

Historical and social contexts for confronting racism: Contextualising racism experiences across two generations of Vietnamese-Australians

Phung Ngoc Ngo
Bernard Guerin
University of South Australia

To document contexts for racism and responding to racism, first and second generation Vietnamese-Australians were asked about their experiences of racism while exploring (1) the historical and political contexts for racism and (2) the social contexts for responding to racism. Both generations agreed that racism seemed less serious in contemporary society than in the 1980s, and more confrontation to racism found than sometimes predicted for people of Asian cultural background. There were also more complexities than a simple division into ‘old’ and ‘new’ racism, such as: (1) racism towards the first wave of Vietnamese-Australians was not apparent until the late 1980s, (2) there were many factors reported that led to racism, and (3) what was perceived as racism and the specific contexts in which the events occurred were most important. A contextual analysis of the responses to racism found that responses to similar racisms were different in different situations. Almost all of the responding was strategically negotiated by participants according to the social relationships and actual contexts at the time, suggesting that fixed or standard methods of recommended responding are probably not going to work. People need to be trained in contextual process rather than standard procedural responses to racism.

Many interventions have been proposed to reduce racism. Interventions range from one-on-one counselling to large scale social marketing and promotion campaigns (Guerin, 2005a; Pedersen, Walker, Paradies & Guerin, 2011). In general with these interventions, however, ‘racism’ has been treated as identical, whether across immigrants, Indigenous Australians, or refugee communities—the recipients change but the processes remain more or less the same regardless of the context.

To be more effective, we must adapt interventions to the specific context or details of the particular groups and circumstances in which racism occurs. All racism is not the same and there is not a single intervention that will address all forms (Guerin, 2003, 2005b). Guerin (2005b), for example, identified many behaviours from the literature, each of which could be called racism, but for which the originating contexts and the interventions might have little in common. Moreover, these behaviours could

occur in different contexts and not work the same way. This is especially important in counselling and psychotherapy approaches to prejudice and racism since dealing with individuals requires a strong understanding of the specific contexts (Sandhu & Aspy, 1997).

The aim of this paper is to present some research findings to begin giving a more nuanced picture of racism faced by just one group—Vietnamese-Australians. Rather than homogenising the concept of racism, the research will open up the different historical changes and social contexts for racism against this group using previously suggested behavioural categories for racism (Guerin, 2005b). While this research is of just one community in one setting, it is hoped that by broadening the analysis of typical racism studies to include context, better interventions can be devised—better fitted to the idiosyncratic contexts of any group. All of the contexts that engender behaviour are important for understanding why people do

what they do (Guerin, 2004, 2016; Guerin & Guerin, 2007).

Racism in its Contexts

In terms of the historical contexts of racism, a common position is that racism has moved from 'old', more overt forms, to 'new', more covert forms, perhaps even when unintentionally perpetrated (Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007). Proposals such as these have led to the theorising about 'old racism' and 'new racism', or 'overt' and 'subtle' racisms, where contemporary racism purportedly operates more subtly through stereotypes of cultural traits or surrounding ideas of the 'self' and 'other' (e. g., Dunn, Forrest, Burnley & MacDonald, 2004; Pyke & Dang, 2003). This suggests that the 'types' of racist behaviours against Asian Australian groups such as the Vietnamese might have changed, and the racism experienced during the 1970s would be different to that experienced currently by their Australian-born children. Corey (2000), for example, found that immigrant Asian-Americans in the USA were likely to perceive racism as more significant than their US born counterparts.

While not denying these changes, the divisions of racism into 'old' and 'new' is broad and ignores any context and idiosyncrasies of particular groups at particular times, so racisms need to be further explored than just through this simple, dualistic conceptualization (Nelson, Dunn, Paradies, Pedersen, Sharpe, Hynes & Guerin, 2010). The notion of an old or blatant racism changing into a new or subtle racism is also abstracted from the realities and diversity of what occurs in everyday life on-the-ground. The goal of the present research therefore was to find out more of the complexities of the historical contexts to see the ways in which the whole social environment for racism has changed from the experiences of earlier Vietnamese-Australians to new generations who have been born in Australia, rather than just look for old and new forms. would be different to that experienced currently by their Australian-born children. Corey (2000), for example, found that

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The second contextual focus for this research is on the differing social contexts for responding to racism. While the research literature tells us quite a bit about the extent of racism, surprisingly little has been researched about responding to racism and the social contexts for doing this. The second goal of this research was therefore to find out more about how the different generations of Vietnamese-Australians *responded* to the forms of racism they experienced and the contexts in which these occurred. Given the pervasive nature of racism, it is disconcerting that such little research has been conducted on how recipients of racism might respond and whether their strategies are helpful or lead to a worse situation in particular contexts (Nelson, Dunn, Paradies, Pedersen, Sharpe, Hynes & Guerin, 2010).

The underlying assumption seems to have been that 'best practice' or 'standard' ways of responding to racism might be found which will be best across any or many contexts (Guerin, 2005b, Figure 1). For example, one typical blanket strategy often proposed is for the victim to always *confront* the perpetrator when experiencing racism

(Rokeach & Cochrane, 1972). Confrontation does not always need to be aggressive, so it can potentially lead to empathy, challenging false beliefs or stereotypes, and providing accurate information about a particular culture (Pedersen, Walker & Wise, 2005; Pederson, Walker, Paradies & Guerin, 2011). However, confrontation can also potentially escalate a situation and make the conflict worse. Further, some Asian cultural contexts are purported to prefer indirect-problem solving over self-assertion (Noh, Beiser, Kaper, Hou, & Rummens, 1999), so any outward display of emotion or confrontation might not be a normal part of cultural norms. This suggestion would predict that groups which adhere to Asian traditions would engage in passive acceptance of the racism, and perhaps more so due to their vulnerability.

Whatever the case, Czopp, Monteith and Mark (2006) suggested that research is needed to examine what types of confrontations are most effective, when delivered by whom and to what sorts of individuals. The present study will therefore also analyse the contexts in which responding to racism was successful and unsuccessful, rather than assume *a priori* any cultural norms. This was done both by asking about incidents and also by given scenarios and asking how the participants might respond.

The aims of this research, therefore, were to talk in depth to a small number of older and younger Vietnamese-Australians, and find out: (1) their reported details of any historical changes in racism, (2) the different social and political contexts in which they might have responded to any racisms, and (3) how we might put these more into specific real contexts for future research and interventions.

Method

The study focused on the experiences of Vietnamese-Australians because, among all the Asian immigrants to Australia, the Vietnamese have had the most impact on the political, economic and social landscape of Australia. They also are easily targeted for racism because of high concentrations in the

large cities, high unemployment rates, and low levels of English proficiency (Thomas, 1997). As Mellor (2004, p. 653) stated, “unless the mainstream English language was mastered... a barrier to full participation in the broader society existed, and individuals were left open to uncontested racism”. Research on racism against Asian immigrants has been scarce, in part due to the language barrier and their unwillingness to report racism.

Participants

Twenty four participants from the South Australian Vietnamese community participated in this qualitative research project. Of the twenty-four participants, twelve were classified as Generation 1 participants (G1) because they migrated to Australia immediately following the Vietnam War, and twelve were classified as Generation 2 (G2) participants because they were born in Australia to Vietnamese parents. Generation 1 comprised of seven female and five male participants with an average age of 47.5 years. Generation 2 comprised of six female and six male participants with an average age of 21.5 years. None were related.

Following ethics approval, participants were recruited through direct solicitation and personal requests, and snowballing from earlier participants. While the first author is part of the Vietnamese community, none of those interviewed were relatives or close family friends. All but a few could speak fluent English although they used Vietnamese most of the time. Those few (all in G1) were interviewed in Vietnamese and the transcripts were translated. This might have biased the sample slightly although, as we will see, fluency in English certainly did not preclude their being targets for racism. A larger study might look for differences here.

Procedure

Before starting, all participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded using a voice recorder, and all participants gave permission. The interview consisted of two sections. The first section was a series of open ended, semi-structured questions designed to address the following

issues: (1) What experiences the interviewee had that they considered race-related, and to elaborate on the situation so that the researcher could document the circumstances of the incidents; (2) How the interviewee responded to a series of race-related incidents, and the rationale behind why they felt it was appropriate to respond that way. Although themes and questions were raised by the researcher, participants were also encouraged to raise themes which they felt were of particular significance.

The second part of the interview consisted of the interviewees being presented with four scenarios in which racism was believed to have occurred and asked how they would respond. The scenarios were created by the authors and loosely based on Mellor, Bynon, Maller, Cleary, Hamilton and Watson (2001). They were verbalised depictions of everyday events, in which an ambiguous racist component of varying severity was included. The scenarios are given below.

Scenarios used to Prompt Responses to Racism

1. You are in a clothes store alone and as you decide to leave there are approximately 5 other Caucasian Australians leaving at the same time as you, however the store clerks stops you and asks to check your bag. You know that she has done this because of your race. How do you feel and react?
2. You are standing in line at a grocery store. A Caucasian man pushes in front of you and says ‘This is my country - I can do whatever I like. If you don’t like it, go back to your own country.’ How do you feel and react?
3. You are at the hospital making an appointment to see the doctor. Despite being quite capable of understanding the conversation the receptionist insists that she book an interpreter. How do you feel and react?
4. You and a family member are conversing in Vietnamese because your family member is unable to speak English. While you are talking a stranger approaches you and says

‘This is Australia, you have to speak English’. How do you feel and react?

Results

The focus of the study was to explore the experiences of racism and responses to racism by two generations of Vietnamese-Australian participants. It was very clear from the interviews that racism was a common experience in the everyday lives of all the Vietnamese participants, even for those who spoke good English. Participants spoke of a number of highly emotionally charged incidences of anti-Asian vandalism, intimidation, and threat. The results, however, will focus first on the historical changes in their experiences of racism, then on what was said about the contexts for responding to the racisms, and finally on the contexts in which racisms might be targeted for intervention and future research.

Changes in Racial Experiences across Two Generations

Racial discrimination against the Vietnamese-community was experienced on a daily basis and it was clear that the experiences had changed considerably over time. Table 1 provides a ‘snap shot’ of these historical changes of racism, along with supporting examples from the participants.

These results suggest that racism, even though it is still ubiquitous, is perceived by G1 participants as not as severe now as the violence and unrest that marked the era of the 1990s. While this gives some overall support to the notion of old and new racisms, the situation was more complex than this suggests. Participants of G1 emphasised that racism was not *initially* an issue when they first arrived, but only became problematic fifteen years or so after their arrival. During the first early years, participants described a harmonious and tolerant environment where “many Australians were more than willing to help the newcomers” (G1:4).

Unfortunately, this hospitality was short-lived and became overshadowed by incidents of racism and turbulence in the 1990s, which were attributed by participants largely to Pauline Hanson, who was a politician promoting a return to a white Australia policy. She was well-known in the

media and gave many speeches and offhand comments voicing racist and inflammatory thinking. As Mellor (2004) had found, Hanson's 'sinister' influence on society was very significant, and the participants from the present study began to notice increasing intolerance and hostility towards them during this period. While this should not be personally attributed to Pauline Hanson, she was the high-profile figure in Australia at that time representing this voice:

Well I found that people are different after that and there was a period of time. When I push her [daughter] in my trolley and for a walk, just passing the school and youth... they spit to her at her, you know my daughter (G1:2)

Through her political campaign, participants believed that Pauline Hanson encouraged the Australian people to develop negative views of the immigrants, especially evident in her 1996 speech to Federal parliament (Saunders & McConnel, 2000). Furthermore, those who already possessed racist beliefs felt that they could now express these values publicly because they had the support and legitimization from this political leader:

They already have racism inside them so that's why they think that 'wow' we have a leader and now we have a leader in, she can just tell them to get out of Australia (G1:7)

Although Pauline Hanson's influence was seen as a driving force behind the increase in racism, however, it was not the only significant context and there were more complex factors reported by participants. As other underlying factors that increased racism against their community, participants identified (a) problems assimilating into mainstream society, (b) the behaviour of a minority of Vietnamese people, and (c) the misconception of 'job stealing'.

Following settlement, the majority of Vietnamese people found it difficult to integrate well into society due to language

and cultural differences, and a lack of acculturation is known to result in higher levels of racism (Goto, Gee & Takeuchi, 2002). Participants speculated that this created cultural barriers manifested as racism. Some Vietnamese people engaged in traditional practices and tried to continue their Vietnamese lifestyle in Australia. This resulted in a number of 'culture clashes' such as the one described by G1:8 when lining up at grocery stores and how this simple act created racial tension:

The case of lining up and in Vietnam, it's almost nonexistent and you just don't line up. You just go somewhere and you try to push in and try to get served first. That's the way it was in Vietnam whereas here the society is more orderly... and that's when the culture clash and that's the basis where the racism occurs. Because people that live here feel that they pushed over by immigrants and the immigrants don't know that they did anything wrong because that's the way they did it in Vietnam and they don't understand the culture (G1:8)

The second contributing factor for the increased racism was the highly publicised negative behaviours of a small group of Vietnamese youth. Specifically, G1:8 thought that the formation of some gangs by Vietnamese youths provoked fear in Australian society, which was exacerbated by the media. According to G2:7, "we are stereotyped as getting into fights and stereotyped on the news... as causing trouble". Even today, gangs and violence is still associated with the Vietnamese community where there is an assumption that they are "out to cause trouble or up to no good" (G2:10) when that was not the case. Further, as noted by G1:10:

There were few Vietnamese people... that did bad things like eat dog which was very common

Table 1. *Categories of Racism Experiences for Participants over Different historical Periods with Examples*

Period	Types of Racism	Examples
1970s - 1980s (initial arrival)	Racism was generally not a prominent part of the landscape or	'I was happy that I came here and that people are very kind and I don't find that people are like racist or anything (G1:2).'
	It was hard to notice or understand the racism	'We were on our way to school ... and there were a bunch of teenagers driving pass and give us the finger but ... we didn't realise what it so we just wave back and say hello and they just laughed (G2:4).'
	Very welcoming and tolerant environment where much aid was given to the new immigrants.	'There a sponsorship family who ... helped us. They taught us English and drove us to places to buy the things we needed. They really helped out with even the second hand things they gave us, was still new and they gave it to us to use (G1:9).'
1990 - 1995	The rise of Pauline Hanson influenced racism at the political increased racism at an individual level.	'The Australian who are already racist to be more, they can stand up and be more racists and they would display their racism more openly. They already have the racism inside them so that's why they think that 'wow we have a leader and now we have a leader in, she can just tell them to get out of Australia (G1:7).'
	Racism was becoming more problematic	'There was a lot of racism...words 'Asians out' on bus stops and when our kids went to school then the kids around the same age as them would say to them 'you are an Asian kid, your parents came here to take our jobs and aren't good people so we don't welcome you (G1:9).'
	Racism was expressed in overt forms in public arenas	'Where I was staying they always painted 'Nips', 'Get out of here' 'Go home' or whatever. They use to throw eggs at the fence (G1:5).'
Post 1995	Racism was less apparent and overt than events of 1990.	'My son was at [school] and at that time racism was very strong. The school caught news that some people were coming into protests...So the police was notified and...they [protesters] didn't do anything physical but they were using the speakers and having signs that they wanted to make all the Asians leave the country. I remember there were many of them protesting in front of the school but there was many police as well to protect us. So the police organised a back exit to protect all the Asian parents and students. Sorry, I'm still crying every time I think about it (G1:9).'
		'Sometimes you walk along the street and I've had banana skin thrown at you from bus stops (G1:7).'
Current (G1)	Racism is no longer a prominent part of their lives	'One day in David Jones store there was a sale...there was a lot of clothes on sale and I find a pair of trousers and I just want to take it to the counter and pay for that and I think the lady not believe it on sale she just says 'this is not the price' and I got a feeling that she thought that I re-write the price but I haven't got anything in my hand at the moment (G1:1).'
Current (G2)	Participants felt that they have been well tolerated, assimilated and therefore accepted into Australian society making racism less of an issue	'I would say it is 90 percent gone (G1:9).'
	Occasional 'comment' or 'look'	'Some Asians are very 'Aussie' into all sorts of things like footy and stuff... so they have adapted the culture very well (G2:8).'
	Occasional 'joke'	'Sometimes they just look at me differently... I get looks here and there (G2:2).'
	Occasional 'stereotype'	'Every now and then you might hear a 'woahhhhh' Bruce Lee kind of thing (G2:1).'
	Misunderstandings	'All Asians look the same (G2:1).'
		'All Asians are good at maths (G2:5).'
		'Asian women are bad drivers (G2:7).'
		'All Asians were Chinese (G2:2).'
		'Assumption that we're out to cause trouble, up to no good (G2:10).'

in Vietnam because it was such a poor country but over here it is not acceptable and then it got published in the newspapers. Then when the Australian people read it then they think 'oh we loved them and we helped them... and now they go and do these bad things'. From then on, those people who did those bad things gave the Australian people a negative image of the Vietnamese people. There was a reason, it wasn't just like [racist] that in the beginning.

Finally, participants attributed racism to the misconception that they were taking jobs "that might otherwise have been occupied by other Australians" (Mellor, 2004, p. 636). This was an issue acknowledged by all participants. However, they felt that the desperation to avoid unemployment due to financial and family obligations justified this. Many of the participants highlighted the difficulty in financially supporting families both here and in Vietnam which resulted in them taking on two or three jobs simultaneously:

Any job that was offered we would take. Like farming, if other people complained it was too hard or hot then we would just take the job. Or like we would do the jobs that others wouldn't... all we wanted was the job...then whatever they were willing to pay was fine we accept it. Because we didn't have any money and we didn't know anything else so... we would take no matter how hard it was (G1:9)

It is important to acknowledge that some participants felt that this 'hardworking nature' was taken advantage of:

I still recall when I got my first job. They will never hire full-time, you're always on casual or part-time. They pay you minimum. I asked around my workplace and I

was on the lowest pay and you're working twice as hard as them... they know it, but they just still don't pay you the same as the others (G1:5)

According to G2, fear of racism was certainly a factor in why they strive so hard to succeed academically.

My parents basically push for education because they believe that education is one to move into society, become more accepted so that you won't be judged or be victims of racism (G2:10)

This has changed, however, and the image of the Vietnamese migrant working two or three jobs in factories for minimum wage is certainly not the image of the typical Vietnamese-Australian currently.

From the participants' experiences, it appears that the level of racism at both the individual and societal level is no longer an issue for many Vietnamese-participants. Many G1 participants who initially commented on the unrest in previous years now acknowledge that racism is no longer a prominent part of their lives. However it must be emphasised that since the participants' experiences of racism varied in their severity and frequency, the suggestion that racism is no longer problematic may not be true for all Vietnamese-Australians. In general, participants acknowledged a significant decrease in racism to a level now that it has become an insignificant issue, but this is referring to overt forms.

This decline in racism was supported by the response of the G2 participants, who could not comment on the incidents of previous years but offered their opinions on racism in contemporary society. Aside from the 'occasional comments', 'look', 'jokes' or 'stereotypes' all G2 participant felt that they have been well accepted into society where "people don't generally treat us that differently" (G2:9):

You get your normal, when

*you're walking down the street
you might get a guy that drives by
and shouts obscenities at you...
apart from that, I don't really get
that much [racism] to be honest
(G2:10)*

These days, G2 participants believed that stereotyping is more common than serious overt racism. Some common contemporary stereotypes of Vietnamese-Australians are detailed in Table 2. Surprisingly, many of these stereotypes were also found in Sue et al. (2007) study with Asian-Americans. A common theme in both was the assumption that 'All Asians look alike'.

Contrary to participants' thoughts, Edsall and Edsall (1992) and Sue et al. (2007) proposed that racism has only appeared to have declined, because overt forms of racism have been publicly repudiated and highly stigmatised resulting in their manifestation in more subtle and elusive forms. Unlike the participants who believed that these subtle forms were usually 'not detrimental' (G1:10), other participants suggested that contemporary forms of racism are more problematic and damaging than overt racism, often because their seriousness is often downplayed (Sue et al., 2007). Some participants acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to detect subtle racisms but they did not believe that it was more damaging and problematic than overt forms. More importantly for this report, stereotyping was very common but it was not reported as so negative because they learned to ignore it and some did not even view it as racism. As English improved, they found alternative ways of responding to racism and most of the younger generation reported ignoring or verbally responding to stereotypical remarks.

Results from this study support the changing nature of racisms but suggested three complexities in the historical context rather than old/new racism split sometimes suggested: overt racism was not noted for a number of years after arrival; there were several strong factors reported to be

determining the racisms whether old or new; and while subtle racism was obviously common, many of the younger generation did not think of it as racism and were able to ignore it better than earlier generations. It should be clear from reading the participants' statements that a single form of intervention would not be viable across the very different historical contexts. The environments of racism change over time and group and so must interventions for behaviour change.

Responding to Racism in the Scenarios

The second part of the research asked participants about their responding to the racisms which they had described earlier, and then gave four scenarios from previous research to explore further (see p. 46). It turned out that some scenarios did not apply well, especially for the younger group who spoke English well. These should be further tested.

Table 2 contains the results of the interpersonal strategies from the four prompted scenarios. The examples used in these tables were taken from a variety of respondents. Not all participant answers are presented in the tables; however, those presented exemplify most patterns in the results (Mellor, 2004). The comparison between the two generations of responses aids its generalisability and allows examination of any generational influences on responses. The results indicate a contradiction in the literature in this regard.

Examination of Table 2 suggests unclear generational differences in Scenarios 1 and 3 whereas generational trends emerged in Scenarios 2, and 4. In Scenario 1, there appeared to be individual differences in responding across generations. Both generations had respondents who would have taken a passive approach, "I am not going to make a huge commotion and get everyone to stare at us" (G2:8), others who would have taken an accusatory approach, "why you ask me to stop and not others?" (G2:11), and with the remainder producing no response but believing it was simply store policy. However, it is important to acknowledge that those who had a passive/no response

approach were usually unsure of the racial intent in the scenario—they did not even recognise the racism. Therefore, *the difference in responses was not a result of generation group, but rather of whether the participant perceived the incident as racist.*

In Scenario 2, responses also varied across individuals but G2 participants were less passive in their responses. G1 had a few participants who would have been passive asking “What can we do?” (G1:11). However, G1 participants were only passive if they felt that they lacked the English skills to be able to confront the situation. This was the barrier that would prevent them from producing a passive response, not a fear of breaking cultural norms as suggested by the literature (Noh et al., 1999). The majority of participants were not passive and some were even aggressive in their confrontations. Some G2 participants even stated that they would physically “take back my spot” (G2:7). In both generations it was not the physical act of pushing in front that participants felt warranted a reaction, but the racial slur as this confirmed the racist intent of the perpetrator. Participants in both generations usually reacted by appealing to egalitarian principles such as ‘everyone should be treated equally’.

Scenario 3 also produced mixed responses from participants in both generations, with participants giving a calm and rational explanation, ignoring the request, or responding aggressively. G1:12 felt highly offended by this scenario because she felt it violated the very essence of Australian multiculturalism. However most G1 participants felt more inclined to offer explanations. Surprisingly, four of the G1 participants related to Scenario 3, acknowledging that the request to speak English was valid:

Well what she said is kind of true, that we do live in Australia and we should try our best to speak the language...even with me, if someone is speaking a language that I don't understand then I feel

something too (G1:9)

G1 participants were more likely to engage in ‘empathy provocation’ (Pedersen et al., 2005) in an attempt to stop the racism. Evoking empathy as a strategy of prejudice reduction has been effective as it is known to evoke a complex combination of emotions in perpetrators (Finlay & Stephan, 2000). On the contrary, there were no empathetic responses from G2 participants who were extremely offended by the scenario. Participants felt that it was their given right to be able to speak Vietnamese and that Australia’s multiculturalism entails that right: “Why can’t we talk in our own language? Why do we have to talk in English? Just because we live in Australia doesn’t mean we have to lose all of our culture” (G2:11). Participants’ responses were mediated by the manner in which they were approached rather than any generational differences:

If they say it in a nice way not just come over and get cross at you and fire at you then you probably say... ‘listen this is my mum who can’t speak English’. But if they charge over and tell you what to do then who are they? (G1:7)

Out of all the scenarios, Scenario 4 was the one where a clear difference between the generations’ responses was produced. Whereas most G1 participants did not feel it was a racist scenario and were not offended, this was not the case for G2 participants. G1 participants did not see the scenario as racist because they acknowledged that their general lack of English often warranted the use of an interpreter. Two participants (G1:10, G1:11) felt grateful that the receptionist had taken the initiative to book an interpreter, believing that “realistically the majority of Vietnamese people aren’t very fluent in English” (G1:10). However those who had mastered the English language were offended by the scenario:

If I truly understood what she was saying, probably

Table 2. Responses from Two Generations of Vietnamese Australian to prompted scenarios**First Generation of Vietnamese Australians**

	Responses	Examples
Scenario 1	Confrontational response.	'If this happened to me at the time I would certainly asks the store assistant or whoever confronted me to try and search me and assume that I have taken any item in the store. I ask them 'on what evidence or right do you have to check my bag' I wouldn't just let them check my bag. On what grounds and beliefs do they think they have to search me? (G1:4)'
	An empathetic response.	'If the worker doesn't look after the shop then the boss might lose money' (G1:9)
	No response.	'Well this is the policy from every store that when you come in you have to abide the law here if you living here... and that's normal' (G1:6)
Scenario 2	Aggressive response.	'I'd tell him 'this is my country, if you don't like it, piss off' (G1:4).'
	No response.	'I suppose that one of the reasons why we escaped Vietnam was for our safety. And just because someone push in front of us, it's not a life or death matter so it they want to go in front us, that's okay' (G1:8).
Scenario 3	Aggressive response	'Mind your own business (G1:7)'
	Explain the situation	'We escaped Vietnam, a communist country because there is no freedom. So we come here for freedom and we want to speak our language because it is quicker and that is the language we love (G1:12)'
	Empathetic response	'Well what she said is kind of true, that we do live in Australia and we should try our best to speak the language... even with me, if someone is speaking a language that I don't understand then I feel something too (G1:9).
	Other	'I think that what she says is motivational thing that helps us improve' (G1:10).
Scenario 4	Aggressive response	'I would feel pretty pissed off if I truly understood what she was saying probably another way of saying you're not good enough. I'll get an interpreter for you. I'll tell her no, I want to do it now and don't need an interpreter (G1:5)'
	Empathetic response	'realistically the majority of Vietnamese people aren't very fluent in English (G1:10)'
	Other	'well if she wants to send me an interpreter by all means, doesn't worry me, cost the Government' (G1:7)

Second Generation of Vietnamese Australians

	Responses	Examples
Scenario 1	Accusatory response.	‘I would be offended... I’d show her my bag and I’d give them a go and ask them exactly why it was they picked me. And why not anyone else and whether I was doing anything in particular that stood out and if they couldn’t give me a reasonable answer or answer that I thought was reasonable then I would take it to higher authorities’ (G2:1)
	An empathetic response.	‘I do understand from their point of view that there are those Asians who do steal... so it’s purely from a business perspective then they are just doing their jobs so it’s not like a massive insult’ (G2:9)
	No response.	‘I will show her that I have nothing to hide... and so it would make her feel bad’ (G2:11).
Scenario 2	Aggressive response.	‘Well I would be pretty pissed off and I would probably... I would take back my spot and be like... we are all equal people there is no need to be racist just cause of your skin colour or what you look like’ (G2:7)
Scenario 3	Aggressive response.	‘I wasn’t talking to you (G2:11)’
	Explain the situation.	‘Well I’d explain to her, ‘look my friend can’t speak English because is new here’. You know whatever the situation maybe, I’ll just explain it to them and that I need to translate... and then continue speaking my own language (G2:10)’
Scenario 4	Aggressive response.	‘Well I don’t like being forced to have an interpreter, making myself seem like I am an outsider when I’m obviously not... so don’t want them to make me seem like foreign and totally different to them on a whole new level that I can’t speak the language’ (G2:9)
	Other.	I would say to her, ‘does it look like I need a bloody interpreter?’ Come on! (G2:7). ‘Me personally, I would throw so many medical terms at her. And I’d just throw drug names at her and I would just explain these mechanisms and pathopsychologies about my condition...because studying health I know that they are’ (G2:9).

*another way of saying
you’re not good enough. I’ll
get an interpreter for you
(G1:5)*

Contrary to G1 participants’ mixed responses, all G2 participants were offended by the suggestion that they needed an interpreter. None were empathetic towards the receptionist stating that they thought she was ‘rude’, ‘insensitive’ and racially stereotyping them as ‘foreigners’. Therefore, they would have protested to her directly stating that an interpreter was useless to them. This incident is not uncommon even for second generation Vietnamese-Australians because they are viewed as perpetually foreign. Although they have

been in Australia for generations, they are often assumed not to speak English. This reflects a worldview that views them as ‘aliens’ in their own country (Sue et al., 2007).

In summary, results from the prompted scenarios demonstrate that the Vietnamese-Australian participants were very responsive or at least offended by the scenarios with majority of participants advocating a proactive response. These responses were certainly not atypical:

*By not confronting
something that is wrong,
you are not helping to build
a better society but you are
making society stand still.
So by confronting the issue,*

put your point of view and when enough people doing that, you can actually make this society better... when I don't believe in something, I voice my concerns (G1:4) If you don't say anything back they will just step over you again and again (G2:7)

Contextual Analysis of Anecdotal Responses

The responses to the anecdotes and stories given were rich in information about where and when responses might be appropriate or effective. This is clearly a complex situation with many possibilities for contingent relations depending upon the social, historical and cultural contexts.

To bring together the contexts for racism found with this group, Table 3 is a preliminary attempt to present some contextual and environmental factors which should be considered when deciding whether and how, to respond to racism. These were separated according to the environmental/social context, loosely following the framework of Guerin (2005b) although this is not crucial. The headings are there to group the responses usefully but do not pretend to explain anything about them.

The table was formed based on participants' actual responses to real racial incidents (not the scenarios) in which participants revealed the strategies that were effective or not, and the discussion refers to the table entries. The many examples were loosely put into these categories although this could be done in other ways. What most needs to be noted is that *the specific social contexts and the individuals' historical contexts play a major role in determining the response to racism*. While not a tight experimental control of outcomes, there is clear adaptation of responding to specific contexts for this group. This again suggests that interventions need to be tailored to the contexts and to the social relationships of all the people involved. Most refer to strategies of responding that take the social relationships into account.

Work Environment. First, G2:23

highlighted the importance of remaining professional in a work environment and therefore refrained from confronting a customer that was verbally abusing him. In this environment, he resisted the urge to 'flatten him' and rather opted to alert other staff members who escorted the offender out of the premise. Participants acknowledged that confrontation at work could result in the victim being reprimanded for unprofessional conduct and losing their job. "It might get to the boss and you could lose your job" (G2:7). Notifying security guards or managers would result in the perpetrator being removed from the store without any further negative repercussions for the victim.

Similarly, racism resulting from this environment should not be confronted by the victim in an aggressive manner. Participant G1:6 and G1:1 both described real situations of racial discrimination by co-workers. In both cases participants stressed the importance of ensuring that racism was actually occurring before proceeding to take action. When participants decided to respond it was not through confrontation but approaching a team-leader who could resolve the issue. G1:4 and G1:3 both have leading positions and stated that when approached by concerned workers, they have a duty to eliminate the problem. In such cases permitting the continuing racism was not an option:

So among the people that I am in charge, if they show any indication of racism, I tend to confront them. I say... I can't accept this... here I cannot allow this to happen (G1:4)

The reason for such a harsh stance is that racism in the workplace can affect the productivity and morale of the entire team. At work, "we need to solve the problem otherwise we can't work" (G1:4). According to participants, racism in a work environment will likely result in strained relationships and a lack of motivation and productivity thus should not be tolerated.

The Public Arena. The second contextual factor from Table 3, whether or

not a *public* act of racism should be confronted (involving strangers rather than closer relationships), was seen as complex. On the one hand, participants reported that it was best not to confront racial incidents in public places because public acts of racism were usually committed to seek attention or status. Therefore it was best to ignore the situation so the offender “get(s) no satisfaction and backs off” (G2:4). Further, ignoring a public incident could evoke sympathy and support from the general public who acknowledge that racism is wrong:

Everyone in public knows that you're copping the insult and know what you're going through and they respect that so by you not saying anything and just leave it the way it is, everyone is like 'yeah his copping it' and so they don't look at you differently (G2:9)

On the other hand Czopp et al. (2006) suggested that sometimes ‘creating a stir’ can induce change in others. By voicing disapproval, people have the opportunity to confront prejudice directly and help reduce future aspersions. In line with this, G1:6, for example, recalled a real incident where confrontation stopped a public display of overt racism. While at the cinema she and her husband were approached by four youths who told them to “go back to your own country”. She recalled:

He just said 'you out of this country'. I say 'excuse me do you know this country not belong to you? Did you know that?' Do you know the history and map of where everyone come from?' and I started to talk about the history. At the time, I know that he is staring to be like, 'Oh my God, this woman knows something'. Because at first they treat us like a dumb

person you know? But when I reacted and talked about it and said... the policy here and such and such. And then he started to, I think at one point he could not confront me anymore and the other guy, started to talk more rude to me. He says, 'you go back to your country, this is not your own country' and I said 'how dare you speak to me that way'. And I talked to him louder voice and then people standing around and starting to watch us but we don't care. But I teach them and let them know that you don't dare to approach the Asian, middle age and try to attack them and whatever. And I think they scare of the aggressive behaviour and they ran away.

Additionally, confrontation may make people aware of their unacceptable behaviour and less likely to engage in future aspersions.

People can be ignorant and maybe this behaviour can be seem to them that it is acceptable but it's not by any standard and they have to think that we are all humans(G1:7)

Customer Service Environment. Unlike the diversity of responses in public arenas, participants unanimously believed racism in customer service environments should always be confronted. Participants commonly reported receiving no eye contact from staff, being ignored, having money returned to them in a rude fashion, having staff follow them around in a store or being excessively questioned by law enforcement officers. The experience described by G1:6 was typical:

We arrived at the Casino and we order some coffee... and the waitress, she bring

Table 3. *Contextual responses and their rationales based on responses from participants experiences with racial incidents*

Environment contexts	Ideal responses	Rationale
Work Environment	Avoid confrontation. Rather, make notes of the incident and notify a manager or supervisor or security guard.	Whether racism has been experienced from a co-worker or customer and regardless of severity, it is best to avoid confrontation. Although it is common to report being discriminated at work, a confrontation would lead to adverse consequences both for the worker and the store owner. The worker may be reprimanded and the store could lose business. Therefore it would be advisable to notify either a manager if from a co-worker or security guard if from another customer.
Public places (1)	No clear consensus was found regarding the best way to respond to the incident. In some instances it is best to ignore the situation to not draw attention to the situation.	It may be beneficial to ignore the situation because those who voice racist ideals in public are usually 'seeking attention' 'wanting to cause trouble' or 'wanting to make a scene to get noticed' (G1:9) therefore it may be best to ignore it so the offender 'gets no satisfaction and generally backs off (G2:4)'
Public places (2)	On the other hand, it may be beneficial to use the public arena to voice concerns because it is unlikely the perpetrator will retaliate. Responses then should be dependent on whether the victim feels they can achieve a desirable outcome.	A confrontation in a public place may act as a deterrent because the offender may feel surprised or embarrassed by the response. Also if other people are around then signs of support and unity may act as a discourager for future incidents. If a response is given, confrontational aggressive responses (such as shouting) are generally ineffective. Better responses would be to educate the perpetrator on why racist views are not tolerated in society and if they wish to be racist, they can do so behind closed doors but it is unacceptable in a public arena.
Customer service environments	Always take note of the incident (ie. what makes it racist, how you have been treated differently) and then voice concerns either to the service person or someone with higher authority.	'You are paying for the service and therefore are entitled to feeling welcome (G1:11).' If the situation was not confronted then the business would suffer and remain oblivious to the situation. Usually notification of a manager would result in an apology to the customer and or reprimand of the worker. Unfortunately, although it is common to report being 'ignored', 'treated rudely' or 'served slower' in these environments, the problem lies in the subtle manifestation of racism in these environments, therefore taking notes is essential.
Bullying at school	If bullying from another student, report to either a teacher or principal. It is not advisable to 'fight back' or for parents of the victims to directly confront the parents of the other child.	In a school environment racial bullying should not be tolerated. In such instances reporting the incident to an impartial teacher or principal is advisable because proper precautions can be taken. Confrontation of the parents could quickly result in the situation becoming quickly out of control as parents are often very protective of their children and accusations such as 'racist' will not be well received. Additionally, it has been established that ideals are created at home and often passed from parents to children so such confrontation is likely to result in more problems.

Racism within the school system	Seek help from the school counsellor before taking action against any teacher who is presumed to be racist.	It is easy to see why an accusation of a teacher being racist is serious and can be permanently damaging to the teachers reputation. As such further investigation must be made by a third party such as the school counsellor before accusing the teacher of being racist.
Racism from Groups	When either the perpetrator or the victims are in group environments, it is always best to walk away. Retaliation will almost always lead to aggression.	Any confrontation where there are groups of people involved is generally ineffective. In such cases, the perpetrator is usually trying to 'impress' their friends or gain status by acting racists and therefore looking for a response and confrontation. In such instances the victim's safety will be in danger and therefore walking away is ideal. Particularly, if the victim and the perpetrators are in a group, any confrontation will be 'egged' on.
Jokes (i. e., All Asians look the same)	Laugh it off or say something humorous in return however if the joke is serious then voice concerns.	Jokes are generally not meant to be offensive or harmful therefore an aggressive confrontation may not be warranted. Sometimes it is useful to say something humorous in return 'All Asians look the same? Yeah I know how you feel; all Whites look the same too (G2:4).' However if the joke becomes offensive then voice concerns because majority of the time the perpetrator is unaware of the offensive nature of the joke so once made aware, it generally stops.
Stereotypes (negative or positive) (ie. All Asians are good at maths)	Attempt to change the stereotype by providing correct information (not all Asians are good at maths and those that are only excel through hard work).	Stereotypes are usually not intentional because it is usually just an 'easy way to categorise people, attitudes and behaviours (G2:10)'. Attempting to change the stereotype by providing accurate information or explanations could prevent stereotyping from becoming problematic. Avoid confrontation or actions to support to the stereotypes.
Misunderstandings (ie. Vietnamese are involved in gangs)	Explain the situation or provide accurate information (Only a small minority of people are involved in gangs but that is found across all cultures) to correct the misunderstanding.	When misunderstandings occur, racism is generally not the intention therefore an aggressive response is usually not effective. For example, the misunderstanding that Vietnamese people are involved in gangs, an aggressive confrontation may actually only reinforce the stereotype. A rational explanation may be able to eliminate the misunderstanding before it manifests itself into something more serious. Try to rectify the misunderstanding by challenging false beliefs' or 'imparting knowledge' (Pedersen et al. 2005). It may also be useful to replace false beliefs with stories or anecdotes that do not put abrupt ends to conversations (Guerin, 2005).
Intentional outburst/ racial slur (i. e., 'go back to your own country')	Ignore the slur and event.	Unlike unintentional racism, people who make racial slurs are aware of the offensive nature of their attitudes and behaviours. An intentional slur or outburst is a conscious decision so an attempt to make the perpetrator aware of the racism in the hope they stop is not likely. Furthermore, those who make racial slurs are usually aggressive so a confrontation would almost lead to retaliation. To protect the safety of the victim, it is best to ignore the remark altogether.

the coffee and throw the money. Then when she put down the coffee she splash the coffee out.

None of the participants believed that discrimination from store employees or those in customer service positions should be accepted, evident from their responses to actual experiences. When they were discriminated against by customer service workers they either confronted the person directly or brought the issue up with higher authorities and usually got an apology or some other desirable outcome. G1:6 explained how she proceeded to confront the waitress.

I just standing up and say, 'excuse me what your name?' and I write down and the supervisor came to see me straight away... they starting to apologise to me and offer me the coffee and not pay but I say 'look she spoil my feeling and I can't stay at this place anymore' but at least I talk with the supervisor...let him know that this shouldn't be going on. You need to stop it.

Similarly, G1:4 recalled a story where a customs officer at an airport was suspicious of his reasons for a business trip. While other passengers were screened with ease, the officer questioned him in regards to all aspects of his trip. He replied "Didn't I put all the information on the form? Read the form and I am here on a business trip". He stated that the officer had no right to pry into his personal information and that they would not have singled him out if he was not Vietnamese. However, as stated by G1:2, the racism in these scenarios is often elusive, making it difficult to detect. Therefore, as suggested by G1:6, it is important to document what in the context makes the behaviour racist, such as how they were being treated relative to others.

School Environment. Table 3 has two forms of racism at school: bullying from other children and perceived discrimination

from a teacher. In both cases, the participants suggested proceeding with caution and report their experiences that an aggressive or accusatory confrontation is unlikely to resolve issues and can exacerbate it. G1:7 described an incident where she was racially bullied at school by a fellow student. She recalls being reluctant to take action and therefore endured the bullying for years. It was not until another classmate informed the principal that the harassment ceased.

According to the participant, personal confrontation of the parents or the student would have caused "more conflicts" because of the sensitive nature of the issue. Parents are usually extremely defensive of their children and accusations of racism would usually not be well received. Accordingly, after the resolution of the incident, "she didn't dare display that behaviour anymore... sort of just walked pass and staring at you instead of calling you names". According to G1:12, who was approached by concerned parents about their children being discriminated against by a teacher, she advised the parents to seek help from the school counsellor before making accusations against the teacher. Accusing a teacher of racism, especially when it is not true, can be extremely damaging to their career and requires further investigation. While remaining silent about the issue resolves nothing, any action must be undertaken with extreme caution and evidence needs to be collected to support the claims before the case is pursued further.

Racism from Groups. Numerous participants gave examples of incidences where they were racially harassed by groups and their retaliation resulted in physical attacks. In such cases, participants acknowledged that a passive approach would be best: by "pretending like you didn't hear it and walk[ing] away" (G1:5). Participants acknowledged that there will be aversive consequences when confronting a group. Therefore "when it's a group onto one... then there is nothing much you can do" (G2:1). Further, "when anything is a group then it's a lot more out of hand... let's just say that" (G2:9).

Joking. Participants suggested that responding to racial jokes should be judged by the severity in context. Since studies have shown that not all racism is intentional, jokes, stereotypes and misunderstandings should be treated differently to intentional and malicious racial slurs and outbursts although equally serious (Guerin, 2003). According to participants, jokes were usually not made by strangers but by acquaintances, and an accusatory confrontation is likely to damage the relationship. In dealing with jokes, participants felt it was best to “laugh it off” (G2:1) or “say something humorous in return” (G2:4). However, if the jokes become too serious then letting the other person know this is generally all that is needed. “Once they know you’re offended... they generally stop” (G2:1).

Stereotyping. Similarly, participants felt that stereotyping was often just an “easy way to categorise people, attitudes and behaviours that are normally not detrimental to anyone” (G2:10). The participants believed that when dealing with stereotypes it is important to change the mentality. This can be accomplished in a similar manner to misunderstandings. Participants acknowledged that stereotypes and are generally harmless in themselves and only become problematic when manifested as racism.

Interestingly, one participant argued that generalising and stereotyping can also have positive effects. G2:4 stated that in his line of work, he is often preferred over Caucasian workers because of stereotypes:

You would get your typical people who really dislike Asians and say that we are inferior to them but generally we would also get those who think that we are superior. In the sense that, in my line of work being in real estate, we would see a lot of clients and they told me that they would prefer someone with an ethnic background ...simply because we have better

work ethics.

Misunderstandings. Similar to joking and stereotyping, participants felt that misunderstandings of different cultural customs were often a form of unintentional racism. When dealing with misunderstandings participants felt that being proactive and trying to educate by providing accurate information would eliminate the misunderstanding. When approached by a co-worker and asked to stop speaking Vietnamese, G1:6 confronted the issue in a non-aggressive manner and chose to explain to the co-worker the reasons why she was speaking Vietnamese. She further said in an attempt to rectify the situation she told her co-worker:

Okay I will speak English... but in sometime when I speak Vietnamese please accept that because I have no choice but I do not talking anything behind you. This is not personal between us.

Racial slurs. Racial slurs are different to unintentional forms of racism and although participants believed that racial slurs were a conscious decision to display racism, they similarly believed that any response would simply be “a waste of time” (G2:9). G2:3 stated that he rarely responded to racist remarks because he did not want to give the perpetrator the satisfaction of a confrontation because it would just “stir them on more”. Similarly, G2:8 believed that:

If they are to the point where they are calling you names, making remarks then they are not likely to change their opinion so easily... it’s always going to be at the back of their heads so... I just walk away
(G2:8)

If responding to the incident could not achieve a desirable outcome then participants felt it was best left. Furthermore, since those who make outburst are likely to be aggressive in nature, confrontation would usually warrant further aggression on the part

of the perpetrator.

Summary. As evident from the results of this study, participants certainly did not adopt passive responses to racism, as was expected from some of the literature. Even G1 participants, who were expected to engage in forbearance because of their stronger ethnic identification with Asian culture, did not passively accept the racism. However, confrontation was mediated by the social contexts of the relationships involved (strangers, work colleagues, employers) because confrontation was seen as more effective in some environments than others. Despite this trend of confronting racism, G1:8 stated that he would not respond to racism unless it was life threatening. This is why:

We escaped Vietnam to come to Australia...for our safety. And just because someone pushing in front of us, it's not a life or death matter so if they want to go in front of us, that's okay.

Many participants saw the value in standing up for themselves and their rights, and felt that they could not only effect change on their current environment but also for others in the same situations. G1:7 felt obliged to confront a racial incident that she witnessed occurring in a supermarket because the victim was unable to speak English. She retold the story of an incident she witnessed at Woolworths where an elderly Vietnamese lady was being mocked when she tried to tell the cashier that she had left her groceries behind. Her motivated response to this was:

I feel at the time, if they could do this with this one lady then they could do it with many others because there are majority of people who shops around there don't speak English... imagine if she did this to my mum

In contradiction with the literature (Noh et al. 1999), none of the participants reported that the fear of being seen as weak or breaking

cultural norms would have prevented them from confronting a racial incident, and actually reported being happy to do so when appropriate.

Conclusion

Overall, many important results are seen in the participants' interviews, and this study makes two major advances. First, the historical context for racism towards this group is not like that presented in some current theories, and we found no simple division between old and new racisms. There were strong historical changes but they were contextualised through particular events and people. Of most importance for this group, initially racism was seen as low, and Australians were keen to support the Vietnamese, but then racism become stronger partly through public figures but all of this was probably contextualised through (a) problems assimilating into mainstream society, (b) the behaviour of a minority of Vietnamese people, and (c) the misconception of 'job stealing'. Thus the political and social contexts played a major role in changing the individual responding to racism in context for these participants.

These results of historical context will not necessarily apply to other groups but the main point is still that detailed contextual analyses show how even the historical context changes in unexpected ways—there is no static environment of racism. To understand what racisms are current, how these affect the recipients, and how these bring about the recipients' behaviour, we need to do more carefully documented analyses (Guerin, 2005b).

The second main advance from this research is to show the huge diversity in how different generations, and different people, respond to racisms in different contexts. There were older people who were more confrontational in one context towards perpetrators of racism, while in another context (particularly when comments were made about the use of English), the younger generation were much more confrontational. The idea that fixed or standard methods of recommended responding can be developed is probably not going to work.

There were some similarities, however, and in particular almost everyone reported that if approached by a group when alone they would not confront the racism. But that was one of the very few common responses to a context of racism. This result means that both research and intervention are going to need to examine the whole field in much more detail than has been done in the past. Even the categories borrowed from Guerin (2005b), used here to loosely categorise the contexts, produced very different responses between people when other parts of the contexts were changed. Almost all of the responding was strategically negotiated by participants according to the social relationships involved, and this also needs to be seen as a major context for confronting racism. People need to be trained in contextual process rather than fixed or standard procedural responses to racism.

Overall, racism and responding to racism have been treated as too monolithic. They vary in an assortment of contexts and we need to set about describing those changes in context with different groups. The examples found here might not apply to other groups and settings, and so interventions need to encompass the hugely context-dependent nature of complex real life situations. Hopefully once more evidence is accrued some more general patterns might be found, but we must not assume this. For the group here, Vietnamese-Australians, there were large historical changes that were not simple, and responding to racisms was very strategic in relation to the contexts in which they occurred.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the community for their participation in this project. Their willingness made this possible. This was also partly funded by an ARC Linkage Grant LP110200495 An exploration of the frequency, outcomes, enablers and constraints of bystander anti-racism.

Address for Correspondence

Bernard.Guerin@unisa.edu.au