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Constructions of racism in the Australian parliamentary debates on asylum seekers

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ABSTRACT   The proliferation of the subtle and slippery nature of the new racism has made it increasingly difficult to define racism and to develop an effective anti-racist rhetoric with which to challenge it. To explore the implications of the new racism for anti-racist discourse, this article uses discourse analysis to examine the parliamentary speeches of politicians opposing Australia's new asylum-seeking laws for what these refugee advocates challenge and make accountable as racist. Using a corpus of the 2001 Australian Hansard speeches on the *MV Tampa*, amendments to the Migration Act, and the Border Protection Bill 2001 as data we identify four ways in which the government's representation of asylum seekers was constructed as racist. These included: the use of categorical generalizations in talk about asylum seekers, the unequal treatment of asylum seekers compared with other categories of 'illegal' immigrants, talk about the nation and cultural-difference-talk. We demonstrate how articulating these constructions of racism in political discourse (and no doubt, in everyday talk) is a socially delicate conversational act that was carefully managed. We suggest that anti-racism strategies must take this issue of the complex nature of making an accusation of racism into account, and search for ways to articulate such accusations in a hostile political climate.

KEY WORDS: *anti-racism, asylum seekers, new racism, political discourse, racism*

The categorical denial of racism and the simultaneous exclusion, oppression and demonization of minorities is a defining feature of contemporary responses to out-groups such as asylum seekers. This is true of Australia's asylum policies, in which the mandatory detention of asylum seekers, including children, in isolated and inhospitable desert prisons was defended in parliament as 'not draconian, racist or discriminatory' (MP Crosio, House of Representatives Hansard, 23/8/01: 30130).

The expression of negative views of others coupled with discursive strategies used to present these views as 'not racist' has been referred to as 'new' or 'modern' racism, which denies being racist, in contrast to 'old-fashioned racism', which was less ambiguous in terms of its racist agenda. Billig (1988) explains this shift as a response to the contemporary social taboo against expressing *unjustified* negative views against out-groups. He argues that general norms and values against irrationality prohibit blatant forms of prejudice, which, since the Enlightenment, has come to be understood primarily as an irrational, unreasonable and subjective/emotional response (Billig, 1988; Van Dijk, 1992). In view of this, speakers attempt to maintain a 'rational' subject position by strategically working up their views as reasonable, and framing their talk in such a way as to undermine or prevent possible charges of prejudice. Those who wish to express negative views against out-groups take care to construct these views as legitimate, warranted and rational (Rapley, 2001), denying, mitigating, justifying and excusing negative acts and views towards minorities in order to position themselves as decent, moral, reasonable citizens (Condor et al., 2006).

An extensive body of discursive research has accumulated on this new racism in western liberal democracies, including the Netherlands (Van Dijk, 1984, 1987, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1997; Verkuyten, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2005), Belgium (Blommaert and Verschueren, 1998), Austria (Sedlak, 2000; Wodak and Matouschek, 1993), Spain (Rojo, 2000; Rojo and Van Dijk, 1997), South Africa (Barnes et al., 2001; Seidel, 1988), the UK (Barker, 1981; Billig, 1988; Billig et al., 1988; Condor, 1988, 2000; Condor et al., 2006; Gilroy, 1987; Lynn and Lea, 2003; Reeves, 1983), the USA (Mehan, 1997; Santa Ana, 1999; Thiesmeyer, 1995), Greece (Figgou, 2002; Figgou and Condor, 2006), New Zealand (Abel, 1996; McCreanor, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c; Nairn and McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Praat, 1998; Tilbury, 1998; Wetherell and Potter, 1992) and Australia (Antidiscrimination Board of NSW, 2003; Augoustinos, 2001; Augoustinos et al., 1999a, 1999b, 2005; Clyne, 1995, 2001; LeCouteur, 2001; LeCouteur and Augoustinos, 2001; LeCouteur et al., 2001; O'Doherty, 2001; Rapley, 1998, 2001; Saxton, 2003).

Collectively, this research has detailed several pervasive features of contemporary discourse that denies, rationalizes and excuses the dehumanization and marginalization of, and discrimination against, minority out-groups, including asylum seekers. These include denials such as the ubiquitous disclaimer 'I'm not racist but . . . ' (Van Dijk, 1992). More subtle strategies for deflecting a prejudiced identity can also be employed. For example, Lynn and Lea (2003) identify the differentiation of asylum seekers into 'genuine' and 'bogus' as one such way to bring off a criticism of asylum seekers that simultaneously appears 'reasonable' (Billig, 1988). Their analysis shows that letters to the editor of a UK newspaper protected claims such as 'refugees are housed ahead of homeless British citizens', which may be countered as unreasonable, erroneous and prejudiced, by following this with a disclaimer 'No one begrudges genuine refugees a home, but when bogus ones are housed within weeks . . .'. This presents the writer's anger as a justifiable response to bogus refugees, a group which commonsensically should not receive housing.

New racist strategies to present practices of exclusion and oppression as legitimate also include the deployment of liberal tropes of equality and fairness (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Katz and Hass, 1988; Kinder and Sears, 1981; McConahay, 1986; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This was used to particular effect in the asylum-seeker debates in claims that asylum seekers were 'queue jumpers'. As Gelber (2003) has argued, culturally, the queue represents a central ideal of modern bureaucratic democracies, that impartial decision-making is unaffected by distinguishing status characteristics such as class, race or health. The queue is claimed to be rational and impartial, in the sense that decisions are made according to rules, rather than subjective criteria. To present asylum seekers as 'jumping the queue', therefore, presents them as violating the impersonal criterion of waiting in line and therefore of fairness. This queue analogy can be used to good effect to discredit asylum seekers, whilst at the same time protecting negative opinions and practices against asylum seekers as 'standing up for fairness' rather than as prejudiced.

Exclusion and oppression may also be warranted and presented as 'not racist' through recourse to nationalist discourses. In this new racist strategy, the exclusion of groups such as asylum seekers is warranted as the legitimate enforcement of national boundaries and the protection of the national interest. Saxton (2003) demonstrates that letters to the editor opposing asylum seekers drew upon themes of familiarity, security and a sense of community to present Australia as our home and asylum seekers as unfamiliar, threatening and socially disruptive. These discourses draw upon commonsense conceptions of national sovereignty, national rights and a national character to justify calls to 'turn them back' as a legitimate defence of the national space and identity.

Similarly, exclusionary views and practices can be legitimated and warranted through the use of culture, rather than race, as a marker of difference. Wetherell and Potter (1992), in their examination of Pakeha (white New Zealanders) talk about Maoris, found that although references to race were still common, racial explanations of social relationships (i.e. those emphasizing biological differences as the basis of racial superiority and inferiority) were no longer used. They found that culture, constructed as a naturally occurring (and irrefutable) difference between people, took over some of the same tasks as race in terms of naturalizing inequality and legitimating oppression and exclusion. In this culture-as-natural-difference discourse, the Other is constituted as inferior in their cultural practices, attitudes and values, and as a threat to the dominant culture.

The deployment of a culture-as-natural-difference discourse was utilized in the negative differentiation of asylum seekers in the Australian debates on this issue. Corlett (2002) highlights that arguments in support of the exclusion of asylum seekers were organized around a central premise – that the 'alien culture' of asylum seekers threatened Australian 'culture'. This was particularly made use of during what has become known as the 'children overboard affair' in which asylum seekers were falsely accused by the Australian government of throwing their children overboard to blackmail their way into receiving protection (Mares, 2002). Government ministers, such as the then Minister for Immigration and

Indigenous Affairs, Philip Ruddock, used this event to build a widely accepted message that

> parents from different backgrounds to 'Australians' are incapable of understanding the significance of their actions because they do not, as a result of their cultural and religious backgrounds, share the deep emotional attachment to their children as 'we' do. (Corlett, 2002: 46)

The Prime Minister John Howard later consolidated this message of cultural difference in the soon to become ubiquitous phrase 'I don't want people like that here' (Saxton, 2003). Claims such as these are produced as a rational, reasonable justification for the exclusion of asylum seekers, and are defended as 'not racist' on the grounds that speakers are not referring to race and racial difference.

An important function of these new racist strategies and their deployment in the asylum-seeker debates is the contestation of what counts, and what does not count, as racism. Those supporting policy measures to mandatorily detain asylum seekers, or to turn back their boats before they reach Australian waters, present these practices as the necessary protection of Australian culture and values, Australian national borders and sovereignty, the defence of equality and the legitimate exclusion of 'bogus' asylum seekers. Despite the extensive academic work that concludes that such discourse is racist, oppressive and exclusionary in its effects, the commonsense consensus is that Australian discourse and practices in relation to asylum seekers (and Australia/ns in general) are not racist (Hage, 1998). In such a context, how can those who position themselves as anti-racists and refugee advocates contest the popular denial that the imprisonment, vilification and dehumanization of asylum seekers is racist?

Challenging what does and does not count as racist is a particularly salient and urgent issue for anti-racism and for refugee advocacy given that presenting something as racist is a way of presenting it as inappropriate and morally wrong. However, in doing so, advocates must wade into a highly charged and defensive public, political and academic struggle over definitions of racism. The research on new racism demonstrates the many ways in which talk may be presented as not racist. In examining what does count as racist, however, research on representations of racism in social psychology, politics, the media and everyday talk demonstrates that there is no single, consensual definition of racism. Rather, this work, a summary of which is presented below, highlights that there are multiple ways of defining racism and prejudice.

Billig (1988; Billig et al., 1988) identifies two common understandings of racism, both of which emerged from Enlightenment concerns with rationality and equality: racism as a subjective, irrational judgement; and racism as unequal or discriminatory treatment. Figgou (2002) identifies multiple understandings of racism in evidence in social psychological texts including, as Billig also found, racism as irrational generalizations about out-groups, but also racism as the attribution of differences to biological rather than social factors. Figgou (2002) and Figgou and Condor (2006) demonstrated the variable discursive constructions of racism and prejudice in everyday talk. In interviews concerning the settlement of Albanian refugees in Greece, the interviewees displayed multiple

understandings of racism and prejudice: prejudice as irrational categorical accounting; prejudice as intolerance of difference; prejudice as internal attributions for negative social acts; and prejudice as antipathy towards lower status groups. In their interviews with middle class second-generation Bangladeshis in the UK, Ahmed et al. (2000) found that racism was constructed as a problem of the past rather than of the present, but also as a present but hidden phenomenon. These definitions are oriented to the particular context in which they are deployed: for example, to deny racism in oneself and one's fellow nationals (Figgou, 2002; Figgou and Condor, 2006), or to avoid labelling someone or something as racist (Ahmed et al., 2000).

This previous research on the social construction of racism demonstrates that there is no singular, uncontested definition of what counts as racist. Rather, there are multiple ways in which this concept is defined. In this article, we are interested in how racism is defined in the anti-racist context of refugee advocacy. That is, we analyse the social construction of racism in the Australian parliamentary debates on asylum seekers. This is of particular interest given the widespread consensus, propagated in new racist discourse, that Australia's current policies towards asylum seekers are not racist. We focus on instances in which advocates count as 'racist' talk and actions that have been constructed in new racism discourse as 'not racist'. These include the following constructions: categorical generalizations; the differential treatment of asylum seekers and other unauthorized migrants; talk about the nation; and cultural-difference talk. We analyse these instances in terms of the multiple and conflicting ways in which this talk may be understood simultaneously as racist and not racist, and the discursive resources upon which advocates draw in making talk and actions against asylum seekers morally accountable as racist.

The data

The data for this article are from the Australian Hansard, a written record of speeches in the Australian parliament in both the Senate (upper house) and the House of Representatives (lower house), on the introduction of new asylum-seeker legislation during 2001. Electronic versions of speeches in the parliament were sourced from www.aph.gov.au.

An advantage of examining political talk is that politicians are part of what Van Dijk (2000) terms 'the elites': those who occupy positions of socioeconomic advantage, influence and power. Van Dijk (2000) argues that elites are highly influential in issues such as immigration, being responsible for drafting and administering immigration policies and laws, and through their greater access to the media. According to Van Dijk:

> If . . . elite groups . . . engage in discrimination against immigrants or minorities, the consequences are considerable: the 'Other' will not be allowed into the country in the first place, or they will not get a job, or they will not be promoted in their job, will not get decent housing, or the mass media or textbooks will spread negative stereotypes about them . . . the role of leading politicians, journalists, corporate

managers, teachers, scholars, judges, police officers and bureaucrats, among others, is crucial for the (un)equal access to material or symbolic resources in society. (Van Dijk, 2000: 15–16)

Conversely, when elites mobilize against intolerance, discrimination, prejudice and racism, and use their position to influence public opinion in this way, it is possible that popular resentment against groups such as asylum seekers may well be lessened (Van Dijk, 2000). Analysing politicians' talk allows the researcher to examine the discursive resources employed in a highly influential context for the ways in which these elites disseminate, reinforce and challenge popular views about asylum seekers.

Our methodology is informed by critical discourse analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1996), and the development of this approach in psychology in the early work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) as well as Billig (1988, 1991), Edwards (1997), Edwards and Potter (1992), Potter (1996) and Wetherell (1998). Broadly, this approach analyses how talk and texts are socially organized to achieve local actions, such as identity management, as well as ideological effects that rationalize and legitimate oppression. It examines both the broad patterns and themes within talk (interpretative repertoires or discourses), as well as the resources and linguistic tools through which accounts are imbued with the status of fact and truth. It also examines how accounts are organized argumentatively, i.e. how they are designed to compete with alternative versions of social reality (Billig et al., 1988).

The first stage of analysis involved identifying all exchanges that referred to the topics of racism, prejudice and discrimination. The coding for this was broad and included: race (and its derivatives), bigot (and derivatives), xenophobia, demonization, hate, fear, division, ethnic, Muslim, Arab, dog-whistling and Pauline Hanson.[1] The second stage of analysis involved identifying regularities in the accounts and indexing the material according to common patterns of what was being constituted as racist (Wetherell, 1998). Having identified the key understandings of prejudice/racism that politicians were reproducing, analysis then focused on similarities to and differences from discursive work on the racialization of asylum seekers and definitions of racism that have emerged in the discourse on new racism.

BACKGROUND TO THE DATA

Australia's relationship with immigrants and refugees has been both welcoming and hostile (Jupp, 2002). However, over the last ten years, with the periodic arrival of boats of asylum seekers mostly from 'Asia' and the 'Middle East', refugee policies have become more oppressive, focused on 'keeping them out', including punishing those who are already here as a deterrent to other potential asylum seekers (Mares, 2002). These policy changes included mandatory detention for all boat arrivals (including children), who remain incarcerated until all court procedures are complete and they are either granted access to Australia or deported (or, in cases of statelessness, forced to remain incarcerated indefinitely), and temporary rather than permanent protection

for boat arrivals (Mares, 2002). However, the events, debates and policy changes of 2001 marked a turn towards even more aggressive and oppressive policies (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003).

The arrival of the *MV Tampa* in 2001, which occurred two weeks before the September 11 attacks, and the later arrival of other boats carrying asylum seekers primarily from Iraq and Afghanistan, brought a long-running debate on asylum seekers and refugees to the fore of an election campaign. The *Tampa*, a Norwegian shipping vessel, rescued 438 people who were on their way to Australia to request asylum. The Australian government, however, denied the Norwegian ship entry into Australian waters. The *Tampa* was boarded by Australian SAS troops who transferred the asylum seekers to the small, impoverished island nation of Nauru for resettlement through the UNHCR, in a hastily established processing centre (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003).

A second boat of asylum seekers arriving soon after were accused of throwing their children overboard. The Australian Navy had intercepted the *Olong,* carrying 223 asylum seekers, on its way to Christmas Island, as part of Operation Relex (a project to turn around boats carrying asylum seekers). They began to escort the boat back to Indonesia; however, the ship began to sink, forcing the Navy to rescue those on board. Philip Ruddock, then the Minister for Immigration and Indigenous Affairs, claimed that those on board had thrown their children overboard in an attempt to blackmail the Australian government into granting them asylum (Marr and Wilkinson, 2003).

In the wake of the *Tampa* and the subsequent boat arrivals, further legislative measures were introduced extending the punitive regime already established by mandatory detention and temporary visas. On 26 and 27 September 2001, seven bills relating to asylum seekers were rushed into law. These amendments to the Migration Act 1958 removed the right of appeal of asylum decisions to the Federal Court; allowed the minister to draw adverse inferences about asylum seekers who do not have identity documents; excised islands from Australia's migration zone preventing people landing there from claiming asylum in Australia; allowed Australian authorities to board vessels, tow them back out to sea, detain the passengers and remove them to another country; and redefined 'persecution' and 'serious harm' more narrowly.

Analysis and discussion

Our analysis identified four ways of talking about asylum seekers that were commonly constructed as racist by refugee advocates in the Australian parliament, and which have also been presented as 'not racist' in defences of Australia's policies against asylum seekers. These include:

- the use of categorical generalizations about asylum seekers;
- the unequal treatment of asylum seekers compared with other, similar, groups;
- talk-about-national-sovereignty;
- culture-as-natural-difference talk.

RACISM AS CATEGORICAL GENERALIZATIONS

According to Billig (1988), the formulation of categorical generalizations as racist has its roots in the Enlightenment, where the concept of prejudice was first mobilized to differentiate between 'rational' science and the 'irrational' (prejudiced) church. During the twentieth century, prejudice acquired its contemporary association with race, when the attribution of homogeneity to racial groups, and the positioning of these groups in a social hierarchy of inferiority and superiority, became widely considered to be fallacious and irrational. The use of negative racial categorical generalizations became less widely accepted as being an objective judgement of the facts (of either out-group hetereogeneity or universal social diversity [Figgou, 2002]) and was criticized as subjective and irrational, i.e. as prejudiced (Billig, 1988). It is most often negative generalizations that are seen as problematic, especially those that imply that the Other is inherently inferior, and that We, as a group, are inherently superior on crucial values such as honesty.

Constituting these negative, superior/inferior categorical generalizations as racist is commonplace in social psychological accounts of racism. According to Figgou (2002), Katz and Braly (1933) were the first to formulate racism as fallacious categorization (stereotyping). The conceptualization of racism as rigid categorical thinking is also dominant in Adorno's theory of the authoritarian personality, in Allport's influential work on the nature of prejudice, and in social cognition models of prejudice (Figgou, 2002).

However, a number of studies of social psychological texts, political discourse, and participants' talk in interviews and focus groups, have noted a pervasive presentation of categorical generalizations as *not* racist, but as factual representations of groups. Condor (1988) and Hopkins et al. (1997) examine the construction of racial categorizations as cognitive representations of 'real' differences between groups, and of this categorizing process as natural and value-free. For example, social cognitive researchers such as Stephan and Rosenfield (1982, cited in Condor, 1988: 79) argue that '[t]he major function of attaching labels to different racial and ethnic groups is to impose order on a chaotic social environment', implying that these categories reflect real-world, observable differences between groups. Similarly, forming generalizations about ethnic groups (stereotyping) has also been constituted as a value-free cognitive process, as in this example from Taylor (1981, cited in Condor, 1988: 77): 'Stereotypes, both benign and pernicious, evolve to describe categories of people, just as sunsets are characterised as colourful or balls as round.'

Following this, in the Australian debate on Indigenous land rights, Pauline Hanson claimed that identifying a criminal as 'Aboriginal' was not racist but 'honest' (Rapley, 2001), whilst Van Dijk (1991) found that journalists justify their ethnic marking of criminals in media reports as not racist, but 'telling the truth'. These researchers argue that the presentation of categorical generalizations as 'fact' has the effect of reproducing potentially discriminatory opinions as 'not racist'. This justification of racial categorization as 'factual accounting' has been identified as a strategy of new racism (Van Dijk, 1991) and as evidence of the increasingly accepted racialization of Australian politics (Rapley, 2001).

It is of significant interest then, that in the debates on asylum seekers in the Australian parliament, refugee advocates drew upon these intellectual resources to constitute negative categorical generalizations of asylum seekers as indeed racist. In this first extract, an interaction between Senators Brown, of the Australian Greens, and McGauran, of the National Party, which forms a coalition with the Liberal Party as the Australian government, Brown constitutes as racist McGauran's categorization of fraudulent asylum seekers as 'Pakistanis'.

Extract 1 The member for racial discrimination

1.	Brown	I keep hearing the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs on our airwaves about what rotters these asylum seekers are.
2.		He says that some of them actually have money in their pockets; they have paid intermediaries.
3.	McGauran	Pakistanis.
4.	Brown	'Pakistanis' interjects the not helpful member for racial discrimination opposite. [Unrecorded interjections]
5.	Brown	He can discriminate who they are from where he is sitting.
6.		I do not happen to have the information, but he interjects, so he must know.

<div align="right">(Senator Bob Brown, Australian Greens, and Senator Julian McGauran,
National Party, Senate Hansard, 24/9/01: 27723)</div>

Senator McGauran's interjection 'Pakistanis' (l. 3) follows Senator Brown's report of the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (Philip Ruddock) calling asylum seekers 'rotters' and 'economic migrants' (ll. 1–2). McGauran's interjection categorizes these 'rotters' as Pakistanis (thereby supporting the claim attributed to Ruddock that they are *not* refugees but are indeed bogus economic migrants). Senator Brown takes up this interjection and accuses Senator McGauran of being 'the not helpful member for racial discrimination' (l. 4). This is followed by unrecorded interjections. (In the Australian parliament, interjections are only included in the transcript if they are referred to by the speaker.)

Brown constitutes 'Pakistani' as an erroneous categorical generalization by challenging the truth status (and thereby the rationality) of this claim. 'He can discriminate who they are from where he is sitting' (l. 5) implies that 'Pakistanis' is not a claim founded on empirical evidence – McGauran has not himself *seen* the asylum seekers, nor, implicitly, can nationality be determined simply by looking – McGauran is merely making an unfounded claim while sitting in his chair in parliament. The likely veracity of McGauran's claim is further undermined when Brown goes on to say: 'I do not happen to have the information, but he interjects, so he must know' (l. 6). Again, this implies that McGauran has made a comment that is not founded on any objective evidence and casts doubt on the validity of McGauran's claim. As only McGauran possesses the 'information' that the asylum seekers are Pakistani, whilst Brown and others in the parliament, who might generally be expected to also have such 'information', do not, it is undermined as a subjective and individual opinion.

As noted, the defence of categorizations, particularly racial categorizations, as factual, is a key strategy in new racist arguments. However, examining this particular account suggests that such racial categorizations do not remain untroubled, but can be constituted as racist, and therefore as morally accountable. Senator Brown, in this account, re-draws the boundaries of what counts as racism to include the racial marking of asylum seekers. Far from being defendable as a mere reporting of the facts, Brown undermines the veracity of McGauran's claim that the 'rotters' are Pakistanis. He problematizes the claim – how does McGauran know this? Has he seen them? Even if he had seen them, can we tell a person's nationality simply by looking at them? The potential status of racial categorizations as 'knowledge' is called into question in this interaction.

A second example of the constitution of negative categorical generalizations as racist appears in the Extract 2 from Duncan Kerr, ALP member for Denison in the House of Representatives, who is speaking on a bill limiting judicial review of refugee applications.

Extract 2   '. . . some will be lying . . . but others will be deserving'

1.   It is not right to find ourselves gathering in the parliament of Australia
     and describing people who come to this country and seek refuge here
     as all – and I use the words that have been used – criminal aliens.
2.   This is not language appropriate to such people.
3.   Some, of course, will be seeking to abuse the system, some will be
     lying, some will be creating false stories and fictions in order that they can make
     their claims but others will be deserving; others will require protection.
     [. . .]
4.   It reminds me of the kind of narrow, dog-whistling populist politics
     that sometimes comes up in the lead-up to elections, where we are
     hearing the kinds of appeals that the member for Fowler so correctly identified as
     associated more with trying to ingratiate oneself with
     those who support the odious views of Pauline Hanson.

(MP Duncan Kerr, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 6/2/01: 23949)

Line 4 of this account, in which Kerr equates the term 'criminal aliens' with 'narrow, dog-whistling populist politics' and Pauline Hanson,[2] makes it clear that Kerr is treating the generalized account of all asylum seekers as criminal aliens, introduced in l. 1, as racist. In ll. 1–3 Kerr constitutes 'criminal aliens' as a generalization that is contrary to the fact of the asylum seekers' diversity ('. . . some will be . . . but others . . .' l. 3). Racism (as categorical generalizations) is viewed as unreasonable: the generalizations are considered to be 'inappropriate' (l. 2) and the belief that all asylum seekers are criminals is devalued as 'trying to ingratiate oneself' and as 'odious' (l. 4).

Kerr does not deny that there may be 'some' liars and cheats among the asylum seekers. He allows room for a kernel of truth in the representation of asylum seekers as criminals: there are some who are taking advantage of Australia's refugee immigration programme and lying to obtain an humanitarian visa (l. 2). What Kerr does problematize is the application of the stereotype 'criminal' to *all* asylum seekers.

Against the claim that all asylum seekers are criminals, Kerr counterposes the 'reality' of intragroup differences between asylum seekers ('others will be deserving; others will require protection', l. 3). By pointing to intragroup differences, Kerr also works up his position as rational and reasonable whilst simultaneously positioning as irrational and unreasonable those using the categorical generalization 'criminals'.

As in Brown's account above, the use of pejorative categories to refer to asylum seekers is constituted as racist, rather than as a neutral reporting of the 'facts'. Kerr's accusation also extends the types of categorical generalizations that are constituted as racist in these debates – whilst Brown constitutes as racist the racial marking of asylum seekers, Kerr seeks to constitute as racist the attribution of criminality to all asylum seekers. In doing so, Kerr is re-producing the social psychological construction of prejudice as the attribution of negative stereotypes to a group of people (Figgou, 2002). This is an important challenge to the hegemonic descriptions of asylum seekers as criminals that formed a central part of the government's campaign.

Kerr also constitutes as racist a categorical generalization that does not refer to race, thereby making an accusation even where talk is de-racialized, suggesting that this new racist strategy of de-racialization is not always successful in fending off accusations of racism. However, although the conceptualization of racism as categorical generalizations is a common one in psychology, the extracts presented here were the only instances in this data set in which categorical generalizations were constituted as racist. This suggests that categorical generalizations are not often being made accountable as racist in this particular context.

RACISM AS UNEQUAL TREATMENT

Another commonplace account of racism and prejudice, both in psychology and in the current data set, regards the preferential treatment of ethnic–racial in-groups and the negative, or discriminatory, treatment of ethnic–racial out-groups. According to Billig et al. (1988) this understanding of racism also has its roots in Enlightenment thought, specifically in the value placed upon equality, which proscribes that all people be treated without either negative or positive bias. This understanding of racism as in-group/out-group bias is also reproduced in some psychological accounts of racism such as social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987).

However, there is substantial research demonstrating the ways in which the concept of equality has also been taken up not to challenge exclusionary views, but to articulate them and present them as justified and warranted. For example, McConahay (1986) found that opposition to black political demands in the USA was expressed in terms of unfairness and inequality; that 'they' are getting special privileges, which 'we' are not. Billig et al. (1988) also notes this in relation to the common argument that 'they' are not following 'our' rules and are gaining unfair advantages and privileges. This is also common in Australian debates on Indigenous land rights. For example, Pauline Hanson claimed that Indigenous people received disproportionate government assistance and gained unfair advantages through land rights and affirmative action programmes

(Rapley, 2001). Similarly, claims that asylum seekers arriving by boat should not be allowed into Australia were justified on the basis that, by jumping the 'queue', they were receiving unfair advantages over other migrants and refugees (Corlett, 2002).

Given these conflicting uses of 'equality', it is therefore interesting that in the Australian parliament, refugee advocates utilize the discourse of equality in order to present the response to asylum seekers arriving by boat on Australia's shores as different from that of other migrant groups, and thereby constitute this response as racist. In this repertoire, two groups are constructed and their treatment compared. The differential treatment of these groups is attributed to their different racial composition.

Extract 3 is taken from the House of Representatives speech by Dick Adams on a bill to restrict asylum seekers' access to the courts. He constructs the new asylum-seeker policies as racially discriminatory, as demonstrated by the unequal treatment of visa over-stayers and boat people.

Extract 3 'Maybe . . . those people come from Europe . . .'

1. Thousands of illegal immigrants come in by air or legitimate means; sometimes they are not touched by the migration people until they are picked up in the community for other reasons.
2. The government does not seem to be too worried about them.
3. I think there are about 50,000 a year.
4. How many boat people do we have?
5. About 2,500.
6. The previous speaker, the member for Chifley, said we are spending $200 million on the 2,500 or 3,000 boat people.
7. But we have 50,000 people each year who arrive by air and overstay their visas.
8. This government does not seem to be too worried about that group of people.
9. Maybe it is because most of those people come from Europe, America, Canada or other white, English-speaking countries.

(MP Dick Adams, Australian Labor Party, House Hansard, 7/2/01: 24039)

As is common in this repertoire, Adams constructs two groups and contrasts the response to them. One group is the 'illegal immigrants' who 'come in by air or legitimate means' (l. 1), the other group is the 'boat people' (l. 4). Whilst the groups are different in terms of the means of their arrival, neither are 'legal' immigrants. It is interesting that Adams describes over-stayers as 'illegal immigrants', using the same terminology commonly deployed by the government to connote asylum seekers. In this context, he takes up, subverts and re-uses this terminology; by constituting both overstayers and asylum seekers as 'illegal immigrants' Adams can problematize any differences in the way they are treated.

Adams compares the number of over-stayers and asylum seekers: '50,000' (twice) and 'about 2,500' and '2,500 to 3,000' (ll. 5–7). He then argues that, although there are far more over-stayers than 'boat people', there is relatively little attention paid to them: 'sometimes they are not touched by the migration

people until they are picked up in the community for other reasons' (l. 2) and 'the government does not seem to be too worried about them' (twice: ll. 3–4 and 8–9), whilst in relation to the boat people 'we are spending $200 million on the 2,400 or 3,000' (l. 6). Kerr employs a contrast structure here, a rhetorical device that allows a speaker to contrast two actions in a way that enables moral inferences to be drawn about those actions (Wooffitt, 1992). Through this contrast, a commonsense assumption that greater financial expenditure, resources and government attention would be focused on the greatest number of illegal immigrants is seen to be violated. This comparison makes this differential treatment accountable and sets up the necessity to explain why this imbalance has occurred.

The comparatively large expenditure on a relatively small number of people arriving by boat is made sense of as a response to the racial composition of each group. Adams concludes that: 'Maybe it is because most of those people come from Europe, America, Canada or other white, English-speaking countries' (l. 9). Implicitly, by contrast, the smaller group of boatpeople is non-white and non-English speaking, presenting the differential treatment of asylum seekers arriving by boat as racist.

Senators Andrew Bartlett and Christ Schacht also draw upon this same contrast structure, but using different groups. Extract 4 from Senator Bartlett's speech on the *Tampa* contrasts the unequal treatment of boat people and people aboard a passenger liner.

Extract 4 'If this boat were carrying people from a passenger liner'

1. Let us not kid ourselves that we would be acting the same way if this boat had anybody else on it other than a boatload of asylum seekers from the Middle East.
2. If this boat were carrying 100 people who had been rescued from a passenger liner, Australia would not think twice, and yet they have used this subterfuge, this extremely technical and highly dubious interpretation of the Law of the Sea to refuse entry to over 400 asylum seekers – men, women and children.

<div align="right">(Senator Andrew Bartlett, Australian Democrats,
Senate Hansard, 28/8/01: 26783–4)</div>

Bartlett contrasts two groups – asylum seekers on a boat, and people on a passenger boat – both of whom need to be rescued. In response to the passenger liner 'Australia would not think twice' (l. 1) before rescuing its passengers, however, the asylum seekers have not been rescued but refused entry into Australia based on a 'highly dubious interpretation of the Law of the Sea' (l. 2). This contrast constructs the response to asylum seekers as abnormal, as well as unequal and discriminatory. The difference between this particular boat and the wider category of people at sea which Bartlett puts forward to explain their differential treatment is that the 'asylum seekers [are] from the Middle East' (l. 1).

In Extract 5, from Senator Schacht's speech on the excision of islands from Australia's migration zone, the differential treatment of asylum seekers is

attributed to Senator Lightfoot's racial preference for white people. Schacht is an ALP senator, whilst Lightfoot is a member of the Liberal Coalition government, who are introducing the new, harsher, asylum policies.

Extract 5   'If they were black farmers from Zimbabwe'

1. I tell you what: if unfortunately because of the circumstances in Zimbabwe with the way the white farmers are being treated – and I do not agree at all with the way they are being treated; I think that what the Mugabe government is doing is a disgrace – those farmers fled that country in some sort of boat and came to Australia Senator Lightfoot would be at Cottesloe Beach welcoming them with a banner because they are white and they are farmers and they are from Zimbabwe.
2. But if they were black farmers from Zimbabwe he would be standing at the shore saying 'Get out we don't want you.'

(Senator Chris Schacht, ALP, Senate Hansard, 25/9/01: 27844)

Schacht uses the now familiar contrast structure of two groups and their differential treatment. Both groups are identified as farmers from Zimbabwe potentially arriving in Australia by boat; however, one group is white and the other black, and thus one is welcomed and the other refused. This is attributed to Senator Lightfoot's preference for white people over black.

As noted, presenting policies and actions as upholding the principle of equal treatment is often used to defend them as not racist. However, this same liberal value of equality is utilized by refugee advocates in order to challenge these same policies. They are constituted as unfair and discriminatory in order to make these policies morally accountable as racist.

RACISM AS TALK-ABOUT-THE-NATION

Several researchers examining new racism have found that opposition to Indigenous claims, immigration and asylum seeking often employs a discourse of 'nation' to legitimate this opposition as 'not racist'. For example, Barker (1981) argued that British Conservative politicians concealed racial discrimination and prejudice within apparently neutral appeals to nationalism. Similarly, Wetherell and Potter (1992) found that white New Zealanders used the repertoire of 'we are all New Zealanders' to position Maori calls for land rights as divisive and unwarranted, and to present their opposition to these land rights as 'not racist' but patriotic.

However, there is also evidence that the presentation of talk-about-the-nation as 'not racist' exists alongside an understanding of such talk as potentially racist. Condor (2000) found that national categories were treated as problematic by interviewees in England, who avoided or otherwise managed any such claims as they would 'racist' talk. By examining interview data for the ways in which national references are taken up as unproblematic or made accountable as prejudice, she found that her English respondents treated talk about 'their country' as a delicate topic. She argues that: 'Far from mobilizing "innocent" national categories to mask or neutralise potentially accountable racist sentiments (Barker, 1981; Reeves, 1983), these respondents seemed inclined to treat

talk-about-this-country as essentially prejudiced, and (often) as tantamount to racism' (Condor, 2000: 193).

The refugee debates in the Australian parliament offer an interesting site in which to examine the ways in which refugee advocates treat talk-about-the-nation. In Extract 6, MP Albanese treats Hardgrave's claim to be 'standing for national sovereignty' as racist. This extract is taken from the end of MP Hardgrave's speech supporting the government's stand on the *Tampa*.

Extract 6 Sieg Heil!

1.	Hardgrave	The Australian Labor Party want to create some sort of splittist agenda in Australia, some sort of racist and religious campaign to claim the government is not acting properly.
2.		Of course, the majority of Australians see through their parlous and splittist approach to Australian politics and support the government, because we are standing for national sovereignty.
3.	Albanese	Sieg Heil!
4.	Hardgrave	Mr Speaker, the member for Grayndler has made a suggestion to me which I find highly offensive.
5.		In fact, given my track record in defending multicultural Australia
6.	Speaker	The member for Moreton will resume his seat.
7.		The member for Grayndler will withdraw the remark.
8.	Albanese	Mr Speaker, I found that speech offensive.
9.		All five minutes of it had racist overtones.

(MP Anthony Albanese, Australian Labor Party and MP Gary Hardgrave, Liberal Party, House Hansard, 30/8/01: 30703)

In a standard reversal move, Hardgrave accuses the Australian Labor Party (of which Albanese is a member) of running a 'racist . . . campaign' (l. 1). In Hardgrave's speech, the government and the majority of Australians, who are allegedly the target of charges of racism, are re-constructed as defendants of 'national sovereignty' (l. 2). This is a form of disclaimer: 'we aren't racist, we're patriotic'. However, the success of such strategic utterances depends ultimately upon their subsequent reception (Condor et al., 2006). In this case, Albanese does not take up Hardgrave's appeals to national sovereignty as socially acceptable and unproblematic, but responds with 'Sieg Heil' (l. 3).

Albanese's response to Hardgrave's speech, together with Condor's (2000) research, suggests that talk-about-the-nation can count as 'racist'. However, neither is this accusation taken up as unproblematic. Hardgrave in turn responds by re-positioning himself as someone with a 'track record in defending multicultural Australia' (l. 5), once again presenting his position as 'not racist'. Hardgrave's choice to defend himself as a multiculturalist also suggests that he has heard 'Sieg Heil' as an accusation of racism. His reply gives a different gloss to 'standing for national sovereignty' – Hardgrave is standing for a 'multicultural' national sovereignty, and is therefore both inclusive and a patriot.

Hardgrave's response to Albanese's accusation of racism, and the Speaker's ruling that the remark be withdrawn, suggests that constituting talk-about-the-nation as racist, particularly through recourse to Nazi metaphors, is unlikely to

be taken up as unproblematic. The deployment of terms and symbols associated with Nazi Germany appears elsewhere in debates about race and immigration, both to articulate racist views and to challenge them. For example, participants in Verkuyten's (1998) study defined racism as extreme violence, such as that of the Nazis, using this to position their own talk and actions as 'not racist'. However, Lynn and Lea (2003) found that challenges to mandatory detention utilized Nazi metaphors, particularly that of the concentration camp, to make this practice visible as a morally accountable, racist act. Similarly, Seidel (1988) noted in the European debates on apartheid that the pro-sanction, anti-racist lobby utilized Nazi imagery to condemn apartheid. Despite the potential to use Nazism as an historical discursive resource to condemn present actions, in the current data corpus there were few examples of Nazi imagery. Its increasing deployment as a measure of extremism, as suggested by Verkuyten's findings, may mean that it is more difficult to justify its use in the context of the asylum-seeker debates.

It is also significant that this extract is the only instance in which talk-about-the-nation is constituted as racist. This suggests that whilst national discourse has the potential to be represented and treated as racist (Condor, 2000), politically, this is not an easy thing to achieve, particularly as appeals to the nation and the national interest commands considerable rhetorical power. The construction of the arrival of asylum seekers as a violation of national rights and sovereignty was hegemonic in the Australian debates. Further, refugee advocates also deployed constructions of the nation and the national interest in their defence of asylum seekers. In this context, constituting talk about the nation as racist could be tantamount to political suicide; however, it meant that much of the government's justificatory nationalist discourse was rarely made morally accountable.

RACISM AS CULTURAL-DIFFERENCE-TALK

Constituting cultural-difference-talk as racist is a relatively recent understanding of racism in the social sciences more generally, and social psychology more specifically. In 1981, Barker argued that racist talk was being concealed in a discourse of culture-as-natural-difference. According to Barker (1981), immigration restrictions proposed in the UK in the late 1970s were justified by politicians as a necessary protection for the British 'way of life', which it was claimed was under increasing threat from an influx of foreign cultures. More recently, Wetherell and Potter (1992) identified the naturalization of cultural difference as a key strategy in white New Zealanders' justification of their opposition to Maori land rights and autonomy. In Australia, Corlett (2002) examined how the exclusion of asylum seekers was re-framed in the Australian parliament and media as the preservation of 'our' culture. He notes the ways in which asylum seekers were constituted as culturally different, and culturally incompatible with 'Australians'.

Although this view of cultural difference talk as potentially racist is becoming more widely accepted in academic work on racism, it was not frequently drawn upon in these debates. However, there was one instance in the Australian parliament in which cultural-difference-talk was constituted as racist. Extract 7 is from

Senator Andrew Bartlett of the Australian Democrats, speaking in the debate on a migration bill amendment to excise islands in Australian waters from the migration zone, and thereby removing the right of those landing there to invoke Australia's asylum process.

Extract 7 '. . . a question of difference in civilization . . .'

1. As I said yesterday, in a lot of ways hearing this debate is like being struck by de ja vu, particularly in relation to this chamber over recent years.
2. The Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Bill 2001 is an enforcement in a literal sense of the Fortress Australia attitude.
3. Many of the statements that have been made – including some of the speeches we heard from senators during the second reading stage, some of the statements from ministers and obviously some of the statements in the community and on talkback radio – would not have been out of place 100 years ago.
4. I have been reading through the Hansard from 100 years ago in relation to the Immigration Restriction Bill, the bill that introduced the White Australia Policy[3] which I mentioned last night.
5. I am not specifically saying that the Migration Amendment (Excision from Migration Zone) Bill 2001 is promoting White Australia.
6. The bill does not specify details in that respect, but the comparisons between the bills are nonetheless quite marked – for example, in the rhetoric that was used to justify excluding people who are unwanted, whom we do not want here.
   [. . .]
7. It is fascinating to read the arguments put forward 100 years ago today – a special centenary – in the House of Representatives on 25 September 1901.
8. Mr Henry Willis, who was the member for Robertson, said: It is our plain duty to prevent any further influx of these aliens into our midst.
   [. . .]
9. Mr Edwards, the member for South Sydney, said: We are afraid that our civilisation will be permanently injured by contact with a large number of persons of races belonging to a different civilisation.
10. To my mind, it was not a question of colour at all – as with the current legislation – but was a question of difference in civilisation.
11. There are very interesting echoes with a lot of the comments around the place that we cannot let in people with a different way of life.
12. They might be terrorists, they might be criminals.
13. They are people who have paid their way, they are people who have done the wrong thing; they will be a bad influence on our life.
    [. . .]
14. Today, 100 years on from the Immigration Restriction Bill, we are still hearing the same justifications.

   (Senator Andrew Bartlett, Australian Democrats, Senate Hansard, 25/9/01: 27841)

In Extract 7, Bartlett constructs the standard anti-asylum seeker arguments about cultural difference and homogeneity (some examples of which he gives in ll. 8 and 9, and 11 to 13) as racist. What is interesting about this extract is the way in which Bartlett builds his accusation of racism. As noted previously, the strategy of de-racializing racist arguments through the deployment of more neutral concepts such as 'culture' may pose a problem for anti-racism; namely,

that it is more difficult to justify accusations of racism in a context in which there is no mention of race. Obviously, the de-racialization of this discourse serves as a prolepsis against accusations of racism, whereby the speaker has the ready defence that they have not mentioned race. Bartlett himself orients to this issue in ll. 5 and 6. In l. 5 he denies that he is making a claim that the new asylum-seeker bill is a bill restricting the immigration of non-whites into Australia, as the White Australia Policy did. In l. 6, he offers a concession – that the bill does not specify details about race. He follows this denial and concession with the argument that, despite the lack of references to race in this new bill 'the comparisons between the bills are nonetheless quite marked' (l. 6).

Further, he manages the issue of the absence of references to race in the bill by shifting his critique from the bill itself, to the rhetoric in support of this bill, a place where he is on stronger ground for claiming that the intentions, if not the actual wording, are racially exclusionary. He builds his argument that this rhetoric is racist by citing two claims made in support of the original White Australia Policy, both of which present non-Anglo immigrants negatively: as 'aliens' and as people who will damage 'our' civilization, with the implication that the immigrants are threateningly different and not civilized like 'us'. Here, Bartlett is relying upon the understanding of prejudice as the attribution of negative qualities to ethnic–racial out-groups and the presentation of the ethnic–racial group of the speaker (white Australians) as a superior group. He demonstrates that such prejudiced claims are not only relics of the past, but are being used again in the current rhetoric about asylum seekers in which all asylum seekers are being negatively categorized as terrorists, criminals, a bad influence, and doing the wrong thing (ll. 11–13). In these rhetorical moves, he manages the potential criticism that the present bill and the arguments in defence of it do not directly refer to race.

In order to warrant his accusation of racism in a context in which race has not been specifically mentioned, and indeed, in which racism has been vociferously denied by government ministers and their supporters, Bartlett strategically works up comparisons between the rhetoric supporting a bill (the White Australia Policy) that has been widely condemned as racist by both sides of the political spectrum and the current bill (ll. 7–13). In l. 10, he again attends to the potential rejoinder that there is no mention of race in these bills by constituting 'civilization' rather than 'colour' as the marker of difference relied on by proponents of the White Australia Policy and by proponents of the current policies against asylum seekers. In doing so, he is reproducing the identification of cultural-difference-talk as potentially racist, an argument that has been central in discursive work on the language of contemporary racism.

Conclusion

Our analysis found that refugee advocates in the Australian parliament constituted the use of categorical generalizations (both racial categorizations and those that did not refer explicitly to race), the differential treatment of asylum seekers

from other categories of 'illegal' immigrants, talk-about-national-sovereignty and cultural-difference-talk as racist. These understandings of racism drew upon constructions of racism as categorical generalizations and unequal treatment found in social psychology and in everyday talk (Figgou, 2002; Figgou and Condor, 2006), and also upon newer understandings of racism as talk about nation and culture found primarily in research on new racism in the social sciences (Figgou, 2002).

This analysis also highlighted the ways in which these constructions of racism challenged the deployment of new racist strategies in these debates. Refugee advocates in the parliament constituted as racist talk that did not employ racial categories or imagery, talk-about-national-sovereignty and cultural-difference-talk, all of which are key new racist strategies for warranting the exclusion of asylum seekers.

At the same time it is evident that new racism presents particular challenges for parliamentary refugee advocates making accusations of racism. The analysis also highlighted that the constitution of 'criminal aliens', talk-about-national-sovereignty and cultural-difference-talk as racist only occurred once in this corpus of data. Further, in the case of Albanese's constitution of talk-about-national-sovereignty as racist (Extract 6), this accusation was not allowed to stand unchallenged, but was contested by another MP, and led to Albanese being disciplined by the House Speaker. It is notable that whilst Albanese's comments were deemed unacceptable, the comments by Hardgrave that Albanese was challenging as racist were not required to be withdrawn. Although 'moderation' is a feature of political talk (Obeng, 1997), the positioning of new racism as 'moderate' and the ruling that Albanese's naming of new racism as racism was in contravention of parliamentary moderation points to a public and political shift in which accusations of racism can be seen as more serious social infringements than racism itself (Van Dijk, 1992). Further, Bartlett's careful management of his constitution of cultural-difference-talk as racist suggests an orientation to the limited acceptability of such alternative understandings of racism.

How then, do we challenge new racism in a way that is both critical of it, but that is also able to be heard? Much of the recent attention focused on how to challenge new racism has centred around the most effective construction/s of racism for anti-racism campaigns. There are generally two, opposing, points of view. In the first are those who argue that there are few who can now be identified as racist according to the narrow historical definition of the term as a belief that humans can be classified into superior and inferior races. However, it is argued that many can be identified as racist in terms of the multitude of ways in which they marginalize, demean, threaten, exclude, discriminate against and dehumanize others on the basis of the other's appearance (e.g. 'Middle Eastern-looking') and on a de-valourization of the other's religious, cultural and ethnic group identity. This is the definition of racism adopted by many researchers in new racism, some of whose work was outlined earlier. The current silencing of anti-racism claims has been attributed to the fact that anti-racism often relies on an 'old-fashioned' definition of racism as the expression of a belief in biological

superiority, or the use of overt and negative racial language, and thus has not yet adopted newer understandings necessary to challenge new racism. As Wetherell and Potter (1992) point out:

> Even relatively blatant fascist propaganda and blatant advocates of racism (such as Le Pen in France) have learnt to modify their discourse so that on some occasions racism can occur without biological categorization and the more familiar paraphernalia of 'advanced' and 'primitive', 'negative' and 'positive', 'superior' and 'inferior' distinctions. Given this flexibility of the enemy, and the way debates move on, it seems sensible not to commit oneself to one exclusive characterization of racist claims. There is a danger of being silenced when racist discourse continues to oppress but no longer meets the main characteristics of social scientific definitions of racism. (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 71–2)

On this basis, Wetherell and Potter (1992) conclude that anti-racism discourses and interventions need to incorporate newer understandings of racism in order to be able to effectively combat new racism.

On the other hand, there are those who argue that taking up this broader definition of racism is dangerous and counterproductive. Cox (2006) argues that what has been termed 'new racist' strategies are not, in fact, racist, and many acts of 'everyday racism' are more productively viewed as uncivil and discourteous behaviour. She argues that naming these kinds of acts (e.g. insulting someone on the basis of their religion) as racist is to close down debate and set up defensive positions on both sides. She argues that combating the resurgence of attacks against minority groups requires a different approach in which everyday incidents are separated out from 'institutionalized' racism and are approached differently.

This seems to fall into the trap of excluding everyday racism as a legitimate concern, a strategy that has been heavily criticized as tacitly reinforcing the consensus that everyday racism is 'not racist'. This argument reproduces one of the fundamental themes of new racism, that 'real' racism is violent and extreme (Verkuyten, 1998). More ordinary, everyday incidents, which do not include extreme physical violence, are protected from being criticized as racist. We would argue that Cox's argument colludes with the push to exclude everyday examples of racism as an accountable matter, thereby minimizing their significance in the continuing reproduction of racism. However, her argument against adopting the broader definition of racism advocated by researchers such as Wetherell and Potter (1992) does raise the question of advocates and anti-racist campaigners 'being heard', an issue that other researchers have also highlighted.

Guerin (2003) has argued that it is important to find ways of engaging with racist talk that do not bring an abrupt end to a conversation, in order to both challenge racism and allow this challenge to 'be heard'. Pedersen et al. (2005) come to a similar conclusion in their review of research on anti-racism strategies. On the one hand, they acknowledge the importance of speaking out against racism, which has, in previous research, led to a reduction in racism in those who have been exposed to these counter discourses; however, they also acknowledge that if people feel under attack they are less likely to listen, and speaking out against racism may be less effective in these circumstances.

Conversation analytic research on disagreements is also pertinent to framing constructions of racism in ways that can be 'heard'. Conversation analysis, which examines the fine-grained micro-detail of talk, shows that disagreements such as those that are being attempted in the data we have examined here are complex conversational interactions, incorporating delays, prefaces, palliatives and accounts (Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998; Kitzinger and Frith, 1999; Wooffitt, 2001). These conversational markers of disagreement often result in talk that is softened, hedged and carefully managed, much in the way that we have seen in our data. Based on this, Kitzinger and Frith (1999) argue that injunctions to perform disagreements, such as constructing someone's talk as racist, without such markers, i.e. to just say 'no to racism', are unlikely to be taken up, as such talk would violate social norms around expressing disagreements.

From the research presented here, it appears that anti-racist campaigns, as represented by refugee advocates in the Australian parliament, fall somewhere in the middle of this divide between adopting the broader definition of new racism as racism, and 'being heard'. These extracts demonstrate both that politicians have in some instances condemned instances of new racism as racism, but have also softened and hedged these claims. We would argue that these refugee advocates are taking up new understandings of racism, but that references to racism, whether relying upon old or new understandings of racism, are not able to be said, as campaigners may risk their legitimacy and persuasiveness in making new racism accountable. Although new racism is sometimes being recognized as racist, it seems that anti-racist campaigners are often constrained from publicly identifying and naming these practices as racist.

This suggests that adopting the broader construction of racism in new racist research, may not, on its own, allow this understanding to effectively infiltrate common sense understandings of racism and be used as a tool to challenge new racism. Speeches such as that by Bartlett suggest that advocates are focussing on the ways in which racism can be challenged that attend to the sensitive nature of these kinds of accusations, as well as at the same time effectively making these practices accountable. As Cox's (2006) arguments that everyday racism is actually impoliteness demonstrate, constructions of racism used in an anti-racist context may easily slip into the same denial of racism they are ostensibly attempting to make visible. The challenge for anti-racist campaigns is not necessarily simply to draw upon newer understandings of racism, nor to ignore them in favour of more narrow definitions, but to find new ways of mobilizing these in a difficult political climate that do not in turn collude with new racism by failing to break the silence around it.

NOTES

1. 'Dog-whistling' is a figurative device referring to talk that cannot be heard or understood by everyone. It has been used to indicate racist talk pitched so that it is unidentifiable as racism to most members of an audience (Double-Tongued Word Wrester Dictionary, 2005). Pauline Hanson, an Australian politician, has come to symbolize the increasing racialization of politics in Australia. Hanson won a seat in

the 1996 Australian general election as an Independent, after being dropped from the conservative Liberal/National Party for 'racist' comments. Her election, achieved with a large swing in the vote in her favour, was accompanied by a media furore in which the race debate came to be identified with her. She was named in many media reports as the 'spark' that ignited this debate (Rapley, 1998). She was widely vilified in the general press as anti-Aboriginal, anti-Asian and against multiculturalism. Her party campaigned for asylum seekers arriving by boat to be turned away.

2. As we noted in Note 1, the term 'dog-whistling' has previously been identified as a synonym for racism, whilst Hanson became widely known as racist during her political career.

3. The Immigration Restriction Bill, commonly known as the White Australia Policy, legislated against the migration of non-whites into Australia. Much of the policing of this racial boundary was achieved surreptitiously, through means such as the infamous dictation test, which, it was understood, but never explicitly stated, would be in a language unknown to those migrants deemed 'undesirable' (Jupp, 2002).

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