not working in interactive people roles (i.e. those who are process workers, etc.), who don't see the benefits of diversity. But when you work as a team and you see ideas coming from all sides and then you start to value diversity. (Mandy, M/MA/Ind)

This observation is mirrored by the results of a recent study investigating the attitudes of young Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds (Ang et al. 2006).

Many participants expressed a positive outlook regarding the future of anti-racism in Australia. Many expressed optimism that eventually racism will be minimised but not totally eradicated. One said, “As long as there is life, there is hope” (Buddy, F/MA/Fil), while another remarked, that ‘it is just a matter of time’ (Mandy, M/MA/Ind). “I will not see the changes in my generation. Perhaps two or three more generations after, racism will get lesser and lesser” (Don, M/O/Chn).
To synthesise, the findings presented indicate that participants had limited knowledge of and access to anti-racism interventions and outside support mechanisms. Participants had a low-level awareness of the cultural-symbolic intervention strategies and were only vaguely aware of legislation that is supposed to protect them from racial discrimination at work and in public places. This observation reveals a weakness in the implementation of anti-racism programs and advocacy services and points to the need for improved information dissemination on these anti-racism intervention strategies.

Data revealed that participants relied mostly on support from family and friends to cope with the stress of everyday racialisation. Niles (1999) found similar results after examining the relationship between acculturative stress and the mental health of Filipino and Greek immigrants in the Northern Territory. Parallel to the conclusions reached in this thesis, Niles found that a strong sense of cultural identity combined with support from family and community members bolster adjustment, even against stressors arising from experiences of racism and discrimination.

Participants stressed the importance of family not only in providing support in times of racism related stress but also in inculcating good values. The data confirms the widely held belief that the rate of reporting of racist incidents is low. This implies that statistics on complaints received by the police or HREOC do not provide an accurate picture of whether Asian Australians are still being targeted.

Figure 6 illustrates the different types of anti-racism interventions and external support mechanisms that individuals can use to cope with the impact of racialisation. These strategies may be categorised into:

- interpersonal/collective (support from family and friends, organizational support, support from community);
- cultural-symbolic (values formation, formal education, informal education, media interventions);
- socio-political (anti-racism legislation, workplace programs, anti-racism advocacy).
This chapter presented the last set of data collected in the study. The next chapter will summarise the main findings and present an integrated model for understanding racialisation.
This study provided an empirical investigation of the utility of the concept of racialisation in understanding the process, impact and response to racism. It sought to address an important underlying question of this thesis: does the concept of racialisation offer a useful analytical and practical tool for understanding race-related issues, especially anti-racism? The answers can be summarised in terms of the three main arguments put forward in this study.

- Racialisation provides a productive way of understanding racism experiences. It allowed for the unpacking of the multi-layered linked processes of racial categorisation, racial differentiation and problematisation, marginalisation and exclusion, inferiorisation and devaluation. These processes are ordinarily part of the experiences of minority people. They constitute what can be called ‘everyday racialisation’.

- Racialisation also enables us to grasp more fully the long-term and cumulative impact of being part of a racialised group. The everyday racialisation of minority groups has serious effects on their socio-psychological functioning and limits the life chances and economic opportunities available to them. Nonetheless, racialised subjects have agency.

- Minority groups cope with the stress of their everyday racialisation by drawing from their personal repertoire of discursive, tactical and behavioural strategies. These, in combination with outside support mechanisms, make up what can be termed ‘personal everyday anti-racism’ strategies. Racialisation provides valuable insights into when, how and why racialised subjects deploy these strategies to negotiate, contest and bridge the constraints and boundaries imposed upon them.
I began this study with the assertion that racism is still a problem in Australia and so, anti-racism is an important issue to investigate. Using findings from previous studies, I showed that negative attitudes towards Asian immigrants have been and are still prevalent. Armed with these basic premises, I conducted interviews and focus groups with 64 Asian Australians in order to learn from their stories of racist experiences. The data have provided evidence for a much expanded theoretical framework than the one I started with (as discussed in Chapter 3). The findings to support the arguments stated above have been presented in four separate data chapters (Chapters 5 to 8). This final chapter aims to provide coherence to the thesis by discussing how the different parts interlock.

This chapter has been divided into four sections. First, I will discuss the implications of the findings on how we conceptualise racism by arguing that the concept of ‘everyday racialisation’ is a better alternative to ‘everyday racism’. Second, I will highlight key findings relating to how participants used discourse, tactical responses and actions to deal with their racialisation experience. I underscore how these findings relate to racialisation and the other theories I used in my framework. Following this, I argue that looking at the problem of racism, as a problem of everyday racialisation demands a reorientation on how we conceptualise anti-racism. I suggest that anti-racism be reconstituted so that it incorporates personal strategies of coping and resistance. I also propose measures to strengthen the concept of ‘everyday anti-racism’. In the third section, I highlight the theoretical and practical significance of this study. I also present an integrated model for understanding racialisation that encapsulates the four previous diagrams that were presented and discussed in the preceding data chapters. In conclusion, I will reflect on the limitations of this study before citing recommendations for future research.

9.1 Rethinking racism and its impact

Data presented in Chapter 5 provided support for the premise that Asian immigrants continue to be targets of racist remarks, racial abuse, and other forms of racial discrimination. The many stories of racist experiences that participants recounted confirmed that Asian Australians are treated differently and negatively simply on the basis of their skin colour, looks, accent, culture, and language. From these we can conclude that the racialisation of Asian Australians is an
ongoing problem that cannot be swept under the carpet of political correctness or assumed to be a thing of the past.

But what do we mean when we say Asian Australians are racialised? Does racialisation help in clarifying crucial issues of race, racism and anti-racism? How useful was racialisation in providing the theoretical foundation and guideposts for deconstructing racist experiences? As was mentioned in the background chapters, the concept of racialisation has not been fully developed although it is now commonly used in the literature. As Murji and Solomos have emphasised, studies using racialisation as framework have to ‘account for why and how it is useful conceptually’ (Murji & Solomos 2005b: 4). There is also an imperative need to clarify the processes that are involved (Phoenix 2005) when we speak of racialisation.

This study demonstrates the value of using racialisation as theoretical framework. Using racialisation to deconstruct stories of racist experiences was productive since it enabled us to identify and describe more clearly the different processes that underpin racist experiences. Deconstructing the stories of racialised subjects laid bare the essence of racist experiences by revealing insights into when and how race becomes a salient signifier of difference. From the thematic analysis, the following racialisation processes were identified: (a) racial categorisation, differentiation and outgroup problematisation; (b) marginalisation and exclusion; and (c) devaluation and dehumanisation. Participants’ stories revealed the different circumstances in which they have been marginalised and excluded by being discriminated at work, provided with poor service, ignored, rejected, or suppressed. Their stories also provided poignant illustrations of how Asian Australians are treated as inferior, devalued and dehumanised by being patronised, underestimated, disrespected and subjected to racial abuse and racist violence. We can infer from these that racist incidents that produce either direct or vicarious racist experiences are but outward manifestations of ongoing complex and dynamic processes of racialisation.

9.1.1 Conceptualising ‘everyday racialisation’

Multiple processes of racialisation happen continually at both micro and macro levels. This suggests that racialisation experiences are commonplace especially among minority people. Analysing racist experiences using the broader prism of racialisation exposed how mundane
daily practices can intentionally or unintentionally convey disregard, disrespect or marginality. The concept of racialisation provides a better way of understanding the everyday nature or banality of these race-making processes.

An important question to ask at this juncture is: how do the findings of the present study compare with those of previous research? The results of this study reinforce Essed's theory of everyday racism (Essed 1991) wherein she suggested that racialising practices of marginalisation, problematisation, and containment infiltrate ordinary people’s lives. I have also expanded on Essed's three ‘main mechanisms of racism’ through the diagram of the multiple processes of racialisation that I presented as Figure 3 (in Chapter 5). The categories that I used to describe the different racialisation processes were defined from the perspective of the racialised subject. In other words, the focus is on how these processes are perceived or interpreted by those directly affected by racialisation. What I have not fully explored though, which is a definite strength of Essed's work is how structural factors influence the construction of minority people’s knowledge about the nature and processes of racism. This remains an area for future research.

‘Everyday racism’ is an established concept used to refer to systemic, recurring practices that marginalise, problematise and contain. However, the phrase conjures images of minority group members being subjected continually to racial abuse, racist violence, or other outward manifestations of racial discrimination because of the strong negative connotation attached to ‘racism’. This leads us to question whether racism is really still a problem given that these outward manifestations are now considered politically and socially unacceptable and therefore not as commonplace. But as the data have shown, while incidents of extreme racism occur infrequently, racial categorisation and outgroup problematisation are ongoing processes that are part and parcel of the lives of minority groups. Their experiences of being inferiorised, disrespected, and excluded are also not uncommon. In addition, while participants did not put much significance to their ‘racial’ characteristics and ethnic background, data revealed that their racist experiences made them more conscious that their Asian-ness is a factor bearing down on them. In other words, being racialised is a concern (almost a burden) that members of minority groups have to contend with everyday.
I propose then that ‘everyday racism’ be re-couched in terms of what I would call ‘everyday racialisation’ since the latter is a more inclusive concept. Everyday racialisation captures more fully the essence that the different racialisation processes occur continually at both macro and micro levels. The term also suggests that these processes are ordinarily part of the everyday experiences of minority people.

How then can we define ‘everyday racialisation’? Everyday racialisation refers to the processes by which race signifiers are used to differentiate and negatively evaluate individuals and groups. These processes are assumed to be happening continually at the subconscious and affective levels and become manifest through racist incidents. While the term ‘everyday racialisation’ suggests banality, it also implies complexity. In other words, everyday racialisation is commonplace yet not so easily understood. Everyday racialisation also implies that the processes occur continually but not always concurrently. Racial categorisation and differentiation and outgroup problematisation, as basic processes are assumed to be occurring always whenever we talk of racialisation. Without these two processes, there is no racialisation. The other processes occur in varying combinations but not all at the same time. Everyday racialisation is dynamic in that the processes are in constant flux or are fluid. It also suggests relationality in that there are always two people (or groups of people) involved—the racialising person(s) and the racialised subject(s).

9.1.2 Recognising racialisation’s multifarious effects

The multifarious effects of racialisation were discussed in Chapter 6. The poignant stories provided compelling evidence of how direct experiences of racism impact on individuals’ health and well-being both by increasing the overall stress burden and by constraining coping choices. The results showed that becoming a target of racism can produce immediate affective and physiological reactions. But more importantly, the data revealed that racialisation produces long-term socio-psychological harm and poses as a significant barrier to the economic advancement of racialised subjects.

No doubt, racism is harmful and racialisation is unfair. But ‘exposure to racism-related stress does not result in a single inescapable outcome, nor does it inevitably place a “mark of oppression” on the psyche of people of color’ (Harrell, SP 2000: 48). This implies that
individuals are affected by racialisation in varying degrees. Racialised subjects do not necessarily become dysfunctional. Some are able to overcome the challenges that they have to face as racialised subjects. And so as Harrell (2000) has pointed out, we need to explore why some people are psychologically (and otherwise) devastated by their racism experiences, while others are not as affected. ‘Illuminating the pathways to health, as well as disorder, is a critical step toward a comprehensive understanding of the impact of racism on well-being’ (Harrell, SP 2000: 48). In the case of Asian Australians, their strong spirituality has in part mitigated the impact of racism on their well-being. An awareness of being racialised propelled some participants to try to excel and to aim high. This, as well as a more focused investigation on the role of culture in mitigating the impact of racism, needs to be explored further.

9.2 Exploring repertoire of responses to racialisation

The importance of racialisation is more pronounced when race-related issues are analysed from the perspective of racialised subjects. Racialisation is not only useful for describing the processes underlying racist experiences, it is also valuable in providing insights on why and how racialised subjects respond in different ways to their experience of being problematised, treated as inferior, marginalised, excluded or dehumanised. In other words, racialisation is important for understanding not only the issues of race and racism but also anti-racism.

Understanding that racialisation involves multiple, complex and intersecting processes enables us to grasp the importance of looking at anti-racism as a combination of overlapping discourses, cognitions and actions. Recognising the complexity and depth of the problem of racialisation gives us a better appreciation of why racialised subjects need to be able to draw from a repertoire of strategies to help them cope with and resist racialisation. Looking at anti-racism through the prism of racialisation strengthens the notion that racialised subjects have agency. While individuals are constrained, marginalised, and inferiorised by racist practices, they are constantly engaged in strategies to negotiate, contest, or bridge the boundaries imposed on them by racialisation. ‘While recognizing that power is predominantly a social concept, we cannot forget that individuals do have agency and ability to act within and in spite of the confines and constraints of the larger social power structure’ (Dei et al. 2004: 5).
The results of this study provided valuable insights into when and how racialised subjects deploy the different discursive, tactical and behavioural strategies to negotiate, contest and bridge the constraints and boundaries imposed upon them. In the next sections, I will synthesise the findings relating to responses to racialisation to support my contention that anti-racism should be reconstructed to give more importance to personal strategies of coping and resistance.

9.2.1 Learning from the discourse of the racialised

There is a need for a shift in focus from analysing racialised discourse to understanding the discourse of the racialised. Thus, this study examined how participants used discourse as part of their repertoire of responses to racialisation. Data from Chapter 7 showed that participants used discourse: to make sense of their racist experiences; to justify the need for anti-racism; and to challenge mainstream discourse.

Explanations for racism. The data revealed that participants had multiple, contradictory explanations for racism. These explanations reflected the paradoxes and multiple meanings inherent in the way they interpreted their experience of being racialised. Ordinary Asian Australians tend to look at racism not as a form of social injustice brought about by systemic factors but as something that is caused mainly by the perpetrators' weakness of character. This tendency to pathologise the perpetrator is compounded by a tendency for some to take the blame for racism. Like the Dutch black women in Essed's (1991) study of everyday racism, the findings here revealed that Asian Australians view racism as the product of ignorance or wrong attitudes.

What are the implications of these findings? Data on explanations for racism showed that participants tend to put the blame for racism on individuals and groups rather than on institutional or structural factors. This was not surprising since such a ‘person-centred analysis’ has also been the approach taken in mainstream anti-racism efforts (Burnett 2001), where much of the focus has been on changing the perpetrator’s prejudicial attitudes. However, I agree with Dei et al. (2004: 13) that we must be wary of ‘commonsense pitfalls that suggest racism and oppression are questions of attitude and individual ignorance’. By blaming racism on the personal imperfections of the racist person, we may be unconsciously exonerating the
perpetrator (Reisigl & Wodak 2001). By blaming it on one's self, racialised subjects may be implicating themselves and may be accused of being complicit in their racialisation. These rationalisations and beliefs become culturally cemented as commonsense knowledge and are adopted as a virtually universal worldview. This contributes to the distortion of the racist experience and the muting of voices of the racialised (Dei et al. 2004).

Karumanchery (2003) who looked at racial trauma as an everyday part of the lives of minority people offers an alternative explanation of why racialised subjects tend to rationalise racism. He suggested that:

[T]he experience of racism functions to inscribe and re-inscribe an internal conflict of sorts, such that even when we resist our oppression, our actions, whether non-combative or oppositional still often work to reinforce the oppressor's hold on power and privilege. ... Like our oppressor we are indoctrinated to be disciplined and blind to the existence and reality of oppression and it is through this internal conflict that we are implicated in our oppression. (Karumanchery 2003: 103)

He adds further that: ‘As oppressed, we find ourselves in a struggle to survive because the traumatic nature of our experience and our existence prevent and or at least forestall the ability to recognize why we struggle’ (Karumanchery 2003: 167). Following this, I argue that we should recognize the possibility that the explanations for racism offered by Asian Australians do not necessarily mean complicity with the perpetrator. Instead, we can look at these conflicting discourses of racialised Asian Australians as part of their ‘strategic pose’ (Scott, 1990), as an integral part of their cognitive and emotional coping strategies. Asian Australians use these explanations for racisms primarily to make sense of racism. We should recognise these discursive strategies for their survival value. From this angle then, we can better understand why the discourse of the racialised seems to be more apologetic rather than accusatory. We can also appreciate why individuals do not always actively resist racialisation. We can better comprehend how racialised subjects get caught up in this ‘internal struggle to survive’, leaving them with little energy and resources to fight for their rights. However, as Karumanchery (2003) stressed, this internal struggle does not negate ‘the possibilities of personal resistance and agency’. This points to the need for strategies that empower racialised subjects so that they become more aware of the root causes of racism and would therefore be more equipped to resist their racialisation.
Dei et al. (2004) contend that being able to ‘name’ that “unnamable feeling” of being racialised can be empowering for those who bear the brunt of racism. Writing as minority peoples themselves, the authors assert that:

At the emotional level and without a critical gaze, we “know” that we feel otherized and isolated, but the words escape us, the knowledge escapes us and, as a result, we can neither act nor defend ourselves. But within and forever after, the experience when it suddenly comes into focus, we find ourselves able to place that “unnamable feeling” in context. … Acknowledging the “reality” of racism and the “real” physiological and psychological effects of its influence on our lives is ultimately empowering. (Dei et al. 2004: 176-177)

This increased awareness is important because it brings into focus what racism and racialisation are all about and why it should be resisted. Analysing stories of racist experiences from the perspective of racialised subjects highlights the point that their subjective interpretation of a racist incident is crucial in determining what constitutes racism and what racialisation is all about. It also emphasises that understanding the outcomes or effects of racialisation are more important than trying to ascertain the motives or intentions of the perpetrator.

Analysing how ordinary people make sense of their racist experiences is already a first step. Here then lies part of the significance of this study. By bringing to the surface ordinary people’s understanding of the causes of racism, we, as critical social researchers can help challenge the beliefs held especially by racialised subjects. As Wainwright (1997) suggested, ‘The point [of critical social research] is not simply to reveal the oppressive aspects of existing phenomenal forms as an end in itself, but to embed this knowledge in the consciousness of the oppressed in order that they might engage in practical activity to emancipate themselves’. The challenge then is to develop effective consciousness-raising strategies that emphasise why racialisation should be resisted.

Justifications for anti-racism. What types of discourse do racialised subjects use to justify the need for anti-racism? None of the respondents grounded their arguments for equality in terms of their legal rights. This is consistent with how they had limited awareness of the specifics of anti-racism legislation. Majority of the participants justified the need to resist racialisation because of a strong belief in universal equality. Participants asserted that all
human beings should be treated as equal because they have a common physiology, similar needs, and a common destiny. They also emphasised the value of respect.

Generally, Asian Australians rebutted notions of inferiority using similar universal rhetorical arguments that Lamont (1997) found in her comparative study of white and black workers in the United States and white and North African workers in France. Her study showed that in both countries, racist and anti-racist rhetoric are framed in universalistic terms. Similarly, Lamont et al. (2002) found that ordinary people, that is, those of working class status (as opposed to the elite) and those who are unaffiliated with activist organisations (as opposed to members of organised activist groups), usually rely on their own ‘cultural tool-kits’ or ‘repertoire of arguments’ to counter racism. They found that North African (black) immigrants rebut racism primarily by citing evidences of universal equality from their daily experience by arguing for example, that people of all nations and religions are equal because human beings have similar needs and physical characteristics. Another key finding is that the workers’ views on anti-racism differed markedly from the emphasis on multiculturalism, cultural relativism or the celebration of differences widely held in academic circles as effective antidotes to racism (Lamont & Aksartova 2002: 5). In other words, when workers affirm fundamental equality, they ground it not in cultural relativism but in the universality of human nature and, in the case of blacks and North Africans, the universality of morality. This implies that ordinary people’s conceptual frameworks with regards to anti-racism have little in common with multiculturalism. The same pattern of response was also found in the present study which points to the need to rethink how messages for anti-racism campaigns are designed. These anti-racism messages should carry positive messages of ‘oneness’ and ‘sameness’ rather than emphasising differences between groups. In the same vein, Lamont and Aksartova (2002: 6) suggested that, ‘Anti-racist academic discourse should focus more on the theme of the universality of human nature, as it resonates better with the worldview of ordinary people than more intellectual arguments having to do with multiculturalism and cultural relativism’. These findings also highlight the need to pursue comparative research using the symbolic or cultural boundaries framework suggested by Lamont.

**Challenging mainstream discourse.** Another interesting finding that emerged from this study was how individuals used jokes and sarcastic remarks to challenge mainstream discourse.
Joking allows racialised subjects to voice out their feelings and opinions without fearing the ramifications of their statements. This type of discourse embodies the ‘hidden transcripts’ (or ‘weapons of the weak’) that racialised subjects share and deploy as a means of fighting back. This type of discourse can also be seen as an integral part of their tactical response to racialisation.

9.2.2 Recognising the value of tactical responses

Through the prism of racialisation, we can better appreciate how ordinary people from minority groups are trying everyday to find ways to cope with their ongoing racialisation. We can also understand why some of these coping responses do not directly challenge racism and why tactical responses are important.

Racialised subjects may use tactical responses to negotiate the boundaries imposed by their racialisation, particularly by displaying forbearance and aiming high. This type of response was common among participants who experienced racial discrimination at work, who indicated that they had to initially endure their unfair treatment because they felt trapped and had no choice. But their inaction must not be interpreted as passive acceptance. Rather, their inaction can be viewed as a ‘tactical response’ whereby racialised subjects adopt a strategic pose as they pause to consider their options or best course of action. This ‘posing-and-pausing’ is necessary especially in situations where individuals feel powerless to do anything else. The forbearance that many of the participants displayed may be attributed to their strong spirituality and philosophical approach to life.

In fact, participants asserted that they did not see themselves as hapless victims, needing to be saved. On the contrary, many welcomed the opportunity to speak for themselves in order to point out that their response does not mean surrendering to their ‘oppressor’ but a conscious decision to do what had to be done. A few emphasised that although there were options available to them, such as transferring to another job or reporting the racist incident to higher authorities, they made a conscious decision to deal with the situation their way (including not overtly challenging racism) since it was the better alternative at that time.

As one key informant suggested:
The person who becomes a victim of practices that are inequitable could come up with their own strategies on what is best for them. In other words, consider [first] what is happening out there in the ‘real world’ and [determine] if you have the power to do anything... because it’s all incremental change anyway. ... [For example,] you can do it by way of influencing policy, advocacy or through one’s writings... hopefully, it will change people’s attitudes, but that doesn’t happen straight away. (Josephine, F/MA/Fil)

The notion of ‘tactical responses’ acknowledges that responses to racialisation are context-specific; these responses are not fixed but are dynamic. The idea that racialised subjects can draw from their repertoire of responses accommodates this need for flexibility and multiplicity.

9.2.3 Dissecting behavioural strategies

Behavioural strategies form an integral part of individual-level responses to racialisation. The data revealed how participants used actions in combination with their discourse and tactical responses. These actions or behavioural strategies were analysed in terms of how racial boundaries are reinforced, contested or bridged. From this analysis, three corresponding types of behavioural strategies were identified: defensive, offensive, and pro-active. Defensive strategies that may be likened to building and reinforcing one’s protective walls include: avoidance and escapism or boycotting and ignoring. On the other hand, offensive strategies include: reporting to authorities; availing of community and government services; and confronting the perpetrator by retaliating verbally and/or physically. Specific pro-active strategies that participants took include: teaching or educating the perpetrator; taking the initiative to make friends; and going out of one’s comfort zone and becoming involved in mainstream activities and organisations.

The results indicated that the use of offensive strategies was not the dominant type of behavioural response to racialisation. Data on outside interventions and support mechanisms accessed by participants reveals the reasons behind this rather disturbing trend. The study found that participants used mostly their own internal coping strategies (rather than relying on outside support and interventions) to deal with the stress of their everyday racialisation. They displayed low-level awareness of macro level anti-racism strategies (such as anti-racism education). Many were only vaguely aware of legislations that are supposed to protect them from racial discrimination at work and in public places. Their limited knowledge of outside
support mechanisms and anti-racism intervention strategies dictated, in large part, why they were hesitant to contest or challenge their unfair treatment. But many acknowledged the support they got from family and friends, as well as from ethnic organisations and migrant resource centers. Participants also reported that when they became aware of their rights and learned more about the system for seeking redress, they became more assertive. Significantly, while anti-racism legislation provides protection and serves as deterrent, macro-level strategies for dealing with race-related problems are not suitable for mitigating the impact of everyday racialisation. This conclusion is evidenced by how participants tend to rely more on their personal strategies for coping and to get support from family and friends rather than relying on community and government-initiated intervention strategies. This points to the need to rethink how we conceptualise anti-racism.

9.2.4 Reconstructing ‘everyday anti-racism’ strategies

How does looking at the problem of racism as an issue of everyday racialisation affect how we define anti-racism? Should the term ‘anti-racism’ be replaced with another phrase that incorporates the notion of racialisation (e.g. counter-racialisation; anti-racialisation) as is now being used by non-government organisations in Canada? Can we accurately say that there are strategies that can prevent or minimise everyday racialisation? To address this, I suggest that the word ‘anti-racism’ should still be retained and not replaced since use of the word ‘racism’ serves a powerful reminder of what the fight or struggle is all about.

Continued use of the word ‘anti-racism’ helps avoid what Tesmann and Bat-Ami (2001 cited in Murji & Solomos 2005a: 23) regard as the ‘de-politicisation of race’. According to them, ‘an analysis of racialization as the process of social construction of race can lead theorists away from the possibility of race conscious strategies for struggling against racism’. To guard against this, I propose that we use the term ‘personal everyday anti-racism’ and strengthen its conceptualisation by incorporating the suggestions outlined below.

First, we need to look at anti-racism as consisting not only of macro-level approaches to minimising racism, but as something that also involves micro-level personal strategies. The sociological approach dominates studies of race-related issues. Thus, racism is seen as a societal problem requiring mainly macro-level solutions. On the other hand, the
alternative approach from a psychological perspective is also limited in that it views anti-racism as mainly involving prejudice reduction strategies. The results of this study point to the value of incorporating micro-level personal strategies of coping and resistance into a reconstituted theory of anti-racism. Following the taxonomy suggested in Chapters 7 and 8, anti-racism should now be conceptualised as consisting of: (a) personal or individual level coping strategies; (b) interpersonal and collective support; (c) cultural-symbolic interventions and (d) socio-political interventions.

In particular, we need to look at anti-racism as something that not only involves organised efforts of resistance, but as something that also includes individual-level coping strategies. This means that anti-racism should not be seen as a project that should be undertaken mainly by advocacy groups or be the concern only of government. Anti-racism is also about how individuals cope with their everyday racialisation. There is a tendency to see anti-racism as something that is external to the individual. More emphasis is placed on organised efforts to combat racism. And yet the results of this study have revealed that those who are directly affected by racism only vaguely know of government or community initiated anti-racism strategies and tend not to rely on external support, except from family and friends. From this we can infer that individual-level coping strategies identified in this study (e.g. developing forbearance, spirituality, use of humour and tactical responses) should be considered an important component of overall anti-racism efforts.

Second, racist incidents have a cumulative impact on the individual and a compounding effect on racialised groups. Thus, we need to look at anti-racism as more than just an individual’s reaction or action in response to a specific racist incident but as something that individuals, groups, and communities should engage in continually. Feagin (1991) pointed out that ‘the impact of racism is much greater than the sum of individual incidents’ (cited in Harrel 2000: 47). Thus, the cumulative impact of the stress of being racialised everyday has a compounding oppressive effect when the sum of individual racist experiences is considered as contributing to the collective racialisation of minority groups. As the findings revealed, minority people engage in everyday anti-racism strategies. These personal strategies are an integral part of the overall effort to combat racialisation but we also need to develop strategies that encourage collective participation in anti-racism efforts. This also points
to the need for developing a more inclusive concept of anti-racism so that everyone can be involved (not only those from minority groups). The onus for resisting racialisation or fighting racism is not only in the hands of government but also in individuals and communities. Anti-racism should be seen as a shared responsibility.

**Lastly, we need to look at anti-racism as something that is more than just the opposite of racism. Anti-racism involves coping mechanisms but should also incorporate strategies for emancipation.**

Racialisation involves multiple, linked processes and individuals respond to these different processes in multiple ways, not necessarily always directly oppositional. Tactical responses must also be considered alongside the discursive and behavioural strategies. This means that we need to revise our understanding of anti-racism so that it is not viewed simply as something as the opposite of racism. Anti-racism can involve strategies that are not necessarily always aimed at resisting racialisation. Some of these strategies are coping mechanisms and tactical responses that form an integral part of the repertoire of responses to racialisation of minority groups. We should recognise these non-confrontational responses for their survival value.

Integrating coping mechanisms into our definition of anti-racism does not mean that experience of being racialised can be reduced simply to experiences of stress (Harrell, SP 2000). Racialisation certainly produces stress that impacts on individuals but structural determinants of racism should also be considered if anti-racism strategies are to be effective. Everyday anti-racism should not be seen merely as strategies for coping and surviving. It should also incorporate strategies for empowering racialised subjects.

In summary, minority groups cope with the stress of their everyday racialisation by drawing from their personal repertoire of discursive, tactical and behavioural strategies. These, in combination with outside support mechanisms, make up what can be termed ‘everyday anti-racism’ strategies.
9.3 Highlighting the study’s significance

Based on the outcomes of this study, we can conclude that racialisation provides a useful framework for describing the different circumstances when race becomes salient as markers of differential treatment. The value of using racialisation to frame the analysis of racist experiences is more pronounced when race-related issues are analysed from the perspective of those at the receiving end, or from the perspective of racialised subjects. It enables us to fully grasp that while race is not real (at least as defined in biological terms), racial markers of difference are still used everyday as bases for determining who is part of the outgroup, who is to be treated as inferior, or who is to be excluded. Racialisation also captures the essence that while race is socially constructed, racism is ubiquitous, durable and has real effects on the lives of ordinary people. Use of the concept of racialisation overcomes the rigorous distinctions between the binaries of institutional and individual racism since the focus is not on who or what is causing racism but on how and why racist incidents occur.

The significance of this study can be inferred in the ways in which it has contributed to theorising on race-related issues, and in providing a platform on which racialised subjects can speak.

9.3.1 Building theory

This study sought to provide fresh insights and new ways of understanding race-related issues. In particular, it was designed specifically to develop more fully the concepts of racialisation and anti-racism, as both suffer from a lack of conceptual clarity. The Integrated Model offered here (presented as Figure 7) emerged in direct answer to the need for a holistic framework that can guide future investigations on racialisation, racism and anti-racism. It builds on the original framework I presented in Chapter 3.

The model attempts to provide coherence to the different theories and findings presented in the preceding chapters. It focuses on racialisation at the micro level or from the perspective of racialised individuals. It identifies the different elements that need to be considered in order to understand fully the total racialisation experience. It also specifies the hypothesised links between these different elements. It represents my contribution to theory.
Figure 7:
Integrated Model for Understanding Racialisation and Anti-racism

(EVERYDAY) RACIALISATION

RACIST INCIDENT(S)
Racial Categorisation

Racial Differentiation & Outgroup Problematisation
Devaluation & Dehumanisation
Marginalisation & Exclusion

Impact on the Racialised
Identity

Health and well-being
Sense of belonging

(EVERYDAY) ANTI-RACISM

PERSONAL REPERTOIRE OF RESPONSES

Discursive Strategies
Behavioural Strategies
Tactical Response

EXTERNAL SUPPORT & ANTI-RACISM INTERVENTIONS

Interpersonal/collective
Socio-Political

Cultural/Symbolic

Agency and Hope

Impact on the Racialised

Sense of belonging

Identity

Health and well-being

Marginalisation & Exclusion
Devaluation & Dehumanisation
Racial Differentiation & Outgroup Problematisation

RACIST INCIDENT(S)
The integrated model is made up of two main sections: racialisation as the problem and anti-racism as the response. I have divided the model into different quadrants, each corresponding to the diagrams presented in the previous data chapters. These are summarised below:

- 1st quadrant (upper left-hand side) – Processes of racialisation (cf. Figure 3)
- 2nd quadrant (upper right-hand side) – Impact of racialisation (cf. Figure 4)
- 3rd quadrant (lower left-hand side) – Personal repertoire of responses (cf. Figure 5)
- 4th quadrant (lower right-hand side) – External support and anti-racism interventions (cf. Figure 6)

In each quadrant, the main elements are presented as contiguous, overlapping spheres (rather than as distinct elements falling on a straight line) to emphasise their interdependence or interconnections, i.e. their possible influence on each other.

Everyday racialisation is conceptualised as consisting of the processes of racialisation and the impact of racialisation. On the other hand, everyday anti-racism is conceptualised as being made up of a combination of personal repertoire of responses and the external support and anti-racism interventions.

**Everyday racialisation.** I had suggested earlier in this chapter that everyday racism be recouched as ‘everyday racialisation’. In the model, I have placed the word ‘(everyday)’—i.e. in brackets—and used it as a qualifier for the term ‘racialisation’ to indicate that some of these processes occur as part of normal human interactions (e.g. racial categorisation and differentiation), while the other processes happen less frequently. It also incorporates the notion of having both extreme and everyday forms of racist incidents.

The solid line between the terms ‘everyday racialisation’ and ‘racist incidents’ signifies direct experiences of racism. In contrast, the broken line between the terms ‘everyday racialisation’ and ‘impact on the racialised’ denotes that individuals do not have to be involved directly in racist incidents to be affected by racialisation. Vicarious experiences of racism can also impact on members of minority groups. The model indicates that in examining everyday racialisation, we need to consider both the processes that underlie racist experiences (1st quadrant) and the impact of these processes on the racialised (2nd quadrant).
The 1st quadrant in Figure 7 suggests that to understand racialisation, we must look beyond the racist incident (which is the outward manifestation of racism) and investigate more closely the different linked processes of racialisation. These include:

- racial categorisation (use of racial signifiers to group people);
- racial differentiation (differentiating ingroups from outgroups) and outgroup problematisation (treating the outgroup as undesirable or problematic);
- marginalisation (discrimination and non-recognition) and exclusion (avoidance, curtailment of rights, and suppression);
- devaluation (patronising and underestimation) and dehumanisation (assault on honor or dignity, disregard for property rights, and physical and emotional attacks).

An arrow in the middle of the diagram pointing towards the 2nd quadrant suggests that these processes impact on the health and well-being, identity and sense of belonging of minority people.

The 2nd quadrant of the model indicates that the everyday racialisation of minority people has multifarious effects on the health and well-being of racialised subjects. These include:

- affective impact (feelings of shock and disbelief; distress and fear; humiliation, anger and frustration)
- physiological impact (psychosomatic symptoms e.g. headaches, hypertension)
- psychosocial impact (psychological distress, low self-esteem, depression, trauma, anti-social and deviant tendencies)
- economic impact (racialisation impedes successful settlement of immigrants, deters economic advancement, and undermines careers).

Racialisation also influences how individuals identify themselves and impacts on their sense of belonging.

The arrow pointing to the lower half of the model implies that racialised individuals respond to their everyday racialisation through everyday anti-racism strategies.

**Everyday anti-racism.** Everyday anti-racism is defined as the strategies individuals use to deal with the effects of being racialised. The term ‘everyday’ is likewise placed in brackets in
the model to indicate that these could include: strategies that are ordinarily part of the coping responses of racialised subjects; and those strategies that individuals use less frequently since they require extra effort and resources. It also suggests that racialised subjects are constantly negotiating, challenging, and transforming the boundaries imposed on them by racialisation.

Individuals respond to everyday racialisation through ‘everyday anti-racism’ strategies. A plus sign in the middle of the diagram suggests that individuals draw on their personal repertoire of responses (3rd quadrant) and also access external support and anti-racism interventions (4th quadrant) to cope with their everyday racialisation. The personal repertoire of responses consists of:

- discursive strategies (making sense of racism; establishing universality; and challenging mainstream discourse)
- tactical responses (deflecting racism; displaying forbearance; and armouring oneself)
- behavioural strategies (defensive; offensive; and pro-active strategies).

The different types of external support and anti-racism interventions include:

- interpersonal/collective support (from family, friends, organisations, and community)
- cultural/symbolic interventions (values formation; formal and informal education; and media interventions)
- socio-political interventions (anti-racism legislation; workplace programs; and anti-racism advocacy).

I have also incorporated a new element in the model called ‘agency and hope’ that was not in the original framework. This is to reinforce the assertion that racialised subjects are not hapless victims. They have the capacity to act. The arrows linking everyday anti-racism to ‘agency and hope’ highlight the importance of empowering individuals so that they are able to make full use of their personal repertoire of responses and the external support mechanisms available to them to counter their everyday racialisation. An arrow from the bottom of the anti-racism box to the left-hand side of the racialisation box has been incorporated to suggest the possibility of anti-racism being able to minimise or subsequently reduce racialisation.
The model and the categories developed here need to be tested for robustness. The model can encourage a broadening of the research agenda so that neglected issues can be explored. The findings and concepts developed in this study can also serve as springboard for more research on anti-racism.

9.3.2 Voice, agency and hope

This study is significant not only because of its distinct theoretical contribution but also because it has confirmed the usefulness and importance of studying race-related issues from the perspective of racialised subjects.

Through their stories, participants allowed us, outsiders, into their subjective world, a world that only someone who has experienced racism can know. Being allowed into their internal world enabled us to visualise and name the processes of racialisation that are more difficult to grasp from surface appearances. Through the voices of racialised subjects—who have presumed competence because of their experiential knowledge—we are able to discern what racism and anti-racism mean to them and how racialisation has impacted on their lives.

Ideally, studies such as this should not only benefit the researcher, but also those researched. In line with this, I used this thesis to give voice to racialised subjects. The stories of racism recounted here made visible the individuals who otherwise would just be part of the countless nameless, faceless ‘others’. This thesis has amplified the voices of racialised subjects who otherwise would not have been given a platform on which to speak. It has provided compelling evidence that amidst voices of pain, there are voices of hope.

Participants spoke volumes of the pain of being racialised. But their stories also provided compelling testimony of their continuing struggle to overcome the many barriers imposed on them by racialisation. While being racialised everyday may infuse in some individuals ‘a sense of utter helplessness over life circumstances’ (Dei et al. 2004: 173), this was not evident from the narratives of the participants. On the contrary, their narratives revealed a strong determination to excel or to break through the barriers imposed by their racialisation. Their stories revealed their forbearance, spirituality, and sense of humour that have helped in some way to mitigate the impact of their racist experiences. As was shown in Chapter 7, participants
used discourse that reflected a strong reliance on religion, a belief in ‘divine will’ or in destiny 
or fate or karma. Their use of ‘tactical responses’ also indicated forbearance or resilience. 
Their use of humour to make light of their negative experiences also suggests a positive 
worldview. This positive orientation was also evident in how they strove hard to excel or how 
they encouraged their children to aim high to counter their inferiorisation and devaluation. 
Many interviewees asserted that full awareness of their racialised status made them more 
cognisant that it is imperative that they do not remain mediocre in their efforts to ‘make it’ in 
Australia. They recognised that there will always be barriers to their economic advancement 
and that it will take a long time before they are no longer othered or considered ‘foreigners’ in 
Australia, but this should not stop them from making the best of their lives as Australians.

Certainly more anti-racism work needs to be done but there is cause for optimism rather than 
pessimism. As data in Chapter 8 revealed, many participants expressed an optimistic and 
hopeful view about the future of anti-racism in Australia. Participants acknowledged that things 
are slowly improving and that change is possible even if it will take a long time. They 
themselves recognised the importance of taking the initiative to build bridges and in using 
positive approaches to break down walls. This can be inferred for instance, from their 
suggestion that the focus of anti-racism should be on encouraging a sense of oneness and 
belonging. They also underscored how a positive approach to anti-racism can be more 
effective in encouraging social cohesion. They themselves acknowledged that they cannot rely 
solely on external support mechanisms or outside interventions to cope with racialisation. 
Displaying forbearance and strong spirituality, participants said that their everyday racialisation 
should not prevent them from doing the best that they can, in spite of the odds against their 
favour.

What are the implications of these findings for anti-racism theorising and practice? The strong 
sense of agency and hope that participants conveyed lend support to Ballard’s (1992) call for a 
radical change in the way we conceptualise race relations. He argued that we should shift our 
orientation or theoretical framework from one that emphasises deprivation to a new focus on 
empowering for resistance. Similarly, Bonnett (1993, 2000) stressed the need to progress 
beyond the dualistic rhetoric of anti-racism as opposition to racism and to see it as part of a 
wider emancipation project.
I have suggested several ways by which we can strengthen the concept of everyday anti-racism. These suggestions are important especially since we need to not only strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of anti-racism, but also to develop practical anti-racism strategies that are relevant or are meaningful to those who are supposed to benefit from them. Incorporating the notion of ‘everyday anti-racism strategies’ into the overall concept of anti-racism recognises the important contribution of individuals and their interpersonal support networks. It underscores the importance of redirecting our focus, energy and resources to empowering individuals, fostering resilience among minority groups, and strengthening interpersonal and collective support capabilities.

9.4 Reflections on the present, proposals for the future

A fitting way to conclude is to reflect on the limitations of the present study and to use insights from these reflections to offer proposals for future research.

The theoretical orientation adopted in this study highlights the saliency of race as the pivotal point for interrogating the experiences of Asian Australians. But such a focus on race meant that I was not able to explore the intersection of race with other factors such as class, gender, sex, and age. This points to many areas for future investigation.

For example, the literature is replete with studies on the intersection of race and gender. But this burgeoning field can still benefit from a closer look at the extent to which race comes into the picture in cases of domestic violence against women from minority groups. Future studies should examine more closely whether the violence is driven mainly by racialisation. Another question that might be asked is whether the experience of abused women from minority groups differs from that of all other victims of domestic violence.

It would be interesting also to explore further the intersection between race and sexual orientation by focusing on the racialisation experiences of gay and lesbians from minority groups. The self-confessed homosexuals who were interviewed for this study stated that their sexual orientation compounded their racialisation experiences. Thus, it would be a challenge to investigate whether those of a different sexual orientation have different strategies for dealing with racialisation.
The intersection between race and age is also an area that has not fully been researched. For example, it would be interesting to assess the impact of racialisation on the quality of life of older Asian Australians, especially those who migrated to Australia as retirees. As the findings of this study have revealed, mature aged and elderly immigrants find it harder to settle in Australia because of language difficulties, the lowering of their social status and their economic displacement. Thomas (1993; 1998; 1999) is already beginning to address this issue through her work on ageing and women's issues affecting Asian immigrants. But the field will certainly benefit from more research on other minority groups.

We need to examine also the intersection between race and class or economic factors. There is already a large body of class-based analysis of racist experiences so the focus should now be on determining if there is a difference in the way racialised subjects from different socio-economic groups respond to racism. Lamont and her colleagues have already begun work in this area but there are many other sub-issues to explore. For example, anecdotal evidence indicate that Asian Australians still have not broken through the glass ceiling of the corporate world although Asian Australians are becoming more visible now as community leaders and are actively being sought to represent their ethnic groups in consultative meetings and policy-making bodies. It would be interesting to examine whether there are differences in the way ordinary people and the so-called ‘elite’ members of minority groups respond to their racialisation.

The socio-psychological approach that I adopted limited the study’s scope in that I focused on analysing racialisation and anti-racism at the individual level. But I did explore the relationship between micro-level responses to racialisation and the macro-level anti-racism intervention strategies and support mechanisms. The findings of this study provide some evidence that racialised subjects have limited knowledge of government initiated anti-racism strategies. This indicates that those on the ground are not reaping the full benefits of such support mechanisms. Thus, future research can focus on examining the structural factors that impinge on racialised subjects' ability to access these services.

The way individuals respond to being racialised can be hypothesised to be contingent on many internal and external factors. I have only touched briefly on the possible influence of cultural factors on the way Asian Australians explain and respond to racialisation. Lamont’s
studies already indicate that there are national differences in the cultural tool-kits that people use to establish equality or rebut inferiority. These underscore the need to pursue research that compares the everyday anti-racism strategies of different groups. For example, it would be interesting to investigate more systematically (as Mellor has done already) the differences in the repertoire of responses to racialisation of Asian Australians and Indigenous Australians. We can also add to this complex panorama the strategies used by Muslim Australians. Will differences in their racialisation history reveal differences in the type of everyday anti-racism strategies they use? Building effective anti-racism strategies should take into account these cultural differences.

Because I limited the scope of this study to the racialisation experiences of Asian Australians, questions may arise regarding the extent to which the findings can be generalised to other minority groups. Are the categories that emanated from this study applicable to the racialisation experiences of other minority groups? Are the themes transferable or would they fit similar investigations on different groups? While I am mindful that the cultural background and settlement history of Asian Australians is different from that of other minority groups, many of the learning from this research is relevant to the struggle of other groups such as that of Indigenous Australians and those of Arab or Middle Eastern descent. I believe the taxonomy developed here reinforces many of the categories that Mellor and Lamont have developed.

An unexpected finding of this study is that Asian Australians despite their experiences of being racialised are relatively optimistic about the future of anti-racism in Australia. This should be explored further as it points to new ways of thinking about alternative ways of dealing with problems of social division and inequality arising from the racialisation of minority groups. It would be interesting to examine further where this hopefulness springs. Is it because of culture, religion, pragmatism, etc.?

Finally, racialisation experiences must be analysed within its wider historical and structural context. For instance, the racialisation of Asians in Australia must be reinterpreted in the context of globalization (Rizvi 1996). In particular, it would be interesting to see if China’s increasing economic power will change the way Chinese immigrants are regarded in Australia and in other parts of the world. Will their increase in affluence as a nation create a backlash in that they will be perceived as a greater threat? Or will this improve their ‘standing’ in the eyes
of others? At the domestic front, it would be interesting to see whether recent changes in Industrial Relations Law have any impact on racial discrimination in workplaces.

9.5 Continuing the search (Concluding remarks)

I began this thesis by stating that: ‘while significant progress has been made over the decades in improving our understanding of the causes and manifestations of racism, the search for the holy grail of anti-racism continues’. I now conclude by asserting that the search must go on, but no longer for a holy grail.

The metaphor of searching for a holy grail of anti-racism suggests a yearning for a cure to the ills brought about by race-related problems. The metaphor connotes that the solutions are ‘out there’, waiting to be discovered. But it also implies that the quest for these solutions is a long and difficult one, almost unattainable. In asserting that we must no longer search for a holy grail, I am not implying that that racism is only in the minds of the racialised subject and so the problem does not really exist. Rather, as this study has shown race is real and racialisation has real and cumulative effects. I am also not suggesting that searching is futile since the utopian goal of having a society free of injustices and inequality is indeed impossible to achieve. The quest for effective anti-racism strategies must continue for the ongoing racialisation of minority groups requires attention and solutions. As Rattansi (2005: 298) has pointed out, ‘the problem will be with us for just a while yet’. But the point is, we do not have to look far and beyond for answers to the problem. The solutions are not necessarily ‘out there’ or in the hands of those who claim to be experts in the field. Indeed, there is no lack of recommendations on how to combat racism from those who claim to ‘know’ and therefore have a right to speak for those who have been ‘victimised’. But as this study has shown, there is nothing quite as convincing as the voice of racialised subjects themselves. Projects such as this provide a means for amplifying the voices of racialised subjects. They are important since as Gilroy (1987) argued, ‘anti-racism should be more modest in its aims, be grounded in everyday experience and address concrete grievances’ (cited in Murji 2006: 279). But more importantly, this thesis has revealed that amidst voices of pain, there are voices of hope.

In the quest for anti-racism’s holy grail, we may be too pre-occupied with finding a miracle cure for the age-old problem of racism. But there is no miracle cure for resisting racialisation nor is
there one ‘right’ method for understanding why race-related problems continue to plague us to this day. We may also be too pre-occupied with blaming the system and with looking to government for remedies so much so that we forget that, we, as individuals, also have a role to play in the struggle. As Dei et al. (2004: 177) have exhorted, ‘we must engage in multiple sites and strategies for change’.

The metaphor of searching for a holy grail of anti-racism can be replaced then by Dei et al.’s (2004) idea of weaving a tapestry.

The anti-racist project is a tapestry and each strategy is a thread in that tapestry. Some threads run through the heart of the work, while others run along the edges. Many of the threads run in the same direction, while others run divergent courses. However, regardless of the direction or location, each thread adds to the strength of the tapestry. … [R]acism, in its constitution as practice and experience, requires amelioration from all sides of the struggle...through each thread of strategy. To elevate one method over another is problematic because every avenue for resistance must be engaged if we are to effect lasting social change. (Dei et al. 2004: 6).

Racialisation provides one way of deepening our understanding of when, how, where and why race matters, but it is not the only way of looking at race-related problems. ‘Everyday anti-racism’ strategies constitute an important thread in the tapestry of anti-racism, but equally important are organised efforts and institutional strategies to combat racism. The bigger challenge for the future then is not so much finding the best way to weave the tapestry. The more important task is to find the weaver in each one so that we can all contribute at strengthening this tapestry for change.

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Appendix A
Guide for In-depth Interviews

Racism experience(s)

Have you experienced any form of racial discrimination as an Asian immigrant in Australia?

- Context: Where or in what situation did it occur?
- Nature of the incident: Who were involved? What happened?
- Feelings and action taken: How did you react? What did you do about the incident?
- Reasons for inaction: Why did you not act on it?
- Overall assessment of personal response to the incident: Were you satisfied with how you handled the incident? How would you assess the support you got from family, friends and community groups?

Discourse

- Explanations for racism: Why do you think you were targeted? How do you explain the behaviour of the racist perpetrator?
- Response to stereotypes/common anti-Asian discourse: What stereotypes against Asians have you heard of or read about? What do you think about these stereotypes? How do you counter these stereotypes?
- Reasons for fighting racism: Why is there a need to combat racism?
- What do you think should be the goal of anti-racism?

Response

- Personal coping techniques: How did the racist incident affect you? How did you cope with these effects?
- Knowledge and usage of existing anti-racism strategies and support mechanisms
- Extent of participation in anti-racism activities
- Suggestions on what can be done to fight/minimise racism: What services or support mechanisms should be put in place to address the issue of racism in Australia?

Identity and sense of belonging

- How do you identify yourself? Why?
Do you feel you belong to Australian society? Why or why not?

Background Information

- Ethnicity
- Country of birth
- Parents’ ethnic background
- Ethnic identification
- Languages spoken at home
- Migration history / Reasons for migration
- Country of origin of parents
- Length of residence in Australia
- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- Educational attainment
- Intergroup relations – extent of cultural mixing
Appendix B
Key Informant Interview Guide

**Aim of key informant interviews**
To examine the strategies Asian Australians use to respond to (or act on) the issue of racism, and the government/community strategies in place to address it.

**Research Questions to address:**

- How have Asian Australians reacted when confronted with racism? What coping strategies do they use to deal with racism and its effects?
- What factors contribute to people’s decisions to act (or not) act against racism?
- What interventions/mechanisms are available at the institutional, community or government levels to prevent/address racism-related problems? To what extent do Asian Australians know and make use of these strategies? What other strategies should be in place?

**Interview Guide:**

**Background Information**

- Migration history
- History of involvement with community or advocacy groups
- Present affiliation

**Racism**

- What is your concept of racism?
- What constitutes racism (outgroup inferiorisation, racial prejudice, racial affect, racist behaviour, power imbalance)?
- When can we consider something as racist? Where do we draw the line or should we draw a line between racial prejudice and racial affect and racist behaviour?
- Is there a need to address the issue of racism? Do you think racism against Asians is still prevalent in Australia? Or have things improved over the years?
- Based on your involvement with Asian ethnic groups, what types of racist incidents are they more likely to encounter? Are they more likely to be targeted in particular spheres or areas of activity (e.g. workplace, provision of services, etc.)?
- How have Asian Australians reacted when confronted with racism?
- What coping strategies do they use to deal with racism and its effects?
- What factors contribute to people’s decisions to act (or not) act against racism?

**Anti-racism**

- What is your concept of anti-racism? What should be the goal of any anti-racism initiative (e.g. increase access and equity; foster harmony; accept/celebrate differences; develop mutual respect; enhance sense of belonging)?
- Are you aware of specific strategies that are designed to address the problem of racism?
- How would you assess the effectiveness of existing anti-racism strategies?

**Identity and sense of belonging**

- How do you identify yourself? Why?
- Has this sense of identity changed over the years? In what way?
- Do you feel you belong to Australian society? Why or why not?
- What are your views on the future of anti-racism efforts in Australia?
Appendix C
Focus Group Discussion Guidelines

Topic 1: Racism
- Do you think racism is a problem in Australian society at present? Why?
- Why do you think some people are racist? Why are Asians targeted?
- Do you think racism is bad and should not be tolerated? Why?
- Do you know of any stereotypes that are usually used to describe Asians in Australia? How do you react to these stereotypes?
- Do you know of people who have experienced racism but are not willing to talk about it? Why do you think they are reluctant to discuss their experiences?

Topic 2: Awareness of anti-racism strategies initiated by community organisations and the government
- What do you think is being done to counter or minimise racism in Australia?
- What interventions/mechanisms are available at the institutional, community or government levels to prevent/address racism-related problems?
- How did you learn about these anti-racism strategies?
- Have you made use of these yourself? How would you evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies?

Topic 3: Suggestions
- Do you think the anti-racism programs or efforts in place are effective?
- What else should be done to minimise racism?
- Do you think multiculturalism is good or bad for Australia? Why?
- Would you be willing to actively participate in anti-racism activities/programs?
Appendix D

Questionnaire for Racism Focus Group Participants

Gender : _____ Male _____ Female
Age : ______________________
Occupation : ___________________________________________
Birthplace : ___________________________________________
Length of stay in Australia (in years): __________________________
Are you an Australian citizen? ____ Yes _____ No

Education and language skills

What is the highest level of education that you have reached?

_____ University degree or higher
_____ Trade or TAFE qualifications
_____ High School Certificate (Year 12) or equivalent
_____ School Certificate (Year 10) or equivalent
_____ No formal qualifications
_____ Other, please specify _______________________________

Where did you do most of your schooling? _____ In Australia ___ Overseas

How well are you able to speak in English?

_____ Very well _____ Good _____ Needs a bit of help

What language do you mainly speak at home : ______________________

Have you ever experienced any form of racism or racial discrimination while living in Australia?

_____ Yes _____ No

Thank you for completing this short questionnaire and I appreciate your participating in the focus group.
Appendix E
Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Experience of racism among Asian immigrants

(HREA Ethics Clearance Approval No. 042 060)

I, MARIA ELISA HOLLERO, a PhD candidate with the UNSW's School of Social Science and Policy am conducting a study that aims to analyse the impact of experiencing racism among Asian immigrants and to examine strategies that address racism.

I would very much appreciate it if you could participate in an interview or focus group discussion.

If you decide to participate, I will ask questions relating to your experience of racism and how it has affected your life. I will also be interested in your views about anti-racism. This interview is expected to last for approximately 1-2 hours. A digital voice recorder will be used to tape the interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary and all information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. I plan to publish the results in my PhD thesis and in some academic journals. However, you can be assured that you will not be identified in these and other publications in any way.

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relations with the University of New South Wales.

If you have any complaints in relation to your participation, you may contact the Ethics Secretariat, The University of New South Wales, SYDNEY 2052, AUSTRALIA (Tel: 9385 4234, Fax: 9385 6648, email: ethics.sec@unsw.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me immediately or at a later date. I can be contacted by email to Maria Elisa Hollero: mehollero@optusnet.com.au. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor, Dr. Rogelia Pe-Pua (Tel: 9385 2297; Fax: 9385 1040; email: r.pe-pua@unsw.edu.au).

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Experiences of racism among Asian immigrants

Your signature below indicates that, having read the Participant Information Statement, you have decided to take part in the study.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Signature of Research Participant       Signature of Investigator

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
(Please PRINT name / Date)       (Please PRINT name / Date)

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

REVOCATION OF CONSENT

Project Title: Experiences of racism among Asian immigrants

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the research proposal described above and understand that such withdrawal will not jeopardise any treatment or my relationship with The University of New South Wales.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Signature       Date

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Please PRINT Name

This section for Revocation of Consent should be forwarded to Ms. Maria Elisa Hollero, School of Social Science and Policy, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.