Building resilience in the face of racism: options for anti-racism strategies

Rivkah Nissim[1]

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1   Executive summary

A significant number of Australians experience racism and racial discrimination every year. Research shows that racism has serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of those who experience it, and impacts negatively upon society more broadly.

Given the prevalence of racism and the harm that it causes, governments and civil society organisations have adopted anti-racism strategies which aim to prevent and reduce racism by targeting those who may perpetrate or condone racism and discrimination. Such strategies however do not tend to focus on building the resilience of those subject to racism. Arguably, this should also be an objective of an anti-racism strategy.

A recent Australian research project, *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* (Healing the Wounds of the Heart) investigated agents of resilience in high-achieving Aboriginal people with experience of racism. The research identified a number of key themes for building resilience to racism: acknowledging racism, emotional distancing, staying calm and positive in the face of racism, having a strong sense of identity, seeking support from friends and family, and challenging racism.

These themes reflect the findings of international research on racism and resilience and provide a framework for incorporating a focus on resilience into anti-racism strategies. The framework outlines objectives for actions targeting individuals, organisations and the broader community, including: having organisations and community leaders who name racism when it occurs and who implement strong sanctions against it, making sure that the targets of racism think positively about their identities and understand that racism results from flawed thinking by those who perpetrate it, the presence of supports, including safe spaces, for those subject to racism, and ensuring that both the targets of racism and bystanders are empowered to respond safely and effectively when encountering racism.

Actions to promote these objectives could include communication campaigns aimed at individuals and groups vulnerable to racism, support for organisations such as businesses, schools and sporting clubs to oppose racism and provide safe spaces for vulnerable groups, and initiatives to promote bystander anti-racism action.

Further research is necessary to develop safe and effective ways for those who experience racism to challenge it, and to understand what constitutes effective bystander action from the perspective of the target of racism. Research into agents of resilience with leaders of a broader range of culturally and linguistically diverse communities would be beneficial, as would work to build an understanding of the benefits to resilience of collective, as well as individual, resistance to racism. Such work is necessary in order to minimise the harm of racism to the individuals and communities who continue to bear the brunt of it.

2   Introduction

The scene: a suburban train carriage full of commuters. Suddenly a female passenger starts racially abusing another passenger, a young man of Asian appearance. Her voice is loud and can easily be heard by everyone in the crowded carriage.

Most do their best to ignore her, gazing out of the window or at their iPods. But the man sitting next to the target of the abuse tells the woman to leave him alone. She turns her aggression onto him. Some of the other passengers now become involved – one or two tell the woman to shut up, someone offers to call the police, and a young woman across the aisle starts filming the incident on her phone. Eventually the abusive woman, muttering under her breath, gets off the train at the next station.

This familiar scenario features three sets of 'actors' – the perpetrator of the racist attack, the bystanders, and the target. By and large, anti-racism strategies deal with two out of these three actors. They may adopt communication campaigns which challenge the prejudicial beliefs of those who may perpetrate racism (see Donovan and Vlais, 2006). They may also encourage the institutions with which potential perpetrators engage, such as schools, workplaces and sporting clubs, to take a stand against racism as this can influence the social norms which affect racist behaviour (see Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2009).

Such strategies may also focus on encouraging bystanders to say or do something to respond to racism when they encounter it, as this can also influence the perpetration of racism (see Russell, Pennay, Webster and Paradies, 2013). The actions of the hypothetical passengers in the train carriage illustrate some of the ways in which bystanders can intervene in a racist incident.

But most anti-racism strategies do not account for the young man who is the target of the racist behaviour. They do not consider what could help to lessen the impact this incident will most likely have on him, and what could help him to cope with such incidents should he encounter them in future – essentially, what would help to build his resilience in the face of racism. Arguably, this should also be an objective of an anti-racism strategy.

Granted, there are some risks to a focus on building resilience to racism in those who experience it. Such a focus may be considered to tacitly accept the existence of racism in spite of efforts to prevent and reduce it. It may also be perceived as implying that the targets of racism should just 'deal with it', therefore vesting the agency and the responsibility for managing racism in its victims.

However, actions which aim to prevent and reduce the incidence of racism, known as primary prevention, and those aimed at supporting the resilience of those at risk of racism, or secondary prevention (see Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2009) do not need to be mutually exclusive. Rather, they should be regarded as complementary elements of a well-integrated anti-racism strategy.

This paper will recommend incorporating a focus on resilience in anti-racism strategies and suggest a framework for doing so which builds on the factors understood to promote resilience in those vulnerable to racism.

The first part of this paper provides a brief review of recent Australian literature on racism and anti-racism strategies. The next section considers the evidence for the factors which can build resilience to racism identified by Bodkin-Andrews in his recent research project *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* (Healing the Wounds of the Heart). The final section of the paper translates these factors into a framework which can be incorporated into an anti-racism strategy and recommends areas for further investigation.

3   Racism and anti-racism strategies

3.1   *What is racism?*

Most definitions of racism acknowledge that racism can occur between individuals, known as interpersonal racism, and that racism can also be systemic or institutional, resulting from policies or practices of institutions such as schools, workplaces and governments. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission (2011, p. 3)

> Racism can take many forms, such as jokes or comments that cause offence or hurt, sometimes unintentionally; name-calling or verbal abuse; harassment or intimidation, or commentary in the media or online that inflames hostility towards certain groups…It can also occur at a systemic or institutional level through policies, conditions or practices that disadvantage certain groups. It often manifests through unconscious bias or prejudice.

Pedersen, Walker and Wise (2005, p. 21) observe that the terms 'prejudice' and 'racism' are often used interchangeably in the literature but that prejudice relates to attitudes, while racism is a broader concept which includes institutional practices.

Paradies (2014), citing Sawrikar and Katz (2010) builds on this analysis, observing that power, in addition to prejudice, is a necessary ingredient in racism. However Sawrikar and Katz warn against an uncritical acceptance of this "racism = prejudice + power" equation. In a paper titled "Only white people can be racist?" they acknowledge that an understanding of the inequitable distribution of power between racial groups is necessary to explain institutional or systemic racism, but that this fails to account for the racism that can, and does, occur between minority ethnic groups.

Some forms of racism, both interpersonal and systemic, are unlawful under state and federal laws which prohibit racial discrimination, defined in the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* as less favourable treatment on the basis of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status. The Racial Discrimination Act also prohibits racial hatred, defined as public conduct that is likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate on the basis of race.

3.2   Why take action against racism?

In the words of Pedersen et al (2005, p 21), "Racism is ideologically offensive, it results in an exclusionary segmented society, and it has considerable negative effects not only for the victim of racism, but for society as a whole."

Research indicates that racism and racial discrimination are prevalent in Australia. The most recent tranche of the annual *Mapping Social Cohesion* survey conducted by Markus (2013, p 22-23) has found that nearly one in five people in Australia has experienced discrimination on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity or religion in the last 12 months. This figure is higher for recent migrants, particularly those of non-English speaking backgrounds. It is higher still for migrants from specific countries, with 45 per cent of recent migrants from Malaysia, 42 per cent from India and Sri Lanka and 39 per cent from China and Hong Kong reporting discrimination.

The *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey* conducted in 2008 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) found that 26 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported having experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months. More recently, a survey of Victorian Aboriginal people found that 97 per cent had experienced racism within the last year, with two out of three people experiencing eight or more incidences of racism a year (Ferdinand, Paradies and Kelaher, 2013, p. 1).

As Russell et al (2013, p 13) have stated, "An increasingly wide body of research has established that (racial) discrimination has serious consequences for those affected." They found that these can include stress, anxiety, depression, being overweight or obese, and engaging in behaviours that contribute to ill health such as smoking and misuse of alcohol and other substances. They point to emerging evidence of an association between racism and racial discrimination, and heart disease and stroke. They also note that racism and discrimination restrict access to resources that are necessary for good health, such as employment, housing and education, and can increase exposure to risks to health such as contact with the criminal justice system.

As well as harming the individuals who experience it, racism negatively impacts upon society more broadly. It is one of the factors identified by Markus as eroding social cohesion, which can be defined as the positive functioning of a community which has shared goals and responsibilities and in which there is a readiness to cooperate between members (2013, p 13).

3.3   Anti-racism strategies

In her consideration of anti-racism as a movement, Lentin (2008, p 312) distinguishes between "contestatory", or community-led, anti-racism action, and "state-sanctioned" anti-racism typified by legislation and policies.

Nearly all of the of anti-racism strategies considered by such researchers as Donovan and Vlais (2006) and Jensen, Cismaru, Lavack and Cismaru (2008) would fall into the latter category, having been initiated by governments or civil society institutions (sporting clubs, businesses, non-government organisations).

As Donovan and Vlais (2006, p. 80) observe, these strategies share a common goal: 'the reduction of negative beliefs about, and discriminatory behaviours towards, CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) groups by the dominant group."

According to Jensen et al (2008, p. 3 citing Watts), this focus on majority – to – minority racism is because such initiatives are framed in an understanding of racism which refers "almost exclusively to the privileges and power associated with the white majority populations and the disadvantages of the 'coloured' populations."

These strategies tend to target a number of spheres of influence, often referred to in the literature as levels. Researchers such as Pedersen et al (2005), Donovan and Vlais (2006), Jensen et al (2008, citing Duckitt 2001) and Russell et al (2013) argue that a "multi-level approach" is necessary in order for anti-racism strategies to be effective.

Two current Australian anti-racism strategies, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation *Building on our Strengths* framework to reduce race-based discrimination and support diversity in Victoria, and the National Anti-Racism Strategy led by the Australian Human Rights Commission, share these characteristics.

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation *Building on our Strengths* framework:

> (i)s based on the understanding that there is a relationship between deeply held stereotypes and prejudices, race-based discrimination in the form of everyday acts and race-based discrimination reflected in organisational, community and broader societal structures and cultures. Accordingly, efforts to reduce such discrimination need to be targeted at all these levels (2009, p 27).

The actions outlined in the Framework target individuals, organisations, community and society. The Framework is concerned with primary prevention - the prevention and reduction of racial discrimination – rather than secondary prevention goals such as helping vulnerable groups respond to discrimination and cope with its impacts (2009, p 17).

The objectives of the National Anti-Racism Strategy are to create awareness of racism and how it affects individuals and the broader community, to identify, promote and build on good practice initiatives to prevent and reduce racism, and to empower communities and individuals to take action to prevent and reduce racism and to seek redress when it occurs (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012, p. 2). In this, it targets similar spheres of influence to the Victorian Health Promotion Strategy Framework (individuals, organisations, community and society).

With its key focus the prevention and reduction of racism, the National Anti-Racism Strategy is also largely a primary prevention strategy. While one of its objectives incorporates secondary prevention – empowering affected communities and individuals to seek redress when racism occurs – this has not been a focus of its activities to date (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013).

4 Resilience

4.1 Resilience and racism

In their review of the literature on resilience, Mason and Pulvirenti (2013, p 402-403) state that resilience tends to refer to the ability to "thrive or bounce back after negative life experiences" and to "adapt positively" in the face of distress and trauma. They note that, while some research views resilience as a "fixed personal attribute" which some possess and others do not, there is a "strong push" to conceive of resilience as a "process of adaptation" that can be built through a range of factors.

In relation to racism, resilience refers to the ability "to persevere and maintain a positive sense of self when faced with omnipresent racial discrimination" (Brown and Tylka 2010, p. 264). According to Salahuddin and O'Brien (2011, p. 495), if, when confronted with racism, a person can maintain pride and strong self-esteem, and avoid harmful outcomes such as depression and social dislocation, they can be said to exhibit resilience.

Watts-Jones (2002) and Pyke (2010) have identified that much of the harm of racism comes from its internalisation by those who experience it. Pyke (2010, p 553) describes internalised racism as:

> (T)he individual inculcation of the racist stereotypes, values, images and ideologies perpetuated by the White dominant society about one's racial group, leading to feelings of self-doubt, disgust, and disrespect for one's race and/or oneself.

Research by Runions, Priest and Dandy (2011, p 25) on the prevalence of perceived discrimination amongst Australian children of Middle Eastern and Asian descent hypothesised that perceived discrimination "would be most strongly associated with children's internalising tendencies (such as) depressive and anxious problems."

Stress, anxiety and depression are also some of the negative effects of racism established in research documented by Russell et al (2013).

In nominating racial discrimination as one of a number of factors contributing to psychological distress amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Kelly, Dudgeon, Gee and Glaskin (2009, p 13) identify the importance of exploring how factors that build resilience can moderate such distress.

Brown and Tylka (2010, p 261) also identify that, for African Americans, it is "especially imperative" to explore the relationship between racial discrimination and

resilience. They state that focusing on resilience as a likely outcome of racial discrimination suggests that African Americans could "find meaning in their adversity and emerge from their adversity with their resilience, or well-being, intact".

4.2 Bubalamai Bawa Gumada – agents of resilience

Bubalamai Bawa Gumada (Healing the Wounds of the Heart) is a recent Australian research project which investigated agents of resilience in high achieving Aboriginal Australians with experience of racism. This research was based on the premise that doing so could add to the range of positive interventions identified by researchers to counter racism (Bodkin-Andrews, Newey, O'Rourke and Craven, 2013).

The key elements identified by *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* participants as contributing to their resilience were classified into the following themes:

- Acknowledging racism

- Emotional distancing

- Staying positive

- Sense of identity

- Seeking support

- Staying calm, and

- Challenging racism.

These themes reflect the research on effective approaches to build resilience to racism and provide a useful structure for the consideration of this research.

(a)   Acknowledging racism and emotional distancing

The need to acknowledge racism and its impacts was one of the strongest factors identified by *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* participants as contributing to their resilience. As one participant said, failing to 'name' racism meant blaming herself, and her Aboriginal identity, for poorer outcomes she may experience:

> *As a victim of racism, I had automatically assumed that every non-Indigenous person was automatically better than me. So they automatically had better houses, better cars, better moral values…* (Bodkin-Andrews et al 2013, p 14)

This blaming of one's own cultural or ethnic identity for perceived inferiority is an illustration of internalised racism. As Watts-Jones (2002, 592-593) says with reference to people of African-American background, internalising racism is "an experience of self-degradation, and self-alienation: one that promotes the assumptive base of our inferiority. It is the experience of being 'Primitive.'" She goes on to say that "what enjoyment or privileges we accrue are by virtue of abandoning our identity….at the core of racism is the shaming of African identity and culture."

Pyke (2010, p 556) identifies that racism can be indirectly internalised through cultural ideologies that seem to have nothing to do with race per se, such as meritocracy. In Pyke's words, "meritocracy obscures oppression by suggesting that racial disparities in hiring or school admissions are decided according to 'objective' standards applied equally to all." In other words, failing to acknowledge systemic racism as a contributor to disadvantage can lead those who experience such racism to blame such disadvantage on themselves and their race.

Pyke relates how racial politics in the United States in the 1960s, typified by the "Black is beautiful" movement, focused on resisting and countering internalised racial oppression and inferiority "to forge an oppositional consciousness of self-love and racial pride" (2010, p 554). Reflecting this, participants in Bodkin-Andrews' *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* project identified promoting a positive sense of identity as one of the key factors that had helped build their resilience to racism. This will be discussed further later.

Research suggests that the naming and rejection of racism by those in leadership positions can help reduce racism. Pedersen et al (2005, p 25) cite a study conducted in the United States by Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham and Vaughn (1994) that found that hearing someone speak out against racism led to a significant strengthening of anti-racist opinions amongst study participants.

In its *Building on our Strengths* framework towards reducing race-based discrimination, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation applied this finding to organisational accountability. The framework states that:

> Organisations and organisational cultures exert a powerful influence on the behaviours of individuals and groups…Through their practices, organisations can impact upon social norms and society more broadly. Accordingly, organisations can play an important role in reducing race-based discrimination by modeling and enforcing non-discriminatory standards. (2009, p. 33)

Conversely, the framework acknowledges that organisations with cultures that do not acknowledge the existence of racism and discrimination, and whose leaders fail to adequately sanction against discrimination, themselves contribute to race-based discrimination (2009, p 31).

Another factor promoting resilience identified by *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* participants that is linked to acknowledging racism is emotional distancing, described as "the process of externalising racism to be the fault of the racist." (2013, p. 14).

This concept has its roots in the psychological theory of learned optimism. Developed by psychologist Martin Seligman, learned optimism identifies the link between optimistic thinking and emotional resilience, and identifies a number of characteristics of optimistic people that can be learned in order to increase the resilience of those whose thinking tends towards pessimism.

Seligman identified three characteristics of the "explanatory style" of optimistic people - that is, the way they explain things to themselves when they go wrong. Of specific interest in terms of racism and resilience is external personalisation, or the attribution of the cause of, and responsibility for, one's problems to others (1990, p 49).

Seligman acknowledges that external personalisation has limitations, in that failing to accept any personal responsibility at any time that things go wrong is not healthy (1990, p 52). Brown and Tylka also note that for "oppressed groups" to excessively attribute the causes of their disadvantage to others may encourage "fatalism and a sense of helplessness, as they believe that they have little or no power to change their environment" (2010, 261).

Taking these limitations into account, the *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* research indicates that emotionally distancing oneself from racism by externalising it as flawed thinking by the person expressing it is more beneficial than internalising the negative messages inherent in racism.

(b)   Sense of identity

Evidence suggests that measures to reinforce pride in one's racial or cultural identity can help to build resilience to racism. Priest, Paradies, Trenerry, Truong, Karlsen and Kelly conducted a systematic review of epidemiological studies on reported racial discrimination and the health and wellbeing of children and young people. One of the moderators identified between experience of racial discrimination and health was the delivery of racial socialisation messages (2013, p 122).

A study by Brown and Tylka found that young African American college students who received a high number of racial socialisation messages had significantly higher resilience to racial discrimination than those who did not receive such messages. They found that certain specific messages were directly associated with resilience, namely those which promoted pride and knowledge about African-American culture and information about cultural heritage.

However they also observed that, as African-American students face a range of experiences of discrimination in different environments, they may need to draw on a range of racial socialisation messages. In addition to messages that promote cultural pride and knowledge of cultural heritage, messages that help them to understand inequality and prepare them to manage discriminatory environments may also be helpful (2010, 275-276).

Other factors identified by Priest et al that have been shown to moderate the impact of racial discrimination on the health and wellbeing of young people in Australia are ethnic group orientation and "ethnic self-esteem" (2013, 122). Research conducted with Korean-Americans by Lee (2005) also considered ethnic identity and "other-group orientation" – attitudes towards other ethnic groups – as protective factors against racism.

Lee's research found that factors such as a sense of understanding about one's ethnic identity can serve to build resilience to discrimination, at least when there is low perceived discrimination. As perceived discrimination increases however, the buffering effects of ethnic identity decrease. It was suggested that this may be partly because those who are very proud of their ethnic heritage may "take greater offence at discrimination and consequently experience more emotional and social distress" (2005, p 41). These findings suggest that while racial and ethnic socialisation can increase resilience to discrimination, their positive benefits should not be over-estimated.

In addition, pride in one's racial, cultural or ethnic identity can also serve as a source of exclusion of others not believed to share that identity, such as those of mixed race. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda (2011) has observed that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people "express suspicion of those who do not fit their model of indigenous authenticity" and that such questions of identity can be "a powerful mechanism to run each other down". He describes this behaviour as lateral violence, a form of "internalised colonialism". This refers to the use of judgments about Indigenous identity based on skin colour in the way that labels such as "full-blood", "half-caste" and "quadroon" were used by the colonisers of Indigenous Australia. Such categorisations of the colonised by the colonisers are common to indigenous peoples around the world.

Conversely, Pyke (2010, p 558) describes as "intra-ethnic othering" the behaviour of young Californians with Korean and Vietnamese heritage towards Koreans and Vietnamese newly arrived in America. In her study, the use of the derogatory term "FOB", for "Fresh off the Boat" was used by first-generation Californians to distance themselves from their newly-arrived peers who were perceived to identify too strongly with their ethnicity and to display behaviour associated with negative stereotypes of those ethnicities such as being a "nerd."

In order to promote the positive benefits for resilience of a sense of pride in one's identity, it is perhaps best to consider ethnic or cultural identity not as a monolithic concept but as mutable and, as Commissioner Gooda suggests, up to the individual to determine. Racial socialisation messages and promotion of ethnic orientation would therefore need to be tailored to individuals and specific communities.

(c)   Staying calm, staying positive and seeking support

Staying calm and responding positively when faced with racism have been identified as key to promoting resilience. As one participant in the *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* project recommended:

> *Count to ten and take a big breath before you respond, because your response is going to be important to you for the rest of your life….acting in anger is not always the best way to conduct yourself, although sometimes you can't help that* (Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2013, p 15)

Responses to racism will be discussed later in the paper.

Another theme identified by *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* participants was that of seeking support, particularly from friends and community:

> *Offload (the racist) incident immediately to your best friends. Do not hold it and let it fester. Have a joke with another Koori who will laugh with you and get rid of it.* (Bodkin-Andrews et al, 2013, p 15)

In their review of studies on moderators between racial discrimination and the health and wellbeing of young people, Priest et al (2012, p 122) also identified coping responses such as talking to someone and the presence of social supports as contributing to resilience.

While having people who may share the same identity and can understand and empathise with the experience of racism is beneficial, being isolated can be detrimental in other ways. Kelly et al (2009, p 24) explain the differences in wellbeing between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in urban and remote areas as "minority stress" caused by the experience of stigma, prejudice and discrimination. They state that:

> Indigenous respondents living as dispersed minorities in urban areas are likely to experience racism and discrimination differently from those living in small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in remote areas where they form greater numbers and, in some cases, the majority of the population….Put simply, people of an oppressed cultural group who form a minority within a larger population are likely to suffer greater mental health problems.

One antidote to minority stress may be the presence of shared, supportive environments for those with a common experience of racism. Watts-Jones (2002, p 594 – 595) calls such environments "sanctuary," or places which offer protection from the "savagery of racism". "Among oppressed people," she says, "the dimension of safety takes on an additional dimension, and that is, the ongoing reality of being subject to the power and privilege of those empowered."

This idea of sanctuary has resonance with the concept of cultural safety. Cultural safety has been defined by Williams (cited by the Australian Human Rights Commission 2011, p 123) as:

> [Having a]n environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

As Social Justice Commissioner Gooda (2011, p 123) writes, "cultural safety…requires the creation of environments of cultural resilience within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities…. where we feel safe and secure in our identity, culture and community."

Research by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (2010, p 63) explored what cultural safety meant to Victorian Aboriginal people. Responses echoed the themes of pride in cultural identity, the ability to determine one's cultural identity, and the presence of sanctuary:

> *Feeling safe in who you are…in your identity. Knowing that you're a proud Indigenous person…taking strength in your culture through adversities.*
>
> *Me giving myself permission to be an Aboriginal person. Not other people telling me who I should be or am.*
>
> *Having the sense of refuge in the middle of a storm.*

(d)   Challenging racism

Research previously cited suggests that speaking out against racism can help contribute to a reduction in racism. Work has been undertaken to identify the strategies most likely to be effective in challenging both interpersonal and institutional racism (Pedersen et al 2005, University of Sydney 2011), and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation *Building on our strengths* framework (2009, p 31 – 31) translates these strategies into a series of themes for action. These include increasing empathy between those of different racial or cultural groups; providing accurate information to address inaccurate beliefs or negative stereotypes, and increasing personal accountability for prejudicial views.

Yet those subject to racism, perhaps not surprisingly, do not always challenge it. Research conducted by Ferdinand, Kelaher and Paradies with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (2013, p 20) found that the majority (72 per cent) of those reporting racist experiences either ignored or put up with them. A further 18 per cent wanted to confront the perpetrator, but didn't. This research found that ignoring the experience or pretending it didn't happen was the only response associated with decreased odds of finding the incident either very, or extremely, stressful (2013, p 33).

Conversely, similar research by Ferdinand, Kelaher and Paradies with Victorian Aboriginal people (Lowitja Institute 2013, p 11) found that those who had experienced racism were most likely to either ignore it (33 per cent) or verbally confront the perpetrator (32 per cent). However, either ignoring the experience or confronting the perpetrator, were identified as more likely to make the experience very stressful or extremely stressful.

The only response identified by study participants as associated with lower odds of finding the experience very or extremely stressful, was talking to someone about it (Lowitja Institute, 2012 p 22). This echoes the findings of the *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* project which also identified seeking support, and "offloading" the incident to friends, as a strategy to support resilience.

While both these studies found that confronting the perpetrator of racism contributed to the stressfulness of the incident for the target, *not* challenging the perpetrator was also identified by Aboriginal people as significantly stressful. The researchers also note that the international literature on racism and health reviewed by Paradies (2006) suggests that coping with racism by ignoring it exacerbates its negative effects on mental health (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 2013, p 40).

In this review Paradies cites evidence of the beneficial effects on mental health of "active/expressive" responses to racism but notes that such responses do not have to be confrontational – they can include actions such as seeking support (2006, p 894).

Taken together, this evidence suggests that some form of response to racism by its targets may be more beneficial than no response, but that it may be most beneficial if that response is non-confrontational.

It is worth noting that the responsibility for directly challenging racism need not be vested in the target of racism. An alternative is to build the capacity of third parties, or bystanders, to speak out against racism when it occurs.

There is a growing body of research on the potential of bystander anti-racism, defined as:

> Action taken by a person or persons (not directly involved as a target or perpetrator) to speak out about or to seek to engage others in responding (either directly or indirectly, immediately or at a later time) to specific incidents of racism and also to behaviours, attitudes, practices or policies that contribute to racism. (Nelson, Dunn, Paradies, Pedersen, Sharpe, Hynes and Guerin, 2001, p 265)

Research suggests that bystander anti-racism can help reduce the incidence of racism. If, as has been found, a lack of sanctions against racism can contribute to its prevalence, anti-racism actions by bystanders can challenge the social norms that enable racism and therefore help prevent it (Russell et al, 2013, p 18).

Nelson et al identify the potential of bystander action for those who experience racism: "The targets of racism currently carry most of the burden of anti-racism. Bystander anti-racism is politically significant in developing effective approaches that shift the burden of anti-racism away from targets" (2001, p. 264). However, Russell et al (2013, p 18) acknowledge the need for further research on bystander anti-racism from the perspective of the targets of racism.

5   Findings and recommendations

5.1 A framework for building resilience

The themes for building resilience described by Bodkin-Andrews in the *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* project lend themselves to a framework for building resilience to

racism which could be incorporated into existing anti-racism strategies, such as the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation 'Building on Our Strengths' framework or the National Anti-Racism Strategy.

The following table presents the *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* themes in such a framework, broken down into sub-themes to better reflect the research findings. Against each sub-theme are recommended targets for actions to implement each theme and agents best placed to initiate these, as well as objectives to guide implementation of actions.

Figure 1: A framework to build resilience in those at risk of racism.

Theme: Acknowledging racism and emotional distancing	
Sub-theme: Demonstrating leadership	**Sub-theme:** Externalising racism
Target/s of action: Organisations, communities	**Target/s of action:** Individuals subject to racism
Agent/s of change: Organisations, communities	**Agent/s of change:** Organisations, communities
Objective of action: Organisations and community leaders name racism when it occurs and have strong sanctions against it.	**Objective of action:** Those subject to racism understand that it is the result of flawed thinking by those who perpetrate it.
Theme: Sense of identity	
Sub-theme: Positive role models	**Sub-theme:** Socialisation
Target/s of action: Individuals subject to racism	**Target/s of action:** Individuals subject to racism
Agent/s of change: Organisations, communities	**Agent/s of change:** Organisations, communities
Objective of action: Those subject to racism are encouraged by the success of high-achieving members of their communities.	**Objective of action:** Those subject to racism think positively about their racial, social and cultural identities.

Theme: Staying calm and positive and seeking support	
Sub –theme: Seeking support	**Sub-theme:** Cultural safety
Target/s of action: Individuals subject to racism	**Target/s of action:** Organisations
Agent/s of change: Organisations, communities	**Agent/s of change:** Organisations
Objective of action: Those subject to racism gain strength by talking about it with friends, family or other supports.	**Objectives of action:** Organisations offer safe, supportive spaces and provide services in ways which enhance cultural safety.
Theme: Challenging racism	
Sub-theme: Personal responses	**Sub-theme:** Bystander responses
Target/s of action: Individuals subject to racism	**Target/s of action:** Organisations, communities
Agent/s of change: Organisations, communities	**Agent/s of change:** Organisations. communities
Objective of action: Those subject to racism are empowered to respond safely and effectively when it occurs.	**Objective of action:** Bystanders are empowered to respond safely and effectively when encountering racism.

5.2 Actions to build resilience

(e)   Individuals

Actions aimed at individuals, such as those which seek to promote a positive sense of identity, would be targeted towards people most likely to experience racism, specifically those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD backgrounds. These could include communications materials such as posters and YouTube videos featuring role models such as sporting stars, politicians and musicians that could be distributed through community agencies such as migrant resource centres, community health services, youth services and schools, and online via social media platforms such as Facebook.

Examples of Australian initiatives aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which promote positive messages about racial or cultural identity are "Proud to Be Indigenous Week", a campaign of the First Peoples Worldwide organisation (see http://firstpeoples.org/wp/proud-to-be-indigenous-week-may-20-26th) and the Facebook group "I Am Proud To Be Aboriginal" (see https://www.facebook.com/IAmProudToBeAboriginal).

An example of an initiative aimed at young people from CALD backgrounds is the publication "Challenging Racism – a guide for young people" produced by the Western Young People's Independent Network (see www.wypin.org.au). The guide provides examples and suggestions of ways in which young people can challenge racism in different settings while staying calm, and encourages them to seek support.

An initiative which promotes a non-confrontational response to racism is "Report Racism", an online tool which supports those who have experienced racism to report it to the police, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission or to a third party (see http://www.reportracism.com.au/).

(f)   Organisations and communities

Actions which encourage organisations and communities to name racism when it occurs and to have strong sanctions against it may look similar to existing anti-racism initiatives such as the Australian *Racism. It Stops with Me* campaign (https://itstopswithme.gov.au) and *Show Racism the Red Card* in the United Kingdom (http://www.srtrc.org). Such initiatives encourage those in leadership positions to publicly pledge their commitment to oppose racism and to condemn racist incidents when they occur. At the organisational level, sanctions against racism can be expressed in the form of strategies, policies and training, accompanied by avenues of redress should racism occur.

A culturally-safe space, which can provide sanctuary from racism as defined by Watts-Jones (2002, p 594 – 595), could be an organisation established solely for a particular cultural or ethnic community, such as the Gathering Place in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Its vision statement is:

> To bring together our people at a gathering place that celebrates our community's culture and identity, enhancing the self determination and well being of our people. It will provide a healthy and proud "Indigenous Australian" community through motivation, education and cultural acknowledgement, whilst giving the Western Suburbs Indigenous Australians a sense of belonging and ownership (http://www.gatheringplace.com.au/index.html)

It could also be an organisation such as a youth centre or sporting club which brings together people from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds who are vulnerable to racism. Young people from CALD backgrounds at a forum on racism hosted by the Centre for Multicultural Youth spoke about their community centre which provided a culturally safe space:

> (M)ost young people come to the centre to feel safe. They find out that other young people experience racism and have been through this too. Sometimes they think they're the only ones so it's good to know that many people experience it and they have a place to come together and talk about it (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2013, p 6)

Russell et al (2013, 51-52) suggest that programs designed to promote bystander anti-racism action be implemented within organisations. They note that in order to be effective, such programs are likely to be highly context-specific and are best conceptualised as part of a broader organisational development approach. They include training for managers and leaders that can then be rolled out to all staff; written and/or audiovisual materials to support training, and whole-of-organisational strategies focused on policy, leadership and culture. An example of such an initiative is the Football Federation of Victoria's *Don't Stand By, Stand Up* program (see http://www.footballfedvic.com.au)

5.3 Further research

Limited research has been undertaken on effective approaches to build resilience in those subject to racism. A number of areas discussed in this paper would benefit from further exploration, particularly the theme of challenging racism.

The findings of the research into responses to racism by Victorians of Aboriginal and CALD backgrounds conducted by Ferdinand, Kelaher and Paradies (2013) suggest a need for further investigation of responses by the targets of racism that are effective and not detrimental to their health. Further, as noted by Russell et al (2013, p 18) there is a need for research on bystander anti-racism from the perspective of the targets of racism.

Bodkin-Andrews' *Bubalamai Bawa Gumada* project whose findings have been discussed in this paper concerned agents of resilience identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in leadership positions. Similar research with leaders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds which specifically considers the factors that have contributed to their resilience to racism would also be beneficial.

Such research should account for the distinct experiences of different culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as researchers such as Markus (2013) and Booth, Leigh and Varganova (2001) have found that the experience of racism differs between different ethnic and cultural communities, with Markus also observing marked differences in the experience of settled migrants and those newly arrived in Australia.

Much of the research on resilience, including resilience in the face of racism, is focused on individual resilience and the factors which enhance it. Yet, as Mason and Pulvirenti acknowledge in their research on resilience amongst former refugees, citing Chaskin (2008),

> (C)ommunities are important to building resilience…because they provide the context within which individuals flourish and grow (or otherwise) and because communities themselves are "actors that respond to adversity." (2013, p 404).

Lentin (2008) observes that communities have historically been sites of active resistance to racism, particularly systemic racism. While she acknowledges the co-option of much anti-racism activity by the state, communities can and do continue to take collective action against racism. Some relatively recent Australian examples include protests by Indian students against racist attacks (Morello 2009) and the class action by a number of young African men concerning racial profiling by Victoria Police (Rintoul 2013). The effects of such action on the resilience of the individuals involved, as well as on the cultural and ethnic communities of which they are part, would be worth investigation.

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