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Oliver, Elizabeth Roslyn, Exploring the everyday performances of white anti-racists in Camden, NSW, Department of Geography and Sustainable Communities, University of Wollongong, 2015.
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Exploring the everyday performances of white anti-racists in Camden, NSW

Degree Type

Thesis

Department

Department of Geography and Sustainable Communities

Advisor(s)

Natasha Klocker

Keywords

SGSC, anti-racism, belonging, denial, place-defending

Exploring the everyday performances of white anti-racists in Camden, NSW

Elizabeth Roslyn Oliver

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement of the Honours Degree of Bachelor
of Science in the Department of Geography and Sustainable Communities.

University of Wollongong

2015

Abstract

Many studies have detailed the presence of racism in Australia, however only a small body of research has studied performances of *anti-racism*. Camden, in south-western Sydney was the focus of intense media scrutiny in 2007, when a group of residents strongly opposed the development application for an Islamic school on the outskirts of the town. Camden was constructed in the media as intolerant, racist and white. This project explored the experiences of white anti-racists in Camden, in the aftermath of this event. The project considered how the aforementioned incident, and associated negative media coverage of Camden, affected the sense of belonging and subsequent activities of white residents of Camden who engage in diverse types of anti-racism. The primary aims of this project were to explore the everyday performances of white anti-racists living in Camden and to analyse media representations of Camden in light of the Islamic school incident. White anti-racists are of particular interest as they outwardly 'fit' in predominantly white neighbourhoods, but their commitment to anti-racism can profoundly affect their belonging. Through a media content analysis of Sydney newspapers and semi-structured interviews with white anti-racists in Camden, this thesis discusses the relationships between racism, anti-racism, place and belonging. It reveals that anti-racism influences belonging in complex ways – by either bolstering it, or undermining it. Equally, belonging shapes anti-racism at the local scale in diverse ways. For some residents of Camden, a strong sense of local belonging motivated their anti-racist activities. For others, this sense of local belonging led to place-defending and the denial of racism, thus inhibiting critical engagement in anti-racism. The findings of this research raise complex challenges for local level anti-racism initiatives. Further research is needed to better understand the relationships between racism, the denial of racism, place-defending and belonging, and the implications of these for successful anti-racism initiatives. In order to maximise the effectiveness of future initiatives, it is clear that local belonging needs to be better understood – both as a motivating factor for anti-racism, and as a barrier.

Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks and gratitude goes to my supervisor Dr. Natascha Klocker. Thank you for your guidance and encouragement throughout the past 9 months and for so generously giving your time and expertise to this project. Your enthusiasm and insights have been invaluable and have helped me to maintain my passion and enthusiasm for the project throughout this year.

I would like to thank each of the participants involved in the project. Thank you for giving of your time so generously and sharing your experiences and thoughts with me. A special thank you to those participants who helped to recruit other interviewees, your support for the project enabled me to reach a group of people who provided valuable insights and opinions for my research project. Thank you to all of those participants who contributed news articles and other sources which enriched the project.

Thank you to all of my friends and family who have shown an interest in my research and have been a sounding board for my thoughts and ideas and a special mention to my Dad and Sal who have continually encouraged me and have lent a listening ear throughout the past 9 months.

And lastly, thank you to my husband Thomas, for your encouragement to pursue this research project and for your love and support throughout the past 9 months.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 – The Camden Islamic School development application

The Camden Local Government Area (LGA) is situated on the south-western edge of the Sydney Metropolitan area with the Campbelltown LGA to the east and the Liverpool LGA to the north (see Figure 1.1). Camden gained much media attention in 2007 when a vocal group of residents strongly opposed the development application for an Islamic school on the outskirts of the town. The Quranic Society, an Islamic religious organisation, had submitted a development application for an educational institution in October 2007 (Al-Natour 2010). The proposed school intended to cater for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. Very few people of Islamic faith lived in the Camden LGA at the time of the application (397 residents - 0.8% of the population; ABS 2006). According to media reports, the Quranic Society envisioned the school as a place that would cater for the changing demographics of the population in the south-west growth area of Sydney (Al-Natour 2010). As the Camden community became aware of the proposed school through local newspapers, and as residents viewed the plans that were on show at Narellan and Camden libraries, opposition grew. Community members expressed their opposition to the school by writing letters to the local council and newspapers, via a group text message and via a community group that was established on Facebook to oppose the development application (Al-Natour 2010).

Sources are conflicted as to the exact number of letters written to Camden Council opposing the school, however the number was in excess of 3000, the overwhelming majority of which objected to the development (Bowie 2008; Murphy 2008). Many of these letters openly objected to the school on racial and religious grounds; others rejected the application on the basis of environmental and traffic concerns (Al-Natour 2010). Public rallies were also held in Camden in opposition to the Islamic school development. One rally held at a local soccer field in November 2007 was attended by more than 2000 people (see Figure 1.2) (Al-Natour and Morgan 2012). These events highlighted the racial intolerance and prejudice of many of the residents who were opposed to the school. Two pigs' heads and a cross inscribed with bible verses and draped in the Australian flag were placed on the proposed school site. Camden Council ultimately rejected the development application and asserted that this decision had been made on planning grounds. The Council strongly refuted assertions that the decision was influenced by racial or religious prejudice (Al-Natour 2010).

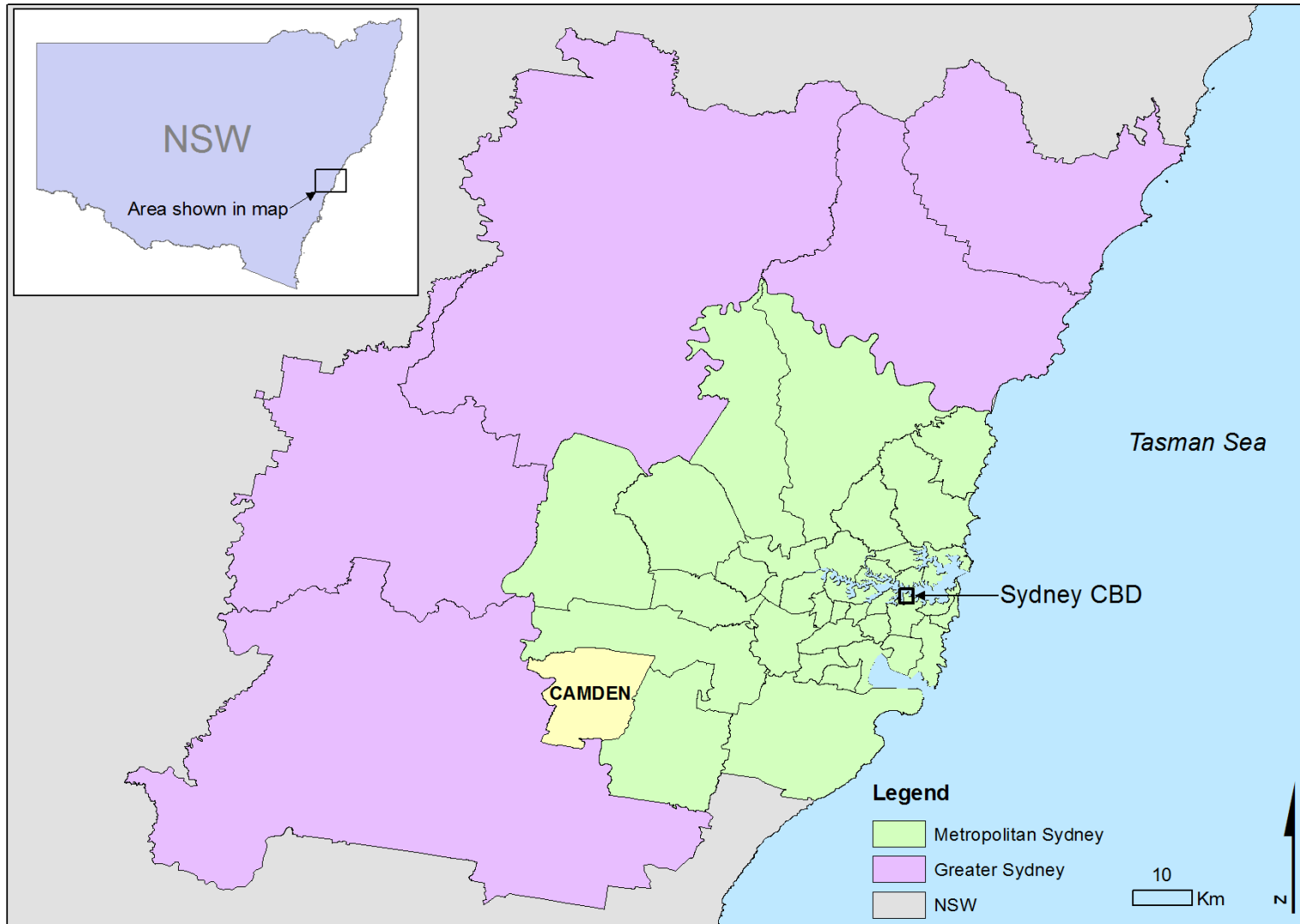


Figure 1.1: Camden LGA in relation to the Sydney Metropolitan Area (Data courtesy of Department of Communications & NICTA 2014)

The Quranic Society appealed Camden Council's decision through the NSW Land and Environment Court in 2008, but the appeal was rejected in June 2009 (Bowie 2009). Three years later, in 2012, the Quranic Society sold the proposed site, which was seen as a victory by some residents of Camden (Campion 2012).

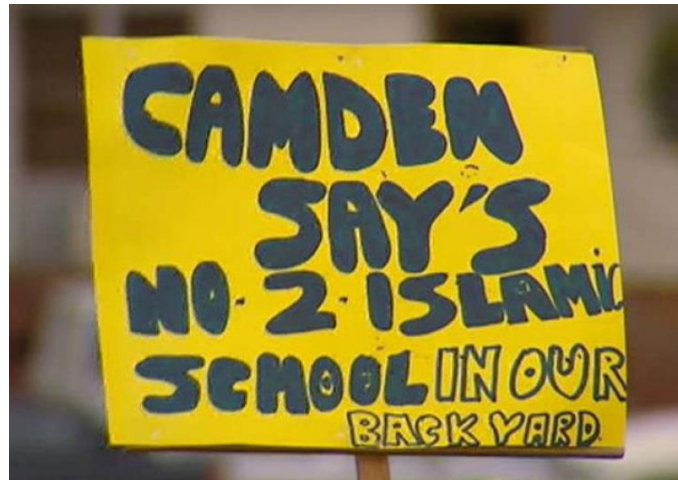


Figure 1.2: A sign at a rally opposing the Islamic school (ABC 2011)

Media coverage of the Camden Islamic School incident focussed on the blatant racism and intolerance of a vocal group of Camden residents. Kate McCulloch, one of the residents who actively lobbied against the school stated, 'They (Muslims) take our welfare and they don't want to accept our way of life... Hezbollah is a terrorist organisation. I'm sorry, I just don't want them in Australia' (Ramachandran 2009). Another resident declared 'if Camden Council wished to bring crime and corruption to Camden and make it a dirty looking town like Lakemba I suppose they will go ahead anyhow' (Senescall and Narushima 2007). In light of these events, Camden was portrayed by Sydney media as an insular and racist place (Al-Natour 2010). The circumstances surrounding the Islamic school proposal, and related media coverage, form the backdrop of – and impetus for – this thesis.

This chapter starts by providing an overview of the Camden LGA and its population. Second, it discusses the Camden Islamic School incident as an example of 'boundary making' – a process whereby dominant power structures are left uncontested allowing the dominant group to determine who belongs in a place (Trudeau 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006). Boundary making is underpinned by – and in turn reinforces – an 'us' versus

'them' binary. Racism and white privilege are operationalised in boundary making events, as was the case in Camden. In response to the events outlined above, a number of community groups formed to promote cultural diversity and oppose racism within the Camden LGA. This chapter also introduces the concept of anti-racism, which underpins this thesis and its key aim: to understand the experiences of white residents of Camden who participated in anti-racist activities in the aftermath of the Camden Islamic School incident. Finally, this chapter introduces the research aims and questions in more detail, and concludes with an outline of the thesis structure.

1.2 – Camden and its population

Camden is one of Australia's oldest farming communities and was integral in the start of Australia's wool industry (Wrigley 2001). In 1805, the colonial secretary Lord Camden granted John Macarthur over 5000 acres of land to the south west of Sydney (Atkinson 1988). Macarthur named one of these areas 'Camden Park' and started what would become a remarkably successful merino wool industry (Al-Natour and Morgan 2012). The township of Camden was founded in 1840 and Macarthur's legacy endures to this day. The street sign on the road into Camden boasts that it is 'the birthplace of the nation's wealth'. The emblem of the town is a merino sheep, a reminder of the heritage of the region. This heritage and rural legacy remain highly valued by Camden residents.

Camden is located between suburban Sydney and its rural hinterland (Al-Natour 2010). However, the area is rapidly changing and is one of the fastest growing areas in NSW (ABS 2012). Sydney's south-west growth sector, which encompasses the north-eastern corner of the Camden LGA, is set to increase by 300,000 people over the next 20 years (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2011). Many Camden residents cherish its rural roots and are strongly resistant to change. Such resistance pertains both to population increase itself, and to predicted changes in the ethnic makeup of the area (Al-Natour and Morgan 2012).

The population of Camden has historically been – and continues to be – predominantly white (Anglo-European Australian). In 2011, 80.2 per cent of the population was born in Australia, compared to the NSW state average of 68.6 per cent and 69.8 per cent Australia-wide (ABS 2011a, 2011b, 2011d). The top four responses to the Census

ancestry question, amongst residents of Camden LGA, were Australian, English, Irish and Scottish (ABS 2011b). Furthermore, 86.3 per cent of Camden's population spoke only English at home in 2011, compared to the NSW state average of 72.5 per cent and the national average of 76.8 per cent (ABS 2011a, 2011b, 2011d). The top non-English languages spoken in Camden in 2011 were Italian and Spanish (ABS 2011b). Christianity is the dominant religion with 78.5 per cent of Camden residents being affiliated with a Christian denomination, compared to 61.1 per cent Australia-wide (ABS 2011a, 2011b). Only 1.1 per cent of Camden residents follow Islam, compared to 2.2 per cent nationally (ABS 2011a, 2011b). Census data thus confirm that Camden is a predominantly white and Christian area.

1.3 – Racism and boundary making

Racism is the inequitable and unfair distribution of opportunity, benefit or resources across ethnic, racial, cultural and/or religious groups (Paradies 2006). The presence of racism in Australia has been studied in great detail. The *Challenging Racism Project* (conducted between 2001 and 2008) has shown that racist attitudes remain common in Australia (Dunn et al. 2004; Forrest and Dunn 2006; Forrest and Dunn 2010).

Residents from all states and territories were surveyed, with a complete data set of 12,512 respondents (Dunn et al. 2012a). The project found that 92 per cent of people agree that racism is a problem in Australia, but only 12 per cent of respondents self-identified as racist. Other contradictory views were also found with 85 per cent of respondents expressing a positive attitude to cultural diversity, but almost half stating that cultural diversity threatens the existence of a strong and harmonious society (Dunn et al. 2004).

The *Challenging Racism Project* generated regional profiles across Australia detailing the extent of racist attitudes and experiences. It provided evidence that racism is a geographically variable phenomenon (Dunn et al. 2012a). The project collected data from the outer south-western Sydney statistical sub-division (which includes Camden). In that area, 52.9 per cent of respondents expressed anti-Muslim sentiment (Dunn et al. 2012b). Respondents from this region of NSW were found to be more likely to express racist attitudes than the broader NSW population (Dunn et al. 2012b).

In addition to these quantitative investigations of racist attitudes, racism researchers have prioritised documenting the experiences of ethnic and religious minorities as the targets of racism (Mellor 2004; Paradies and Cunningham 2009). Studies have explored how racism has impacted ethnic and religious minorities' sense of belonging in certain places, with a focus on Cronulla following the riots in that suburb in 2005 (Dunn 2009; Noble 2005). A sizeable body of research has also documented the implications of racism for the health and wellbeing of target groups, with a particular focus on Indigenous Australians (Paradies 2006; Paradies and Cunningham 2009). Research from both ethnic majority and ethnic minority perspectives reveals that racism remains prevalent in Australia, and has harmful effects.

Racism has changed significantly over the last century, which has led to the labels 'Old racism' and 'New racism' (Dunn et al. 2004). 'Old racism' was prevalent in Australia from the time of Federation until the 1970s. The term 'old racism' is used to describe racist attitudes that are underpinned by a belief in racial hierarchies, perceived biological differences between 'races', and the biological inferiority of ethnic minorities (Dunn et al. 2004). The White Australia Policy supported and reinforced these attitudes (Dunn et al 2004; Jakubowicz 2002). Although 'Old Racism' is still present within Australian society, 'New Racism' is arguably more prevalent. 'New Racism' has moved away from the idea that ethnic minorities are biologically inferior and instead claims that insurmountable cultural differences threaten social cohesion (Dunn et al. 2004). 'New Racism', while often more subtle than 'Old Racism', is also nefarious. It positions ethnic and/or religious minorities as 'Other' and is informed by negative stereotypes of those groups (Dunn et al. 2004). 'New Racism' was evident in the discourses of those who opposed the Camden Islamic School. Perceived cultural differences between the predominantly white and Christian population of Camden, and Muslims (particularly those from Middle Eastern backgrounds) were emphasised. Camden residents who opposed the Islamic school argued that the two cultures were incompatible and that the school would threaten the social cohesion of the Camden LGA. They argued that the people who would be drawn to the area by the Islamic school would not 'be like them' and would not 'assimilate' into their community (Murphy 2009; Vallejo 2007). Residents quoted in media coverage of the Islamic school incident lamented that Camden would

become 'another Lakemba'.¹ Such residents felt that the diversity of cultures and religions in Lakemba have contributed to local tensions (Senescall and Narushima 2007).

By making these claims – and by opposing the Islamic school development application – Camden residents were engaged in an act of boundary making (Wimmer 2008). Australian racism researchers have paid particular attention to such processes through the lens of the 2005 Cronulla Riots (Poynting 2006). Boundary making involves assertions that the 'Other' does not belong in certain places. Ethnic and religious minorities are considered unable to coexist with the dominant group. Dunn (2009) described the Cronulla riots as a performance of Australian nationalism. The majority (white, Anglo-European Australians) reinforced who belonged on their beach, but more broadly who belonged in Australia. A line was drawn between the ethnic and/or religious majority and minority (in that case, Lebanese Muslim Australians). In Camden, the response to the Islamic school development application also created and maintained a boundary. In 2007, residents of Camden sought to determine who did and did not belong within their community.

Boundary making and belonging are inextricably linked. Yuval-Davis (2006) defined belonging as an emotional attachment where a person feels 'safe' and 'at home' in a particular location. Along with this, Yuval-Davis (2006) has discussed the politics of belonging, which is the process of maintaining and enforcing boundaries. The politics of belonging inform – and are informed by – nationalism and national identity. Anderson (1983) famously described nations as 'imagined communities'. There are certain 'national imaginings' of what it is to be 'Australian', things that people share in common and that underpin a shared national identity. Individuals' national imaginings are influenced by their social location, their personal experiences and their values and these form a basis for inclusion and exclusion (Yuval-Davis 2006). For many people in Camden, Muslims are not part of their local (or national) imagining.

¹ Lakemba is a suburb located in the south-west of Sydney in the City of Canterbury. It is highly multicultural with the top three ancestry responses being Bangladeshi (10.9%), Lebanese (10.0%) and Chinese (6.2%); 88% of residents have both parents born overseas. Just over half (51.8%) of its residents are Muslim (ABS 2011c).

1.4 – Anti-racism

Anti-racism is defined as ‘forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate, and/or ameliorate racism’ (Bonnett 2000a, p. 4). Effective anti-racism needs to address ‘Old Racism’ and ‘New racism’, confront the denial of racism and raise awareness of white privilege (Nelson 2015b). Anti-racism is discussed in further detail in Chapter 2, through the theoretical lens of performativity.

Anti-racism research in Australia has been quite limited (Kowal 2011, 2012, 2015; Nelson 2013, 2014; Nelson et al. 2011). Little research has focused specifically on members of the ethnic majority who seek to oppose racism, such as the residents of Camden who formed community groups to promote cultural diversity in the aftermath of the Camden Islamic School incident (Kowal 2011 is an exception). While people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds participate in anti-racism activities, the focus in this study is on these ‘white anti-racists’ (Kowal 2011). This is because white anti-racists outwardly appear to ‘fit’ in predominantly white communities, but they may face unique challenges living and practising anti-racism in a community like Camden, which has sought to publicly affirm its own white identity, and which has been widely designated as racist as a result. Negative constructions of place – place stigma (Nelson 2014; Wacquant 2007) – can affect individuals’ sense of belonging. The stigma of living in a place that has been labeled racist, may present challenges for white anti-racists – whose values and actions may not coincide with those of their neighbours.

1.5 – Research aims and thesis outline

The over-arching aim of this project was to explore the experiences and everyday performances of white anti-racists living in Camden, NSW. In order to contextualise these performances, a second key aim of this project was to analyse media representations of Camden, in the aftermath of the Islamic school incident. Rather than relying on anecdotal evidence to make a case that Camden has been portrayed as white, insular and racist in the media, this thesis presents empirical evidence of these tendencies. Following on from these two over-arching aims, the research project was framed by four research questions:

1. How are localised instances of racism, and associated media discourses, experienced by white anti-racists?
2. How do white anti-racists perceive their role in response to such incidents and negative constructions of place?
3. How do white anti-racists perform anti-racism in their local communities, and with what perceived effect?
4. How do white anti-racists negotiate and understand their own sense of belonging in places designated as white and racist?

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview and critical assessment of the anti-racism literature and how performances of anti-racism are linked to constructions of place and sense of belonging. Chapter 3 discusses and evaluates the methodology of the research. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the results of the research and discuss their implications. Chapter 4 discusses the results of a media content analysis, which examined representations of Camden in Sydney newspapers. It also explores the interviewees' perceptions of the media's 'treatment' of Camden. Chapter 5 discusses racism in Camden and the formal and everyday performances of anti-racism enacted by the interviewees. Chapter 6 explores the denial of racism, place-defending and the effect of white privilege on performances of anti-racism. The chapter also considers the relationships between belonging, place-defending and performances of anti-racism. The implications of these relationships for effective anti-racism praxis are discussed. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis and discusses the limitations of the research and considers the implications of the research findings. It suggests further options for anti-racist action and research.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 – Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative research has provided evidence of the existence and persistence of racism in Australia (Dunn and Nelson 2011; Forrest and Dunn 2006; Jayasuriya 2002), as well as its harmful effects (Berman and Paradies 2010; Brondolo et al. 2009). Key racism researchers have argued that it is important to move beyond documenting the existence of racism (Berman and Paradies 2010). An important next step is to uncover, investigate and advocate for actions that challenge and address racism. Accordingly, a body of literature has emerged around anti-racism and the role it plays within Australian society (Aquino 2015; Kowal 2011; Nelson 2013; Nelson et al. 2011). The literature reviewed in this chapter discusses different forms of anti-racism, including celebratory, regulatory and everyday (including bystander) anti-racism (Ho 2009; Lentin 2008; Nelson et al 2011). In keeping with the aims of this project, particular attention is given to everyday performances of anti-racism.

This chapter also details the conceptual approach adopted in this thesis, which applied theories of performance and performativity to racism and anti-racism. As discussed in Chapter 1, racist performances create spatial boundaries that hinder the belonging of ethnic and religious minorities in places such as Camden. Anti-racist performances seek to resist these processes. This study focused specifically on white anti-racists who oppose racism in a predominantly white locality. Thus this chapter also considers how white privilege and belonging are intricately linked to performances of anti-racism and anti-racist subjectivities. White privilege affects the ability of people to effectively address racism and influences the forms of anti-racism that are employed (Bonnett 1996; Hage 1998; Kowal 2011).

2.2 – Anti-racism: definitions and types

Anti-racism refers to ‘forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate, and/or ameliorate racism’ (Bonnett 2000a, p. 4). Formal anti-racism initiatives generally fit into one of two categories: celebratory or regulatory (Nelson 2015b). Celebratory anti-racism is arguably most prevalent in Australian society. It typically takes the form of festivals and events that encourage tolerance and celebrate multiculturalism by bringing together diverse people in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere (Ho 2009). Regulatory anti-racism is more targeted and seeks to stop racism through the

implementation of policies or protocols, which help to address the systems that underpin racism (Dunn et al. 2001). It focuses on understanding and addressing the underlying tensions and issues that are present between communities and people of different ethnicities (Nelson 2015b). Everyday anti-racism occurs when individuals challenge racism through their everyday actions (Czopp and Monteith 2003). It generally takes place outside formal settings and initiatives (Nelson et al. 2011; Pedersen et al. 2005; Pedersen et al. 2011;). Bystander anti-racism is a type of everyday anti-racism. It refers specifically to '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) against interpersonal or systemic racism' (Nelson et al. 2011: 265). Celebratory and bystander anti-racism are given further consideration below.

Celebratory anti-racism has attracted much criticism, being seen as ineffective in addressing long-term underlying issues of racial prejudice (Ho 2009; Kymlicka 2010; Lentin 2008; Nelson and Dunn 2013). The language of celebratory anti-racism tends to focus around words such as harmony, integration, understanding and respect, which avoid explicitly acknowledging the presence and serious implications of racism within Australian society. Jacqueline Nelson (2015b) has challenged celebratory anti-racism, arguing that racism needs to be called what it is, rather than being sanitised to avoid unsettling the dominant Anglo-Australian imaginary of racial tolerance. Events encouraging cultural diversity are popular because they are non-confrontational, but they risk commodifying 'otherness' and reinforcing an 'us' and 'them' divide. They also fail to address the structures that underpin racism, including economic and political inequalities (Ho 2009; Nelson 2013). These critiques of celebratory anti-racism link into a broader concern with the concept of tolerance – and the role it plays in bolstering white privilege (Hage 1998). This issue is given greater consideration in section 2.4 of this chapter.

A small number of recent studies in Australia have argued that bystander anti-racism, has great potential to help counter racial prejudices and racist behaviours, and to encourage real change within communities (Nelson et al. 2011). By challenging instances of racism (such as racist jokes and taunts or unfair treatment or exclusion),

bystander anti-racism can help to build new social norms, which in time can help to reduce racism (Czopp and Monteith 2003; Pedersen et al. 2011). These everyday actions in workplaces and other social contexts have significant potential to alter local attitudes of racial prejudice in places such as Camden.

2.3 – Anti-racism, performance and place

This project explored anti-racism in Camden through the theoretical lenses of performance and performativity. Gregson and Rose (2000: 434) defined performance as ‘what individual subjects do, say ‘act-out’’ and performativity as ‘the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performance’. While performance has typically been attributed to the work of Erving Goffman (1956) and performativity to Judith Butler (1990, 1993), Gregson and Rose (2000) have argued that performance and performativity are intrinsically linked, with performativity determining the performance. Performance and performativity provide an important theoretical basis from which to understand racism, anti-racism and belonging at the local scale (Dunn 2009; Nelson 2014, 2015a). This is because performance and place are closely linked.

Everyday performances are an important element of constructing and reinforcing particular constructions of place (Dunn 2009; Gregson and Rose 2000). Place has a physical geography but it is also a social construct: emotions and meanings are attached to place through people’s actions (Gregson and Rose 2000). Gregson and Rose (2000) have explained that places do not ‘pre-exist’ but are brought into being through specific performances. Neely and Samura (2011: 1939) have similarly described place as ‘largely created and maintained through performative, embodied experience’. Performances of racism and anti-racism play an important role in establishing place-identities, and in fostering or inhibiting the belonging of particular ethnic groups (Nelson 2014). Racist performances (such as the Cronulla riots or the Camden Islamic School incident) act as an impediment to the belonging of ethnic and/or religious minorities. Anti-racist performances can play an important role in challenging such framings of place. However, as Nelson (2014) has shown, the embeddedness of local anti-racism actors in their communities can act to inhibit anti-racist action. Specifically, local anti-racism actors have been found to engage in denial of racism and place-defending.

Denial of racism is often done as a means of 'place-defending' (Nelson 2014), with many people – including those engaged in anti-racism – admitting that there are issues of racism within broader society but not within their own local community. Nelson (2013) has defined four forms of denial of racism: temporal deflections, spatial deflections, deflections from the mainstream and absence (Nelson 2013). Temporal deflections minimise racism by claiming that ethnic minorities experience less racism today than in the past. Spatial deflections compare countries or localities saying that there is a greater presence of racism elsewhere. Deflections from the mainstream attribute racism to a small proportion of the population and dismiss it as a widespread issue. Absence of racism is an outright denial that there is any presence of racism (Nelson 2013). Celebratory anti-racism can exist even when denial of racism is present – as it does not necessitate acknowledgement of racism. Indeed, the popularity of celebratory anti-racism could be attributed to these denials. But denial of racism acts as a barrier to stronger forms of anti-racist action (including bystander anti-racism), which depend upon acknowledging racism and calling it what it is (Nelson 2015b).

2.4 – Racism, anti-racism and white privilege

The focus on white anti-racists adopted in this project is important because these individuals may play an important role in resisting and opposing racist attitudes and behaviours from *within* the communities where they live. However, there is a need to contextualise their whiteness and to address issues of white privilege (Bonnett 2000b; Frankenberg 1997). This is particularly important because white privilege may hinder white anti-racists' willingness to acknowledge racism and thus their capacities to engage in meaningful action.

White privilege refers to the unquestioned and unearned benefits and advantages experienced by people who are white on the basis of their skin colour and ethnic background (Hage 1998). To the majority of white people, white privilege is largely invisible as they are its beneficiaries (Ahmed 2004). A number of scholars have debated this problem, and whether it is possible to unlearn or escape from white privilege (Ahmed 2004; Bonnett 2000b; Probyn 2004). It can be difficult for white researchers to examine and critique white privilege, as there is always a risk of reinforcing it rather than helping to address it. However, Frankenberg (1997) has argued that the risks of

doing nothing are greater. If whiteness is left unexamined, its dominance will continue unabated (Bonnett 2000b; Frankenberg 1997). As discussed in the following sections, white privilege is fundamental to racism. It also underpins the popularity of celebratory anti-racism, and acts to inhibit more meaningful anti-racist actions. It is critical that the interplay between racism, anti-racism and white privilege is understood before effective anti-racist praxis can be undertaken.

2.4.1 – White privilege and racism

Australia's history of European settlement has left a legacy of racial prejudice and white privilege (Jakubowicz 2002). Hage (1998) has described Australia as a 'fantasy space' in which only 'white' Australians really belong (Hage 1998). The white fantasy space has its roots in the first half of the 20th Century, when Australian governments enforced their desire for a 'white' Australia through the Immigration Restriction Act (1901) and through policies intended to 'breed out' the Indigenous people of Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 1937). These policies sought to maintain the white fantasy space and, although they are no longer in practice, have left a lasting imprint on public attitudes and power structures (Kowal 2011).

Racist performances reinforce the white Australian 'fantasy space' and the ethnic majority group's dominance – and sense of belonging – to the exclusion of 'others' (Dunn 2009; Nelson 2014). Such performances often hinge upon discourses of deviance, according to which ethnic or religious minorities are portrayed as threatening to the dominant culture (Dunn 2004). This is normally achieved through stereotyping, a prime example of this being Muslims within Australia who are often portrayed negatively by the media (e.g. as fanatic, intolerant, militant, fundamentalist, misogynist and alien, see Dunn 2001). Such stereotypes have spatial implications. They enable the white majority to assert control over space by limiting the spatial belonging of those deemed 'Other'. This has been seen in relation to mosque development applications (Dunn 2001), and also in the response of Camden residents to the Islamic school. Residents of Camden asserted that Muslims did not fit into the dominant culture of Camden and were therefore not able to be a part of the community. The protests opposing the Islamic school in Camden sought to reinforce the white 'fantasy space'. White privilege was operational in these discourses: those who sought to dictate who did and did not belong

in Camden, felt emboldened to do so by their own sense of privileged belonging (as white Australians; Hage 1998).

2.4.2 – White privilege and anti-racism

Celebratory anti-racism is often couched in the language of tolerance, harmony and diversity. Ghassan Hage (1998) has argued that the notion of ‘tolerance’ reinforces the dominance of white (Anglo-European) Australians: it is an expression of white privilege. This is because tolerance allows the white majority to determine who does and does not belong – they retain the power to assert who is *tolerable*, and where (Hage 1998). Further, the idea that white Australians should kindly tolerate ‘Others’ reinforces white privilege and ‘ownership’ over space (Hage 1998). Balint (2010) has also criticised tolerance as a ‘minimal condition’, preferring instead to use the language of respect. For Balint (2010), to be tolerated shows little value or care. Respect suggests a more genuine incorporation into the community. Nelson (2014) has argued that such respect is not possible when there is a denial of racism. If there is said to be little or no racism then stronger forms of anti-racism – that acknowledge and challenge racism in the community (rather than promoting tolerance) – are deemed unnecessary.

Few studies have explicitly considered the relationship between whiteness, white privilege and anti-racist subjectivities. An exception is Kowal (2011), whose research explored this issue amongst ‘white’ employees working in the field of Indigenous health in the Northern Territory. Kowal (2011) noted that white anti-racists are faced with the challenge of coming to terms with the legacy and stigma of white privilege and its oppressive outcomes in Australia. She found that they deploy a range of strategies for managing this stigma. Kowal (2011) used the comparison of ‘non-German Germans’, that is Germans who are seeking to create a new identity by rejecting all that is ‘typically German’ and by strongly identifying with Jewish culture and victims of the Holocaust (Kowal 2011). The white anti-racists interviewed by Kowal (2011) in Australia’s Northern Territory sought to minimise their stigma (vis-à-vis the treatment of Indigenous Australians) in similarly complex ways as part of their anti-racist performances. A common strategy was to classify and label other white anti-racists, as ‘mercenary, missionary or misfit’ (Kowal 2011), and to reduce white agency to limit the negative impact they have on Indigenous Australians. Mercenaries are ‘in it for the

money', missionaries feel a sense of duty to help and view their work as a sacrifice for the benefits of others (who need to be 'saved'); and misfits are disillusioned workers who may have once been a mercenary or missionary (Kowal 2011). The missionary label is particularly complex, and is also a highly negative one – given the role of churches in the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families (Kowal 2011). The present study did not focus explicitly on white anti-racists working in an Indigenous context. However, it was attentive to the types of anti-racist subjectivities that were adopted by white anti-racists in Camden, and whether these were adopted unknowingly – or (as was the case with Kowal's interviewees), with a degree of self-reflexivity.

2.5 – Conclusion

This chapter has framed the present study within the context of literature on performance, performativity and place (Gregson and Rose 2000). Such literature provides an important framework for understanding performances of racism and anti-racism (Dunn 2009; Nelson 2014, 2015a). Research has shown that attitudes of racial prejudice and intolerance continue to exist within Australian society (Dunn et al 2004; Forrest and Dunn 2006). Many Australians recognise the presence of racism, yet very few are aware of (or willing to acknowledge) the existence of white privilege. Anti-racism initiatives in contemporary Australia are often limited to celebratory events that neither unsettle white privilege, nor require explicit acknowledgement of racism. Celebratory anti-racism has thus been extensively criticised for being ineffective and for not addressing the core issues associated with racism (Ho 2009; Lentin 2008; Nelson 2015b; Nelson and Dunn 2013). Although there is only a small body of literature on everyday and bystander anti-racism, research shows that it has great potential to challenge racial prejudice and reduce racism within communities (Czopp and Monteith 2003; Nelson et al 2011; Pedersen et al. 2011). However there is a need to address issues of whiteness and white privilege – particularly as these may present a barrier to effective anti-racism praxis at the local scale, in places such as Camden. Chapter 3 outlines the methods used in the present study to explore the performances of white anti-racists living in Camden, and the manner in which these performances were shaped by local belonging and white privilege.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 – Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods used to investigate and understand the performances of everyday anti-racism by white anti-racists in Camden, NSW. The chapter is divided into the following sections: ethical considerations, positionality, reflexivity and insider research, recruitment of participants, project design, data analysis and limitations.

3.2 – Ethical considerations

When undertaking any research that involves people, ensuring privacy, confidentiality and informed consent are of the highest importance (Hay 1998). The nature of this project required that an ethics application be submitted to the University of Wollongong's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for approval. This identified potential risks and detailed how privacy and confidentiality would be maintained throughout the research process. A risk assessment was also completed for this project. Approval was given for this project by the HREC on 26th March 2015 (see Appendix A, HE15/135).

3.2.1 – Privacy and confidentiality

Given the sensitivity of the research topic, privacy and confidentiality were of great importance during the research process. Participants were given the option of using a pseudonym for themselves and/or their organisation (if relevant). Participants' decisions relating to the use of pseudonyms were carefully followed in the preparation of this thesis. Ultimately, a decision was made to use pseudonyms for all organisations mentioned in this thesis, as the individuals interviewed could not provide consent on behalf of their entire organisation. The contact details of participants and collected data were only accessible to the primary researchers and are being securely stored according to standard ethics procedures (see Appendix A).

3.2.2 – Informed consent

All participants were over 18 years of age and were able to provide informed consent. Prior to the interview, participants were given a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (see Appendix B) informing them of the aims and methods of the project, what involvement in the project would entail and providing contact details for the investigators. Interview

participants were given a consent form (see Appendix C) and had the opportunity to ask questions or raise any concerns they had about the project before signing. Participants were informed about the potential uses of the interview data they provided, and were given the option of withdrawing any data they had provided to the project within a one month period following their interview. All participants were English-speaking adults who were familiar with the concept of consent and the process of signing a document. Therefore, the use of a PIS and a written consent form was an appropriate method of obtaining informed consent.

3.3 – Positionality, reflexivity and insider research

Reflexivity is the hallmark of excellent qualitative research and it entails the ability and willingness of researchers to acknowledge and take account of the many ways they themselves influence research findings and thus what comes to be accepted as knowledge (Sandelowski and Barroso 2002: 222).

The above quote from Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) captures the importance of reflexivity and positionality in qualitative research. Qualitative research is underpinned by research methodologies that involve social interaction (Dowling 2010). These social interactions do not occur ‘in a social vacuum’ (Dowling 2010: 35) hence subjectivity will always be present, incorporating personal opinions and characteristics into the methodologies used. Alongside subjectivity, intersubjectivity is also important. Intersubjectivity refers to ‘the meanings and interpretations of the world created, confirmed or disconfirmed as a result of interactions with other people within specific contexts’ (Dowling 2010: 35). In the case of semi-structured interviews (discussed in section 3.5.2) rapport is built between the researcher and the participant and a dialogue takes place as the means of primary data collection. The researcher’s subjectivity cannot be fully controlled in this process, however critical reflexivity can help to deal with issues of subjectivity and intersubjectivity (Dowling 2010).

Critical reflexivity is of the utmost importance in qualitative research. It is ‘a process of constant, self-conscious scrutiny of the self as researcher and of the research process’ (Dowling 2010: 31). Positioning oneself within the research is important so the factors,

which affect the research, can be reflected upon. Class, ethnicity and gender are just three factors that influence positionality (Mansvelt and Berg 2010). These factors can also influence the power relations between the researcher and the participant (Dowling 2010). However in the case of this research, the researcher was Anglo-Australian and middle class and the participants also identified with these categories. For this research project the researcher's 'insider' status was particularly pertinent. Teusner (2015) has discussed the particular complexities of 'insider' research and the ways in which the validity and credibility of such research can be ensured. In this research project, the primary researcher (Elizabeth) was an insider researcher in two key ways. First, Elizabeth lives in the local community that is being researched. Second, Elizabeth identifies as a white anti-racist. Critical reflexivity was helpful to understand and address the subjectivities relating to 'insider' research.

Reflexivity was used before the commencement of the research and throughout the research process – including in the writing of this thesis – to address the changing nature of the researcher's positionality as the project evolved. Two positionality statements are used in this thesis to account for these shifts: one was written before the commencement of data collection and is included below (Box 3.1). The other was written towards the end of the data collection process (see Chapter 7, Box 7.1).

Box 3.1: Positionality Statement I – early reflections on the project.

As a resident of the Camden LGA, I am to a certain extent, an ‘insider’ when it comes to this research project. I am part of the local community and some of my participants will be recruited through my personal connections with anti-racism initiatives in the community. I identify myself as an anti-racist, which also positions me as an insider. I am also of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Celtic ancestry, and am a fifth generation Australian. This places me in the ethnic majority, and in a position of white privilege.

Although I am a resident of the Camden LGA I have only lived here for less than four years. I did not go to school in the area and am completing my tertiary education in Wollongong. Camden is a town, which has a unique generational quality to it. It is not uncommon for people to be a third or fourth generation Camden resident. There are still prominent local families, some of whom have been here since the time of the Macarthurs.* There is a tendency for people to stay in the Camden area rather than move further afield. Many joke that you are not a ‘real’ Camden resident unless your parents and grandparents were born here. It is for this reason that I feel as though I am not really a ‘local’ and do not fit the Camden mould. However I do feel a strong connection to the area socially, through my friendships with Camden residents, rather than the fact that I’m *in Camden*. I seem to lack a sense of Camden patriotism.

The focus of this research is a rather sensitive topic in the Camden area after the way the media portrayed Camden at the time of the protests surrounding the development application for an Islamic school in 2007. In my initial scoping activities, to see if there would be enough potential participants for the project, I have already encountered defensive attitudes to do with Camden and racism. At first, the people I contacted did not know I lived in the local area. Many subtly (or overtly) defended their town to me. However, if I revealed that I did in fact live in the local area, their responses softened and they were less defensive due to the fact that they then saw me as ‘one of them’. I am conscious of the fact that even though I may not feel like a ‘real local’, I am still an insider and this can impact the ways that my interviewees respond to me and to the research questions.

* John and Elizabeth Macarthur were the pioneers of the Australian wool industry and were granted land in 1805 to establish sheep farming a few kilometres south-east of the present day township of Camden. Their children established the township of Camden in 1840. The Macarthurs have left a lasting influence on agriculture in Australia and laid the foundation for a very successful merino wool industry. Their descendants continue to reside at Camden Park, the heritage listed house that is situated on the remaining part of John Macarthur’s land grant (Atkinson 2008; Wrigley 2001).

3.4 – Recruitment of participants

Participants were recruited according to a set of criteria. An effort was made to recruit a diverse group of participants according to age, profession, gender and length of time living/working in Camden.

3.4.1 – Selection criteria

In keeping with the project aims outlined in Section 1.5 of this thesis, participants had to:

- Live or work within the Camden Local Government Area (LGA) at the time of the research
- Be 18 years of age or older (due to ethical constraints)
- Be of Anglo-European ancestry
- Be engaged in formal activities or everyday practices that oppose racism and/or promote diversity

As explained in Chapter 1, the project's focus was explicitly on 'white' (i.e. Anglo-European) people. These individuals occupy a potentially important position in the Camden community: they are members of the ethnic majority but – through their activities – seek to challenge the racism experienced by ethnic/religious minorities. Such individuals can potentially play an important role in shifting prejudicial attitudes, especially through their everyday actions (Nelson et al. 2011). It is important to note that although the label 'white anti-racist' has been adopted in this thesis (and was used during participant recruitment), many of the participants did not *like* the term 'anti-racist', and did not personally identify with it. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

3.4.2 – Methods of recruitment

Potential participants were targeted through personal connections and snowball sampling (Bradshaw and Stratford 2010; Noy 2008). The primary researcher lives in Camden and is engaged in various anti-racism activities as a volunteer. These networks helped to form an important starting point for recruitment. Participants were also targeted by contacting specific community groups involved in anti-racism activities. These included the Camden Cultural Harmony Group, Camden Community Club, the

Camden Social Justice Network and the local churches. Participants were initially approached by email (see Appendix E). Twenty-two interviewees were recruited in total: 13 of these were recruited through targeted sampling strategies and nine through snowballing. Of this sample, 20 interviews were appropriate for inclusion in the final dataset for this thesis. Two interviews were excluded because the participants did not meet the selection criteria (although this was not apparent until interviews had been completed).

3.4.3 – Participant attributes

Of the 20 interviewees who make up the dataset for this thesis, only one-third (7) were male. As indicated in Table 3.1, a wide range of age groups was included in the sample, from 18 to 70+ years. A specific effort was made to include people holding different positions within the Camden community, in order to gather information about diverse types of engagement with anti-racism activities. The dataset includes two former Mayors (one of whom is still a Councillor), retired and current ministers of religion, retired and current primary and high school teachers from local schools, local business owners and university students. In addition, an effort was made to include people from both 'Old Camden' (Camden and its surrounding suburbs) and 'New Camden' (including Narellan and some more recently developed suburbs). Camden and Narellan are the two centres of the Camden LGA, both having council offices and important services. Although Camden is changing, its rural heritage is still apparent with a presence of local agriculture and farming. Narellan is quite different. It is the centre for many newer housing developments and has a large industrial area. During the interviews a number of participants who lived in Narellan or the surrounding areas expressed less of a connection to Camden (the suburb) because of where they live. Furthermore, the dataset includes both long-term Camden residents (with extensive family histories in the area), as well as comparatively new residents of the area.

Table 3.1: Summary of participant attributes

Name	Gender	Age	Community position	Old/New Camden	Length of time in Camden	Recruitment
Paul	M	50-59	Minister of Religion	New	15 years	Targeted
Peter	M	50-59	NGO	New	17 years	Snowballing
Robyn	F	50-59	Pastoral Care Worker	New	16 years	Targeted
Brian	M	70+	Retired Minister of Religion	Old	14 years	Snowballing
Fred	M	70+	Prominent Community Member	Old	19 years	Snowballing
Kimberley	F	18-29	Community Facilitator	Old	16 years	Targeted
Daryl	M	50-59	Retired Teacher	New	19 years	Snowballing
Emily M	F	18-29	University Student	Old	Born	Targeted
Susan	F	40-49	Counsellor	Old	22 years	Targeted
Renee	F	18-29	Program Coordinator	Old	16 years	Targeted
Linda	F	40-49	Travel Agent	Old	Born	Targeted
Cathy	F	30-39	Teacher	Unclear	Born	Snowballing
Maire	F	18-29	University Student	Old	8 years	Targeted
Christopher	M	50-59	Teacher	New	16 years	Targeted
Emily N	F	18-29	University Student	Unclear	Born	Snowballing
Sophie	F	60-69	Prominent Community Member	Old	40 years	Targeted
David	M	60-69	Retired Teacher	Old	48 years	Snowballing
Dani	F	30-39	Local Business Owner	Old	Born	Targeted
Ellen	F	50-59	Teacher	New	24 years	Snowballing
Leonie	F	60-69	Retired Teacher	New	34 years	Snowballing

3.5 – Project design

For this project, two methods were used. The first was a media content analysis. This was used to gain insights into representations of Camden in Sydney two newspapers (*The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*). Latent and manifest content analysis techniques were employed (as discussed in 3.5.1). The second method was semi-structured interviews. The interview schedule (see Appendix D) was designed around the study's two aims and four research questions (see section 1.5).

3.5.1 – Media analysis

The media content analysis responded to the study's second aim: to analyse media representations of Camden, in the aftermath of the Islamic school incident. The researcher's perception was that Camden had been portrayed as having a predominantly white population, and as being a racist place. The media content analysis sought to ascertain whether these perceptions could be empirically substantiated. The findings of the media content analysis helped to frame discussions with the interviewees (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Media content analyses enable the themes from newspaper articles to be analysed in their original context (French 2013). In this study, both manifest and latent content analyses were employed. Manifest content analysis was used to tally recurring themes or words throughout the articles. It is a quantitative approach to content analysis, which tries to ascertain the extent to which certain themes or topics are present (Neuendorf 2002; Priest 2010). Latent content analysis was also used to gain deeper understandings of the themes present within the articles. Neuendorf (2002: 23) described latent content as concepts that 'cannot be measured directly but can be represented or measured by one or more ...indicators'. Latent content analysis also involves assessing the tone of an article, determining whether it is positive, negative, neutral or mixed.

Two online newspaper databases were used to search for articles from *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*: ProQuest Australia and New Zealand Newsstand and Factiva. Both databases were used to ensure all possible articles were found. *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* are both Sydney-based newspapers and are published six days per week. *The Sydney Morning Herald* is

published by Fairfax Media and *The Daily Telegraph* is published by News Corporation. *The Sydney Morning Herald* has a weekday readership of 515,000 and a Saturday readership of 727,000 (Roy Morgan Research 2015). *The Daily Telegraph* has a weekday readership of 625,000 and a Saturday readership of 605,000 (Roy Morgan Research 2015). These two newspapers were chosen due to their wide reach and different target audiences, the first being a broadsheet newspaper and the second being part of the tabloid press.

The Islamic school incident in Camden first captured media interest towards the end of 2007. The final decision on the fate of the school was made by the Land and Environment Court in mid-2009. For this project, media searches were conducted for content published between 1st January 2007 and 31st May 2015, when the analysis was conducted. Key search terms were identified to find appropriate articles for analysis. All searches started with Camden AND ... one of the following: Islam*, Muslim*, Multicultural*, Cultural diversity, Diversity, Racism, Tolerance, Religion, Ethnic*, Raci*.

For *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 41 results matched one of the above searches and 36 of these articles were analysed. In *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 results matched one of the above searches and 27 articles were analysed. Articles that were excluded had contained the key words but were not specifically about Camden.

3.5.2 – Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are an important method for qualitative research allowing fluid and natural discussion, which can lead to more in-depth insights and understanding. Unlike structured interviews where the researcher is restricted by a strict interview schedule, semi-structured interviews are free flowing and topic oriented (Dunn 2010). They allow for a natural conversational style of interview, which gives participants the opportunity to share stories and thoughts freely. Semi-structured interviews can also use an interview schedule (which was the case for this research project) with a list of carefully worded questions. However, the researcher can choose to omit questions as necessary and change the order of the interview. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher helps acts an interventionist, redirecting the conversation if it strays too far from the topics of focus (Dunn 2010).

Participants were asked to choose a time and a location that would best suit them. Interviews were conducted in cafes, the local library, participants' workplaces and participants' homes. Interviews ranged in length from as short as 22 minutes (this due in part to the fact that the participant had not read the participant information sheet which indicated that the interview would take around an hour, and had thus not allowed herself enough time) to two hours. The majority of the interviews were between 45 minutes and one hour in duration.

The interview schedule contained four sections (see Appendix D). The first section focused on the participant's background including: duration of residence or length of time spent working in Camden LGA and their self-defined ethnicity. The next three sections were based around the four research questions, which frame the project (as outlined in Section 1.5). Section 2 focussed on the ethnic makeup of the Camden LGA and localised racism, specifically the events surrounding the development application for an Islamic school in 2007, and the associated media discourses. It asked interviewees to reflect on their responses to these incidents. These questions were designed to address the first and second research questions (i.e. How are localised instances of racism, and associated media discourses, experienced by white anti-racists? How do white anti-racists perceive their role in response to such incidents and negative constructions of place?) Section three had a specific focus on performances of anti-racism within the local community and the perceived effects of these performances. These questions addressed the third research question: How do white anti-racists perform anti-racism in their local communities, and with what perceived effect? The fourth and final section of the interview sought to understand how white anti-racists navigate their own sense of belonging in a place that has been labelled as white and racist by the media, thus addressing the fourth and final research question: How do white anti-racists negotiate and understand their own sense of belonging in places designated as white and racist? Table 3.2 provides examples of questions included in each section of the interview schedule.

Table 3.2: Sample interview questions

Section	Question
One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How long have you lived in the Camden Area? Where did you live previously?• How would you describe your own ethnic background?
Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What was the community response like to the proposal of the Islamic school in 2007? Tell me a bit about how this made you feel.• What did you think of the way the media portrayed Camden at that time? Did you agree with the portrayal?
Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell me about the kinds of initiatives you have been involved in that resist racism and support cultural diversity in Camden.• Tell me about any everyday actions that you undertake that resist racism.
Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you feel like you belong or are 'at home' living in the Camden area? If yes, why is this so? If not, why is this so?• How do you feel living in a place that has been labelled in the media as white and racist?• What are the links between your efforts to oppose racism in Camden, and your own sense of belonging in this community?

As shown in Table 3.1, diverse question styles were used (see Dunn 2010) including descriptive questions (e.g. length of time living in the area, and previous places of residence); storytelling style questions (which give participants the opportunity to talk freely on a given topic); and opinion questions (especially in relation to the Islamic school incident and the media portrayal).

3.6 – Data analysis

The media content analysis employed manifest content analysis to tally recurring themes and ideas within the newspaper articles relating to constructions of place, people and the events surrounding the proposal for the Islamic school. Latent content analysis was used to assess the overall tone and key themes of each article. The combination of manifest and latent content analyses allowed a more rigorous understanding of the newspaper articles, which strengthened the credibility of the results. This enabled the researcher to gain a greater insight into media representations of Camden, which subsequently informed and influenced the interview schedule. The results of the media content analysis are discussed in Chapter 4.

All of the semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded (with participants' permission) and were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcribing was helpful in starting to draw out recurring themes that came out of the interviews. Discourse analysis was used as the primary means of analysing the interview data. This was chosen as it enabled key themes and sets of ideas to be identified that inform the way participants see and interpret things within their social context. It is also a helpful method of analysis for situations where there is some kind of social injustice or social inequality (in this case, white privilege) in helping to deconstruct why people say or act in particular ways (Waitt 2010). Discourse analysis draws on the ideas of Foucault, who was interested in understanding how 'truth' statements are the product of unequal power relations. Foucault believed that it was error to accept at a surface level what a person thinks or says. He emphasised the importance of seeking to understand the social context in which ideas are produced and perpetuated (Waitt 2010). The use of discourse analysis in the interpretation of interviews allows the researcher to understand how the thoughts and ideas of participants have come into being. In this project, discourse analysis allowed the influence of white privilege on participants' attitudes and actions to be considered.

3.7 – Limitations

Everyday performances of anti-racism are often seen as insignificant, with many people not thinking that their actions are substantial enough to constitute anti-racism. At times, participants struggled to talk about the actions that they perform as part-and-parcel of their everyday lives. Dismissiveness about incidents of racism within the Camden community also inhibited certain aspects of the discussion. After a few interviews where such dismissiveness was apparent further prompting was given regarding racist attitudes, jokes and comments. Many participants did not initially identify such 'everyday incivilities' (Dunn et al. 2015) as racism. This issue is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6, which considers the denial and minimisation of racism in Camden.

Participant recruitment was also difficult at times, although this improved towards the end of the project. The initial phase of recruitment was through targeted strategies (see Chapter 3, section 3.4.2) with the hope that subsequent snowball sampling would provide the remainder of interviewees. Although the first round of interviewees passed

on the recruitment email, only one additional interview resulted through snowballing. This was discouraging, and further targeted sampling was required to recruit additional participants, after which there was greater success with snowballing. Some organisations were hesitant to take part in the research. Due to the sensitive nature of racism they were concerned as to how their organisation may be portrayed. This made it difficult to gain a diverse group of participants. In the sample there was an overrepresentation of school teachers. This was due in part to snowballing where the connections school teachers had were with their colleagues. There was an underrepresentation of local business owners (with only one recruited).

3.8 – Conclusion

This chapter has presented and evaluated the research methodology that underpinned this research project. Ethical considerations were of utmost importance to ensure the safety, privacy and confidentiality of participants – particularly in relation to this sensitive topic. Positionality and reflexivity were also central to this project, given the researcher’s position as a community ‘insider’. The results of the media content analysis are discussed in Chapter 4. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was threefold: to understand participants’ responses to media portrayals of Camden, to investigate performances of everyday anti-racism by the interviewees, and to understand the relationships between racism, anti-racism and participants’ sense of belonging within their community. Relevant interview data are discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

CHAPTER 4 – CAMDEN IN THE MEDIA

4.1 – Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the media content analysis that was undertaken to explore representations of Camden and its residents in Sydney newspapers. It addresses the second overarching aim of the project: ‘to analyse media representations of Camden in light of the Islamic school incident’. It also discusses the interviewees’ experiences of ‘media discourses’ pertaining to Camden, answering part of the first research question: ‘how are localised instances of racism, *and associated media discourses*, experienced by white anti-racists?’ The remainder of the question – pertaining to interviewees’ experiences of localised incidences of racism – is answered in Chapter 5. This chapter contains two key sections, discussing the media content analysis and interview findings respectively.

4.2 – Representations of Camden in Sydney newspapers

A media content analysis was conducted to understand the ways in which the media has portrayed the people and the place of Camden. As discussed in Chapter 3, two Sydney newspapers were chosen, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*. The search terms were outlined in Section 3.5.1 of this thesis. Of the articles that met the search criteria, 62 were relevant for the analysis. These articles included feature pieces, news leaders and opinion pieces. Of the 62 articles analysed, 35 were from *The Sydney Morning Herald* and 27 were from *The Daily Telegraph*.

The results of the media content analysis supported the researcher’s own perceptions of how the media had portrayed Camden in the aftermath of the Islamic school incident – as ‘white’ and ‘racist’. The terms of the media content analysis were broad (i.e. not restricted to the Islamic school incident), The search terms used included Islam* and Muslim* to include articles that related to the school incident, however the other search terms (see section 3.5.1) were chosen to ensure that articles reporting more broadly on racism or cultural diversity in Camden could be included. Nonetheless, all of the articles retrieved focused on that one event. Thus Camden’s relationship with ethnic/religious diversity has been framed – in Sydney newspapers – through this singular lens.

Furthermore, although the timeframe used for the searches was from January 2007 to May 2015, only two articles were retrieved that were published after 2009. These included a *Sydney Morning Herald* article from March 2011 which referred to Camden

and its 'Muslim shy residents' (Murphy 2011) and a *Daily Telegraph* article which reported on the sale of the proposed site for the Islamic school in March 2012 (Campion 2012).

Latent content analysis was used to assess the tenor of the articles (Priest 2010). As shown in Table 4.1, the overwhelming majority of the articles adopted a negative tone towards Camden and its residents. This can be attributed, in part, to the fact that the event that attracted media attention – the Islamic school incident – was itself negative. When reporting on the Islamic school incident, almost no media attention was given to Camden residents or community groups who were in support of the school. Only one article reflected positively on the Camden community, and half a dozen were neutral. Ten articles grouped or compared the events in Camden with the Cronulla riots, or with other attempts to oppose Islamic schools or places of worship in Sydney. This raised an interesting finding. The two newspaper articles compared Camden to Cronulla as a means of stigmatising the area. However, several of the interviewees in this study used such comparisons to downplay the significance of racism in Camden (i.e. it is not as bad as Cronulla – see 6.3.1 for further discussion).

Table 4.1: Latent content analysis results

Newspaper	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
<i>The Sydney Morning Herald</i>	1 (2.8%)	3 (8.6%)	31 (88.6%)	35
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>	0 (0%)	3 (11.1%)	24 (88.9%)	27
Total	1 (1.6%)	6 (9.7%)	55 (88.7%)	62

Manifest content analysis was used to tally key themes across the articles included in the sample (Priest 2010). Rather than tallying key words (such as 'racist' or 'Islam'), key themes were identified and the occurrence of these was tallied. This approach was taken to take account of the context. For example, if the term 'racist' were to be tallied in a decontextualised way, important insights would be lost. Often the term 'racist' was used in newspaper articles by residents who claimed that they were not racist, rather than by journalists who were specifically referring to Camden (or its residents) as racist.

Due to the subject of the articles analysed, the focus of the manifest content analysis was on representations of: Camden the place, Camden the people, the Islamic school incident, the planning decision and Islam/Muslims (see Table 4.2). In many of the newspaper articles, Camden residents were quoted directly. Thus, for each of the five categories identified above, manifest content analysis distinguished between representations of Camden that were made by these residents, and those made by the journalists themselves. Overall, however, Camden residents had little voice in the media apart from quotes relating to the Islamic school protests and meetings. Key themes were then tallied (see Table 4.2). The most commonly identified themes were: intolerance, fear and the historic and rural nature of Camden.

Table 4.2: Manifest content analysis: key themes

Category	Residents’ portrayals (number of mentions)	Media portrayals (number of mentions)
Camden (Place)	Rural (5) White (2)	Rural (15) White (6) Historic/heritage (7)
Camden (People)	Not racist (6)	Intolerant (13) Fearful (4) Ill-Informed (3) Hypocrites (1)
The Islamic school incident	Not prejudiced (1) Traffic (1)	Hatred (3) Fear (4) Angry opposition (4) Racist (5) Divisive (1) Anglo victory (1)
The planning decision	Planning grounds (4)	“Planning grounds” (6) Planning grounds (3) Racism (2)
Islam/Muslim people	Terrorists/ world domination (10) Don’t integrate (8) Take welfare (3)	Want to integrate (1)

The Sydney Morning Herald and *The Daily Telegraph* articles that were analysed portrayed Camden as a place that is rural, white and of historic significance (Wrigley 2001). This fits with the values that many of the protestors wanted to maintain and the pride that residents of Camden have in their ‘country town’ on the edge of Sydney (Al-Natour 2010). The people of Camden who were quoted in the newspapers presented

themselves in a positive light – as ‘not racist’. However, in the journalists’ accounts Camden residents were portrayed in a negative light. They were painted as intolerant, fearful and ill-informed. In response to the proposed Islamic school, Camden resident Judith Bond was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* as saying, ‘Values of violence will be emphasised. It will be a breeding ground for terrorists...there will be a surge of gang rapes, looting and attacking infidels’ (Murray and Tovey 2009). Kate McCulloch (see Figure 4.1), one of the figureheads for the opponents of the Islamic school expressed her views about Muslim people in one of the articles analysed from the *Sydney Morning Herald* ‘the ones that come here oppress our society, they take our welfare and they don’t want to accept our way of life’ (Dart and Creagh 2009). The views expressed by these two residents are an example of the way that the incident was reported and portrayed in Sydney newspapers: as one of hatred, fear, angry opposition and as being racially-fuelled.



Figure 4.1: An article reporting on Camden, featuring Kate McCulloch (ABC 2008)

The decision made by Camden Council, in relation to the Islamic school development application, was reported in the two newspapers as being made on planning grounds. The Mayor of the time, Chris Patterson, was quoted as saying ‘I have said all along that this is an issue that’s not a religious issue, it’s not a nationalistic issue. It’s an issue to be based on planning’ (Creagh 2008). In Table 4.2, a distinction has been made between instances when the term planning grounds was used objectively and the times in which scepticism was applied by the journalists (hence the quote marks). References to

'planning grounds' implied that this rationale had been given by Camden Council to conceal a decision that was ultimately made on racist grounds. As shown in Table 4.2, this was the more common interpretation. A *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist expressed such scepticism:

In situations such as this where a community is characterised by deep divides in worldviews, ethnicity, religion and social status, decisions are never reducible to traffic flows, zoning and heritage vistas (Bugg 2008).

Like Bugg (2008), most journalists writing for *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* were sceptical of Camden Council's decision. Explanations like the one provided by then Mayor (Chris Patterson) were often dismissed as a guise for more nefarious (i.e. racist) motives. Residents' own voices on the planning decision were underrepresented in the articles, with only four reporting on the decision from their perspective. In all of those instances, residents expressed their belief that the decision had been made on planning grounds. A clear split was thus evident between media representations of the 'planning decision' and Camden residents stated perceptions.

The content analysis also tallied the themes and terms used by residents of Camden to refer to Islam/Muslims (Table 4.2). The comments made by residents – or at least those who were quoted in the newspaper articles – referred to Muslims using the common stereotype 'terrorist'. Other recurring themes, expressed by Camden residents, included constructions of Muslims as people who do not integrate, and who take welfare. These are similar to the constructions of Muslims that Dunn (2001) has found are commonly articulated within Australian society.

Tables 4.1 and 4.2, indicate that the vast majority of newspaper articles in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* portrayed Camden in a negative light. This is at least partly attributable to the fact that all of the articles analysed were related to the Islamic school incident. The results of the content analysis show that newspaper reporting on Camden (in relation to cultural diversity, multiculturalism and/or racism) has been solely focused on this one incident. The two newspapers focused exclusively on this one event in Camden and, furthermore, appeared to restrict their focus to residents

who strongly opposed the school. Individuals or groups within Camden who voiced their support for the Islamic school development application were mentioned only twice across all articles. This may be because such individuals or groups were less vocal than those opposing the school, or because those opposing the school made for more interesting news. It may also be because those opposing the school were more numerous. It is hard to know what proportion of the population these people represented. However, over 3000 submissions were submitted to Camden Council in relation to the development application, and less than 50 of these were supportive (Bowie 2008; Murphy 2008).

4.3 – Interviewees’ perceptions of media portrayals of Camden

The first research question, outlined in section 1.5 of this thesis, asked: ‘How are localised instances of racism, and associated media discourses, experienced by white anti-racists?’ The remainder of this chapter focuses on the interviewees’ experiences of ‘media discourses’ pertaining to Camden. To address this question, the interview schedule asked three questions relating to media portrayals of Camden at the time of the Islamic school incident and how participants experienced and felt about such portrayals. Participants were asked what they thought about media representations of Camden, whether these representations reflected their personal experiences of the area, and whether they agreed with media representations of the Islamic school incident.

Interviewees’ reflections on media representations of Camden were mixed. Some (around one-third), felt that the media had misrepresented the Islamic school incident and focused disproportionately on negative news stories about Camden. Interviewees felt that this was an intentional strategy to sell more newspapers and catch people’s attention. As Linda commented: ‘The media do tend to pick out highlights that will be good ratings or start some sort of political debate’. Ellen made a similar observation, ‘what makes news is the really racist comments’. So too did Sophie, a prominent community member who was closely involved with the events surrounding the Islamic school: ‘I think for whatever reasons bad news stories tend to go into the paper and onto the first few prominent pages rather than good news ones’.

David felt that the media 'enjoy this sort of thing, it helps them sell newspapers.' Many other participants either directly stated or implied that media outlets often distort reality to create a sensationalist new story, and thus they were not surprised by the way the media had reported on the Islamic school incident. Some participants showed a general distrust or dismissiveness of the media with Paul declaring, 'I dismiss the media' and Christopher sharing a predominantly negative view of the media overall and commenting specifically on its polarising influence.

Sophie shared two stories about two separate occasions when she felt journalists had attempted to manipulate community members during their coverage of the Islamic school development application. The first happened after a meeting held at the Camden Civic Centre regarding the proposal for the school. At the conclusion of the meeting a news crew was waiting outside and (according to Sophie) made a beeline for three young males dressed in flannelette shirts, shorts and baseball caps. Sophie felt that they tried to interview these three people as they fitted with the media's stereotypical image of Camden. The news crew, however, were disappointed with the young men's measured responses when they asked what they thought of the meeting. According to Sophie, the young men had simply replied that it was an 'interesting' meeting. A second incident occurred when journalists tried to interview Sophie, repeatedly asking her the same questions because they were not satisfied with the calm and careful (rather than inflammatory) answers she had given. Neither of these incidents made it into the printed or television media. Sophie shared these stories as evidence of her belief that journalists reporting on Camden intentionally sought interviewees' with negative opinions of the Islamic school proposal in order to portray the situation (and Camden residents) in a negative light.

Kimberley disagreed strongly with the manner in which Camden had been portrayed:

The views of the community weren't truthfully portrayed because they took the opinion of a few sort of extreme opinions and projected it as if the whole community thought that way.

She also said that at the time she was disappointed with the media for the way they portrayed the incident and Camden more generally. Many other participants had a similar reaction. Numerous participants stated that the views reported were not representative of the community as a whole and only represented a very small but vocal minority. Cathy commented that those residents whose opinions were reported by the media were 'just the minority that made a real fuss'. Maire thought that it was 'blown out of proportion' and that the extreme opinions that were reported were not actually widespread. Christopher felt the same. These perspectives are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, which reflects on minimisation of racism as a place-defending tactic.

However, a further one-third of the interviewees ² agreed with the media's portrayal of the events surrounding the Islamic school incident. Many of them were embarrassed and ashamed of how their community had been portrayed, but felt that the incident was reported fairly and accurately. Peter felt that it was inevitable that the media would pick up on the very strong opinions being expressed by certain members of the community and that the media would use this to their advantage. He did not feel that the media coverage of Camden was representative of everyone living in the area, including himself, but he felt that it was 'fairly accurate' as it portrayed the fear and narrow-mindedness that he believed were present in the community at the time. Peter also thought that Camden was 'the victim of our own silliness' and that the media attention was 'probably deserved'. Peter appeared to be able to separate himself from the version of Camden portrayed in the media, and did not feel the need to deny racism.

Brian and Fred, two of the most involved participants in the events surrounding the Islamic school, also agreed with media representations of Camden. Brian's perspective has shifted over time. At the time of the Islamic school development application he joined with other ministers of religion from the local area to oppose the development application. The ministers' opposition to the Islamic school was reported in both *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* (Murray and Bowie 2009; Vallejo 2009). In these newspapers, the minister's fraternal (of which Brian was part) was portrayed in a negative light. However, over the intervening years Brian has changed his views on the

² The remainder of the interviewees, whose views are not reported in this section, were unsure and/or felt they could not accurately recall how Camden had been portrayed in the media.

Islamic school proposal and would now handle such an incident quite differently. Despite being part of a group that was portrayed negatively in the media – and whose own name was mentioned in these accounts – Brian felt that media accounts of the Camden Islamic School incident were indeed accurate. When interviewed, he was very open and honest in saying that he felt he made the wrong decision by signing a document opposing the school and it was this change in attitude that led him to be involved with the Camden Cultural Harmony Group (see Chapter 5 for further information). Brian said that media reporting: ‘Showed something latent that wasn’t awfully nice...the media represented it fairly accurately’. Brian’s openness about his former views enabled him to accept the media portrayal of Camden as ‘white’ and ‘racist’. However he did describe the reaction of residents of Camden as similar to any other rural town, this being a means of denying racism (through spatial deflections) and an example of place-defending (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Fred was heavily involved in the community at the time of the Islamic school incident. He felt the media had portrayed Camden and the incident correctly, although he did say it was reported with ‘a broad brush approach’. However, due to his strong and vocal support for the school in different community forums at the time of the Islamic school incident, and some unfair treatment by opponents of the school, he felt little need to defend those who were portrayed as racist in the media. He was quite willing to concur that some Camden residents’ views were, in fact, racist. David is another interesting example. He felt that the media’s reporting of the Islamic school incident was ‘close enough to the truth’ and similar to his personal experiences of what was going on at the time. He did feel that it was ‘horrifying’ for Camden to be portrayed in that way, but he was not surprised by it. Interestingly, David commented that he has often felt like a bit of a ‘radical’ in Camden and does not quite fit the mould. By viewing and describing himself in this way, David was able to acknowledge the racism of Camden residents and to simultaneously distance himself from that racism.

Those interviewees who felt that media representations of Camden had been accurate (including Brian, David, Fred and Peter) appeared to be less engaged in place-defending strategies than other participants. They were willing to identify Camden as racist, despite not identifying with this label themselves. These interviewees distanced

themselves from the version of Camden portrayed in the media – and from the Camden residents who (in their view) deserved to be labelled racist. However, apart from Fred, the other three participants (Brian, David and Peter) did engage in the denial of racism through spatial and temporal deflections respectively. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 6. Conversely, those interviewees who considered media representations of Camden to be inaccurate (including Sophie, Paul, Christopher, Kimberley and Maire) attempted to defend their community from the stigma of racism during their interviews. They not only distanced themselves from the version of Camden portrayed in the media, but sought to distance their entire community (with the exception of ‘a few vocal individuals’) from this stigma. This issue of place-defending – and its implications for anti-racism – is given greater consideration in Chapter 6.

4.4 – Conclusion

The media content analysis, which analysed newspaper representations of Camden, revealed that the area has been overwhelmingly portrayed in a negative light. This was, in part, due to the fact that the only articles published about Camden – pertaining to multiculturalism, cultural diversity and/or racism – were about the Islamic school incident. Recurring themes adopted in the newspaper articles constructed Camden and its residents as intolerant, prejudiced, rural and white. Making a determination on whether such portrayals were accurate is beyond the scope of this thesis – although interviewees were asked for their opinions on this matter. The main purpose of the content analysis was to ascertain how Camden had been portrayed in the media, in order to contextualise the interviewees’ perceptions of such media portrayals. All of the interviewees agreed that the media had portrayed Camden in a negative light (in keeping with the findings of the media content analysis), yet there were divergent opinions on whether or not such representations were accurate.

Around one-third of the interviewees either mildly or strongly disagreed with media representations of Camden, with some finding the portrayal of the suburb (and its residents) deeply offensive. Most often, those who disagreed with media representations did so because they did not personally identify with the stereotypes that were foregrounded by the media, and because they felt that the media had only presented the views of a small and vocal minority. When these interviewees reflected on

the portrayal of their suburb, they participated in a form of place-defending by minimising the existence of racist attitudes. Another sizeable group of interviewees – who felt that media representations of Camden had indeed been accurate – distanced themselves from negative stereotypes of their area, but did not feel the need to defend their entire community. However, some of these participants did still engage in the denial of racism. These issues are discussed in further detail in Chapter 6. Interestingly, those interviewees who disagreed most strongly with media representations of Camden also appeared to have a stronger sense of place belonging than those who felt Camden was accurately portrayed. For the former, it appeared to be harder to disassociate their own subjectivities (as Camden residents) from broader representations of their community. As is discussed in Chapter 6, this likely contributed to their desire to defend Camden, and inhibited their anti-racist performances. Conversely those participants who agreed with the manner in which the media had portrayed Camden were less concerned about how it reflected upon them as individuals – perhaps because they were less attached to Camden as a place. The following two chapters consider issues of racism, anti-racism, place-defending and belonging in further detail. They also discuss the ways in which the media representations of Camden outlined in this chapter impacted on residents' performances of anti-racism and their sense of belonging.

CHAPTER 5 – RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM IN CAMDEN

5.1 – Introduction

This chapter discusses participants' perceptions of racism in Camden and their performances of anti-racism (through both formal initiatives and their everyday actions). The chapter addresses the first aim of the research project: 'to explore the experiences and everyday performances of white anti-racists living in Camden, NSW'. It also answers the first, second and third research questions: 'how are localised instances of racism, and associated media discourses, experienced by white anti-racists?', 'How do white anti-racists perceive their role in response to such incidents and negative constructions of place?' and 'How do white anti-racists perform anti-racism in their local communities, and with what perceived effect?'

The events surrounding the development application for the Islamic school in 2007 (explained in Chapter 1), brought to the fore underlying issues of racial prejudice and intolerance within the Camden community (Al-Natour 2010; Al-Natour and Morgan 2012). As discussed in Chapter 4, media reports of these events portrayed Camden in a negative light, as a racist place. The events surrounding the Islamic school development application were discussed at some length during interviews. Interviewees were asked to reflect on these events and their perceptions of the local community's response. Interviewees who lived in Camden at the time of the Islamic school development application were also asked about their own responses to these events. Several were prompted, by these events, to initiate and/or engage in formal anti-racism activities in the local community. Extending from this discussion, interviewees were also asked to reflect upon the existence of racism in Camden more generally, and their responses to such situations.

This chapter begins by discussing interviewees' responses to the label 'anti-racist'. This is followed by a brief discussion of the acknowledgement (or indeed, denial) of racism in Camden by participants. The final section of the chapter considers how the denial of racism affects performances of anti-racism. It also raises the issue of white privilege and considers how certain forms of anti-racism (particularly celebratory forms that may function through the denial of racism) can perpetuate white privilege. Chapter 6 builds on this chapter by considering how the denial of racism is related to place-defending and local belonging.

5.2 – Identifying as ‘anti-racist’?

Nelson (2015b) has discussed the importance of ‘speaking racism’ to address the denial of racism. By using the terms racism and anti-racism, rather than more positive language (such as diversity or harmony), discourses of denial can be challenged. Like celebratory forms of anti-racism, positive language fails to acknowledge – let alone address – the underlying problems of racism.

Participants for this study were recruited using emails and participant information sheets, which openly framed this project (and its participant selection criteria) using the term anti-racism. As part of the interviews, participants were asked ‘how does the label anti-racist make you feel?’ Half of the participants thought that it was negative and were uncomfortable with the term. Many explained that they wanted to stand *for* something rather than against something. When asked if he identified with the term anti-racist, Peter made the following comment:

Ah, not really...I think this is probably something of my...approach to Christianity...for a lot of time we’ve been known for what we are against...so I’d rather stand for something than against it.

Brian expressed similar sentiments and suggested alternative terms:

I don’t like the word anti-racist, there’s a sense that I don’t like any kind of anti-word...I think it is negative and probably is therefore not terribly definitive, it’s better to be multicultural or pro-diversity.

Only one-quarter of the study participants were comfortable with the label anti-racist, and a further two expressed strong support for the term. The label anti-racist made Kimberley feel positive and hopeful and Dani declared: ‘If that label [anti-racist] was applied to me, I would be proud of that’. However, these interviewees were in the minority. Like Brian and Peter, most participants preferred terms such as pro-inclusion, pro-diversity or pro-race equality. Discomfort with the term anti-racist highlights a deep reluctance to acknowledge racism and call it what it is (Nelson 2015b). Language that avoids explicit use of the word ‘racism’ arguably makes it easier to avoid actively

challenging and confronting racism (Augoustinos and Every 2007). Thus, the interviewees' discomfort with the label 'anti-racist' has broader implications. The following sections discuss participants' responses when asked whether racism is present in Camden and how such responses shed light on their performances of anti-racism.

5.3 – Racism in Camden?

Interviewees were asked about their perceptions of the Islamic school incident and also to discuss any other instances of racism that they had witnessed in the Camden area. Many participants did acknowledge that racism played a role at the time of the Islamic school incident. However, apart from this one event, none of the participants felt they had witnessed overt racism in Camden. Just over half reported having witnessed or heard racist jokes or comments made by friends and family members, but the significance of these (as 'racism') was often dismissed.

5.3.1 The Islamic school incident: was it racist?

Half of the participants thought that the Camden community's response to the Islamic school in 2007 was racist. Leonie felt particularly strongly about this. She thought that the community had behaved in a disgraceful and overtly racist manner:

It was disgraceful, it was shocking and it was very openly racist even though there were claims for it not to be...it was such a hostile environment that I think they [the Quranic Society] probably lost interest in even building a school and there was an orchestrated community response that was manipulated by politicians.

Many others thought that the responses of some community members were racist, but that these attitudes did not reflect Camden as a whole. They commented on the racist attitudes of a small but vocal minority of Camden residents who were portrayed in the media (as was discussed in Chapter 4). This issue is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6 during a discussion of minimisation as a place-defending tactic.

Others denied that racism had played a significant role in the community's response to the Islamic school at all. They felt that the views expressed by Camden residents who opposed the Islamic school were valid and thus not racist. When asked to reflect on the community's response to the proposal for the Islamic school, many interviewees remarked on the fear and aggression that was present in the community at that time, especially during the public protests. However, for some of the participants this fear was justified. Paul observed that the development application was shrouded in secrecy and hence was rightfully a target of suspicion:

So, you couldn't seem to get who was actually applying for the school. It was just the Islamic school... this was part of the difficulty that the locals faced of *who are we actually dealing with* and the more it was shrouded in secrecy, seeming secrecy, the more the fear got out of hand. They must be hiding something...I could appreciate that too.

Paul's comments placed the responsibility for the protests onto the applicants. Rather than acknowledging racism, Paul's comments placed blame on the Quranic Society. He went on to state:

I was very slow to make any judgements on it and I didn't want to be too harsh on the locals because I understand, they're protective. The very nature of being conservative is the feeling that you've got something worth keeping.

In the above quote, Paul distanced himself from the protesters – by referring to 'the locals' and by not including himself as a part of that group. However, he simultaneously sympathised with the protestors and effectively denied that their actions were racist.

Painting the community's reactions to the Islamic school development application as 'fearful' (rather than racist), functioned as a form of justification. Such explanations excused the reactions of the community by declaring that they were due to fear rather than racial/religious prejudice. Sophie also empathised with the fears of community members:

I can understand people's fear um, I know that when you're expressing loathing and hatred of another group what we're probably talking about [is] personal insecurity that you have difficulties yourself...

Sophie justified the fear of these community members by attributing their hatred to their personal insecurities, thus minimising and excusing racist attitudes. Some interviewees expressed their support for freedom of religion as a principle, but simultaneously expressed concerns about Islam and an uncertainty about some of the teachings of the Islamic faith. Robyn made the following comment:

We need to draw a distinction between people and the religion because... there is evidence to say that what...is, happening say in Northern Africa where they're kind of driving the Christians [out], and...they're trying to make them just a Muslim state and that's happening in other parts of the world as well.

Later on in the interview Robyn also commented on the Islamic faith: 'some elements of Islam are, yeah are not seeking peace really'. Robyn's uncertainty about the Islamic faith led her to empathise with the members of the Camden community who were fearful and in opposition to the Islamic school. Robyn and other such participants shared the fears and concerns of the local residents who had protested against the school.

Linda – while not expressing fear – noted her surprise in response to the development application for the Islamic school. By making the school appear 'out of context' in (rural, white, Christian) Camden, she was able to dismiss assertions that the community's response constituted racism:

I think on the whole when it was proposed and the location it was proposed...everybody was probably...even those that are accepting of multicultural diversity and integrating people from other cultures it was probably a shock to think that they'd chosen this little parcel of land less than 5 minutes out of Camden that was very, very rural.

Other interviewees made similar comments: they positioned themselves as not being opposed to the school, but felt unsure of the need for an Islamic school in the area given its demographic composition. These comments – which defended the actions of those who protested against the Islamic school (as *not* racist), have the effect of leaving their actions unchallenged. Both Linda and Robyn’s responses of surprise and unease fit with Dunn’s (2001) findings regarding opposition to mosque development in Sydney. Linda’s response suggested that Muslims do not ‘fit’ in Camden, while Robyn was concerned about the potential for the domination of Islam (Dunn 2001).

Throughout these interviews, it was obvious that several participants’ Christian faith shaped their perceptions of the Islamic school incident, and the relationship between racism and religion. The concerns that some participants expressed about Islam seemed contradictory to (indeed, incompatible with) some of the anti-racism activities in which they were involved. The Camden Social Justice Network, for instance, promotes awareness of refugee issues to increase acceptance within the local community. One of their most significant community events, a refugee simulation, focussed on the plight of Muslim refugees from Afghanistan. Yet some of the participants who were involved in this initiative themselves expressed uncertainty about Islam’s presence in Australia during interviews. Finally, in reflecting on the Islamic school incident, a small number of participants deflected the question of whether it was racist by noting that Islam is a religion, not a race. Following this logic, opposition to an Islamic school could not be racist, by definition.

5.3.2 – Racism in Camden – beyond the Islamic school incident?

None of the participants indicated that they had witnessed overt racism in Camden (with the exception of the Islamic school incident) – that is, they had not witnessed verbal or physical harassment of ethnic or religious minorities. Some attributed this to the fact that the population of Camden is predominantly white, and thus there are few opportunities for interactions to occur between groups. Just over half of the participants noted that they had heard negative attitudes towards ethnic or religious minorities being expressed in Camden, but they typically downplayed the significance of such incidents and many did not identify them as ‘racist’. Brian commented, ‘I would think I

haven't heard any racism in some kind of a developed form in Camden apart from the business relating to the [Islamic] school.' And Paul reflected:

Ah, no, no nothing open or overt, because that's not the way that elite intelligentsia with kind of power and heritage and history and tradition...that's not the way those things [happen], that's not done in polite company.

Paul felt that overt racism was 'beneath' the Camden community and that there was instead a more subtle rejection of other people. He went on to say that rather than actively excluding people from their community, Camden residents are just not inclusive. They remain 'aloof' or 'indifferent' to people who are new to their community who come from a different background. However, Paul did not explicitly identify this as racism. Emily M also referred to the implicit nature of racism in Australia – which (in her opinion) makes it even harder to address. She used the example of her family where certain comments and jokes are made. Emily M was one of the only participants who took such incidents seriously. She reflected on the danger of dismissing comments and jokes as being insignificant:

It's really unfortunate because, you know you say, "That's not really ok" and they say, "Oh it's just a joke, you know, no one's here to hear it, no one's here to be hurt by it". And that's a really dangerous mind-set to have, and I think [that is] the thing that goes on here [in Camden]. It's not deliberately excluding people, it's an attitude and just a way of acting that ends up excluding people as a result.

Emily M expressed concern about the implicit nature of racism in Camden, which she felt can cause just as much harm as overt acts of racism.

The majority of the other interviewees either dismissed jokes or negative comments as inconsequential, or denied that such attitudes exist in Camden at all. When asked if she had ever witnessed racism in Camden, Linda was very definite in her answer:

No, definitely not...I guess at the time when that [the Islamic school] was in the media there was probably a bit of discussion about the acceptance and non-acceptance of it but I wouldn't say I personally experienced anyone's hatred or racism towards a particular, towards the Muslim community.

Several interviewees also explained jokes or negative comments towards ethnic/religious minorities as mere ignorance, for instance, Maire stated: 'I think a lot of the time it comes across as ignorance just peoples lack of knowledge about other cultures as well'. Overall, there was a lack of acknowledgement of racism – and its serious implications – across the vast majority of interviews conducted in this project. This denial or minimisation has important implications for anti-racism.

5.4 – Denial of racism: implications for anti-racism in Camden

Nelson (2013) has discussed the implications of the denial of racism for local anti-racism initiatives. The denial of racism limits the possibilities for effective anti-racism. In many cases, denial leads to the implementation of 'weak' forms of anti-racism (such as celebratory anti-racism) that do little to acknowledge and address underlying prejudice and intolerance (Ho 2009). The links between denial of racism and weak anti-racism were apparent in this study. Most participants were engaged in celebratory formal anti-racism initiatives. Those who engaged in everyday anti-racism usually did so by 'affirming' other cultures, rather than directly challenging racism. Only a small number of participants stridently opposed racism in their everyday lives.

5.4.1 – Celebratory anti-racism in Camden

The most common types of anti-racism initiatives in which interviewees reported being involved were celebratory, such as festivals and cultural events. As noted in Chapter 2, celebratory forms of anti-racism have been heavily critiqued in the literature (Ho 2009; Kymlicka 2010; Lentin 2008; Nelson and Dunn 2013) for failing to recognise, let alone address, the root issues of racial prejudice and intolerance. Amongst the interviewees who had actively participated in such formal, celebratory anti-racism initiatives, the denial of racism was prevalent. This is most likely due to the fact that celebratory anti-racism can coexist with the denial of racism because performing celebratory forms of anti-racism does not actually require a person to acknowledge that racism exists

(Kymlicka 2010). Such events focus on positive and less confronting ideals of harmony and diversity.

Ellen works in a primary school in the Camden LGA and has been involved in multiple initiatives promoting cultural diversity within her school. The school runs Harmony Day celebrations each year and has also had other cultural days. Harmony Day initiatives, which are widely promoted in Australian primary schools, do little to directly address racism in school settings. They generally focus on sharing different foods and celebrating diverse cultures, rather than discussing racism (Ho 2009; Kymlicka 2010). Ellen has also coordinated visits between her school and another school that has a more ethnically and religiously diverse population. The purpose of such visits is to give school students the opportunity to interact with, and get to know, students from different cultures. Ellen felt that this has been a very positive experience for the students and has changed their attitudes towards other cultures. These interschool initiatives are potentially more effective than Harmony Day activities, to the extent that they facilitate relationship-building between children of different cultures. However, these events also did not involve open and frank discussions of racism and its implications.

Cathy is the coordinator of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander group at a primary school in the Camden LGA. The aim of the group is to raise awareness about Indigenous issues within the school community and to support and encourage students within the school who come from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The Indigenous students sing the Dharawal National Anthem at school assemblies and special areas within the school have been designated for Indigenous students. Cathy feels that these initiatives have opened the eyes of non-Indigenous staff and students and have positively changed their attitudes. However, as in the examples above, racism is not directly named and challenged as part of these initiatives. Participants who engaged in celebratory forms of anti-racism were often those who denied the existence of racism in Camden. Both Cathy and Ellen engaged in the denial of racism by attributing it to only a small section of the community (as discussed further in Chapter 6 and Table 6.1).

Renee denied the existence of racism in Camden, but has been involved in two projects with the Camden Social Justice Network: a film screening and a refugee simulation.

Renee felt that the film screening was not particularly successful in terms of attendance, and also because it was 'preaching to the converted'. She felt that the screening of the documentary did not have much of an impact on people's attitudes towards refugees because:

Nobody goes to watch a documentary unless they're already interested in it and they're pro whatever the documentary is about and nobody goes to any event unless there's something in it for them.

Renee, along with the other members of the Camden Social Justice Network who were interviewed, felt that the refugee simulation was much more successful than the film screening. The first reason for this was that school students were compelled to participate in the simulation (thus it did not rely upon people having a prior interest). Renee reflected on the effectiveness of the simulation:

Simulations are definitely the way to go...finding a way to draw people [in] like that, like as in school groups where it's not an option...it could be a work team building thing...they're in the space to learn, outside work and school people want to have fun they don't necessarily want to learn.

Renee emphasised the importance of educational and participatory approaches to anti-racism, an argument that fits well with critiques of celebratory anti-racism in the literature (Nelson and Dunn 2013). The refugee simulation that Renee referred to only had around 100 participants, but it was considered (by the members of the Camden Social Justice Network) to be a positive initiative that educated and influenced participants.

With the exception of this one event, the formal anti-racism initiatives in which the study participants were engaged were predominantly celebratory. They included an annual multicultural festival for the wider community, Harmony Day celebrations (council run and school run), a multicultural day and multicultural public speaking in a local primary school, cultural exchange programs through sister city relationships and sister school relationships, a Japanese garden designed to acknowledge a sister city

relationship and a community multicultural art project. All of these initiatives focused on the celebration of culture and diversity rather than racism.

Distancing strategies were apparent amongst some participants who engaged actively in formal campaigns with a broader, global social justice focus. Such formal initiatives did not depend upon acknowledging racism within the Camden community itself. Emily M. (one of the few interviewees who acknowledged the presence of racism in Camden) lamented a lack of opportunities to become involved in formal anti-racism activities targeting the Camden community. She went on to say that a number of social justice groups operated through her church, but these did not focus on local issues. Emily M. did not deny the importance of globally-focussed social justice initiatives, but questioned whether this focus offered a means to avoid important local issues. These issues are explored in greater detail in the section on place-defending in Chapter 6.

5.4.2 – Everyday anti-racism in Camden?

Recent studies on bystander anti-racism have suggested that it may be a highly effective form of anti-racism at a local level (Nelson et al. 2011; Pederson et al. 2011).

Participants in this study were asked about performances of anti-racism in their everyday lives. Responses were varied. In general, performances of everyday anti-racism were fairly limited amongst the interviewees. This is perhaps unsurprising given that many participants did not acknowledge the presence of racism in their community. This failure to acknowledge racism appeared to inhibit individuals' engagements with bystander anti-racism. The types of everyday anti-racism that most interviewees did perform were quite superficial (and mimicked the types of celebratory anti-racism mentioned above). Several interviewees discussed how they smile or give a wave to people from other ethnic backgrounds, or show a general sense of curiosity about different cultures (for instance, by eating diverse foods). Brian discussed his approach:

Ever since 07, I have sought, I've worked harder to um, just to engage even just with a wave or a smile and as recently as today I was working away over at the preschool, but a fellow walked past who was, Samoan, I was using a chainsaw at the time, but as he walked passed I just nodded at him, cheerily as best I could.

Ellen also mentioned being intentionally friendly to people of other cultures through a smile or a wave, wanting to show that she is welcoming. However, both Ellen and Brian reflected that this could be misinterpreted as patronising or be seen as unusual treatment. They hoped that this was not the case but felt that a person could feel like they had been singled out by their actions. Paul reflected on his own everyday actions as follows:

I affirm them [ethnic/religious minorities] and show a personal interest and curiosity. Like you know I nearly bought this thick fat atlas, a brand new one...because the story is, in showing an interest... I get the atlas and say show me where you lived...so knowing where the Nepalis' their actual village [is], and affirming their history and background and culture.

Although Paul's intentions are undoubtedly genuine, this idea of affirming another culture suggests that approval is needed and once again places white Australians in a position of power (Hage 1998). Christopher also discussed affirming people from other cultures. He discussed an incident in his Scout group where a Muslim boy was unable to eat during Ramadan:

He went "I can't really eat that", and we went "ok that's cool". Then to explore positively with them what it's like to observe Ramadan or to have those particular food restrictions in ways that are positive and you know *affirm* (emphasis added).

Susan similarly discussed how she encourages others to be curious about other cultures:

[I] try and have an attitude of curiosity towards other people how they make meaning in their lives rather than judging it...and [I] just encourage people to be very curious.

Both trying to affirm and showing curiosity about another culture – while often well intentioned – are expressions of white privilege. They suggest unequal power relations and position the minority group as needing approval. As noted by Ghassan Hage (1998),

both 'white evil nationalists' (those who are explicitly racist) and 'good white nationalists' occupy a privileged position in the national space, and perceive a sense of power to determine who does and does not belong, who is and who is not tolerable (Balint 2010). Kowal (2011) discussed the anti-racist subjectivities of white anti-racists working in an Indigenous context. Unlike Kowal's interviewees, the participants for this project adopted these anti-racist subjectivities unproblematically and without self-reflexivity, appearing to be largely unaware of white privilege.

Many of the interviewees who engaged in these 'weak' forms of everyday anti-racism dismissed racist jokes or comments as being insignificant, and expressed discomfort at the prospect of challenging people who make such jokes or comments. Thus, these individuals generally did not engage in bystander anti-racism in their everyday lives.

Renee noted:

If someone says a racist comment, well it's mostly, I hear racist jokes and you have to, you have to know the person whether they really mean it, whether they're really being racist... so it's like you have to learn, it's unhelpful sometimes to point it out too much like, if you're a bit snappy on, "Don't be racist", and they're like, "I was just making a joke and it was harmless". But I don't know, I would rather just not say anything.

Sophie felt that it was better to engage in more subtle forms of anti-racism rather than openly challenging people:

You can't in my opinion, you don't address racism by confronting people...it's best not to confront because that tends to cement the views....it's best not to do that in my opinion again, that mushy little 'l' liberal notion that racism is just an idea or a belief, it's just a belief that you have...I think if you're going to support a civil society that has genuinely tolerant people you've got to be a bit more subtle than that.

Only a small number of participants engaged in more strident forms of bystander anti-racism, by actively challenging jokes and negative comments, or by taking a strong stand

in response to the events relating to the Islamic school. These individuals did not engage in denials of racism – whether in relation to the Islamic school, or more generally. For instance, Leonie attended the information night that was held by Camden Council in December 2007 to inform the community about the development application for the school. As journalists were banned from the meeting, Leonie took it upon herself to record as accurately as she could, the events of the meeting with the purpose of then writing a letter to the local newspapers shedding light on what happened at the meeting. As a result of that letter, she found herself the subject of a ‘Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation’ (SLAPP). Leonie was asked to make a public apology and retract the statements she had made about the meeting and the people involved. Leonie was given legal advice on the matter and made a statement, which was accepted as an apology. Leonie was willing to take a stand against what she believed to be wrong and to present a truthful representation of this particular event. Unlike many interviewees who were defensive of the way the people of Camden were portrayed, Leonie wanted to reveal what was happening in the community, especially in relation to politicians.

Dani was one of only a few interviewees who stridently performed everyday anti-racism in her everyday life. She was also one of a minority of interviewees who did not deny racism in Camden. Dani recalled a recent incident with a client where she directly challenged their racism:

A couple of weeks ago someone said, I asked if they had any allergies and they said they were allergic to Lebs (sic), and they laughed and said, “Is that racist?” And I said, “Yes it is” ...they then said “Not all Lebs (sic) just most of them”, and I said “One of the practitioners here is from a Lebanese background” ... and then it’s like, “Oh I’m only joking”. Well it’s not funny.

Dani reflected on how challenging everyday racism can be uncomfortable and difficult. However, this has not lessened her conviction. Dunn et al. (2009) found that everyday racism – name-calling and slurs – is the most prevalent form of racism in Australia. The study found that the most effective way to challenge this racism is to employ everyday-anti-racism (Dunn et al. 2009). Emily M responded similarly to Dani. She highlighted the importance of not letting really subtle racism slide. Emily M reported telling people how

what they say might affect a person from an ethnic minority background. She also discussed the difficulty of being seen as harping on about an issue but has decided to challenge herself to speak up when inappropriate comments are made. Dani, Emily N and Emily M have had to deal with being labelled as too politically correct by others in the Camden community, and find it difficult at times to perform these everyday actions. The implications of their interventions for their sense of belonging in Camden are considered in Chapter 6. However, these difficulties have not stopped these young women from continuing to identify racism, call it what it is, and oppose it in their everyday lives.

Finally, a number of participants reported performing everyday anti-racism using social media. Daryl is the administrator for a couple of social justice groups on Facebook and it is his responsibility to moderate comments. He is at times required to moderate racist comments. Renee also uses Facebook as a platform to promote issues of justice, sharing petitions and articles. Using social media as a platform to perform everyday anti-racism could potentially be less threatening than doing so within a person's local community. Daryl and Renee did not openly acknowledge racism in Camden, yet they acknowledged that racism exists online and reported actively using social media to address it. Local belonging can create barriers for acknowledging racism within one's own community (as discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to place-defending). Acknowledging the existence of online racism may be less challenging because it does not reflect specifically on the local communities in which anti-racists are located. This echoes Nelson's (2014) findings that state or federal level anti-racism actors were less likely to deny racism than those who were performing anti-racism at a local level.

The findings presented in this chapter raise important questions about everyday anti-racism. As with formal anti-racism initiatives, not all types of everyday anti-racism are equal. While bystander anti-racism can indeed be powerful – and involves actively recognising and challenging racism – everyday anti-racisms that are based on 'affirming' ethnic and/or religious minorities may face many of the same limitations as formal, celebratory forms of anti-racism.

5.5 – Conclusion

Participants' tendency to feel uncomfortable with the term anti-racist was reflected in their denials of racism. The unwillingness of many of the interviewees to 'speak racism and anti-racism' (Nelson 2015b), has arguably allowed racism to remain unchallenged. Denials of racism appear to have affected the kinds of anti-racism that have been performed in Camden. Those interviewees who denied racism were, in most cases, involved in celebratory anti-racism initiatives and 'softer' forms of everyday anti-racism. Those who willingly acknowledged racism were more likely to stridently oppose racism in their everyday lives through their interactions with friends, family and colleagues. The effects of white privilege were apparent in some interviewees' everyday actions, which sought to affirm ethnic/religious minorities' presence in the local area (Hage 1998).

As a researcher, the denials of racism and weak engagements with anti-racism evident throughout many of the interviews also raise important questions about whether these performances and subjectivities should even be labelled 'anti-racist'. Does using the label 'anti-racism' for celebratory formal initiatives and everyday actions that affirm ethnic/religious minorities evacuate the term of its powerful meaning? This question is given greater consideration in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 also discusses how participants' sense of belonging in Camden contributes to their desire to place-defend, thus contributing to the denial of racism and impeding performances of anti-racism. The implications of the denial of racism for belonging, and vice versa, are discussed.

CHAPTER 6 – BELONGING, PLACE-DEFENDING AND ANTI-RACISM

6.1 – Introduction

As explored in Chapters 1 and 2, racism, anti-racism and belonging are intimately connected. In this chapter, the first section considers how the denial of racism by Camden residents (as discussed in Chapter 5) can be attributed to the research participants' desire to defend Camden as a place. The second section investigates the interviewees' sense of belonging and how they have navigated their belonging in Camden – a place that has been portrayed as white and racist in the media (as shown in Chapter 4). Supposedly, the interviewees *belong* in Camden – by virtue of their position as part of the white (Anglo-Australian) ethnic majority (Hage 1998). However, the third section of this chapter considers how anti-racism can mediate individuals' sense of personal belonging, particularly for those who engage in strident forms of anti-racism.

Belonging is connected to place-defending and the denial of racism, and in turn, shapes anti-racist subjectivities and performances. Nelson (2014) has shown that local-level anti-racism actors often engage in place-defending, which contributes to the denial of racism and acts as a barrier to effective anti-racism. This chapter considers how a sense of *local belonging* contributes to a desire to place-defend, and hence to the minimisation or denial of racism. However, the relationship between anti-racism and belonging is shown to be mutually constitutive. Engagement in anti-racism can either undermine or strengthen local belonging. In turn, interviewees' personal sense of belonging in the Camden community shapes the types of anti-racism they are willing (and able) to practise. This chapter addresses the fourth research question: How do white anti-racists negotiate and understand their own sense of belonging in places designated as white and racist?

6.2 – Denial of racism and place-defending

Nelson (2013) outlined four means of denying racism (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion). Three of these featured prominently in the interviews conducted for the present study: spatial deflections, deflections from the mainstream and temporal deflections (Nelson 2013). Deflections from the mainstream were by far the most often used means of denying racism. Nelson (2014) observed that such tendencies are particularly common amongst local-level anti-racism actors – while those who tackle

racism at the broader scale (for instance, the national level) may feel less compelled to deny racism and defend place.

6.2.1 – Spatial deflections

A number of interviewees used spatial deflections as a means of place-defending. According to Nelson (2013) spatial deflections allow a person to deny racism by saying that racism is worse in another location. At a national level, this may take the form of assertions that racism is worse in the country that an immigrant has come from than it is in Australia. Nelson (2013) also discussed localised instances of spatial deflections where a comparison is made to another location, minimising the issue of racism in a person's locality.

Several of the interviewees in this study minimised racism in Camden by comparing the Islamic school incident to events in other parts of Australia. For example, Cathy said, 'It wasn't as bad as the one that happened, was it Sutherland with the riots?' By comparing the incident in Camden to the Cronulla Riots, Cathy sought to draw negative attention away from Camden. Rather than acknowledging that the Camden incident was a significant issue in its own right, such comparisons enabled interviewees to portray Camden in a more favourable light – relative to Cronulla. Maire compared Camden to Bendigo in Victoria where she used to live. Although she did not refer to a particular incident of racism she described the two towns as 'probably the two most conservative towns in Australia'. Maire paired Camden with another 'conservative' town in order to reinforce the idea that the attitudes in Camden are typical of rural Australia. Thus, Camden is not deserving of specific attention as a racist place (and is not in need of specific anti-racist interventions).

Brian made a similar case in reference to the Camden community's response to the Islamic school:

It could have been said of other places, if someone had wanted to build a Muslim school in a hundred other suburbs in Sydney I think they would have had the same response, I don't think it was unique...Can I say, it's not an expression of Camden it's an expression of people.

By making the Camden community's response appear standard, the racism that occurred in response to the Islamic school was normalised and dismissed as insignificant. Brian's statement about it being an expression of people and not of Camden the *place* is another example of place-defending and is akin to deflections from the mainstream (see section 6.2.2). Brian recalled having occasionally witnessed everyday incivilities in Camden – such as hearing someone calling another person a 'wog'. However, he said these incidents were fairly uncommon today and that such comments happen *everywhere* – not just in Camden. The *place*, Camden, was defended in such statements, and racist attitudes and events were minimised.

6.2.2 – Deflections from the mainstream

Deflections from the mainstream were regularly used by interview participants to deny racism. Indeed, almost half of the interviewees did so. Nelson (2013: 93) explained that deflections from the mainstream operate as follows: 'racism is not an overwhelming problem, just with a small cohort of individuals'. As discussed in Chapter 4, a number of interviewees were sceptical of the media and were dismissive of media portrayals of Camden. These interviewees were unwilling to accept Camden's representation as a racist place. Renee's response exemplified the tendency for interviewees to deflect racism in Camden from the mainstream: 'I would say that there are more non-racist people than racist people in Camden'. Maire discussed her disappointment with the media for the way Camden had been portrayed:

I think that whole debacle was largely blown out of proportion in the media...there were definitely a core group of people that were completely adverse to it [the Islamic school] for...racial reasons, and I thought that was really disappointing because it did seem [in media representations] as though those reasons were reflective of the whole town.

Maire acknowledged that racist views were present, but only in a small subsection of the community. Cathy had a similar response:

Like every controversial thing, it was probably a very small minority of the Camden area that felt that way, that made such a fuss, it's like that with every episode that happens.

Through such statements, interviewees reduced the significance of the issue of racism, by positioning it as a minor issue within the community, and as characteristic of only a small proportion of the local population.

6.2.3 – Temporal deflections

Some interviewees agreed that the events surrounding the Islamic school were evidence of racism in Camden – and a small number even felt that negative media representations of Camden were deserved *at that time*. However, they felt that this event was in the past and thus was no longer a relevant issue for Camden. This is an example of what Nelson (2013) has described as a temporal deflection. Thus, for instance, Peter commented, 'it wasn't nice at the time. It was very uncomfortable, but I think that has dissipated, it's a fair while ago now'.

Fred openly acknowledged racism in Camden. However, he also temporally deflected it:

I would say it's true [racist label]. I'm disappointed that this is the attitude of the people I choose to live with ... [but] by and large I have no problems with the people that I live with except on this issue [the Islamic school], and that issue hasn't raised its head again.

By temporally deflecting racism – to 2007 – these participants were able to feel comfortable living in Camden in the present day.

Such temporal deflections also have important implications for performances of anti-racism. A number of the interviewees who engaged in temporal deflections had become involved in formal anti-racism initiatives in the aftermath of the Islamic school application. They felt that there was a problem in their community at that time, and wished to participate in addressing that problem. However, only one of the individuals who engaged in temporal deflections was still involved in a formal anti-racism initiative

at the time of being interviewed. The remaining four are no longer part of the initiatives they were involved in. In part, this was due to funding – which often ceased a few years after the Islamic school incident (as was the case with the Camden Cultural Harmony Group). However, temporal deflections of racism also played an important role: interviewees had done something in response to the racist attitudes that had been displayed in 2007, but felt that the perceived ‘threat’ was gone and the negative voices had died down. Racism was not perceived as a significant problem in Camden – in 2015. Thus David who was the chairman of the Camden Cultural Harmony Group reflected on the group’s decision to disband, ‘The cultural harmony group has now disbanded because I think there became a lack of an impetus there to continue the need to do something.’

The following section considers how a small number of participants – in addition to denying, minimising or deflecting racism in Camden – actually participated in particular racist discourses of their own. Despite considering themselves to be opposed to racism (and having been recruited to this study on that basis) – these participants displayed attitudes that have commonly been referred to as ‘new racism’ (Dunn et al. 2004). Place-defending not only undermined their capacity to recognise racism, and to engage in anti-racist performances, but also appeared to contribute to their own participation in perpetuating racism.

6.2.4 – Islam: a poor cultural fit

A small number of interviewees expressed attitudes – during interviews – that were akin to ‘new racism’. ‘New racism’ focuses on the ‘insurmountability of cultural differences’ (Dunn et al. 2004: 410), deeming certain people or cultures as a poor cultural fit. These interviewees deemed Islam to be a poor cultural fit for the predominantly Christian population of Camden. For instance, Robyn said: ‘In some ways, I wonder...how they [the Quaranic Society] really expected people to act, bringing something in that was kind of so different’. By saying this Robyn defended the Camden residents who vehemently opposed the Islamic school and also re-inscribed a line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. This is an act of boundary making (Dunn 2009; Wimmer 2008). Comments such as Robyn’s position Muslim people as Other: they do not belong in

Camden because they are 'different' and threatening to the cultural values of the majority. Renee expressed a similar perspective:

It's a grey area whether [or] not wanting another religion in an area is racist...we're a strong Christian community, I mean I didn't oppose it for that reason but I can understand that some people just don't want another religion close to theirs.

Renee maintained that this was not her view, however she sympathised with Camden residents who felt uncomfortable with having members of another religious group in their community. When making such observations some interviewees were aware that they may be perceived as racist, but certainly did not see themselves as such. Robyn noted: 'For me personally as I said I treat everyone equally and I don't believe that I'm racist. It's just a sense of, being cautious about [Muslims]'. Overall, such expressions of new racism were rare in the interviews. While many study participants denied or minimised racism (as discussed above) they did not personally perpetuate exclusionary discourses.

6.2.5 – Implications of place-defending

In Chapter 5, the relationship between the denial of racism and performances of anti-racism was discussed. Clearly, when racism is denied or minimised it inhibits the potential for effective anti-racist praxis (Nelson 2013; 2014). In the case of Camden, where racism has been denied and minimised (including amongst the interviewees involved in this study), the majority of anti-racism initiatives have been celebratory. Table 6.1 shows the relationship between place-defending and 'weak' performances of anti-racism, revealing that 13 out of the 15 participants who engaged in place-defending during interviews were involved in 'weak' or celebratory forms of anti-racism. Meanwhile, the five participants who did *not* engage in place-defending (Leonie, Dani, Emily M, Emily N and Fred) were all involved in strong performances of anti-racism.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, celebratory anti-racism has come under criticism for celebrating culture, but failing to acknowledge and address the effects of racial prejudice and intolerance (Ho 2009; Kymlicka 2010). The types of everyday anti-racism

performed by the interviewees in this study also remained fairly superficial, for the same reasons. As discussed in Chapter 5, several of the interviewees explained that they participate in a limited range of everyday anti-racist performances – for instance, acknowledging and affirming the presence of ethnic minorities by smiling at them and being friendly in public spaces, and showing an interest in learning about their cultures. Only a very small minority engaged in more strident acts of everyday anti-racism that involved calling racism what it is and actively opposing it. The following section considers how anti-racism and place-defending intersect with local belonging.

Table 6.1: Participant engagement in place-defending and anti-racism

Name	Place-defending?	Strong anti-racism?
Paul	Yes	No
Peter	Yes	Yes
Robyn	Yes	No
Brian	Yes	No
Fred	No	Yes
Kimberley	Yes	No
Daryl	Yes	No
Emily M.	No	Yes
Susan	Yes	No
Renee	Yes	No
Linda	Yes	Yes
Cathy	Yes	No
Maire	Yes	No
Christopher	Yes	No
Emily N.	No	Yes
Sophie	Yes	No
David	Yes	No
Dani	No	Yes
Ellen	Yes	No
Leonie	No	Yes

6.3 – Local belonging: implications for anti-racism

This section considers how belonging is linked to place-defending and the denial of racism, and thus the way anti-racism is performed. A person's sense of belonging, within a particular location, affects their perceptions of that place and can contribute to a desire to defend that place. Bonaiuto et al. (1996) conducted a study investigating beach pollution in England. The study found that people with strong connections to their local area were more likely to deny that pollution was a problem than people who reported having less of a connection. This same connection to place can be applied to the denial of racism, as evident in the interviewees' responses in the present study. The majority of the interviewees felt a sense of belonging in Camden. Many were born in Camden and others had lived in the Camden area for a large portion of their lives. Although for some being born in Camden contributed to a very strong sense of belonging, length of time living in the area did not appear to be a straightforward determinant of individuals' willingness to identify racism within the community, or their desire to defend their community. As discussed in Chapter 5, when asked about racist attitudes in Camden, some interviewees mentioned hearing racist comments or jokes, and several acknowledged that racism was present during the Islamic school incident. However, none of the interviewees described Camden itself as a *racist place*.

The links between belonging and anti-racism are complex. In some cases, local belonging prompted individuals to engage in anti-racism. In other instances, local belonging prompted place-defending and the denial of racism, and inhibited effective anti-racism.

6.3.1 – Belonging prompting anti-racism

Some interviewees felt that it was their sense of belonging, in Camden, which enabled them to perform anti-racism in the community. Christopher commented, 'I don't engage in these [anti-racism] activities in order to feel like I belong, I belong and as a result I engage in these activities in the community'. He also noted that he feels like he belongs enough to express his opinions openly and comfortably. Emily N. felt similarly to Christopher and reflected on what it would feel like if she did not belong:

I think I'd have a lot more of an issue speaking out about it if I didn't feel like I fit in anywhere, because I feel like I have a voice and I'm able to speak out, that's where it comes from.

For these interviewees a sense of belonging is vital to their performances of anti-racism. Due to the sometimes unsettling nature of anti-racism, a sense of belonging and the respect or security that accompanies it, appeared to be necessary for these particular interviewees to feel able to perform anti-racism.

A few interviewees also felt that it was their duty as a member of the community to take part in anti-racism. David shared the following reflection:

I don't think I can live in a place and belong and have views and not be willing to express them...if I belong to this place then I want to help change it and so therefore I will act.

As discussed in chapter 2, everyday performances create and reinforce particular constructions of place (Dunn 2009; Gregson and Rose 2000). Ideally performances of anti-racism should establish place-identities and foster the belonging of ethnic/religious minorities. For these interviewees, belonging prompted engagement in anti-racism initiatives, however their belonging was arguably a hindrance to engagement in *effective* anti-racism.

6.3.2 – *Belonging as a barrier to anti-racism*

Most participants had a strong sense of belonging in the Camden community. Cathy, Maire and Brian all expressed a strong sense of belonging – despite the fact that Brian and Maire were the two most 'recent' arrivals amongst the interviewees (having lived in Camden for 14 and 8 years respectively). Maire commented on the length of time she had lived in the area: 'Once you develop relationships in an area, although I haven't been here as long as some other people, you do feel like you're at home'. Maire's reflections are an example of the way that belonging is not always determined by the time spent living in a place but rather the relationships and connections that a person has. Cathy has lived in Camden her whole life and attributed this to her reason for belonging.

Cathy, Brian and Maire all sought to minimise racism in Camden, throughout their interviews. Their denial of racism was also reflected in the types of anti-racism they performed. All three only engaged with celebratory initiatives. Towards the end of the interviews, interviewees were asked: 'What things (beliefs, values) make you feel different from other people living in Camden?' Both Cathy and Brian responded that they do not feel different from the people of Camden. These interviewees felt a sense of belonging in Camden, and a sense of commonality with its residents. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that they were unwilling to designate the locality as racist. These examples provide evidence of the link between a strong sense of place belonging and community perceptions. As shown in Table 6.1, a sense of local belonging and consequent desire to place-defend led to weak engagements with anti-racism. Indeed, 13 of the 15 participants who engaged in place-defending during interviews were only engaged in celebratory anti-racism initiatives, and/or forms of everyday anti-racism that involved affirming the presence of others. Thus place-defending and local belonging operated as a barrier to more direct forms of anti-racism. Just like Bonaiuto et al. (1996) with the presence of pollution, these interviewees' strong sense of belonging appeared to affect their ability to accept the existence (or significance) of racism in their community – and thus, to stridently challenge it.

For others, engagement in anti-racism initiatives in relation to the Islamic school incident represented a permanent rupture. Some interviewees specifically felt that their engagement in anti-racism activities had undermined their belonging in the community. Significantly, these interviewees were generally those who were involved in strong – more confrontational – forms of anti-racism. This issue – the way that anti-racism affects belonging – is considered in section 6.4 below.

6.4 – Shaping belonging: the role of anti-racism

Only a few interviewees felt that their anti-racist performances undermined their belonging in the Camden community. Almost half of the interviewees felt that their anti-racist performances increased their sense of belonging in the Camden community – by giving them an important role to play.

6.4.1 – A decreased sense of belonging

Both Dani and Emily M. said that opposing racism lessened their sense of belonging in Camden because it made them feel different. Further, they stated that the more strident they are in pursuing anti-racism, the *less* they belong. Neither Dani nor Emily M. has participated in formal anti-racism initiatives, yet they both have definite views on performing everyday anti-racism. Both are active in addressing racist comments and jokes when they occur, and do not excuse or minimise these comments or jokes. Dani made the following comments about how she performs anti-racism and the responses some friends have towards her:

I think just having zero tolerance for it [racism] so not allowing it to, let it slide as a joke, ever...several of my friends dismiss it as being PC [politically correct] and [they think] it's like a band wagon.

Emily M. also wanted to change and influence racist attitudes. Representations of Camden as a racist place made her uncomfortable, but she felt that these portrayals were accurate. She did not participate in place-defending and was open in saying:

I'm not going to defend Camden because I know there are so many issues that need to be addressed...I'm not going to say it's not [racist] and [a] very white centric place but I'm going to say that I *want* it to be different and I want to make it [different].

Both Dani and Emily M. were born in Camden – and for this reason they reported feeling like they belong in the community. However, they both distanced themselves from what they described as the closed-minded and insular attitudes of some Camden residents, and sought to confront these as part of their everyday anti-racism. Dani and Emily M.

stated that they do not share these insular attitudes and although they currently feel connected to Camden (due to living in the area for their whole lives), they would be quite happy to move away. As noted above, they both felt that their performances of anti-racism undermine their sense of belonging. Emily M. shared the following reflection:

The more you start to oppose something the less you belong because you start to stick out and you start to be obviously against the mind-set of the crowd. The more that I start to speak to people who are very Camden the more they're going to be oh, ok, you're different and obviously that's going to affect a sense of belonging.

From the interviews, it became apparent that those who engaged stridently in everyday anti-racism – challenging and arguing with family and friends – were more likely to feel that their belonging was being undermined through their performances. By way of contrast, those who opposed racism through softer and non-confrontational forms of anti-racism – affirming or smiling at people from other cultures, or engaging in celebratory initiatives – did not feel that their belonging was undermined.

Unlike Dani and Emily M., Fred does not feel that he belongs in Camden anymore. When asked if he felt like he belonged in Camden he responded with the following:

On many fronts I don't believe I am comfortable. By and large I speak to the people who speak to me. *[Laughs]* And there are many people who choose not to speak to me.

For Fred, this lack of belonging resulted from his actions in response to the Islamic school. Fred held a prominent community position in 2007, and was supportive of the development proposal. Many community members were surprised and disappointed by his opinions. Because of his Christian faith they expected that he would oppose the Islamic school. Many people stopped him in the street to talk to him about the Islamic school proposal:

When the issue first hit um I would be stopped in the street where people would refer to the fact that they knew of my time on the ministry team at that particular church and they would say to me words to the effect of, 'Fred we know that you've been a minister of a Christian church and so therefore we know you'll be against this'. To which my reply would be, "why do you assume that?" ... I would say to them, "I believe in the full hallmarks of the leading western countries: freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of religion". To which I could see that people were disappointed, in that I didn't give them the sort of response that they were looking for.

Fred had been perceived (by other community members) as someone who would oppose the Islamic school due to his religious faith. However, due to the position that he took he forfeited his sense of belonging and this was reinforced by the reactions of people to his comments. Fred feels that racism is a problem in Camden. Despite no longer feeling a sense of belonging in Camden, Fred expressed an awareness that his community connections afford him important opportunities to engage in anti-racism activities:

If I was going to select a district to live in where I could continue um the fight it's this one, not some other one where I'm not known and where there is seemingly no issue.

Although Fred felt like he no longer had a clear sense of belonging in Camden, he was nonetheless aware that his ties with the Camden community afforded him opportunities to be able to continue the fight against racism.

6.4.2 – An increased sense of belonging

A small number of interviewees reflected on the way anti-racism increased their sense of belonging. Kimberley felt that her sense of belonging was increased by her performances of anti-racism:

When you have a unique role somewhere that increases your sense of belonging and when you are proactive and when that draws other people who are like minded and you make a connection with them that increases your sense of belonging.

Kimberley also felt that if she did not already feel a sense of belonging in the Camden community, she would not be so proactive. Belonging in the community strengthened her commitment to act, and those actions then reaffirmed her sense of belonging in the community. Cathy also felt that her sense of belonging was increased by her performances of anti-racism in her role as the Aboriginal Coordinator at the school she teaches at. She said:

It strengthens my sense of belonging because...it's something that I'm passionate about, I'm making a difference through, or we are making a difference through that.

For Cathy being able to actively pursue her passion, and being able to make a difference through that, has enabled her to feel a greater sense of belonging in Camden.

Kimberley's reflections, and those of several other interviewees, suggest that a certain level of belonging or connection is needed to be able to start participating in anti-racism in a community. Once a person starts participating, this can help to increase their sense of belonging because of the role it affords them in the community. However, as was the case for Fred, Dani and Emily M. (see section 6.4.1), anti-racist performances (particularly strident ones) can also undermine belonging – if those performances cause people to feel that they stand out in the community as being different.

6.5 – Conclusion

In response to the Islamic school incident, and subsequent media portrayals of Camden as a white and racist place, many of the participants involved in this study denied or minimised racism as a form of place-defending (Nelson 2014). Such denial and place-defending appeared to be personally important to these individuals, as a means of protecting their personal sense of belonging within the Camden community. Thus, local belonging can undermine individuals' willingness, or ability, to acknowledge racism and engage in effective anti-racism. However, this relationship is not clear-cut. For some other participants, a sense of belonging compelled them to engage in anti-racism. They felt that their role and position in the Camden community allowed them to have an influence that they would not have in a place where they are unknown.

Just as individuals' sense of place belonging shapes their anti-racist performances, this chapter has shown that individuals' anti-racist performances also influence their sense of belonging – in some cases enhancing it, and in others undermining it. Only three interviewees felt that their anti-racist performances decreased their sense of belonging in Camden, by making them feel increasingly different to others in the community. Importantly, these interviewees were amongst the few who engaged in strident forms of everyday anti-racism – for instance, by challenging racist jokes and attitudes when they heard them being expressed; and in Fred's instance by refusing to oppose the Islamic school in 2007. They acknowledged the existence of racism in Camden and did not seek to minimise or deflect it. Other interviewees – many of whom were engaged in more celebratory forms of anti-racism – felt that their sense of belonging in Camden was strengthened through their anti-racist performances. This may be because their performances did not depend on openly acknowledging and confronting racism within their community, but instead, were framed in terms of accepting diversity and promoting harmony. Their performances were constructing Camden as tolerant and harmonious rather than challenging the dominant discourse of white privilege (Bonnet 2000a; Hage 1998).

The denial of racism discussed in the first section of this chapter also raises questions as to the effectiveness and persistence of anti-racism initiatives in Camden. As the furore surrounding the Islamic school dissipated, some anti-racism initiatives stopped

completely. These initiatives were perceived to have responded to the negativity of the Islamic school incident. As the media coverage faded, so too did the impetus for anti-racism initiatives. Chapter 7, the final chapter of this thesis, presents the conclusions of the research and discusses the implications of this study and potential areas for further research. As noted in Chapter 5, the types of anti-racism performed by participants in this study were generally limited to celebratory formal initiatives or 'weak' forms of everyday anti-racism. Chapter 7 reflects further on whether using the label 'anti-racism' to describe these activities is indeed accurate.

CHAPTER 7 - CONCLUSION

7.1 – Introduction

To conclude this thesis, this chapter explores the changing positionality of the researcher and the influence of this on the research. The second section discusses the research aims and research questions and the key findings of the research. The last section of the chapter discusses the implications of this project and potential areas for future research.

7.2 – Changing positionality

Box 7.1: Positionality Statement II – late reflections on the project.

I have realised through the course of the research, specifically throughout the interview process, that I am more connected within the Camden community than I had first thought. The methods of recruitment that I used have contributed significantly to this reality. My initial phase of recruitment was through a local social justice group, which I have been loosely involved in myself, as well as some other personal connections. From that starting point, recruitment was through snowball sampling with my initial interviewees helping to recruit other people they knew who met the criteria and who may have been interested in participating. The nature of this type of recruitment means that many of the people interviewed – although not personally known to me – had some form of connection due to me. Despite having some connection with these people, I still felt I was on the fringe of the community compared to some of my interviewees. However, towards the end of the interview process I started to realise that I am significantly ‘linked in’ to the Camden community. Family ties are strong in Camden and it seems that I have not escaped this fact. I moved to Camden with my family. Some of my family members have a significant role in the community (through their work), and as I am linked to them I am linked to Camden. Although I do not even share the same name as my family members, I am still known by my relationship to them – even by people who (I thought) were complete strangers to me before the interviews.

I did not disclose who I was related to but many of the people I interviewed knew anyway (probably through the people who recruited them who do know me personally). Many mentioned that they knew my family. I feel throughout the course of my interviews that my positionality has changed greatly. I have realised that it is not always time that creates belonging. This has not made me feel that I have a greater sense of belonging in Camden. Instead, it has been a source of frustration, making me feel like I am very connected when I do not really want to be.

I have worried that my connection will make me more subjective, especially when it comes to writing critically about the interviewees' opinions. I have been surprised by some of the responses by interviewees, with many people denying or minimising racism which has affected their ability to perform effective anti-racism. I have been worried about the implications of critically analysing these responses, especially in cases where I know these people. So in many ways I am strongly connected into the community, yet I want to resist this not just for the purposes of this project but also because of my desire not to fit into the Camden mould.

After reflecting on the interview process and the responses of the participants, it became apparent that the extent to which racism was denied or minimised hampered participants' ability to engage in effective anti-racism. Some participants also expressed opinions that were akin to 'new racism'. This raised the question as to whether or not it was still appropriate to refer to the study participants as anti-racists. One of the recruitment criteria was that participants identified as anti-racist or were participating in activities that were opposing racism. Indeed, the participant information sheet used in this project (attached as Appendix B) stated:

The aim of this project is to explore the experiences of people engaged in anti-racism activities in Camden, NSW. The specific focus is on Anglo-European residents/workers of Camden who seek to challenge racism against ethnic and/or religious minorities, whether through formal activities or through their everyday practices.

Due to participants being recruited on this basis, they have been referred to as anti-racists throughout this thesis. However, the lack of strident forms of anti-racism and the high level of denial of racism expressed throughout interviews challenges the appropriateness of this term - especially given that many interviewees stated that they do not identify with it (as discussed in section 5.2). Through my discussions with the interviewees in this project, I have ultimately come to question whether the label 'anti-racism' should be attached to celebratory initiatives and everyday actions that do not depend upon acknowledging and challenging racism. The interviewees in this project seemed to understand their own subjectivities quite accurately. Those who felt a sense of affinity or pride with the label anti-racist, were the same individuals who were

engaged in strident forms of anti-racism. Those who felt uncomfortable with the term were generally those who were engaged with softer and more celebratory initiatives that did not depend upon acknowledging racism. These individuals did not call themselves anti-racist, and did not describe their activities as anti-racism.

7.3 –Research aims and key findings

This project had two overarching aims, the first was ‘to explore the everyday performances of white-anti-racists living in Camden, NSW.’ In order to contextualise these performances the second key aim was ‘to analyse media representations of Camden, in the aftermath of the Islamic school incident’. A media content analysis was employed to address the second research aim, providing empirical evidence regarding the media’s portrayal of Camden. The findings of the media content analysis helped to guide the semi-structured interviews, providing grounded evidence rather than speculative thoughts about media representations of the Islamic school incident. The semi-structured interviews allowed for fluid and natural discussion in order for the experiences of the interviewees to be understood. The key findings of this project are discussed in the sections below, in response to each of the four key research questions.

7.3.1 - How are localised instances of racism, and associated media discourses, experienced by white anti-racists?

Chapter 4 discussed the findings of the media content analysis and the participants’ opinions of media portrayals of the Islamic school incident. Chapter 5 discussed participants’ personal experiences and perceptions of the community protests surrounding the Islamic school, and also discussed their perceptions of racism within the Camden community more generally.

A large portion of the participants disagreed with media representations of Camden, attributing the vitriolic responses to the Islamic school that were quoted in media outlets to a very small section of the community. Many of the participants were sceptical of journalists and media reporting as a whole and hence were dismissive of the way that Camden was portrayed in print and television media. There was also a group of participants who felt that the media’s portrayal of Camden was accurate, although they were embarrassed by it.

The discussion of localised racism in Camden in Chapter 5 brought with it varying degrees of denial. Apart from the Islamic school incident, no participants stated that they had witnessed overt racism in Camden – which they understood as racist abuse or violence. Most participants could recall instances of racist remarks or jokes, however many dismissed these as insignificant, with only a few participants declaring that they were acts of racism. Quite a large number of interviewees also denied that the community protests surrounding the Islamic school were racist, and sought to justify these through acknowledgement of community fears. This minimisation and denial of racism appeared to have significant implications for performances of anti-racism in the Camden LGA (discussed in the sections below). Racism has not been perceived as a significant problem in Camden with the Islamic school incident being perceived as an aberration, rather than signaling that racism is a problem in the community which needs to be named and addressed.

7.3.2 - How do white anti-racists perceive their role in response to such incidents and negative constructions of place?

In Chapter 5 participants' anti-racist activities and subjectivities were discussed. Half of the participants did not want to be described as anti-racist due to the perceived negativity of the term. Some considered the word racist to be 'angry' and many rejected the idea of being against a cause. Many wanted to reframe the concept, standing *for* something rather than against something. Out of those who did not identify with the term anti-racist, many suggested other words that they would prefer such as pro-diversity or pro-human rights. Out of those who did identify with the term, only two were vocal about the pride that comes with being known as an anti-racist and the positivity of the term. As discussed above, it seemed that participants' attitudes towards the term 'anti-racist' were reflected in the types of anti-racism that they performed. Discomfort with the term anti-racist appeared to translate into the discomfort associated with strident forms of anti-racism.

Most participants did not see their role in their community as particularly significant or effective. Some felt that they should be more proactive in speaking out against racism and could be more vocal about anti-racism. Others looked back at the events surrounding the Islamic school incident and felt that they should have done more to be a

positive voice within the community at that time. Out of those who felt this way, only one has changed their actions and has tried to do more to speak out about racism over the intervening years.

Many participants were uncomfortable or embarrassed by the negative representations of Camden that were perpetuated by the media. However, this did not prompt many of them to acknowledge and challenge racism in their community. For most, this discomfort appeared to lead to participation in place-defending and denial discourses. Deflections from the mainstream, spatial deflections and temporal deflections were all employed to defend Camden, as was discussed in Chapter 6.

7.3.3 - How do white anti-racists perform anti-racism in their local communities, and with what perceived effect?

Performances of anti-racism in Camden have remained largely superficial and limited to celebratory initiatives. Harmony Day and the local multicultural festival featured prominently amongst responses. In keeping with broader critiques of celebratory anti-racism, some interviewees who had engaged in such initiatives – such as the refugee film screening – felt unsure about the extent to which such events could have a broader impact. The Camden Social Justice Network has run events that have sought to go beyond these celebratory forms of anti-racism by taking a more educational approach. Those involved in the refugee simulation felt that it was a successful and positive event, which challenged perceptions of refugees. However, they felt that the scale of this event was too small to make much of an impact. Further, such events did not focus specifically on racism in Camden but instead on the broader issue of refugees. Importantly, while the Islamic school incident is what prompted the Camden Social Justice Network to form, the approach taken by that group did not focus explicitly on racism in the Camden community.

The actions undertaken by the interviewees, as part of their everyday lives, have also remained largely superficial. Many participants discussed how they try to affirm people from ethnic/religious minorities by smiling or waving at them, and by trying to show curiosity about their cultures as a way of being open and welcoming. While their intentions are good, this idea of affirming and showing curiosity is informed by white

privilege and suggests that the belonging of ethnic/religious minorities is contingent upon approval from the ethnic majority. Some interviewees were aware that these actions could be seen as condescending, but hoped they had a positive effect. This approach is akin to celebratory forms of formal anti-racism, which fail to directly address the presence of racism. Only two participants were strident in their performances of everyday anti-racism, challenging friends and family about racist comments or jokes. These two participants were also among the few who felt performing anti-racism decreased their sense of belonging (see 7.3.4).

7.3.4 - How do white anti-racists negotiate and understand their own sense of belonging in places designated as white and racist?

The vast majority of participants felt that they belong in Camden. Most participants have lived in Camden for more than 15 years, with a quarter having lived in Camden for their entire lives. When asked about living in a place that has been portrayed in the media as white and racist most participants were unfazed and said that it did not affect them. Participants used three forms of denial of racism to defend Camden, and arguably to protect their own sense of belonging. Many were uncomfortable at the time of the Islamic school incident and some were embarrassed to say they lived in Camden at that time. However these participants claimed that it was no longer an issue and hence it did not concern them. This is what Nelson (2013) has described as a temporal deflection, where racism is deemed to no longer be a problem. Other participants used deflection from the mainstream whereby racism is only attributed to a small section of the community. They claimed that only a small but vocal minority held racist opinions and they did not feel that Camden was a racist place. A small group of participants used spatial deflections to minimise racism in Camden. Participants compared Camden to Cronulla, declaring that the Islamic school incident was not as serious as the Cronulla riots. Another participant declared that Camden's response was not unique and any country town would have a similar response. These three forms of denying racism were used by interviewees to defend Camden, preserving it as a place where the participants could continue to belong.

A large portion of the participants felt that their sense of belonging enabled them to perform anti-racism at a formal and everyday level. Many commented that they would

not feel comfortable performing anti-racism in their community if they did not have a sense of belonging. However, it became apparent that for many of the participants this sense of belonging actually inhibited their ability to engage in effective forms of anti-racism. Participants' sense of belonging prompted engagement in place-defending and the denial of racism. They appeared to feel comfortable engaging in celebratory initiatives, but did not directly acknowledge or confront racism in their community. Participating in these initiatives, in turn, enhanced their sense of belonging.

A few participants found that the more they participated in anti-racism the less they belonged in the community. Interestingly these were the only three participants who were involved in strident forms of anti-racism – either in an everyday sense (by challenging and arguing with friends and family when inappropriate racist jokes or comments were made), or by refusing to oppose the Islamic school in 2007. Their willingness to acknowledge and oppose racism in Camden thus came with a price, as these actions set them apart from others in the community and diminished their belonging.

7.4 – Implications and future research

This research project has revealed some interesting insights about anti-racism and its relationships with belonging. As prior research has already discovered, the denial of racism has serious implications on the effectiveness of anti-racism. It prevents the root of the problem from being acknowledged and addressed. This project has shown that relationships between belonging and anti-racism are complex. A base level of belonging appears to be an important pre-requisite for participation in local level anti-racism. Such belonging appears to give people a sense of investment in their local community, and also a platform from which to speak as a local who is known within the community. However, a strong sense of belonging can inhibit effective anti-racism at the local scale. Softer, more celebratory initiatives and everyday actions readily co-exist with a strong sense of local belonging and a desire to place-defend, because they do not involve directly challenging the attitudes and behaviours of others in the community. They do not necessitate naming racism for what it is.

Although most participants in this project did engage in the denial of racism, a small group did not. Their perspectives provided interesting insights into racism, anti-racism, belonging and place-defending. These participants did feel a sense of belonging in Camden, but they also felt 'different' to others in the community. These participants were typically engaged in more strident forms of anti-racism – those types of anti-racism that are deserving of this powerful label. They felt that the more they engaged in such performances, the less they belonged within the Camden community. Stronger forms of anti-racism – which depend upon openly acknowledging and challenging racism – can undermine (or even sever) relationships between anti-racist actors and the broader community.

The findings of this research raise complex challenges for local level anti-racism initiatives. Further research is needed to better understand the relationships between racism, the denial of racism, place-defending and belonging, and the implications of these for successful anti-racism initiatives. Such research should be attentive to the implications of belonging for the types of anti-racism that are performed, and vice versa. Such research will provide an important foundation for designing local-level anti-racism initiatives, and for engaging with practitioners. In order to maximise the effectiveness of future initiatives, it is clear that local belonging needs to be better understood – both as a motivating factor for anti-racism, and as a barrier.

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Appendix A – Ethics Approval Letter



APPROVAL LETTER

In reply please quote: HE15/135

26 March 2015

Ms Elizabeth Oliver
531 Cobbitty Rd
Cobbitty NSW 2570

Dear Ms Oliver,

I am pleased to advise that the Human Research Ethics application referred to below has been approved.

Ethics Number: HE15/135
Project Title: Opposing racism: exploring the experiences of 'anti-racists' in Camden, NSW
Researchers: Ms Elizabeth Oliver, Dr Natascha Klocker
Approval Date: 26 March 2015
Expiry Date: 25 March 2015

The University of Wollongong/Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the *National Statement* and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document.

Approval by the HREC is for a twelve month period. Further extension will be considered on receipt of a progress report prior to expiry date. Continuing approval requires:

- The submission of a progress report annually and on completion of your project. The progress report template is available at <http://www.uow.edu.au/research/ethics/human/index.html>. This report must be completed, signed by the researchers and the appropriate Head of Unit, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.
- Approval by the HREC of any proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- Immediate report of serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- Immediate report of unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process, please contact the Ethics Unit on phone 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Melanie Randle'.

Associate Professor Melanie Randle
Chair, UOW Social Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee

Ethics Unit, Research Services Office
University of Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone (02) 4221 3386 Facsimile (02) 4221 4338
Email: rso-ethics@uow.edu.au Web: www.uow.edu.au

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet for Semi-Structured Interviews



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

TITLE: Opposing racism: exploring the experiences of 'anti-racists' in Camden, NSW

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The aim of this project is to explore the experiences of people engaged in anti-racism activities in Camden, NSW. The specific focus is on Anglo-European residents/workers of Camden who seek to challenge racism against ethnic and/or religious minorities, whether through formal activities or through their everyday practices.

INVESTIGATORS:

Elizabeth Oliver (student investigator), Faculty of Social Sciences,
ew683@uowmail.edu.au Mobile Number: 0455897190

Dr Natascha Klocker, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong;
natascha@uow.edu.au

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: If you choose to participate, you will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview where you will talk about the anti-racism initiatives you have been involved in and the everyday actions you take to encourage cultural diversity and resist racism within your community (Camden, NSW). This conversation will occur at a time and location that suits you. We will ask for permission to audio-record the interviews.

Here is an example of the kinds of questions that will be asked: How long have you lived in the Camden area? How did the community response to the proposal to build an Islamic school in 2007 make you feel? What kinds of initiatives have you been involved in that resist racism and support cultural diversity in Camden? Do you think these initiatives have been effective? What everyday actions do you engage in to support cultural diversity and resist racism? As a person who is engaged in anti-racism activities, what is it like to live in a place that has been portrayed as racist? Do you feel like you belong or are 'at home' living in the Camden area?

POSSIBLE RISKS, INCONVIENCES AND DISCOMFORTS: Apart from the time taken to participate in this research, we can foresee no inconvenience for you. We anticipate the interview will be about one hour in duration. The interview will be conducted professionally and ethically. You will not be pressured to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and your involvement is entirely voluntary. You may halt your participation at any time and withdraw any data you have provided until that point. You can also withdraw any data you have provided for up to the end of June 2015. If you decide not to participate, this will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong.

FUNDING AND BENEFITS: The research will be used to better understand the experiences of people who are engaged in activities and everyday practices that seek to confront, eradicate, and/or ameliorate racism in Camden, NSW. It will become the basis of an honours thesis and may be published in academic journal articles, books, and conference papers. The findings may also be discussed in media interviews. You will be able to choose whether you would prefer to be referred to by your real name in published materials, or whether you would prefer to use a pseudonym (false name). If you work or volunteer for an organisation that engages in anti-racism activities, you can also indicate whether you would prefer for that organisation to be referred to by a pseudonym. In accordance with the law, all data that we obtain from you will be stored for a minimum of 5 years in locked filing cabinets in Department of Geography and Sustainable Communities, University of Wollongong, and on password protected computers. With approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee, the data may continue to be used by the researchers after the 5 year period in related research and publications.

ETHICS REVIEW AND COMPLAINTS: This study was reviewed by the Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted please contact the UOW Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 3386 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au. If you have any questions about this study, please contact the team leader, Dr Natascha Klocker via the details noted above. Thank you for your interest in this study.

Appendix C – Consent Form for Semi-Structured Interviews



CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

RESEARCH TITLE: Opposing racism: exploring the experiences of ‘anti-racists’ in Camden, NSW

RESEARCHERS: Elizabeth Oliver and Dr Natascha Klocker; Department of Geography and Sustainable Communities, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Wollongong.

I have been given information about the project ‘*Opposing racism: exploring the experiences of ‘anti-racists’ in Camden, NSW*’. I have discussed the research project with Elizabeth Oliver, who is conducting this research as part of an Honours project in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Wollongong.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, which include the time taken to participate in an interview.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. If I decide not to participate or withdraw my consent, this will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong. I also understand that I can withdraw any data that I have contributed to the project up until the end of June 2015.

If I have any enquires about the research, I can contact Dr Natascha Klocker (02) 4298 1331. If I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on (02) 4298 1331 or email rso-ethics@uow.edu.au

By signing below I am indicating my consent to (please tick):

- Participate in an interview
- Have an audio-recording of the interview made for the purposes of transcription

In published materials relating to this research, I would like to be referred to by (please tick one):

- My real/given name
- A pseudonym (false name)

Where relevant, in published materials relating to this research, I would like my organisation to be referred to by (please tick one):

- Its real/given name
- A pseudonym (false name)
- Not applicable

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for an honours thesis and may be used to write academic journal articles, books and conference papers. I also understand that the data collected may be used when communicating research outcomes to the media. I consent for the data I provide to be used in these ways.

Signed

.....

Date

...../...../.....

Name (please print)

Appendix D – Interview Schedule

Interview questions:

Themes:

- Introductory:
 1. How long have you lived in the Camden Area? Where did you live previously?
 2. Why did you choose to move to the Camden area?
 3. How would you describe your own ethnic background?
 4. How would you describe the population of Camden, in terms of its ethnic mix?
 5. How would you describe Camden, as a place for ethnic or religious minorities to live? *[Prompt around whether it is more or less accepting of some groups over others]*

- Localised racism and associated media discourses:
 6. Did you live in the Camden LGA in 2007?
 7. What was the community response like to the proposal of the Islamic school in 2007? *(For participants who lived in Camden in 2007).*
 8. Tell me a bit about how this made you feel.
 9. *(For participants who did not live in Camden in 2007)* What have you heard about the proposal of the Islamic school in 2007 and the community's response to it?
 10. What did you think of the way the media portrayed Camden at that time?
 11. Tell me a bit about how you felt seeing your community portrayed in this way.
 12. Did you agree with the media's portrayal of Camden? Why?
 13. *[For participants who lived there in 2007]* Was the media's portrayal similar to your personal experiences of this event?
 14. If you lived in Camden at the time, how did you respond to the events surrounding the proposal for the Islamic school?
 15. Have you ever witnessed racism in Camden? If so, tell me a bit about these incidents.
 16. Thinking about the incidents of racism you mentioned above, what was your reaction to these events?
 17. How did you feel, as a resident of Camden, when you witnessed this incident/these incidents?

Participants' performances of anti-racism in Camden (individual and group).

Potential introduction to this section: I'd now like to talk to you about the anti-racism activities or events that you engage with. Some of the questions will focus on group initiatives that oppose racism, while others will focus on your everyday actions, which oppose racism. Group anti-racism is often the most visible form of anti-racism because it often takes place in a setting where it is seeking to engage

the wider community. However I am also interested to see what you do to oppose racism through your everyday actions.

18. How does the label anti-racist make you feel? [Prompt: do you identify as anti-racist? Why/why not?]
19. Tell me about the kinds of initiatives you have been involved in that resist racism and support cultural diversity in Camden.
20. How did you become involved in the interfaith dialogue group/social justice group [or other relevant anti-racism group or initiative]?
21. Why did you become involved in this group?
22. What are the aims/activities of this group?
23. Were you involved before 2007 or after 2007?
24. How do you perceive your role in this community?
25. How have these initiatives engaged people from ethnic minority backgrounds (non-white residents)?
26. How have these initiatives engaged other ethnic majority (white) residents?
27. Have these initiatives engaged with the media's portrayal of Camden at all? How so?
28. How effective do you think these initiatives have been at addressing racism in Camden? Why?

29. Tell me about any everyday actions that you undertake that resist racism.
30. How do you feel when you do these things?
31. What challenges (if any) do you face when you do these things?
32. What effect do you think these everyday actions have?

33. What are some of the specific challenges that arise from being a 'white' person who opposes racism in Camden?
34. What are some of the specific opportunities that arise from being a 'white' person who opposed racism in Camden?
35. How do you think the experiences of 'white' people who oppose racism, and the experience of migrants or Indigenous people who oppose racism, might be different? [prompt them to give specific examples – including, for instance, from within their own organisation/group?]
36. What responses have friends and family had towards your efforts to oppose racism?
37. What responses have other community members had towards your efforts to oppose racism?
38. Have you ever had an argument with a family member or friend about racism? If you are comfortable doing so, can you please explain a bit about that argument?

- Sense of belonging
 39. Do you feel like you belong or are 'at home' living in the Camden area? If yes, why is this so? If not, why is this so?
 40. What things (beliefs, values) connect you to other people living in Camden?

41. What things (beliefs, values) make you feel different from other people living in Camden?
 42. In which part of Sydney do you think you would find the most like-minded people to you (i.e. people who share your most important beliefs and values)?
 43. When you are in other parts of Sydney, how do you feel about telling people that you are from Camden? What types of reactions do you typically receive? [Prompt: what stereotypes are associated with Camden?]
 44. How do you feel living in a place that has been labelled in the media as white and racist?
 45. Why do you continue to live in a place that has been labelled as racist?
 46. What are the links between your efforts to oppose racism in Camden, and your own sense of belonging in this community?
- Final Questions:
 47. Is there anything else you would like to add or mention?
 48. Would you like to ask me any questions?

Appendix E – Email to Potential Participants

Dear

My name is Elizabeth Oliver and I am writing to invite you to take part in a research study conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong.

This research aims to better understand the activities of those who live and/or work in Camden who engage in activities that promote acceptance of cultural diversity and resist racism.

In 2007, Camden was portrayed by the media as a white and racist place, following protests opposing the proposal for an Islamic school on the outskirts of the town. Media attention focused on Camden residents who opposed the Islamic school, but gave minimal attention to people who are supportive of cultural diversity in the Camden LGA.

We are interested to see what people have been doing to resist racism and support cultural diversity in Camden. We would like to speak to Camden residents and workers who are engaged in formal anti-racism activities. We would also like to speak to people who oppose racism or promote acceptance of cultural diversity in informal ways, through their everyday activities.

Your involvement in this research is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be invited to talk about the initiatives you have been involved in and/or the everyday actions you take to support cultural diversity and resist racism within your community (Camden, NSW). These conversations will occur at a time and location that suits you.

If you are interested in this study and would like more information, please contact Elizabeth Oliver on 0455897190 or ew683@uowmail.edu.au

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Elizabeth Oliver (Honours Student, Student Investigator)

Dr. Natascha Klocker (Senior Lecturer, Project Supervisor)