Xenophobia (Racism) in Australia:

Please explain!

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Abstract

There is a dearth of empirical evidence on the extent of racist attitudes, broadly defined, in Australia. A telephone survey of 5056 residents in Queensland and NSW examined attitudes to cultural difference, perceptions of the extent of racism, tolerance of specific groups, ideology of nation, perceptions of Anglo-Celt cultural privilege, and belief in racialism, racial separatism and racial hierarchy. The research was conducted within what can be broadly categorised as a social constructivist understanding of racisms. Findings showed a substantive degree of racist sentiment in Australia but also that most recognise this as a problem. This suggests potentially broad community support for anti-racism initiatives. However, less than half recognise the cultural privileges that racism accords, indicating the sensitivities that anti-racism initiatives would need to negotiate. Racist attitudes were positively associated with age, non-tertiary education, and to a slightly lesser extent with those who do not speak a language other than English, the Australia-born, and with males. Anti-Muslim sentiment was very strong, but there was also a persistence of intolerance against Asian, Indigenous and Jewish Australians. Those who believe in racial hierarchy and separatism, are a minority and are largely the same people who self-identify as being prejudiced. Nonetheless, sociobiological understandings of race and nation remain widespread and are in tension with equally widely held liberal dispositions towards cultural diversity and dynamism.

Speaking of racism

This work on racism was born out of the so-called race debates in Australia of 1996 and 1997, and what Jayasuriya (2002: 40) has criticised as the "paucity of thinking about race and racism in Australia". There is a dearth of recent empirical evidence as to the extent of racism in Australia. The most recent academic surveys were conducted by McAllister and Moore in the late 1980s. Between 1996 and 1998, the Australian Federal Government commissioned an inquiry into racism in Australia but the results have never been publicly released (DIMA 1998: 1). Multiple freedom of information requests for access to those results have been refused. There is, therefore, an information gap on the extent, variation and impact of racism in Australia which this study sought to address.

In 1996, Pauline Hanson, leader of the One Nation Party asked a television reporter to 'please explain' what was meant by the term xenophobia. This highlighting of her lack of knowledge of the term on the national current affairs program *Sixty Minutes* was clearly intended to embarrass Hanson. However, the exchange was interpreted by many as an attack on an 'Aussie battler' by the cultural elites (the media, academics, community leaders, etc). Why should this 'ordinary' battler be expected to critically reflect on her opinions, many of which were plainly hostile to Asian and Aboriginal Australians? A widely held assumption is that Anglo-Celtic Australians should have an unfettered right to express hostility to non-Anglo-Celts, and to make statements on who should be allowed into the national space, and who should be recognised (culturally and legally) as a citizen (Hage 1998). The *Sixty Minutes* exchange, and the Federal Government's reluctance to release its data on the extent of racism, provide examples of a reticence within Australian public life to engage with the issue of racism. This paper then reports on Australian attitudes from a sample survey of

persons aged 18 years and over in New South Wales and Queensland (about half of Australia's population) undertaken in October and December 2001.

Surveying racist attitudes

The emphases in this project have been to interrogate variations in racist attitudes in Australia, building on Dunn and McDonald's (2001) pilot study in New South Wales and their review of applicable theories. These theories include the thinking of traditional urbanists (Simmel 1903;Wirth 1938), neo-Marxist explanations (Solomos 1986), the Chicago School (Park 1950) and more recently, social constructivism (Bonnet 1996; Kobayashi & Peake 1994; Miles 1989). Each of these theories retains substantial explanatory potential, but here we focus on social constructivism. This approach is particularly useful for disentangling variations in racism from one place to another within Australia, as suggested by Dunn and McDonald (2001) for New South Wales, and for uncovering background ideologies that sustain both racist attitudes (broadly defined) and anti-racism. Racist and anti-racist (or non-racist) attitudes are often co-existent, and a social constructivist approach also aids an understanding of that apparent contradiction. For example, contested discourses of the nation – as multicultural in official rhetoric of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, or as Anglo-Celtic in political debate and in media – feed into varied and complicated everyday understandings of nation and citizenship. In the sections following, various studies of racism are cited by way of philosophical introductions. Most of these can be described as constructivist analyses, including work on links between racism and national ideology, critiques of sociobiological understandings of race, critical analyses of cultural privilege, and specific assessments of the disparagement and lesser regard experienced by Australians of specific cultural groups.

A telephone survey of attitudes held by Queensland and NSW residents generated a sample of 5056 responses. This was an area-stratified sample, randomly drawn from within every second postcode, but in such a way that included at least one postcode from every Statistical Local Area in both states. For this project, the value of a fully national sample was offset by the priority need to obtain a sufficiently large representation of respondents by geographic areas. About half of Australia's population was therefore surveyed. Sixty-four per cent of the sample was from NSW, and the remainder from Queensland, which is close to proportional to the relative population sizes of the two states. The survey was undertaken in October and December 2001, which spanned a Federal Election. The questionnaire was available in six community languages, but despite this the sample is a little under-representative of those who speak a language other than English (LOTE); it tends to over-represent women and under-represents indigenous Australians (Table 1). The likelihood of refusal to answer the substantive questions varied very little across all groups of respondents; females for example were only slightly more likely then males to provide a 'not stated' response to the questions.

Take in Table 1 about here

Xenophobia is usually taken to refer to fear of outsiders, but in this research we refocus on intolerance of Indigenous people and on other groups of Australians including major 'out groups' who are subject to disparagement in media, political debates and everyday conversation. The selection of these groups was informed by earlier survey work by social scientists in the 1980s, and by the gamut of cultural and social research on tolerance, discrimination and culture in Australia, which are reviewed in the following section. Our survey questions were adapted from existing work in this field. These included attitudinal questions that gauge a respondents' tolerance of (or comfort with) for specific (out-) cultural groups, as well as their opinions on the desirability of cultural diversity. In so far as we tested the intolerance of 'outsiders within', xenophobia is still a

usable concept for this research. However, this study also ranged further afield to examine belief in what we have called 'old racisms': belief in racial hierarchy, racial separatism, and belief in racial categories (racialism) (Jayasuriya 2002; Wieviorka 1995; Miles 1989).

New question formats were also developed to test the extent of belief in these concepts. Respondents were also asked to self-diagnose themselves as prejudiced or not. New question formats were introduced to operationalise aspects of what have been called the 'new racism'. The new racism refers more overtly to hostility to the cultural traditions of disparaged groups, to narrow constructions of the national identity (or cultural norm), the protection of cultural privilege, and to the uneven citizenship and belonging that these facilitate. New racisms operate more through stereotypes of cultural traits of groups, or surrounding notions of 'self' and 'other' and the national space (Cole 1997; Gilroy 1987; Hall 1992: 256-8; Parekh 1987). The latter are reproduced in media and in political debates (Barker, 1981; Goodall et al. 1994; van Dijk, 1991). They are clearly important to the intolerances of specific cultural groups, and to views regarding cultural diversity and privilege. The survey included questions on perceptions of Anglo-Celtic cultural privilege and ideologies of nation. In summary, the survey utilised seventeen separate indicators grouped around disposition towards cultural difference, perceptions about the extent of racism, tolerance (or comfort with) specific groups, the ideology of nation, perceptions of Anglo-Celtic cultural privilege, and belief in racialism, racial separatism and racial hierarchy. Thus the survey moved beyond xenophobia to a more general examination of racist attitudes (broadly defined) in Australia.

What constitutes racism for one person can be radically different from the definition espoused by the next, and it varies not only from person to person, but also among people of similar social backgrounds from place to place, and over time. It is of course something of a truism to say that racism is a dynamic and contested concept, because all key concepts used in social research are. But it is noteworthy that racism is so especially contested. It is a powerful term and its deployment

has a good deal of semantic power. Angst over the deployment of the term is part of a wider political contest regarding the prohibition of the term within public policy debates. This is reflective of the public reticence to speak of racism and perhaps underlines the insufficient Australian academic attention to the field.

Who are the out-groups?

Contemporary racism in Australia, and intolerance towards specific cultural groups, is likely linked to historic constructions of Australian national identity and who does and does not belong. Asian-Australians, Muslims, and Indigenous people have long been identified as key Others to the Australian national imaginary (Hamilton 1990; Rajkowski 1987; Rizvi 1996: 176-7). Intolerance of these groups, as stated in attitudinal surveys, had been detected in previous studies. Intolerance of Indigenous Australians has been a feature of such attitude polling, with specific findings that such intolerance is sustained through core stereotypes. These stereotypes surround complaints about supposed welfare dependency, drunkenness, and failure to 'assimilate' (Brian Sweeney & Associates 1996a: 2-23; 1996b: 17-27; Dunn & McDonald 2001: 35; Larsen 1981: 115-7,121; Pedersen et al. 2000: 110-2). Anti-Asian sentiment, and anti-Muslim feeling, has also been strongly recorded in attitude polling in Australia (McAllister & Moore 1989: 7-11). The stereotypes that sustain such intolerances have been best outlined in qualitative work and media studies (Goodall et al. 1994: 61-5; Hage 1991; Lowe 1985; Shboul 1988). Two sets of questions were posed to discover the current out-groups of Australian society. Firstly, respondents were asked whether they believed that there were any cultural or ethnic groups that did not fit into Australian society. Respondents could then name up to three such groups. Secondly, Bogardus social distance instruments were used to measure the degree of intolerance of specific out-groups (Bogardus 1933).

Forty-five per cent of respondents were able to identify a cultural group or groups that they felt did not belong in Australia. Commonly mentioned groups were Muslims (28 per cent of mentions) and people from the Middle East (28 per cent of mentions). Cultural groups from, and those born in, Asian countries were a further source of concern for many respondents (33 per cent of all mentions). Ten per cent were unable to name any groups they thought did not belong in Australia, referring broadly and vaguely to "Foreigners" or "Ethnics". Two-and-a-half per cent of the mentions were to Indigenous Australians – as a cultural group that did not fit into Australian society! It is worrying that even such a small part of the sample would make such an unsolicited observation, especially when one considers the implications of such a viewpoint. The results overwhelmingly indicate the outsider status of Muslims, as well as Australians of Middle-Eastern and Asian origin.

The second indicator of the extent of 'out-groups' status, using Bogardus tolerance measures, have also been referred to as 'comfort' or social distance indicators in attitudinal survey work (see Berry & Kalin 1995: 306-7; Peach 1976). Respondents were asked for the extent of their concern, if any, if a close relative were to marry a member of seven specific groups (see groups in Table 2). Data generated from such questions have traditionally been analysed as indicators of tolerance. We are mindful of the rhetorical (and political) repercussions of using 'tolerance' as a key concept. The discussion of tolerance can have the conservative effect of awarding power to the culturally powerful in society (by asking them to be tolerant), and constructs the disparaged as guests about whom the powerful must be charitable and tolerant. Hage (1988) outlined this critique of tolerance politics in Australia, drawing upon the philosophical work of King (1976; see also Galeotti 2002). These critiques should be bore in mind when using the data presented here on uneasiness regarding specific cultural groups. The data should be read alongside those we have collected on Anglo-Celtic cultural privilege, the extent of the problem of racism, and on the background role of

nationalisms. The construction of 'out-groups' and 'in-groups' is a core outcome of the so-called new racism discourses (Jayasuriya 2002: 42).

Take in Table 2 about here

The comfort or distance data reveal an unevenness of esteem. There was a substantial level of stated concern regarding Muslim Australians. Only 46 per cent replied they would not be concerned at all if a relative married a Muslim (Table 2); twenty-four per cent of respondents indicated they would be 'extremely or very concerned'. This was more than three times the rates of high concern expressed for any other groups. Aboriginal, Asian and Jewish Australians are clearly significant out-groups, although not to the extent of Muslims. Anti-Aboriginal and anti-Jewish sentiment was in evidence for only one-in-four respondents. The results indicate a very culturally uneven allocation of tolerance in Australia.

Female respondents were generally more relaxed about inter-marriage with the out-groups identified above. This was especially so of Aboriginal Australians and Asian-Australians, although for Jews there was no gender variation (Table 3). However, female respondents were more concerned about out-marriage to a Muslim than were men. This is evidence that Muslims suffer quite dramatically from the stereotypes of Islamic misogyny or sexism (Chafic 1985: 52; Dwyer 1993: 156). Older people had greater intolerance on this measure, especially regarding Muslims and Indigenous Australians. McAllister and Moore's social distance surveys of the late 1980s had indicated that Muslim and Arab Australians were key 'out groups', just ahead of Asian and Aboriginal Australians. Generally the 2001 results indicate an expanding Islamaphobia, probably linked to recent geopolitical events, media representations of Muslims, and an accumulating heritage of antipathy towards Islam in Australia (Dunn 2001; Islamic Council of NSW 1989; Said 1981). The social distance of other 'out-groups' also appears to have an enduring longevity in

Australia, with Indigenous, Asian and Jewish Australians encountering a social distance that had been found in earlier survey work.

Cross-tabulations and Chi square testing demonstrate a strong positive association between age groups and the level of intolerance of Muslim Australians, Aboriginal Australians, Asian-Australians and Jewish Australians. Older persons show greater intolerance, which no doubt reflects different official treatment of cultural diversity (in both schooling and public policy statements) during their lifetimes, and reinforces the importance of progressive educational anti-racism initiatives and inclusive government rhetoric. These appear to be crucial, most especially during periods in which certain cultural groups are the focus of powerful disparagement in media and other fora.

Take in Table 3 about here.

Views on cultural diversity and nation

Researchers have pointed to the ideology of nationhood as important to understanding racism (Hage 1998: 27-55; Goodall et al. 1994: 16,188). Racism, especially the new racism, is argued to be linked to dominant ideas about what a nation is, where it is, and who is popularly considered to be a citizen (what is an Australian?) (Rizvi 1996: 174). The findings of public opinion polling on Australian national identity and support for multiculturalism are varied and often quite contradictory. On the one hand respondents have tended to respond favourably to questions asking them about the desirability of cultural difference. Yet poll findings have also reported concerns regarding cultural maintenance amongst migrant groups. For example, surveys in the mid-1990s would find that while 60 per cent of those polled agreed that migrants should not maintain their own cultural traditions, only 20 per cent thought that multicultural policy should be abolished (see

Dunn & McDonald 2001: 35). Yet, cultural maintenance is a core principal of multiculturalism (Commonwealth of Australia 1999: 19; Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989: vii). Similarly, recent work by Ang et al. (2002: 17-20) found that 60 per cent of Australians are positive about cultural diversity, although support for the policy of multiculturalism was only about 50 per cent. Clearly, there is an unresolved, and widespread, tension in attitudes towards cultural diversity in Australia.

Two questions were used to test support for cultural diversity, and also the respondents' own comfort with the experience of cultural difference. Almost 85 per cent of respondents were of the view that it is a good thing for a society to be culturally diverse (Table 4). These results also indicate that very few people are opposed to cultural diversity (about seven per cent), and just over one-in-ten feel insecure when in the company of people of a different ethnicity than their own. There was, however, quite strong support for the proposition that cultural diversity is a threat to nationhood in Australia: forty-five per cent of respondents agreed that Australia was weakened by people of different ethnic origins 'sticking to their old ways' which contradicts the pro-diversity view of the 85 per cent reported above. Interpretation of this contradiction can be derived from a constructivist examination of competing discourses of the nation and nationalism. The notion that strong societies and communities can only be constructed in circumstances of cultural homogeneity is a widespread belief, and continues to have everyday currency in countries that proclaim their diversity, such as Australia and the United States (Jayasuriya 2002; Stratton & Ang 1994).

Thus contradictory views on multiculturalism among our respondents are likely to be outcomes of two powerful but different discourses. The first is a pro-cultural diversity discourse based on liberal values of cultural equality, reproduced in the official rhetoric about multiculturalism that has been generated by government and non-government agencies over the last twenty years or so. The second is a much older, more pessimistic and conservative ideology that borrows from sociobiological understandings of identity and community. Clearly, the latter ideology undermines

a multicultural society. This conceptual tension lies unresolved within official multiculturalism. The potential threats from the sociobiological understanding of community include: generating opposition to multiculturalism, providing an ideological base for racist politics, and undermining the citizenship of those considered to be different from an Anglo-Celtic 'norm'. These tensions and discomforts associated with cultural difference have not been sufficiently acknowledged by official multicultural policy.

The argument that diversity weakens national ethos, community and identity was a strong line of the One Nation Party. Hanson (1996: 862) stated in her maiden speech to the Federal Parliament that "a truly multicultural country can never be strong or united". The name of the political party she co-founded drew on the same ideology. The long-standing rhetoric of anti-multicultural politics warns of division and tribalism. This idea draws heavily on the sociobiological belief that community, even nations, can only be wrought in circumstances of cultural sameness (Ardrey 1967: 253). Since the evolution of modern nation-states a central problem has been this promotion of a single identity; composed of a culturally uniform or homogeneous people, bounded within a definitive territory (Renan 1882).

> [A]s long as the nation is built around social constructions of uniform 'people' and place, ... it will not change the intolerance of difference which leads to the marginalization of particular individuals and groups (Penrose 1993: 45).

Take in Table 4 about here

A recent survey of 3501 Australians (of which more than half were Australians of a non-English speaking background) found that 74 per cent of long-present Australians (principally Anglo and Indigenous Australians) identified themselves as "Australian" (Ang, et al. 2002: 40). However,

only ten per cent of those of a non-English speaking background were prepared to identify as "Australian". Of the 400 Vietnamese-Australians surveyed only 3 per cent were prepared to identify as Australian (Ang, et al. 2002: 40). The authors concluded that "mainstream definitions of Australian cultural identity still tend to ignore or overlook the social diversity of the overall population", and the national imaginary remains 'white'.

Hage (1998) has persuasively suggested the utility of the binary concepts of 'spatial managers' and the 'spatially managed'. The spatial managers are those who feel empowered to express an opinion about the nation, and about who belongs, and who should be allowed into the national space. The spatially managed are those who have opinions expressed about them, where they should be put, what they are doing, or where they should be sent back to. As mentioned earlier, forty-five per cent of survey respondents felt able to say that some cultural groups did not belong in Australia. Almost half of the sample acted as spatial managers. Such management – and strength of belonging – was slightly lower among indigenous respondents (49 per cent), those born overseas (39 per cent), and those who spoke a language other than English at home (37 per cent) (Table 5). In other words, almost half of the respondents, and Anglo-Celtic-Australians more so than others, felt able to make judgments about who does fit, and who does not, in Australia. The data lend some support to the argument of theorists like Hage (1998), and the research mentioned above, that there is a cultural uneveness to belonging (see also Butcher and Thomas 2001). Representations of the nation, of Australia and Australian-ness, remain too narrow to allow for a wide enough sense of belonging. The link between cultural background and the confidence to judge who is an outsider is through the everyday repetitions of what constitutes national identity. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) 'Consultations with Civil Society' (2001: 10,19-20) found consensus that:

> The White Australia Policy has had a lasting impact on the national social development of Australia. It allowed the construction of a populist national identity which excludes and marginalizes groups … . This has led to popular ideas of the need for people to conform to a set of perceived cultural and social norms if they are to be truly 'Australian' (HREOC 2001: 19).

Exclusionary articulations of national identity, of Australian-ness, are repeated daily in media, by politicians, community leaders and in everyday interactions of everyday spaces.

Age was strongly and positively associated with the ability to make a judgment about who does not belong in Australia. So also was non-tertiary education. Higher education, and more recent education (and peer learning etc), were most likely linked to the possession of less exclusionary attitudes (Table 5). These two relationships indicate the importance of educative anti-racism programs to engage this high level of exclusionist sentiment. This also confirms the arguments that the nation's media and cultural industries, and other core institutions, need to offer much more inclusive articulations of nation-ness (Goodall et al. 1994).

Take in Table 5 about here

Normalcy and privilege

Critical race theorists have commented on what they have called the normalcy of racism (Kobayashi and Peake 2000: 394-6). It has been argued there is a privilege of Whiteness, and that it is associated with a way of life and perspective where racism is unseen or is considered an exceptional aberration (Bonnett 1997; Dyer 1988; Gabriel 1998; Kobayashi & Peake 2000: 393-7; McGuiness 2000). Two survey questions tested the extent to which respondents recognised a

problem of racism in Australia, and the extent to which they recognised that Australians of a British background enjoy a privileged position (as an indicator of Anglo-Celtic cultural privilege). Most respondents (83 per cent) recognised that there was a problem with racism in Australia, and about 8 per cent denied such a problem. This accords with Brian Sweeney and Associates (1996a: 23; 1996b: 11-2) who found that 79 per cent of telephone survey respondents (sample of 1250) were concerned about the level of racism in Australia and felt that racism was "rife". There was an encouraging recognition of racism in Australia. This indicates that at the everyday level, a substantial majority of the population would appreciate a need to speak about racism and for anti-racism initiatives.

Recognition of cultural 'winners' from racism was less apparent. Denial of Anglo-Celtic privilege was reported by 43 per cent of respondents. Pedersen and Walker (1997: 565) observed that in the contemporary era alongside an "apparent egalitarianism" there was a strong strain of new racism that operated to "defend the privileges of the dominant culture". This is a portent of the strategic sensitivities that the politics of anti-racism must negotiate (Johnson 2002).

Take in Table 6 about here

Older people, males and Anglo-Celts were more likely than younger respondents, females and non-Anglo-Celts, to deny racism and cultural privilege. Fewer than five per cent of indigenous respondents denied there was racism, and only a third denied there was Anglo-Celtic privilege. Of those born overseas (excluding UK and NZ) only 15 per cent did not see racism as a contemporary problem in Australia and one-third denied that British-Australians enjoyed a cultural privilege. Similarly, only 36 per cent of respondents who spoke a language other than English (LOTE) denied there was a cultural privilege for Anglo-Celtic Australians. For those respondents who only spoke English, the denial of Anglo-Celtic privilege was higher at forty-four per cent. The recognition of a

problem, and of cultural privilege, were both significantly associated with those possessing a LOTE background and with the overseas born. Thus, recognition of racism and privilege was stronger among those of a non-Anglo-Celtic background.

Belief in racial hierarchy, racial separatism and 'race'

Arguments that 'racial groups' should be separated from one another, or that some 'racial groups' are naturally superior to others have been referred to as 'old racisms', sometimes 'blatant' or 'old fashioned' racisms (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). What we have called 'old racisms' include belief in racial hierarchy and racial separatism (see Jayasuriya, 2002; Wieviorka 1995). We developed some questions to test for 'old racist' sentiment. Respondents were asked whether they agreed that all 'races' of people are equal. Disagreement to that proposition was operationalised as an indicator of support for racial hierarchy. Almost 12 per cent of respondents believed there was a natural racial hierarchy of some form. This indicates that more than one-in-eight Australians hold beliefs akin to racial supremacy (Table 7). Stated belief in the need to keep 'races' sexually separate was a little stronger. Just over 13 per cent were racial separatists, as indicated by the stated undesirability of inter-marriage between 'racial groups' (Table 7). Belief in the old racisms is clearly confined to a minority of Australians, as anticipated by Jayasuriya (2002: 41-2).

Take in Table 7 about here

Older people and those without tertiary qualifications were much more likely to agree that 'races' were unequal. By these measures, belief in racial hierarchy is positively associated with age and negatively associated with education. The associations with age and education were even stronger for the proposition regarding racial inter-marriage. For example, 24 per cent of those aged 65 and over thought it a bad idea for people of different 'races' to marry one another, while only seven per

cent of those aged 18 to 34 had the same view (Table 8). Males were slightly more likely to oppose racial inter-marriage than females. These data again point to the conservative legacy of sociobiology, such as through white Australia ideology, but also to the progressive role of anti-racist initiatives within the education system.

Links between ethnicity and old racisms are unclear. The birthplace, language and indigeneity cross tabulations indicated that non-Anglo-Celtic Australians were slightly more likely to believe in racial hierarchy and separation. It may be that the question on racial hierarchy was mis-interpreted as a question regarding political fact (is there a racial hierarchy in operation?) rather than as a biological proposition (are some races naturally superior to others?). The other interpretation is that old racisms retain a stronger hold among non-Anglo-Celtic-Australians (admittedly a broad and very diverse category). However, only the opposition to racial inter-marriage had any form of statistically significant relationship with the ethnicity variables. In the absence of robust statistical associations, and given the slightly greater acceptance of old racisms among those of LOTE background, there are no grounds for assuming that belief in old racisms is a characteristic of Anglo-Celtic-Australians.

Take in Table 8 about here

The belief that there are natural 'racial' categories of humankind has been defined as racialism, and is thought to be linked to discourses of nature, such as taxonomic division and natural orders (Hannaford 1997; Miles 1989). UNESCO (1983) in the 1950s and 1960s condemned the sociobiological premise that humankind can be sorted by a biological category called 'race', and recent work within genetics refutes any substantive or meaningful biological category called 'race' (Human Genome Diversity Committee 1993). Yet racialism emerged as a widespread belief in the 2001 attitudes survey. About 78 per cent of respondents believed that human kind could be sorted

by natural categories called 'races'. The belief was prevalent. The demographic variables most strongly associated with this belief were older age, followed by birthplace (Australian or UK/NZ born rather than elsewhere overseas), those without a language other than English, and the less well educated (Table 8).

It has been argued that racialism is a core ideology on which racism draws (Anderson 1998: 125-7; Bonnett 1996; Kobayashi & Peake 2000: 393; Miles 1989). Without the notion of separate and distinct 'races', racial discrimination would lack an ideological basis. Our findings could suggest that the prevalence of racialism provides a fecund circumstance for old racisms. Most of those respondents who believed in racial separation and hierarchy also accepted the notion of racial categories. Indeed, associations among these three variables generated significant results. Clearly, belief in the category ‘race’ may be a foundation of the old racisms, including belief in racial hierarchy and the need for racial separatism. However, the statistical associations between racialism and the attitudes outlined in earlier sections – on out groups, diversity and nation, and priviliege – were all weak. This suggests that belief in ‘race’ in Australia has a very limited link with the new racisms. Indeed, the influence upon the new racisms, the supposed role of racialism as a core ideology for all racisms, is not supported in these findings. The new racisms are more likely sustained by social constructions of nation, and to media stereotypes and other portrayals of specific cultural groups (most dramatically in regards to Muslim Australians at the turn of the Millennium).

Self-identification as racist

Respondents were asked if they were prejudiced against other cultures, as an indicator of their self-identification as racist: about 12 per cent self diagnosed their own racism (Table 9). In common with most of the racism indicators discussed above, older people, males and those without tertiary

education were more likely to indicate that they were prejudiced against other cultures. The statistical associations with self-identification were significant, most particularly by gender. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders were less likely to state that they were prejudiced, there was little substantive difference between those who spoke a language other than English, and those who did not. The overseas born were similar to the Australia-born, although the UK and New Zealand born were less likely to report being prejudiced. None of these ethnicity indicators were associated in a statistically significant way with self-identified prejudice (Table 9). Nonetheless, the 12 per cent of respondents who self-identified are a reflection of a 'hard-core' body of racists. They were racist by their own admission and often stated this to the interviewers with pride. Those who self diagnosed their own racism were also those most likely to believe in the old racisms of racial hierarchy and racial separatism. Extrapolating from our results, we are talking about just over one-in-eight Australians, indicative of dramatic scope for inter-communal relations tensions within Australian society.

Take in Table 9 about here

Eighty per cent of respondents disagreed with the proposition that they were prejudiced against other cultures, which seemingly contradicts the finding that 83 per cent of respondents recognized that there was a problem with racism (Table 6). Clearly, the problem of racism was well recognised by respondents, yet it was seen as a problem that afflicted *other* people. This reveals a widely held assumption that racism is a spatial and temporal aberration, expressed infrequently by a deviant minority (Kobayashi & Peake 2000: 393-7). Here again are further clues to the complexity of the negotiations required in anti-racism interventions.

Conclusions

Despite official reticence to acknowledge racism in this country, the majority of Australians are prepared to recognize that there *is* a problem. This is a strong popular basis upon which to justify the further development of anti-racism public policies. There is nonetheless a substantive minority who deny that there is a problem (about 8 per cent). About twelve per cent of respondents self-identify themselves as prejudiced and hold beliefs that are racially separatist and supremacist. Old racism has an ideological hold on only a minority of Australians. Even so, this minority (at say one-in-eight) has the potential to generate substantial inter-communal relations tensions in the workplaces and other public realms of Australian society.

As with earlier research, most of our respondents (85 per cent) demonstrate a contradictory set of attitudes regarding cultural diversity. Liberal attitudes to equality of opportunity mixed with official celebratory rhetoric and education about multiculturalism are likely to have facilitated the generally positive disposition towards cultural diversity. Another important factor may be the respondents' own positive experiences of diversity, although the role of that variable remains to be tested. In stark contrast, however, a substantial proportion of respondents (almost half) perceived cultural diversity to be deleterious to a strong and harmonious society. This contradiction suggests a widely held, and largely unchallenged, assumption that successful societies can only be wrought in circumstances of cultural uniformity. In concurring with Jayasuriya's (2002: 43) analyses of racism, we suggest that the confrontation of this sociobiological and pessimistic understanding of nation remains an unfinished public policy imperative of Australian multicultural policy.

Age and education are important associates to the possession of racist attitudes: older people, and those without tertiary education, were much more likely to express attitudes that we have defined as old racism, and also more likely to make an assessment that a particular cultural group, or groups, do not belong in Australia. Older respondents also express much stronger levels of antipathy towards Muslims and Aboriginal Australians. Both the age and education associations suggest the

effectiveness of anti-racism initiatives and messages within the education sector. The age element also reminds us of the legacy of the White Australia policy, of white national identity. More positively it also indicates that the shift to a multicultural definition of national identity is having a structural impact upon understandings of nation – although that message has been unevenly received. One public policy implication is that education initiatives and public pronouncements (even celebratory cosmo-multicultural rhetoric) have important roles to play.

The survey has revealed a substantial degree of intolerance of Muslim and Arab-Australians. Most likely, geopolitical events, international media and local moral panics have generated these heightened levels of Islamaphobia. This confirms the dynamic and socially constructed nature of intolerance. There is considerable scope for successfully engaging such intolerance, as present within all age groups, in the here and now, which runs counter to the generally pessimistic findings of previous attitudinal work where it was felt that societies will inevitably have an out-group, or groups, who are the focus of contemporary disparagement (McAllister and Moore, 1989: 37-8). Such pessimism is supported by a long history of commentary and academic analyses that emphasise poor ethnic relations and diversity as problematic. The scholarship on positive aspects of diversity, and more radical forms of multiculturalism, is by comparison more recent and still poorly developed. A social construction take on inter-communal relations can imagine a culturally inclusive, diverse and dynamic articulation of nation, which could theoretically challenge the apparent inevitability of out-groups.

The social constructions of cultural groups as problematic, by dint of supposed and generalised cultural practices, is a key aspect of the new racism. Another is the culturally exclusive construction of what constitutes the mainstream, the normal, or indeed the nation. There were more respondents who denied there was Anglo-Celtic cultural privilege in Australia than there were those who recognised that privilege. Recognition of privilege was strongly associated with being

born overseas, and with possession of a language other than English. Preparedness to make judgments on whether some groups did not belong in Australian society was itself culturally uneven. This culturally varied recognition suggests that privilege itself is culturally uneven. Given the findings on out groups and privilege, the degree of fit of cultural groups was most likely judged along an Anglo-Celtic yardstick. This provides yet another indicator of the unevenness of national belonging. The survey findings reported here generally suggest that the Australian national imaginary still remains far too Anglo-Celtic.

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Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of the telephone survey sample, compared to ABS Census 2001.

		Racist attitudes survey, October-Dec 2001	**ABS Census, mid-June 2001**
Total persons		n: 5056	n: 9,896,807
Gender*	Male	41.3%	49.4%
	Female	58.7%	50.6%
Ethnicity indicators*	Aboriginal or TSI	1.9%	2.4%
	Australia-born	76.5%	73.1%
	English only at home	85.8%	80.3%
Age	18-34	25.6%	31.7%
	35-64	54.8%	51.1%
	65 +	17.2%	19.6%

* These ABS Census figures refer to all people enumerated, whereas the Survey excluded people aged under 18 years.
Sources: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001; Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census, 2003

Table 2: Levels of concern regarding out-marriage of a relative, to specific groups

Level of concern*	Muslim %	Aboriginal %	Asian %	Jewish %	Italian %	Christian %	British %
Not at all	46.0	70.5	71.8	74.9	87.3	90.7	91.8
Slightly	16.1	13.8	13.0	12.0	7.2	4.6	4.6
Somewhat	12.3	7.7	7.9	6.5	3.3	2.3	1.9
Very	9.7	3.5	3.3	3.0	0.9	0.8	0.7
Extremely	14.7	3.9	3.2	2.5	0.8	1.2	0.7
Don't know	1.2	0.7	0.8	1.0	0.5	0.4	0.4
Total n:	100.0 5056	100.0 5056	100.0 5056	100.0 5056	100.0 5056	100.0 5056	100.0 5056

*Question wording: In your opinion how concerned would you feel if one of your close relatives were to marry a person of …
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 3: Any stated concern regarding inter-marriage, to selected 'out-groups', by gender and age

Would be concerned if a relative were to marry a person of …		Muslim faith %	Aboriginal background %	Asian background %	Jewish faith %
Age	18 to 34	44.9	20.3	21.0	22.3
	35 to 64	52.7	28.7	27.2	24.0
	65 +	63.7	40.6	36.7	26.7
Gender	Male	48.9	30.7	28.5	24.1
	Female	55.6	27.6	26.8	24.1
All n:		52.8 5056	28.9 5056	27.5 5056	24.1 5056

*Question wording: In your opinion how concerned would you feel if one of your close relatives were to marry a person of …
Chi Square tests of the significance of associations for Age were Muslim (p=<.000), Aboriginal (p=<.000), Asian (p=<.000) & Jewish (p=<.026); and for Gender were Muslim (p=<.000), Aboriginal (p=<.021), Asian (p=<.218), and Jewish (p=<.935).
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 4: Support for diversity, and concern with difference

	Cultural diversity is good* **%**	**Feel secure with ethnic difference**** **%**	**Ethnic diversity weakens nation***** **%**
Disagree	7.3	10.7	37.8
Neither disagree/agree	7.7	13.6	16.4
Agree	84.6	74.5	44.8
Don't know / Not sure	0.4	1.2	1.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
n:	5056	5056	5056

*Question wording: It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures?
**Question wording: You feel secure when you are with people of different ethnic backgrounds?
***Question wording: Australia is weakened by different ethnicities sticking to their old ways?
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 5: Preparedness to identify groups that do not belong in Australian society, by ethnicity, gender, age and education.

Demographic characteristics & Chi Square test		Are there groups that do not belong in Australian society?* % Yes
LOTE (p=<.000)	Yes	37.2
	No	46.2
Birthplace (p=<.003)	Overseas	39.2
	UK/NZ	45.1
	Australia	46.0
ATSI (p=<.404)**	Yes	40.4
	No	45.0
Gender (p=<.129)	Female	43.4
	Male	47.1
Age (p=<.000)	18 to 34	30.6
	35 to 64	44.4
	65 +	65.4
Education (p=<.000)	Tertiary	34.1
	Non-tertiary	49.3
ALL Yes (n: 2272)		44.9

*Question wording: Do you believe that there are any cultural or ethnic groups that do NOT fit into Australian society?

** Data set for ATSI (n: 94) was too small for meaningful Chi Square testing.

Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 6: Recognition of racial prejudice and Anglo-Celtic privilege in Australia

	There is racial prejudice in Australia?* %	British Australians enjoy a privileged position?** %
Disagree	8.5	42.6
Neither disagree or agree	7.7	16.0
Agree	83.2	38.9
Don't know / Not sure	0.6	2.5
Total	100.0	100.0
n:	5056	5056

*Question wording: There is racial prejudice in Australia?
**Question wording: Australians from a British background enjoy a privileged position in our society?
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 7: Belief in racial hierarchy, racial separatism, and racialism.

	Do not believe in racial equality* %	Belief in sexual separation** %	Belief in 'races'*** %
Disagree	11.7	75.5	15.1
Neither disagree / agree	4.8	10.6	6.2
Agree	83.1	13.2	77.6
Don't know / Not sure	0.4	0.7	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
n:	5056	5056	5056

* Question wording: All races of people are equal?
** Question wording: It is not a good idea for people of different races to marry one another?
*** Question wording: Humankind is made up of separate races?
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 8: Belief in racial hierarchy, racial separatism, and racialism, by ethnicity, gender, age and education.

Demographic characteristics		Do not believe in racial equality* %	Belief in sexual separation** %	Belief in 'races'*** %
LOTE	Yes	13.4	15.6	70.2
	No	11.4	12.8	78.9
Birthplace	Overseas	12.7	15.3	68.5
	UK/NZ	13.9	12.2	78.1
	Australia	11.2	12.9	79.2
ATSI	Yes	9.6	12.8	71.3
	No	11.7	13.2	77.7
Gender	Female	10.9	12.1	76.3
	Male	12.8	14.9	79.6
Age	18 to 34	8.7	6.9	72.7
	35 to 64	11.3	12.6	77.6
	65 +	16.6	23.5	84.2
Education	Tertiary	9.8	10.2	75.6
	Non-tertiary	12.5	14.4	78.4
ALL		11.7	13.2	77.6
n:		5056	5056	5056

* Question wording: All races of people are equal?
**Question wording: It is not a good idea for people of different races to marry one another?
*** Question wording: Humankind is made up of separate races?
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001

Table 9: Self-identification as a racist, by ethnicity, gender, age and education.

Demographic characteristics & Chi Square test		**I am prejudiced* % Yes**
LOTE (p=<.858)	Yes	12.0
	No	12.0
Birthplace (p=<.201)	Overseas	12.1
	UK/NZ	10.8
	Australia	12.0
ATSI (p=<.731)**	Yes	9.6
	No	12.0
Gender (p=<.000)	Female	9.6
	Male	15.2
Age (p=<.006)	18 to 34	9.1
	35 to 64	12.8
	65 +	13.2
Education (p=<.003)	Tertiary	9.5
	Non-tertiary	12.9
ALL Yes (n: 605)		12.0

*Question wording: You are prejudiced against other cultures?
** Data set for ATSI (n 94) was too small for meaningful Chi Square testing.
Source: The UNSW Racism Survey, telephone survey, Oct-Dec 2001