RACIST DISINFORMATION ON THE WEB: THE ROLE OF ANTI-RACIST SITES IN PROVIDING BALANCE

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Declaration:

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the problem of racist disinformation on the World Wide Web and the role played by anti-racist sites in providing balance. The disinformation capacity of the Web is an important issue for those who provide access to the Web, for content providers, and for Web users. An understanding of the issues involved, including the characteristics of racist disinformation, is vital if these groups are to make informed decisions about how to deal with such Web content. However, in Australia especially, there has been limited research into racism in general and racism on the Web in particular.

To address this deficiency, the integration of perspectives from the fields of race relations and information science is facilitated utilising a critical realist methodology to provide new insights. Through an extensive examination of the literature, including Australian media reports, terms are delineated and the problem situated within an historical, cultural and political environment. Alternatives for tackling racist disinformation are evaluated and the issues involved in the provision and utilisation of balancing information are discussed.

The literature analysis underpins an assessment of anti-racist sites using three data collection methods to gain multiple perspectives on the balancing qualities of these sites. These methods are an assessment of anti-racist website longevity, an assessment of website reliability, and a questionnaire of content providers of anti-racist websites.

This thesis provides a synthesis of the academic literature and media coverage related to Australian racism and racist disinformation on the Web, leading to new insights about the range and depth of issues concerned. An analysis of the data collected concludes that while anti-racist websites take on diverse roles in tackling racism, few provide content directly to balance Web racist disinformation. Approaches that seek to control or censure the Web are ineffective and problematic, but balancing disinformation is not in itself an adequate solution.
1. Introduction

This thesis studies racist disinformation on the Web. It aims to understand the nature of racist disinformation and the role played by anti-racist sites in providing balance, through a comprehensive study of racist disinformation and the issue of balance on the Web. This has the potential to inform decisions on how to deal with issues of racism on the Web. The program is timely because use of the Web is pervasive in Australia and the Commonwealth Government has considered content censorship. Actions and decisions taken now will have significant long-term effects.

1.1. Background

Those who advocate balance, rather than some form of censorship or filtering, often do so from a very optimistic perspective using ‘freedom of speech’ or ‘freedom to read arguments’. Freedom of speech, or more correctly freedom of expression, relates to the right of an individual to express opinions. Freedom to read is related to the right of an individual to access information and knowledge. Both these principles fall under the overarching principle of intellectual freedom (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions 2007).

While these principles are worthy, in the face of the creation and dissemination of unreliable information, or disinformation, advocates of intellectual freedom depend on the provision of balancing information. Balance is provided when all opinions are available in an unbiased manner, but this is not a simple solution. An informed decision on how to deal with racism on the Web cannot be made without research into the effectiveness of balance. The project aims to provide this research. The project thus intends to produce useful new knowledge about the nature of racist disinformation on the Web and the effectiveness of balance. This new knowledge will include a clearer definition of the term ‘racist disinformation’, and a subsidiary analysis of existing descriptions of disinformation, racism and balance as applied in the context of the Web.

Potential beneficiaries can be identified in three categories. Firstly, those who provide Web access, such as Internet service providers, government agencies, libraries and educational institutions, often have to deal with calls for censorship of Web sites. The

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project will provide information to help them make decisions and to justify those decisions. Secondly, information providers who want to ensure their sites/homepages are racism free will have a better understanding about racist disinformation. Specifically anti-racist sites will benefit from a study of their role. The third category is users and potential users who are discouraged from accessing the Web because of racism. If access and information providers are able to make better-informed decisions about how to deal with racism on the Web, this should give rise to a less hostile on-line environment for users.

1.2. Research question

The research question is therefore: Is the ‘balance’ provided by anti-racist sites a viable means of countering the dissemination of racist disinformation on the Web? This is addressed through a systematic exploration of definitions and an examination and synthesis of the relevant literature on disinformation, racism, balance and the Web. This will be followed by an examination of racist sites and those sites that may provide balance.

Since the Web is global in scope, the project examines the issues as they apply globally. However, the focus is on the Australian situation. Content is examined regardless of originating source. Because the Web does not exist in a political and cultural vacuum (Kitchin 1998), the study is also situated within a broader context through a summary of the literature. As the research is undertaken from an information science perspective, examination of sites is limited to Web pages containing information directly accessible from the page. This may include pdf and word-processed documents. The scope does not consider other Internet uses such as email, newsgroups, bulletin boards, library catalogues and community sites. It does not consider what is commonly referred to as the ‘invisible web’ such as information held in databases. Because the research is limited to Web pages, there is no attempt to generalise the results to all forms of disinformation on the Web.

1.3. Research approach

The thesis commences with a synopsis of the literature to situate the study within the discipline. An appropriate research methodology is then identified. The methodology is important to decisions about what is to be studied and how that study will be undertaken. Following from this, the research then involves a wide-ranging analysis
of the literature to identify key concepts. Through this examination, terms are consolidated, definitions established and categories of disinformation determined.

The focus then turns to racist disinformation. The Web is examined for examples of racist disinformation. The identified examples are categorised by type of disinformation. The intention is to ascertain the types and range of racist disinformation available on the Web. The second focus, balance, is addressed through a synthesis of the literature on balance and the literature on the Web. This enables the development of criteria for assessing site reliability and methods of achieving balance on the Web. The findings of the literature study influence how the study assesses balance to racist disinformation.

Data is then collected and analysed. Ultimately, the results will be disseminated with the aim 'to bring about change to the situation’ (Mingers 2001, p. 246). Information imparted by anti-racist sites contains emancipatory potential.
2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Library and information services have long upheld a commitment to intellectual freedom and balance. Their selection policies attempt to ensure that they collect widely to reflect all opinions in an unbiased manner (Malley 1990, p. 20). However, these policies can be challenged:

Intellectual freedom is an admirable ideal which is a fundamental philosophical commitment of the profession. But it is not a supreme ideal. Other values at times can and should take precedence (Williams & Dillon 1993).

Like all information sources, the Web can be a means of disseminating disinformation. In a multicultural society such as Australia, racist disinformation is of particular concern. In dealing with the various forms of disinformation, the information science profession argued against the use of censorship, preferring to rely on selection standards and balance in collection development (Ali & Biskup 1996). This approach has worked reasonably effectively in the library environment where control of the collection is possible. It is not clear that this approach is working for the Web.

While debate about censorship of objectionable material on the Web has raged for some time, racism needs to be addressed separately because of its disinformation quality. This is being realised in Europe but has only recently come to some attention in Australia with the government funded agency NetAlert advising:

Information on some websites may misrepresent the truth, be misleading, be out of date, biased or incorrect. Racist websites can claim to tell or represent the truth about complex social, cultural or historical issues in ways that appear logical and plausible. Such websites can actively merchandise or even recruit people (NetAlert 2005, p. 9).

This review of literature will serve as a ‘jumping-off’ point for research into the issues involved in finding solutions to the problem of racist disinformation on the Web.

This chapter will examine the state of the literature at the commencement of the research and provide pointers to the subsequent direction of the literature. The review will highlight the available literature on the topic of racist disinformation on the Web. As this thesis is largely comprised of a synthesis of literature from race relations and
information science, the substantive analysis of the literature will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

2.2. Literature

2.2.1. Racism

The study of race and racism in the context of action and policy has been undertaken in many diverse disciplines, necessitating a transdisciplinary approach. A selection of different perspectives on the problem will be briefly discussed to highlight the multiplicity of approaches.

Simply, racism involves treating an individual or group less favourably because of their race, colour, descent, national origin or ethnic origin (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2007). The underlying causes of racism are manifold and complex. Within sociology, the economistic approaches tend to stress material realities and the connections between economic and social divisions (Bottomley 1984, p. 25). Still other sociological approaches stress the historical and cultural, while not economic, explanations (Bottomley 1984, p. 26).

An alternative approach originates in the assertion that society is characterised by heterogeneity. Meta-narratives that explain the development and continued existence of racism are rejected (Rattansi & Westwood 1994, p. 2), as all determination is considered to be illegitimate (Malik 1996, p. 249).

Malik argues that while these theories suggest that universalism is the source of racism, it was in fact the degradation of universalism itself that produced racism (Malik 1996, p. 219). Many western thinkers after World War II came to believe that the rationalism, humanism and modernity of the European Enlightenment were themselves responsible for the genocide, slavery and holocaust of the last centuries. These atrocities caused a lack of confidence in Western modernity because the Enlightenment had espoused a belief in equality and progress and yet had failed to deliver. This led to a ‘crisis of confidence in the Enlightenment’ (Rattansi 1994, p. 18).

Malik asserts that, based on the belief that social change was not possible, these thinkers claim that equality is meaningless and that the recognition and
respect of difference should be the new aim. Equality has come to be redefined from ‘the right to be the same’ to mean ‘the right to be different’ (Malik 1996, p. 258).

The problem with a relativist approach is that the concepts of true and false can only have meaning within a cultural context (Sokal & Bricmont 1988, p. 183). This also fails to acknowledge the diversity within cultures and gives equal voice to all who would speak for that culture (Sokal & Bricmont 1988, p. 185). This makes the identification of the causes of racism and the development of possible solutions, almost impossible:

> If all discourses are merely ‘stories’ or ‘narrations’, and none is more objective or truthful than another, then one must concede that the worst sexist or racist prejudices and the most reactionary socioeconomic theories are ‘equally valid’, at least as descriptions or analyses of the real world…Clearly, relativism is an extremely weak foundation on which to build a criticism of the existing social order (Sokal & Bricmont 1988, p. 196).

> There is a bigger danger lurking for the unwary post-modernist. For their arguments can apply to the politics of oppression and violence as much as to the politics of empowerment and liberation (Evans 1997).

Without a universal theory, there is no reference point with which to measure truth (Malik 1996, p. 256). This has serious implications for anti-racists.

There is, therefore, a need to ‘ground a theory of racism in the broader framework of political economy’ (Solomos 1986, p. 85). Attempts to do this consist of competing doctrines ranging from economic determinism to explanatory models incorporating the centrality of human agency (Solomos 1986, p. 87).

According to Solomos (1986, p. 88), there are three main approaches to the question of race and class from within the Marxist tradition; the relative autonomy model, the autonomy model and the migrant labour model.

The relative autonomy model was largely developed by researchers at the former Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, United Kingdom. The writers from the CCCS have attempted to develop an analytic framework where racism is located in historically specific social relations (Solomos 1986, p. 90).
This model rejects a simplistic reductionist Marxist analysis of racism. It also denies that racism is an aspect of all human societies because each racist society is historically specific. These societies may have common features but before a comparative analysis can be employed, it will be necessary to understand the historical, economic, political, class and ideological circumstances that produced these features (Bottomley 1984, p. 27). So racism cannot be reduced to other social relations and nor can it be explained without reference to other social relations. ‘Racism has a relative autonomy from other relations’ (Solomos 1986, p. 92).

The autonomy model argues that racism arises from contemporary and historical struggles but that these struggles cannot be understood by general theories of economic or social relations (Solomos 1986, p. 95). A Marxist analysis therefore should examine the ‘ideological and political practices which work autonomously to produce racism.’ This approach views the state as not monolithic ‘but the site of constant struggles, compromises and administrative decisions.’ Research should be policy oriented and aimed at supporting anti-racist struggles (Solomos 1986, p. 97).

The autonomy model thus makes a complete break from the ‘economic and class reductionist elements in Marxist theory’ which this model believes the relative autonomy model has failed to do. This failure of the relative autonomy model is in turn ‘seen as supporting a deterministic analysis of political struggles against racism and thus allowing little room for anti-racist political strategies to be effective rather than symbolic’ (Solomos 1986, p. 95).

However, a fundamental problem with rejecting the relative autonomy model is falling back to a pluralistic analysis, which sees race and class relationships as completely distinct (Solomos 1986, p. 105). The autonomy model is inadequate in that the analysis of racism through struggle is not located within a social context (Solomos 1986, p. 106).

The Migrant Labour Model considers attempts to examine the relationship between race and class to be futile because the two categories do not have the same analytical significance. Racism acts upon class divisions in capitalist societies (Solomos 1986, p. 104):

Blacks are not a ‘race’ apart which has to be related to class but ‘persons whose forms of political struggles can be understood in terms of racialisation
Within a particular set of production (class) relations’ (Miles in Solomos 1986, p. 101).

From these three models, Solomos identifies two crucial questions; to what extent do racial categorisations have ‘relative autonomy’ or ‘autonomy’ from economic and class determination? What role do state and political institutions play in the reproduction of racism (Solomos 1986, p. 101)?

Solomos suggests that an ideal model would hold that all race relations issues are related to the structural elements of capitalist society, a general Marxist theory of racism is impossible because each historical situation needs to be analysed in its own specificity and racial divisions cannot be viewed as completely determined by the structural contradictions of capitalist societies (Solomos 1986, p. 104).

Some commentators argue that race should not be studied as such, because it has no objective reality. By studying it, one is simply reifying it. The term ‘race’ should be always placed in inverted commas, to signify that the ascription of ‘race’ is an ideological and political process. It would follow that the term ‘race’ cannot be used as an analytical or descriptive tool (Miles 1996a, p. 302). So, rather than race being the object of analysis, the process of racial categorisation in the context of specific economic, political and ideological relations, should be the focus of analysis (Solomos 1986, p. 99).

Hollinsworth (1998, p. 31) agrees that ‘the use of the term gives it an undeserved legitimacy’ but feels that the term should continue to be used because ‘such constructs shape how people think and act, the effects of “race” are very real indeed’:

While race has no meaning outside of discourse, racism is not just discursive…social constructions become ‘social facts’…because people believe in these false or imagined ideas they are made real in their consequences (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 33).

An attempt to address these problems is found in the field of race relations. This acknowledges that race is a socially constructed term that has no scientific validity but nevertheless, many people believe in the existence of race and act on the basis of that belief. ‘This makes race subjectively real’ (Troyna & Cashmore 1996, p. 303). Racism is thus presumed to exist and any study must examine its general and particular causes. This would integrate an historical
analysis of the colonial, political and social experience believed to underpin race relations with a study of the effect of culture on these relations. ‘In this way, it is possible to acknowledge that race as a concept is analytically redundant, yet still identify race relations situations as the focus of the study’ (Troyna & Cashmore 1996, p. 305). A comprehensive exploration of the literature related to this point is undertaken in Chapter 4, and includes an attempt to define racism in the present historical, cultural and political context.

2.2.2. Internet

The early development of the Internet and later the Web through the 1980s and 1990s spawned social and cultural commentators who were eager to predict the future possibilities of this new technology. Rheingold (1995) saw the Internet and Web as a cornucopia of potential new realities where old prejudices and inequities could be ignored or combated through online activism. He did however raise concerns about the potential for the commodification of the Internet and the new public sphere that has been created.

Other commentators urged caution, suggesting that the utopian vision may not come to pass and that the same pressures and players in the real world will come to occupy the online world (Stoll 1995). Stoll also highlighted the segmentary and random nature of the information available via the Internet:

Computer networks return answers – often the right ones – but they emphasise the product over the process. When I’m online, I sense the vast ocean of information available to me. But I am alone, without a tutor or librarian (Stoll 1995, p. 124).

Shenk (1997) and later Sunstein (2001), specifically addressed the issue of information overload, a common concern in the early years of the Web. The ease with which disinformation can spread and also be intentionally sought is a key point of Shenk’s commentary:

… the Net encourages a cultural splintering that can render physical communities much less relevant and free people from having to climb outside their own biases, assumptions, inherited ways of thought (Shenk 1997, p. 125).
2.2.3. Racism on the Internet

The Internet existed well before the development of the Web, with racist
groups and individuals using the Internet for email, newsgroups, bulletin
boards and file transfer. Racism also appeared in the content of these
interactions in the form of racist abuse and racist discussion forums. Early
research about racism on the Internet rarely dealt specifically with the Web
(Burton 1995; Rosenberg 1995).

Cultural and psychological studies at the time focused on the extension of the
Internet as new territory and examined whether this new terrain would
duplicate real world prejudices and inequities (Chronicle of Higher Education
2001). The findings during this early period were certainly negative in terms of
equality of access. Most users were white, middleclass, male and from the
United States. The primary focus of their interest seemed to be sex and
pornography or nascent commercial activity (Sardar 1996).

Kallen (1998), a researcher with an interest in hate propaganda, which includes
but is not limited to racism, focused on Internet hate. By applying sociological
theory to hate messages on newsgroups, Kallen found that these messages
incite hate crimes and violate minority rights. This finding pointed to the need
for further research into the issue of censorship on the Internet.

Hyman (1995) examined hate messages carried by bulletin boards, in this case
focusing on Holocaust denial. From the position that legal means to censor
virulent hate messages need to be explored, Hyman also discussed the issue of
balance. The significant characteristic at this time was the inequitable presence
of minority and persecuted groups on the Internet. Without equal
representation online, a balanced view cannot be achieved.

Academic interest in racism on the Internet was strong in the areas of sociology
and cultural studies (Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman 2000). These disciplines in
ensuing years have turned attention to the use of the Web for hate group
recruitment (Ray & Marsh 2001) and the differentiation of websites as ‘pull’
technology (Rajagopal & Bojin 2002). Comparative studies of the use of the
Web by activist groups have included studies of racist groups (Hara & Estrada
2003).
Interest in online racism has continued in the disciplines of sociology, psychology and cultural studies (Hier 2000; Glaser, Dixit & Green 2002; Adams 2005; Preston 2006). The study of online racism thus involves coming to grips with a ‘bewildering backcloth of contradictory understandings of key conceptual and theoretical themes’ from such disciplines as sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and politics (Troyna 1996, p. 106).

While much of this material is not within the scope of this thesis, it demonstrates the potential for a transdisciplinary study that might extend the analysis of anti-racism to include insights from these disciplines.

2.2.4. Disinformation on the Web

‘To date, research on Internet information credibility has lagged behind research on Internet usage’ (Flanagin & Metzger 2000, p. 533). Researchers, such as Floridi (1996) and Bannerman (1996), have raised the potential of the Internet as a disinformation, or unreliable information, source, while Edelstein (1997) has touched on the issue of cyber-propaganda. Floridi considered what disinformation is, and evaluated how it can occur. He then applied his findings to consider disinformation on the Internet and what can be done to counter it. Floridi’s work will form the basis of much of the discussion in Chapter 4.

Disinformation on the Web was also becoming of interest to the library and information profession. An extensive article (Fitzgerald 1997), summarised many of the issues for the profession and identified the key means by which information can be assessed for disinformation qualities. Ebbinghouse (2000) focused on Internet fraud and hoaxes and outlined ways to avoid being taken in.

Drawing on the findings of Floridi (1996), Fitzgerald (1997) and also Shenk (1997), Calvert (2001) conducted focus groups to assess the impact of scholarly misconduct and disinformation on the Web. He concluded that ‘information literacy is the best possible solution that we have available to us at the moment’ (Calvert 2001, p. 240). The Web user who is educated in critical thinking skills and with the ability to differentiate quality information is less likely to be deceived by disinformation.
2.2.5. Racist disinformation on the Web

Despite the above interest in racism on the Internet, racist disinformation on the Web has rarely been studied specifically.

Writing from the perspective of Black sociological studies, Beckles (1996) had an early interest in the relationship between racist and anti-racist organisations on the Internet. He found that both types of user were utilising the Internet for recruitment, linkage with likeminded groups and dissemination of information/disinformation. He pointed out the need for further research into the ‘effectiveness of anti-racist activity as it occurs on the Internet’.

Thiesmeyer examined Internet hate speech in terms of its impact on violent hate crimes but also as a source of ‘persuasive rhetoric that does not directly enunciate but ultimately promotes or justifies violence’. Thiesmeyer examined features of the language used on neo-Nazi websites and concluded that:

… the issue here has gone far beyond one of censorship of the Net. It is a political issue that should be addressed through concerted political and social action at all levels of society (Thiesmeyer 1999, p. 124).

Holocaust denial was an early and frequent cause of anxiety. Borrowman (1999) particularly was concerned that this form of racism could achieve more credibility on the Internet. Through an examination of two Holocaust denier websites, Borrowman concluded that such sites had the potential be used as tools to teach students to think critically about the websites they access and the information they find there. Similar thoughts were later expressed by Goldsborough (2001), but with the idea of educating users to understand how to assess the authority of the information provider.

A different approach was taken by Hasian (1999) who, from a legal perspective, examined available legislative recourses and recent Canadian cases. He argued that long-standing free speech issues are likely to become more acute as the laws in the United States and other countries come into conflict with regard to Internet content.

Research into the legal aspects of online racism largely arose from international and intergovernmental organisations. This research focused on the efficacy of censorship and whether cross-border regulation was feasible (Sieber 2001; Starr 2004; Wolf 2004). These studies largely concluded that regulation
is best achieved through non-legal means including codes of conduct and the provision of balancing material:

More pages should be provided so that school children browsing for information on the Holocaust should not be confronted just with sites propagating the lies of Nazi groups, nor indeed the pages of unhelpful anti-Nazi sites, as they often do today, but objective educational material as well (Sieber 2001).

A study commissioned by the British Library (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999), and published after the commencement of this thesis, provided a snapshot of the use of the Internet by racist extremists in the late 1990s. Through an analysis of search results, it examined all racist uses of the Internet and was not restricted to the Web.

Recommendations from this report for further research included independent monitoring of extremist sites for changes over time, informed debate and raised awareness in the information and library professions, and the integration of information and library professional viewpoints with those of related areas including human rights (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 88). The latter recommendations fall within the scope of this thesis.

2.2.6. Censorship of the Web

While Kallen (1998) and Hyman (1995) put the spotlight on racism and hate in newsgroups, most of what was written in the censorship/free speech debate actually focused on pornography (Elmer-Dewitt 1995; Mason, Mason & Culnan 1995; Kidman 1996; Lumby 1996; Watson 1996; Horton 1999), with racism simply an adjunct.

Censorship issues were raised early with a large study of pornographic material carried on newsgroups and email (Rosenberg 1993). Other forms of unacceptable material including racism were only mentioned in the concluding paragraphs of this study. Recommendations arising from the study were not to censor material but instead to educate users about acceptable use, backing this up with punitive recourse.

Information Science academic Paul Burton was also an early analyst of Internet regulation issues (Burton 1995; Burton 1996). Again focusing on pornography, but looking at access through university servers, Burton concluded that the
potential for the freeing up of information access that the Internet provides should not be subverted through censorship. ‘If we simply approach the problem as one of suppression of material, we will lose more than we gain’ (Burton 1995, p. 425).

The information technology media were also interested early in censorship issues. A report in Australian Personal Computer (Dancer, Torr & Tebbutt 1995) discussed many of the then current topics including responsibility for content, regulation, censorship and technological issues. It considered ‘damaging’ content in a general sense, but only in regard to access by children.

Censorship was also a topic of interest on the Web itself. In the United States, civil liberty groups were particularly concerned at suggestions that the Web should be censored (Beeson & Hansen 1997; Hudson 1998). The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) stated that ‘more speech is always a better solution than censorship for dealing with speech that someone may find objectionable’ (Beeson & Hansen 1997).

While pornography dominated the discussion around censorship, the issue of racist material was occasionally raised. Still focusing on material accessed through newsgroups and bulletin boards, Rosenberg (1995, p. 146) discussed several examples of racist postings. He reported that the general consensus of users who saw these postings was that freedom of expression was paramount but he pointed out that this position was inconsistent with the situation often found in the off-line environment.

An Australian publication which summarised Web censorship (Weckert & Adeney 1996) included hate material in the discussion. Constituting an outline of the issues, it concluded that while censorship of pornography could not usually be justified, there was some justification for limiting hate material on the grounds that it may cause harm to individuals.

The media also developed an early interest in online racism, with particular interest in racist websites (Bajak 1995; Eatwell 1995; Hilvert 1995; Roberts 1999a). There was even some discussion of the role of anti-racists on the Web. Most interesting for this thesis is an article by Eatwell (1995) that discussed the type of racism available on the Web. Rather than just focusing on the extreme examples, Eatwell pointed out that racism takes many forms and the question
of how to deal with newer forms that emphasise cultural identity would be an important issue for the future. This point is taken up throughout this thesis.

2.2.7. Balance on the Web

While many of the above references arrived at general conclusions about the need for balancing material, balance on the Web in regard to racist material has rarely been addressed, including in Australia, except in very specific cases. For example, the acquisition of Holocaust denial material has been an issue for libraries and this remains the same in the case of the Web (American Libraries 1997). This material has been a driving force behind the presence of some anti-hate organisations on the Web that have argued for many years against censorship and in favour of education and balance:

The second thing that we must do is make sure the Web’s content is enriched by minority culture and beliefs, and that there are more Web sites and home pages dedicated to meeting head-on the racist caricatures and pseudo history often found in cyberspace (Smith 1998).

2.3. Conclusion

Most early research and commentary on the issue of racism on the Web rejected notions of censorship in favour of the provision of balancing information. Except in one newspaper article (Eatwell 1995), the racism discussed was of the extreme and often violent kind and there was no indication of any understanding of the varied nature of racism and little focus on its disinformation quality. The common and rather offhand suggestion in much of the research that balance is the answer, also displays little understanding of the issues involved in providing balancing material on the Web.

In order to determine whether reliance on balance is an appropriate approach for dealing with racist disinformation on the Web, it is first necessary to define racist disinformation and to understand the characteristics of this racism. The factors that contribute to balance will then be isolated. Finally, the project will assess whether those balancing factors are present on the Web in relation to racism and whether they are effective. While balance can be provided from a number of sources, the thesis will focus particularly on the role played by anti-racist sites.
The thesis will rely on research from the fields of race relations and information science. As this thesis deals with a very current topic, many additional sources for later chapters will be derived from newspaper and website articles. An examination of the references cited in an earlier study of related issues (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999), indicates that the project also needed to rely heavily on media articles. The synthesis of media sources is an additional aim of this thesis.

Race relations provides a framework to analyse racism, enabling historical, social and political factors to be considered. As has been suggested from the literature, the integration of race relations and library and information science perspectives will enhance the understanding of the complex issues that are involved. This approach will necessitate identifying a suitable research methodology.
3. Research Methodology

3.1. Transdisciplinary Approach

The aim of this thesis is to achieve an understanding that will lead to practical outcomes, by drawing together information from the areas of race relations and information science. Interdisciplinary research in relation to the Web is becoming more common and recognised (Spink 2002, p. 65). As race relations and information science are both themselves interdisciplinary fields, a transdisciplinary approach appears most appropriate.

Traditionally, disciplinary-specific research has formed the basis of efforts to understand the world and to increase that understanding. Unless members of specific disciplines follow the history and traditions of their discipline, they risk losing the basis on which they communicate their ideas and findings. However, a problem arises when discipline-specific research needs to be applied to practical issues, such as the topic of this thesis, because practical problems rarely fall under the purview of a single discipline. But the application of a simple interdisciplinary approach may not offer a solution, because researchers from different disciplines effectively speak different languages and do not share common assumptions. The newer field of transdisciplinary research is more likely to offer a solution (Gare 2004, p. 23).

A transdisciplinary study involves the integration of research findings from different disciplines into a new body of research aimed at dealing with a specific, often complex, problem (Danermark 2002, p. 56). Transdisciplinary study has the particular advantage of coalescing specialist research from diverse researchers in a manner (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 2) in which none of the findings produced from any one particular discipline receive priority (Danermark 2002, p. 63). For this approach to be productive, all knowledge contributing to the study must be acknowledged and all beliefs need to be able to be explained in terms of how they are developed and held (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 3). The basis of an effective transdisciplinary study, involves the understanding and explicit statement of historical developments, assumptions and terminology (Gare 2004, p. 24).

A research methodology therefore is required that is suitable for a transdisciplinary approach (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 1). Finding a single methodology appears problematic because transdisciplinary work is ineffective if the researchers are
following different ontological approaches (Danermark 2002, p. 56). However, a critical realist methodology involving particular claims about the nature of social reality does seem particularly suited to transdisciplinary studies (Archer et al. 1999, p. 12). This is because the ontological framework of critical realism provides the basis in which findings from different disciplines can be assessed and utilised (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 6).

3.2. Methodology

Broadly, realism in general holds that the methods for studying the natural sciences can equally be applied to the social sciences but realism also considers that there are differences between the two fields of study. These differences lie in the social construction of social reality. The reality and the observation of the reality by those involved are equally real but they have different characteristics. The reality itself is stable and intransitive; it exists independently of our descriptions of it. But the observation, or our description, of that reality is transitive and changing (Dobson 2002). Research in the social sciences therefore must include a study of how people create, reproduce and interpret social structures (Blaikie 1993, p. 36).

Realism requires that the research methods employed must be appropriate to the specific subject under investigation. Bhaskar (1997), the founder of critical realism, suggests that research methods will differ precisely because of the differences in the subjects being studied. Research should combine techniques. It should not just be descriptive because the aim is to understand observable events.

Unlike the closed system laboratory experiments often conducted in the natural sciences, the social sciences involve studies conducted in open systems. In the sites of social science investigations, there will be multiple mechanisms (including the physical, biological or social) acting and interacting concurrently (Spencer 1995). This may result in the effects of these interacting mechanisms cancelling each other out. There may then be no observable effects (Blaikie 1993, p. 104).

Both the natural and social sciences require investigation of deeper and deeper structures and mechanisms (Dobson 2001, p. 202). A critical realist methodology is applied with the aim of an analysis of the interaction and causal relationship of the many mechanisms within complex, open systems (Outhwaite 1987, p. 22).

These interacting mechanisms on causal relationships are not laws. They do not need to have universal application. It follows that prediction or falsification are not
possible because no universal laws can be developed (Blaikie 1993, p. 204). Similarly, no final theory can be developed. Only explanation, within a particular set of circumstances, is possible. Even this limited explanation is open to revision as more circumstances or influences become known (Dobson 2001, p. 202). It is the success of the explanation that determines the quality of the theory. A theory is adequate in one situation but may not be so in a variant situation (Sanghera n.d.).

For the critical realist, there are three domains of reality, which overlap and interact over time. The three domains are the real, the actual and the empirical. The real consists of mechanisms and structures which cause events. The actual consists of events and non-events generated by the real, irrespective of whether these are observed or not. The empirical are events that are observed, they are phenomenal experiences (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 4).

Reality is stratified but not hierarchical. The empirical is part of the actual, and the actual is part of the real. So the domain of the real consists of experiences, events and mechanisms:

Social phenomena emerge from the deep underlying structures, become actual, and then empirical. Our understanding of these social phenomena goes exactly in the opposite direction (from empirical to actual and then to real), which makes understanding them a very difficult task (Kaboub 2002).

An understanding of the causal mechanisms behind reality may also be at variance to the appearance of that reality (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 4).

Bhaskar considers that individuals do not create social structures, but do reproduce and transform them. Social structures in turn have a causal effect on individuals. This is a point of dispute within critical realism, with some proponents denying the causal power of social structures (Lopez & Potter 2001, p. 16). They believe that social structures are only descriptive terms, so attempts to change injustices by addressing social structures will fail (Harre & Bhaskar 2001, p. 23). By reifying a descriptive category, critical realists are bestowing attributes of objects on the categories that are used to describe them (Harre & Bhaskar 2001, p. 25). Bhaskar’s response, in discussion with Harre, is that ‘classifications are utilised as such precisely in virtue of their explanatory potential’ (Harre & Bhaskar 2001, p. 34). As will be seen in the following chapter, this issue has particular pertinence to the social construction of ‘race’.
A less contentious principle within critical realism is that all entities have objective reality, they are equally real regardless of whether or not they are experienced or observed (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 4). Whether something is real is determined by whether it is causally efficacious (Kaboub 2002). This was articulated earlier by Bhaskar:

Society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification). But it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism) (Bhaskar 1979, p. 45).

Physical entities such as living organisms, social entities such as the family, and conceptual entities such as categories, are all equally real.

All these entities have powers which might, or might not, be observable or exercised. They exist, whether they are observed or not (Mingers 2002, p. 299). Even when exercised they may not have an effect because of the exercised powers of the other entities. This is inevitable because structures and their causal mechanisms are causally related to many other structures and mechanisms (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 6). It is these generative mechanisms that are of interest to critical realists. Because they are different in nature from, and exist independently of, the events that they explain, the mechanisms themselves can be studied (Blaikie 1993, p. 61).

‘Critical realism proceeds by trying to discover underlying structures that generate particular patterns of events (or nonevents)’ (Mingers 2002, p. 301). Retroduction is used to solve unexplained phenomenon. A hypothesis of the structures that might cause the phenomenon is developed through utilising knowledge from various sources and by eliminating any unlikely structures as options. The hypothesis is tested by developing additional possible outcomes that can be empirically tested (Blaikie 1993, p. 170). This type of retroduction argues from an observed occurrence to something that may produce the occurrence (Dobson 2001, p. 202). As Mingers states:

We can generate explanations of why particular actors may hold the beliefs they do in terms of their social and organizational positions, their history of experiences particularly as these relate to underlying social characteristics such as gender, race, age, and, of course, their individual personalities. We are also in a position to understand the psychological and social structures that may impede or facilitate learning and change (Mingers 2002, p. 302).
A basic tenet of critical realism is that social theory must be transformative, with the explanation leading to action (Mingers 2002, p. 298). Change requires an understanding of which structures are generating the events that require change (Bhaskar 1989, p. 2):

It is to these structures of social relations that realism directs our attention – both as the explanatory key to understanding social events and trends and as the focus of social activity aimed at self-emancipation of the exploited and oppressed (Bhaskar 1989, p. 4).

‘… socialist emancipation depends on the transformation of structures, not the amelioration of states of affairs’ (Bhaskar 1989, p. 6). ‘But the emancipatory potential of social science is contingent upon, and entirely a consequence of, its contextual explanatory power’ (Bhaskar 1979, p. 32).

Research in the social sciences can impact on social relations because the views of those being studied can be challenged by the researcher (Blaikie 1993, p. 62). Unlike the natural sciences where practices are simply discovered and named, the critical realist is also involved in the construction of practices and thus in the development of new realities (Sanghera n.d.). However, the extent to which critical realism can lead to emancipatory outcomes is cause for debate within the paradigm (Archer et al. 1999, p. 13). It is important to recognise that all aspects of a problem do not have to be tackled in order to achieve change. In fact, aiming to cover everything may result in missed opportunities for reform (Lin 1998, p. 163).

Critical realists are ontological realists but epistemological relativists. This does not mean however that they hold all views or values as equally valid. Nor does it mean that value laden opinions are inadequate or false. Ideas and beliefs are not all equal and clearly some accounts have greater validity. ‘Truth is relative to be sure but there is still both truth and error (as well as lies!)’ (Lopez & Potter 2001, p. 9). It does not signify an open mind to accept the equal status of all beliefs. ‘The principle of equality applies to the moral worth of persons, not to the epistemological status of their beliefs….moral equality does not entail epistemological equality’ (Sanghera n.d.). ‘Critical realism understands all knowledge claims as historically and culturally situated’ (Lopez & Potter 2001, p. 97).

Despite its apparent suitability to transdisciplinary study, perhaps critical realism is itself too restrictive an approach. Adhering to only one methodology restricts outlook and may force the issue under investigation to conform to a methodological
perspective rather than the methodology to adapt to suit the issue. But specific research methodologies might be thought to be incompatible because of their differing positions on basic philosophical premises about the nature of reality and how that reality can be studied. This incompatibility may be true at the ontological level (Dobson 2001, p. 201), but some mutability nevertheless exists between many methodologies and some research methods are equally applicable to differing methodologies (Mingers 2001, p. 247).

Perhaps by defining reality in a particular way, the researcher is limiting his or her access to knowledge about reality (Farmer & Gruba 2004, p. 1). ‘Adopting a particular paradigm is like viewing the world through a particular instrument…each reveals certain aspects, but is blind to others’ (Mingers 2001, p. 244). So, combining research methods might achieve a more in-depth understanding of the issues (Mingers 2001, p. 241) because different research methods result in different types of information about different aspects of the one issue. This diversity should lead to deeper and, hopefully, more accurate information and conclusions.

This diverse approach builds on critical realism by further recognising the complexity and interrelatedness of the various aspects of reality. Perhaps a different methodology is required for each domain of reality or for each phase in the research process (Mingers 2001, p. 245). But if this path is followed it will be important not to ignore the interactions between the different domains (Dobson 2002).

A transdisciplinary study entails recognising the validity of multiple research methods. It does not mean that all methods are equally useful to a particular level of study:

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\text{Deployment of a method appropriate at one level as a model for research on mechanisms at other levels can only be counter-productive. This is a fundamentally wrong approach which only reveals ignorance about reality (Danermark 2002, p. 63).}
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As mentioned, the diversity generated by transdisciplinary study has a number of advantages. Findings have a wider and more diverse basis and thus ‘strong objectivity’ (Sauko 2003, p. 29), and leading researchers in their fields are able to contribute to the study without abandoning their discipline areas. These advantages give new impetus and invigoration to the study and encourage creative solutions (Robey 1996, p. 404).

But, ‘discipline is required to prevent methodological pluralism from becoming methodological anarchy’ (Robey 1996, p. 406). Choices of methodologies and
methods must be justified by the research aims. ‘Theories and methods are justified on pragmatic grounds as appropriate tools for accomplishing research aims’ (Robey 1996, p. 406).

The researcher cannot just adapt and adopt research methods ad hoc. It is necessary to understand the basis on which they rest, and the ontological and epistemological foundations (Dobson 2002). All research has a philosophical position, so researchers must state their philosophical position at the outset. By thinking about philosophical beliefs, the researcher is forced to acknowledge the influence of their beliefs on the approach taken to the research project and even the selection of project topic or focus (Dobson 2001, p. 220). Being a critical realist entails a ‘critical attitude’, being constantly self aware. ‘But the difficulty of designing complete studies with varied approaches should not blind researchers to their ability to do studies that at least are aware of different approaches’ (Lin 1998, p. 171). The philosophical position also serves to act as an under-labourer, in identifying and eliminating unlikely mechanisms (Dobson 2002).

The primary focus in determining research methods must be to develop an understanding of the underlying structures and mechanisms. The choice of methods will depend primarily on the ontological aspects of the research problem. Secondary aspects will include the previous experience and skills of researcher, the researcher’s theoretical approach (Dobson 2002) and access to the site. A critical realist approach to research would be evaluated ‘in terms of how well it understands the social, economic and political context and connections of the phenomenon it is studying’ (Sauko 2003, p. 19).

3.3. Research Strategy

A critical realism methodology requires that the interrelatedness of society, groups and individuals be recognised and studied in a manner that assesses this interconnection. This ensures that the resulting explanation is as powerful as possible (Dobson 2001, p. 203). It also recognises at the outset that an explanation will not be simple, that there will be multiple causes producing multiple effects under different conditions (Archer et al. 1999, p. 12). Deep structures and mechanisms are only likely to be identified through a study of this complexity. The context of the study is as important as the individual structures and occurrences (Dobson 2001, p. 204), so the social context is vital to the explanation. Society is not created by human actors but
does not exist independently of them, it is replicated and altered by them (Kaboub 2002).

Social forces that play on individuals and groups, and that may need to be studied, include the beliefs and values that they adhere to, the legal forbiddance of certain practices, changing social norms, and the varying structural conditions to which they must adapt (Ford 2001, p. 228).

This critical realist based approach commences with the identification of the reality to be investigated, identifying what is in need of explanation – the combating of racist disinformation on the Web. A possible mechanism causing the occurrence is postulated to be the role played by anti-racist sites. ‘The conception of the object of inquiry will crucially determine the sorts of method which are appropriate to its investigation’ (Outhwaite 1987, p. 57).

A critical realist approach to the research question: is the ‘balance’ provided by anti-racist sites a viable means of countering the dissemination of racist disinformation on the Web, will initially involve developing an understanding of the political implications of racism and anti-racism, through an acknowledgement of the social and political construction of definitions of race and racism. It will involve a re-examination of the definitions and ideas hereto commonly accepted as fact.

This will be achieved in the first section of Chapter 4, where the historical development of ideas about race and of racism will be outlined. While no new reality is likely to be discovered, the field of study will be moved on to a more complete and appropriate explanation or ‘set of explanations’ (Forsyth 2001, p. 152). This will be followed by an overview of the other key mechanisms; anti-racism, disinformation, the Web and balance.

Central to the entire study will be the recognition that the Web is not a closed system and that mechanisms from the off-line environment have significant causal effects on Web-based events. This will be counter to previous explanations and interpretations that have frequently been applied to the Internet because of a belief that ‘information on the Internet exists in a closed system’ (Higham 2001, p. 160). This approach has resulted in studies of the Internet isolated from the rest of reality with no recognition of the interrelatedness and flow between the Internet and other systems. ‘Much may be missed if grassroots activities online are studied as though they were enacted in a closed world’ (Hara & Estrada 2003). A critical realist approach must consider the
Internet within a ‘historical, cultural and socio-economic context’ (Higham 2001, p. 168), in other words, an open system.

The thesis must also examine possible alternative explanations. Possible alternative methods to tackling online racism will be discussed in Chapter 5. The conditions under which the mechanism of anti-racist sites might be effective will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 will cover data collection which will involve finding evidence to support the existence of the mechanism. Evidence will be from different sources and achieved by varying but appropriate methods. While the data will address the specific issue, the ‘contextual complexity’ is equally important to reveal (Benbasat, Goldstein & Mead 1987, p. 374).

Three data collection methods were employed. Firstly, one hundred self identifying anti-racist sites were located in 2002. Five years later, these sites were again examined to assess longevity. Secondly, a new set of anti-racist sites were identified and examined for content, format, scope and quality.

Thirdly, based on an analysis of the literature, a research instrument was developed to survey anti-racist sites. Because this was administered via the Internet, the most suitable survey instrument was a questionnaire. This included open-ended questions to enable an exploration of the issues. Sampling was not used because of the relatively low numbers of sites involved and the ease of distributing the questionnaire. Data collection is elaborated in Chapter 7.

Analysis occurs on several levels. The literature synthesis provides pointers to the issues and evidence of the impact of balance. Responses from the anti-racist sites are compared with the findings of the literature synthesis to identify common themes and differences. These result in an understanding of the ways that anti-racist sites provide balance and the issues involved. The full data analysis is detailed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 9 provides conclusions, reflections on the methodology and suggestions for further research.

3.4. Summary

The implications of cyberspatial technologies are many and the social, cultural, political and economic effects are interdependent and should be studied as such (Kitchin 1998, p. 170).
The literature review and research methodology have resulted in the identification of the events that are in need of change and the causal mechanism by which such change may come about. Alternative mechanisms have also been postulated. Subsequent chapters will situate the research within an historical and cultural setting, assess alternative mechanisms, and test the hypothesis through an evaluation involving a combination of research methods:

Separation of racism on and off the Web and talk of real or virtual hate is ‘becoming a moot point, since the Internet is an integral part of society’ (International Network Against Cyber Hate 2004, p. 4).

Final conclusions will not ignore the open nature of the study site and will recognise that any explanation will be limited to the particular circumstances extant at the time of the study.
4. Key Concepts

4.1. Racism

Following the requirements of a critical realist analysis, this section will place the issue of racism in a historical, social and political context. Race and racism will be shown to be social and political constructs. Commonly accepted ideas about racism will be explored and challenged. How these ideas influence the events and strategies employed will inform the study of anti-racism on the Web. The first idea to be discussed is ‘race’:

One of the striking aspects of the study of race is that everyone ‘knows’ what ‘race’ is, but no one can quite define it (Malik 1996, p. 2).

Race, as a term to label groups of people, has been in use for hundreds of years, however the meaning has altered over time. McConnochie (1988, p. 5) maintains that the labelling of groups or people as races requires at least two groups, the naming group and the named group. The naming group establishes the racial categories, associates real or imagined genetic characteristics with the racial categories, determines who will belong to these particular racial categories, and then assumes that everyone who has been allocated to a racial category will display the characteristics of that named group (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 6).

This process, sometimes termed racialisation, however rests on a false premise. It has no scientific basis, because genetic differences between human groups are in fact very small. While there may be some genetic variations in frequency between population groups there are no genetically based groupings which can lead to identification as ‘races’ (Marchant 2001). ‘It turns out that you can group people into genetically similar clusters after all – it’s just that they don’t correspond to conventional racial groups’ (Ananthaswamy 2002, p. 34).

The recent success in the mapping of the human genome has also confirmed that the concept of race has no genetic basis (Brook 2000, p. 14). In addition, human populations merge into one another so the concept of a ‘pure race’ is illogical (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 17). It follows that racialisation is a
political and ideological process, not a scientific process (Miles 1996b, p. 307). Race is therefore socially defined (Malik 1996, p. 4).

General acceptance of this fact is however problematic because most discussions of the concept of race are held in such a way as to suggest an ‘objective existence’ (Malik 1996, p. 3). Cashmore (1996a, p. 299) believes that while people continue to use the word as though it has an objective reality its influence will continue.

Banton (1996, p. 296) concurs, pointing out that the existence of races is frequently accepted in academia and in the legal and political arenas. In legal usage the meaning of the term can refer to biological, ethnic, national or cultural groupings (de Lepervanche 1984, p. 50). The term appears in current legislation, such as the Australian Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and ‘judges have taken the view that “race” in anti-discrimination legislation is used in the popular sense regardless of academic recognition that the concept is biologically meaningless’ (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 292).

Changing the public understanding of the term is therefore problematic. Even if all dictionaries and text books of today contained appropriate definitions, people are likely to continue to use the term as they were originally taught as children. ‘We have known for at least a decade; yet the message has not been successfully conveyed to the American public’ (Graves 2001, p. 5). Passing on the facts about race is an important element in the fight against racism and the first step to developing an analysis of racism in Australia (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 268). These facts about race inform this transdisciplinary study by elucidating common assumptions and historical background. It is important that this research, while recognising that ‘race’ is a social construct, does not ignore the influence of that construct (Carter 1998, p. 5).

Canter (2001, p. 46) however, has raised concerns that too much emphasis on the invalidity of the biological basis of race may itself become problematic if later scientific advances do identify common biological characteristics in certain groups. But he correctly points out that even if this were so, it would not justify racism. Recently, medical developments have identified particular populations as being more susceptible than others to certain diseases, leading to the development of drugs specifically for these groups. Kohn (2006), echoing Canter, warns that as more becomes known about these population differences and ‘the taboo starts to appear outdated or untenable, the danger is that unreflective denial will be replaced by equally uncritical acceptance’.
A critical realist analysis requires that the historical and cultural setting of the investigation is acknowledged and understood. Following from an understanding of the term ‘race’, racism must then be assessed in context:

In the social world we are heavily burdened by the oppressive presence of the past (Bhaskar in Harre & Bhaskar 2001, p. 30).

Historically, racism has been defined as the use of the concept of race to justify beliefs in the superiority of a group of people over another. McConnochie, Hollinsworth and Pettman (1988, p. 22) believe that racism is a form of prejudice. Prejudice involves stereotyping and then making judgements based on those stereotypes. A final step involves acting on these judgements.

Racial discrimination or racialism is the ‘active or behavioral expression of racism and is aimed at denying members of certain groups equal access to scarce or valued resources’ (Cashmore 1996b, p. 305). The term ‘racism’ is frequently now used to mean racial discrimination or racialism.

Article 1(1) of the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination defines racism as:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms; in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (UNHCHR 1965).

Lawrence (1982, p. 47) does not agree that racism is a form of prejudice or that a tendency towards prejudice arises from an innate human characteristic. He sees the current racism as arising from attempts to find answers to perceived problems in society. While the issue of whether people have an inborn tendency towards prejudice is still open to debate (Buchanan 2007), Sivanandan (1983, p. 3) argues that the issue has more to do with power than prejudice. When prejudice is acted upon it becomes discrimination. When that discrimination is institutionalised in the power structure of society, it becomes a matter of power not attitudes.

Discussion of racism is often divided into two particular forms, individual and institutional. Individual racism refers to racist attitudes and behaviour by individuals (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 32). Studies of racism that focus largely on instances of aberrant individual behaviour can give a misleading impression of the extent of racism in a society.
Such approaches may also ignore the historical and political circumstances which create and sustain racism (Pettman 1987, p. 128). These circumstances find expression through institutional racism which involves the way racist beliefs have been built into the operations of a society’s institutions leading to discriminatory outcomes arising from the apparent impartial application of rules and procedures (Vasta 1996, p. 49).

For a critical realist, recognition of the often complex context of the study is vital and any explanation must be premised on this complexity. Because of the varying historical and cultural contexts in which racism has developed, agreement on a definition is often problematic. A brief, and necessarily limited, overview of the development of racism will provide an insight into the difficulties in finding consensus. The overview focuses primarily on racist thought as it developed in the United Kingdom and Australia.

This historical overview covers the main ideas and themes in the development of racism in the last few hundred years. It should not be viewed as exhaustive. In particular it is beyond the scope of this thesis to describe and analyse the resistance to racist thought and action that occurred throughout the colonial world.

While examples of racist-like treatment of particular groups of people can be found earlier (Graves 2001, p. 21), the term ‘race’ as applied to people has been in use in Europe since the early sixteenth century. It was first used to classify groups of people with something in common (Banton 1996, p. 294), but these shared characteristics do not appear to have been thought to have a biological basis (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 8).

The Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century emphasised a universal human nature and the equality of Man. Differences between people were seen as environmental rather than natural, and people were not categorised in racial terms (Malik 1996, p. 54).

During this period though, attitudes to equality in regard to the position of slaves varied. Some considered slavery to be a property rather than an equality issue. This amounted to a conflict over the rights of property owners versus the right to liberty (Malik 1996, p. 63). In France, however, the revolution of the late 1700s aimed to overthrow property and therefore abolished slavery (Malik 1996, p. 67). Sherwood (2001, p. 1) believes that during this time most Britons were ignorant of the details of the slave trade and had no idea of its racist justifications.
The Enlightenment therefore allowed for the possibility of human equality but put limits on its expression (Malik 1996, p. 40). The bourgeoisie wanted to protect their property rights which were threatened by the concept of human equality. Adam Smith suggested placing a social restriction on equality, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had favoured restrictions on property rights (Malik 1996, p. 60). Thus, racial differences did not give rise to racial inequality, rather, the social need to restrict equal rights led to racism (Graves 2001, p. 3). The nation state became the means of exercising universal rights but also the means of denying rights to non-citizens (Malik 1996, p. 69).

Once in place, social hierarchies generated by slavery began to be seen as the natural result of biological differences. The existence of races was not disputed, nor was there doubt that the races fitted into a hierarchy with Europeans at the top (Graves 2001, p. 3). The concept of ‘race’ explained enduring inequalities, and social inequalities became regarded as natural (Malik 1996, p. 71). ‘It is not “race” that gives rise to inequality but inequality that gives rise to “race”’ (Malik 1996, p. 39).

Class differences within society were increasingly seen in racial terms. The concept of race arose from within European social divisions (Malik 1996, p. 81) and involved the idea that inherent moral differences could be seen in physical differences (chosen on the need of the observer). The lowest members of European society were considered to be on the same level as non-Europeans (Malik 1996, p. 99).

During the period of European expansion and colonisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the concept of race took on new meaning. Questions were raised about the causes of the differing levels of development, or civilization, among human societies and racist explanations were developed to account for these (Markus 1994, p. 4). Also, at this time, Europe was experiencing political turbulence. Nation-states were in the process of formation and there was a need to establish a common identity between large groups of people. Nationalism, supported by a belief in common descent, was used to develop such allegiances (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 9).

Racism specifically directed at black people, developed during the colonial period (Lawrence 1982, p. 59). The colour black had long had negative connotations, associated with darkness, dirt and evil while white was associated with all that was virtuous and pure (Sherwood 2001, p. 2). During the colonial period, many different peoples including Indians and Arabs were labelled black. Most non-Europeans were
labelled black, regardless of their actual skin pigmentation. In fact, their religious and
cultural practices were also a deciding factor in the labelling process (Lawrence 1982,
p. 61). Colonial peoples were viewed as underdeveloped, while Africans were seen as
childlike. The expansion of colonialism led to contempt for the conquered people
(Institute of Race Relations 1982, p. 38). By viewing races as at different
evolutionary levels, an explanation for the colonial expansion and dominance of
European people during the nineteenth century could be provided (McConnochie,

So, by 1800, race was generally used to refer to groups considered to have common
and distinct biological traits (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 10).
The focus was on physical or biological differences, rather than cultural. It was
believed that human beings could be divided into separate species or races, distinct in
physical and mental capabilities.

Scientists attempted to classify races. Linnaeus, the botanist who developed a system
for defining and identifying genera and species, for example, suggested a four-way
racial division of humanity (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 10).
This idea of race still survives in the doctrine of ‘scientific racism’ (Banton 1996, p.
295). As will be seen, while scientific racism has been discredited and has been
employed as an argument less frequently since 1945, its political cachet has not
completely disappeared (Bottomley 1984, p. 24).

By the end of the colonial period racist images about people whose skin was not
considered to be white were well internalised by all segments of British society
(Lawrence 1982, p. 69). The expansion and profits derived from the colonial empires
had confirmed beliefs in moral and racial superiority of the British race, and racial
thinking became part of popular culture (Malik 1996, p. 116). However, this
description is somewhat simplistic as it is apparent that increasing numbers of black
people were living in working class Britain. Intermarriage was common and attitudes
were variable and far from fixed (Sherwood 2001, p. 8).

The scientific belief that groups of people formed distinct races was gradually
overturned in the 1800s as it became clear that human beings were of the same
species. However, many scientific publications of the time continued to report studies
of anatomical comparisons between peoples of different origins suggesting significant
physical differences. These provided support for the public maintenance of the notion
that people could be classified according to physical traits (Banton 1996, p. 295).
The idea that a biological division of race was linked to culture also started to take hold during this time (McConnochie, Hollinsworth & Pettman 1988, p. 13). The Australian gold rushes of the mid 1800s saw people from all over the world arrive in Victoria and New South Wales, most visible among them were the Chinese. The idea developed that racial differences caused differences in ability and temperament between groups which, in turn, caused cultural differences.

Colonial history does not determine the shape of contemporary racism, but does provide images of superior/inferior, which can then be utilised by racists. This goes some way to explain the formation of racist ideas in Britain as distinct from the American experience (Lawrence 1982, p. 68). The myth of the superiority of Englishmen over the colonised people justified taking land, exploiting labour and consolidated social cohesion in Britain itself (Sherwood 2001, p. 2).

Australia’s history of racism was informed by that of Britain. Social Darwinism, based on the theories of evolution and survival of the fittest, was strongly believed in Australia (Markus 1994, p. 15). These views, applied to Australia’s Indigenous populations, held that civilised people develop to adulthood through various stages while the less civilised remain at a child-like stage (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 39). It followed from this belief, that those who remained in a primitive state were less able to survive and would ultimately die out (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 41).

With the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia, in 1901, Social Darwinism underpinned the restrictive immigration system commonly known as the White Australia Policy. Immigration was limited to those who could pass a European language dictation test. Australia’s first Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, stated that “I do not think that the doctrine of equality of man was really ever intended to include racial equality” (in Kelly 2001 p. 11).

This white Australia policy was enacted because of fears that the Anglo heritage of the Australian population would dissipate, amid worries about declining birth rates and Asian invasion (Wyndham 1996, p. 332). The policy also ensured the protection of white male employment. The racial separation of the Indigenous population was enshrined through the almost total exclusion of mention in the Constitution (Kalantzis 2001). This racism was inextricably linked to notions of mateship and egalitarianism that did not extend to those of non-Anglo background (Kelly 2001). Whiteness provided a unifying symbol of nationhood (de Lepervanche 1980, p. 27), and racist
ideology divided the working class, establishing a sense of competition between white and non-white workers.

The Indigenous population of Australia, the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, have been subjected to particular racism. Government policies, while varying to some extent, were all aimed at managing Indigenous people and attempting to assimilate them into the dominant Australian culture. They were not official citizens until 1948 and did not achieve full electoral franchise until 1967 (Jayasuriya 2004, p. 9).

In England and Australia, the advent of an education system not only available to the ruling classes but also to the middle classes allowed for the further inculcation of these ideas. The education system also consolidated the class system and the notion of a hierarchy in society. Text books and other publications contributed to the depiction of black people as being inferior (Sherwood 2001, p. 6). By the early twentieth century universal education was targeting all levels of society and supporting claims about the importance of imperialism with racist justifications. Baden-Powell, stated that his scouting movement had as its aim “imperial defence and racial survival” (in Sherwood 2001, p. 15). Surveys of children in the early part of the 1900s showed that racist attitudes were held almost universally (Sherwood 2001, p. 19).

Prior to the Second World War, these ideas of racial superiority were seen as obvious and sensible (Malik 1996, p. 14). Horror at the implications of Nazism and the Holocaust threw the biological arguments for racial superiority into disrepute. ‘Racism undermined the West’s moral authority’ (Malik 1996, p. 16).

Through the 1940s and 1950s the United Nations actively advocated racial equality and UNESCO sponsored research to disprove racial science (Tucker 1987, p. 17). However, the specific idea that society could be divided into racial groups remained unchallenged (Malik 1996, p. 103). So, while the overt expression of racism was no longer sanctioned, in private nothing changed (Malik 1996, p. 18).

The 1950s increasingly saw social and political issues reduced to racial interpretations (Malik 1996, p. 33). However, a discourse on cultural difference was substituted for the discredited discussion of racial difference. This new approach thus continued to support notions of ‘inferiority’ and ‘superiority’ (Malik 1996, p. 128).

In the United Kingdom, from the late fifties onwards, people from former colonies began to migrate to Britain in larger numbers than previously and race was again
raised as a political issue. Race was seen as a problem being imposed on British society by these immigrants, a problem that had not existed before. Race became a question of culture rather than biology, with integration seen as the key to equality.

The concept of the nation as a homogenous culture developed with the emergence of the modern state that defined people’s existence. There was a need to develop a national ideology to maintain the loyalty and cooperation of the population (Malik 1996, p. 137). The image of the nation state as a community with a common culture served this purpose. This emphasised the importance of the continuity of the cultural pattern. ‘Retrospectively the nation was homogenised’ (Malik 1996, p. 139).

Lawrence (1982, p. 81) describes as ‘profound historical forgetfulness’ the phenomenon of idealising a pre-1940s Britain as culturally homogeneous. This enabled the idea to be sustained that the problems of post war Britain were caused by and imported by the black immigrants. It was believed that because of their different cultures, these new arrivals could not assimilate into British society and that their cultural practices in fact created more problems.

Commentators on race issues, such as Enoch Powell in the 1960s, were able to deny that they were racist by claiming that blacks were not ‘inferior’ but ‘different’. They suggested that this difference would generate fear among the white population that their way of life and culture would be destroyed (Tucker 1987, p. 18). This argument relied on the assumption that British culture was homogeneous, but also on the idea that cultures are unchanging. The argument also assumed that it was a natural characteristic of any culture to reject all that was culturally different (Bottomley 1984, p. 27).

This contention relied on an appeal to ‘commonsense’; that it was obvious that immigrants were different and therefore would not fit in. To say that something is commonsense is:

> to appeal over the logic and argumentation of intellectuals to what all reasonable people know in their ‘heart of hearts’ to be right and proper. Such an appeal can act at one and the same time to foreclose any discussion about certain ideas and practices and to legitimate them (Lawrence 1982, p. 48).

‘Commonsense’ suggests that the current social order is ‘natural’ and has not come about through a historical process, thus entailing that change cannot occur. Belief in a homogeneous culture requires ignoring history, class and gender divisions, as origin
is not particularly relevant to this commonsense idea of culture (Lawrence 1982, p. 85).

This racism that focuses on ‘commonsense’ beliefs about a homogeneous society under threat from alien cultures was termed ‘new racism’ by Martin Barker (1981). New racism does not rely on ideas of racial superiority but on the notion that the presence of people from a foreign culture is a threat to a way of life. ‘Referring barriers between peoples to human nature is racist because of the way it suggests that national separatism is natural and inevitable’ (Barker 1981, p. 2). Its newness relies on a definition of race based on culture. Such generalisations ignore the fact that culture is rarely homogeneous.

New racism is particularly dangerous because at first appearance it has little in common with older forms of racism. New racist arguments can fool people into accepting the reasoning as logical (Tucker 1987, p. 19). ‘It is racism because it sees as biological, or pseudo-biological, groupings that are the result of social and historical processes’ (Barker 1981, p. 4).

While the concept of new racism is well understood and recognised in the fields of race relations, this understanding has not flowed through to other disciplines or to the general public. This transdisciplinary study aims to extend this understanding to the discipline of information science.

This newer form of racism succeeded in fusing racism and nationalism, by linking to national boundaries and to notions of inclusion and exclusion on this basis (Gilroy 1987b, p. 46). The conflation of racial and national boundaries ‘is a central achievement of the new racism’ (Gilroy 1987b, p. 46).

The ‘commonsense’ notions of new racism draw a distinction between the formal membership of the national community such as provided by citizenship, and that membership which is identified with cultural links such as language and customs (Gilroy 1987b, p. 46). A person may have legal citizenship but yet, because of cultural difference, not be considered a member of that country.

de Lepervanche (1980, p. 24) believes that this new racism is also employing new terms for old ideas, ‘ethnicity’ is being used in place of the term ‘race’. Because race is no longer discussed, it is assumed to have gone away and while it is not acceptable to be racist, it is encouraged to be multicultural (de Lepervanche 1980, p. 26).
Sivanandan (1983, p. 1) agrees that ethnicity has disguised the problem of racism,
making it more difficult to tackle. Although ethnicity is a learned characteristic it is popularly seen as similar to race and the term often incorporates the biological idea of race (Malik 1996, p. 175).

The recognition of Indigenous Land Rights, a policy platform of the Hawke Labor government elected to power in 1983, was a trigger for instances of new racism in Australia. Land Rights were opposed vigorously by the mining industry which ran a media campaign drawing on prejudices and fears (Markus 1994, p. 217). Similar arguments were raised in June 1992 when the Mabo High Court case granted Indigenous rights to pursue cultural practices on crown land:

   Many people deny there is racism in this land. That’s due partly to a lack of understanding about what racism is, but also to their resistance to accepting responsibility for contributing to it (Clark 2001 p. 15).

Recent racism directed at Indigenous people has also involved an Australian form of historical denial. Keith Windschuttle has disputed the numbers of deaths and suffering during the Australian colonial period (Mann 2006b):

   Historical denialism is a morally terrible matter. By refusing to acknowledge the suffering of the victims it becomes for them and their families a second sickening blow, a revival of the original offence (Mann 2006a).

New racism also found expression in Australia through the writings of Geoffrey Blainey (1984) in the 1980s and the policy articulation of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party in the late 1990s. Both Blainey and Hanson relied on arguments based on the common themes of the threat to a way of life, fear of racial conflict, economic downturn, environmental threat and alleged preferential treatment of the immigrant and Indigenous populations:

   Through his newspaper writings and speeches it may be that Blainey contributed to the legitimation of simplistic, populist understanding of complex social issues, which reached their culmination in Pauline Hanson’s One Nation (Markus 2000 p. 17).

Blainey argued that racism only had meaning in the traditional biological sense and that it was legitimate to question immigration policy on the grounds of a perceived threat to traditional, majority Australian, lifestyle. ‘Where the new Asian immigrants have congregated, the old Australians cannot easily defend their neighbourhood’ (Blainey 1984, p. 128).
Blainey denied he was racist because he defined racism in the narrow sense as a belief that races could be ranked according to superiority. He denied that believing ‘false notions concerning racial determinants of human abilities’ was racist (Ricklefs 1995, p. 46). Blainey’s arguments are conspicuous for their lack of substantive supporting evidence, making tackling his arguments in a reasoned manner very difficult (Ricklefs 1995, p. 36).

Blainey believed that Australians of Anglo origin were concerned at a loss of their perceived homogeneous culture. He claimed that society would divide along ethnic lines and the national or Anglo culture would whither (Vasta 1996, p. 55). He further claimed that Asian immigration in particular would cause these problems (Ricklefs 1995, p. 37). Interestingly, this was at odds with his focus on English language as a determinant of suitability for immigration, because many migrants from Asian countries speak fluent English:

> With the near universal acceptance of the scientific falsity of this biological argument of ‘race’, it is culture and ethnicity that have come to demarcate ‘difference’ and the boundaries of acceptance/rejection of group membership (Jayasuriya & Kee 1999, p. 82).

The 1990s saw several other attempts to turn anti-immigration sentiment into political capital. In 1996, disaffected Labor MP Graeme Campbell instigated the nationalist Australia First Party (Markus 2005, p. 29). The party has been inactive for several years but apparently plans to run candidates in future elections (Birnbauer & Miller 2005, p. 4).

In the 1996 federal election, Pauline Hanson was elected to the House of Representatives’ seat of Oxley. A year later, she developed her new political party, Pauline Hanson’s One Nation. With appeals to middle Australia, One Nation claimed to represent mainstream Australian culture. Hanson attacked Australia’s immigration policy and the government’s perceived favouritism towards the Indigenous population (Stratton 1998, p. 32).

The government policy to ameliorate the effects of discrimination experienced by migrants and Indigenous Australians led to Hanson’s claims of discrimination against Anglo Australians. She combined these claims with expressed concerns for social issues such as unemployment and crime (Jayasuriya & Kee 1999, p. 81).

Hanson emphatically denied that her views were racist, yet former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, and a prominent holocaust denier were among her vocal
supporters (Sutton 1998; Altmann 2001). Hanson expressed shock at the Duke support (Skotnicki, Porteous & Butcher 1998). But One Nation officials said that they would not turn away any supporters:

One of the confusions about Pauline Hanson’s position, and that of her party, is that while she, herself, may be a naïve culturalist, many of her supporters, and the extreme-right parties are racialist, and racists, in the traditional manner (Stratton 1998, p. 197). Hanson was later reported as stating that she ‘could not care less about her party’s candidates’ links with racist or anti-Jewish groups’ (Age 2001 p. 7).

With the aim of reducing the immigration rate from Asia, Blainey and Hanson stressed the perceived negative impact on the cultural homogeneity of Australian society (White 1997, p. 19). They raised the spectre of racial conflict and associated particular migrant groups with criminal activity. Hanson argued that there was a past ideal when values were not under threat and society had greater social cohesion (Gale 1997, p. 5). Far from reflecting society’s concerns, White (1997) has found that anti-Asian feeling only increased:

after attention has been focused on the issue by keynote speakers and politicians. In other words, regardless of the terms of the debate, the issue has been manufactured to some extent by the anti-Asian protagonists themselves (White 1997, p. 21).

This argument for cultural homogeneity was also combined with an economic argument which blamed ‘recent and potential migrants for the problems associated with economic restructuring and the downturn in short-term and long-term economic prospects’ (White 1997, p. 24).

Another argument against immigration has focused on the availability of natural resources. This argument has been voiced by many differing groups on the right and left and by the environment movement. It argues that more migration will lead to overcrowding in the cities and depletion of limited natural resources such as water and fresh air. It has resulted in the scapegoating of newly arrived migrants for Australia’s perceived environmental problems (White 1997, p. 28).

Mixed in with these claims is an argument against foreign control of Australian resources and industry, which has tended to focus on Asian investment in Australia (White 1997, p. 37). Hanson claimed that special treatment of a particular group has the potential to divide the nation. It is fear of social division that she claims to be her real concern (Stratton 1998, p. 53).
Stratton believes that Blainey’s ideas fall between old and new racism while Hanson represents the new racism (Stratton 1998, p. 63). Both conform to the characteristics identified by Barker (1981, p. 13) of claiming that society is tolerant but that things have gone too far and that tolerance is being tested. Both also appear to believe that race determines cultural difference (Castles 1996, p. 25).

Hanson lost her seat in 1998 and was subsequently convicted and jailed for electoral fraud. The conviction was later quashed. While her more extreme statements were rejected by mainstream political parties, Hanson’s electoral support in marginal seats did result in some political accommodation for her claims. In fact, very few political leaders were willing to openly take a stand against her. Many of One Nation’s policies have since been enacted by the current federal coalition Government (Carney 2002; Rutherford 2006), a circumstance identified in the following assessments:

Hanson’s political goals were achieved not by One Nation or its remnants, but by a smarter, more politically astute political outfit known as the Liberal Party. If that sounds like an exaggeration, just note that the party that disowned her has now delivered on every single one of the substantive policies proposed in Hanson’s maiden speech (Scanlon 2006).

Hanson and her subsequent political outfit One Nation, proved to be the Trojan Horse by which Howard and his fellow reactionaries, the driest of the Liberal dries, smuggled their decades-old prejudices and grievances into the national consciousness (Dawson 2006).

Hanson has been the subject of revisionism of sorts over the last few years. She is now a media celebrity appearing on various television shows where her views, and the political turmoil they caused, are never mentioned:

Hanson’s political vision has become the norm, so much so that she can now appear on ‘reality’ TV shows with other has and never-been celebrities who can’t dance, with only the hint of a raised eyebrow (Scanlon 2006).

But, as will be seen, proponents of similar views have remained on the political landscape. Hanson has also recently announced her intention to run for office again, this time on a platform attacking Muslim cultural influences (Skelton 2006). As Scanlon states:

Now she’s back. This time she’s making a grab for power by playing the same tune that got her attention last time, only this time the word ‘Aborigines’ has been changed to ‘diseased Africans’ and ‘Asians’ updated to ‘Muslims’ (Scanlon 2006).
Arguments from new racism were again evident in December 2005, when the Sydney beach suburb of Cronulla was the site of race riots between young men of Muslim and Anglo ancestry. After an attack on a life-guard (an iconic Australian symbol) by a group of apparently Lebanese men, people of Middle Eastern appearance were set upon by men who had draped themselves in Australian flags. Tit-for-tat violence ensued for several days, urged on by talkback radio hosts and text messaging (Marr 2005; Clennell & Davies 2006). Both the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition denied a racist motive to the violence (Koutsoukis 2005) but quotes from those allegedly involved suggest otherwise: ‘it’s time for Aussies to stand up’, ‘Aussies standing up for Aussies’, ‘our fathers, our grandfathers fought for these beaches, now it’s our turn’ (Kearney & Overington 2005, p. 4).

Various analyses of the underlying causes examined the economic conditions of Lebanese migrants (Sheahan 2005, p. 25), the lack of emphasis on patriotism in the school curriculum (Hage-Ali 2005, p. 29), and the failure of those in office to recognise and deal with institutional racism and disadvantage (Jupp 2005, p. 12).

Riots in France that occurred only a few months prior to Cronulla appear to have had similar causes including unemployment and discrimination (Ganley 2005). The riots generated parallel suggested solutions including removing citizenship from foreign born rioters (Henley 2005; Murray, G. 2006). While the causes of such riots are manifold, anti-racist commentator A.Sivanandan pointed out that Muslim youth living with poverty and unemployment in prosperous countries feel particularly hard done by. They or their parents may have arrived with very high hopes and these have been crushed (Shanmugaratnam 2006).

Failure to appreciate the symbiosis of cultural and scientific racism, the Editorial of an Australian national newspaper stated ‘Sydney’s riots result from a clash of cultures not racism’ (Australian 2005, p. 13) and linked the claims of racism to the same ‘elitist assumptions’ about One Nation supporters:

There is a world of difference between prejudice directed at migrants, which time heals, and racism, which festers for centuries. Every immigrant group since 1945 has suffered some form of prejudice. But the examples of endemic racism are much harder to find (Australian 2005, p. 13).

The use of the Australian flag by rioters of Anglo descent received mixed responses. The Prime Minister stated that “‘I would never condemn people for being proud of the Australian flag’” (in Gordon 2005, p. 21). But novelist Markus Zouzak said
‘they’re fighting for what they reckon is the Australian way of life…and for
Australian-ness, but it’s a white, bigoted, and “xenophobic” version, and “nothing to

The concept of what is Australian was discussed in the media, ‘there will not be
social harmony as long as many Australians go on thinking that only those of a
particular descent or culture are real Australians’ (Jupp 2005, p. 12).

The role of the talk back radio announcers was also analysed:

The more rabid talkback shock jocks in Sydney kept talking up the divisions – Stan
Zemanek, on 2GB, at one point, late at night, took a call from former One Nation
identity John Pasquarelli, who called multiculturalism an ‘evil experiment.’ Then
Zemanek cut off a Lebanese Muslim caller with a pre-recorded volley of gunshots
(Johnston 2005, p. 24)

More recently, organisers of the Big Day Out music festival asked patrons not to
bring Australian flags to the concert. ‘Big Day Out promoter Ken West was brave
enough to give it a name when he astutely described the creeping trend of patriotism
cloaked in national colours as racism’ (Hutchison 2007).

In the wake of the September 11 2001 attacks in the United States, Australia has been
a key, if small, player in the ‘war on terror’. The threat of terrorism has inevitably
been linked to perceptions of Islam and the position of Australian Muslims. As in the
United Kingdom (Sivanandan 2006, p. 2), it has also linked the notion of race to that
of ‘civilisation’ with the ‘war on terror’ portrayed as a battle between civilisations or
for civilisation. Anti-Muslim racism is on the increase in Britain (Bourne 2007;
Kundnani 2007) and in Australia.

The September 2001 attacks in the United States and the later Bali, Jakarta and
London bombings have all served to draw attention to the small Muslim minority in
Australia. The London bombings were carried out by Muslims who were living in,
and were raised in, the United Kingdom (Lopez 2005, p. 33). This has led Lopez to
claim that the global situation and Australia’s ethnic makeup have changed since
multiculturalism was first introduced and that security is now possibly incompatible
with multiculturalism (Lopez 2005, p. 39).

Multiculturalism, a policy that was widely supported in the 1970s, is now being
questioned in an era of heightened international insecurity and domestic economic
disparity (Albrechtsen 2005, p. 12). The term has been downgraded in the government lexicon. Critiques of multiculturalism:

… tend to merge with what we have previously termed ‘new racism’…this focus on the receiving culture, usually coupled with explicit denials of racist attitudes to the immigrants themselves, allows for considerable popular appeal (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 273).

Australian immigration and multiculturalism are being questioned and the claim repeated that there has been no public debate:

Our society will remain a success as long as we do two things. One is to guarantee our young people the widest range of opportunities, the other is to make it clear that viewing yourself as somehow not part of society is not an option (Carney 2005).

Windschuttle (2005) firmly blames multiculturalism and Lebanese culture in particular for the Cronulla riots. He asserts that multiculturalism has led to Lebanese ‘ethnic ghettos’ and that ‘it is not race that is the problem but culture’. These arguments have also appeared in the United Kingdom:

The concept of racism was turned on its head. It was no longer a question of the ways in which society systematically excluded particular groups and thus set in train a process of ghettoisation. It was supposed, instead, that non-white groups themselves refused to integrate and so made themselves strange to whites, some of whom then became hostile. Racism was no longer ‘institutional’ but defined instead as a prejudice arising from unfamiliarity. It was to be understood as an outcome of segregation, not its cause (Kundnani 2007, p. 34).

In the past few months, several senior government members including the Education Minister, the Treasurer and the Prime Minister, have expressed the idea that Muslims who do not accept Australian values should leave (Topsfield & Grattan 2006). An example is shown in the following quote from the Prime Minister:

We don’t impose conformity on people in Australia but we do expect them to subscribe to our basic values and we do expect them, when they come to this nation, to become Australians…People who fit the migration criteria from any part of the world should be welcome to this country …but once they come to this country they should embrace the values of this country (John Howard in Hudson 2005, p. 4).

Similar views have been expressed in Europe, with a German conservative politician stating that foreigners should conform to the main German culture (Finn 2000). In
Britain, parliamentary members of the Conservative party called for those Muslim citizens who did not have allegiance to Britain to leave (Guardian 2005, 3 Aug).

Expressing her position against a Bill to allow the availability of an abortion drug, another Australian government minister, Danna Vale, argued that unless the abortion rate amongst Australians of European origin was stemmed, Australia would become a Muslim country within 50 years. She then published an explanation for her views that, far from apologising, actually reiterated her views while at the same time denying that she was racist. ‘It is not racist to identify a trend in demographic divergence within our community’ (Vale 2006 p. 9).

One government minister did take a moderating stand. Tony Abbott, stated that ‘each migrant’s arrival is another vote of confidence in our country….there are no “Australian-ness” tests, beyond a commitment to its laws and respect for its people’ (Abbott 2006 p. 13).

The lack of any serious rebuke of Vale, and little in the way of Opposition outrage, was a disturbing aspect of the incident for a senior member of the Muslim community:

The frequency and intensity of this governmental preoccupation is out of all proportion to size of the fragment of social concern. There are probably significantly more white supremacists in Australia than there are Muslims ‘raving on about jihad’ (Aly 2006 p. 7).

The Government’s solution to the ‘problem’ was an emphasis on the responsibility of all Australians to accept a common set of values. To mark Australia Day 2006, John Howard called for a revision to how history is taught in schools:

And too often, history along with other subjects in the humanities, has succumbed to a post-modern culture of relativism where any objective record of achievement is questioned or repudiated (in Age 2006c).

Howard’s emphasis on Anglo values as somehow superior to other cultural values, reflects a view that Australian society must subscribe to these supposedly homogeneous and immutable values (Jayasuriya 2003, p. 8).

The arguments were played out in microcosm on the letters pages of Australian newspapers following several incidents at international cricket matches. Anglo Australians complained that Australians of Sri Lankan background were inappropriately supporting the Sri Lankan team. But what seemed to be most
upsetting, was the ‘un-Australian’ cultural practice of playing drums and singing at a cricket match (Letters to the Editor 2006).

The Treasurer Peter Costello cites Australian values as including economic opportunity, security, physical environment and social infrastructure. Harris (2004) suggests that the only common value needed is an ‘agreement to obey the law’. ‘There are no common values…in so far as we have “common values” we share them with the rest of the world’ (Harris 2004, p. 10). Aitkin (2006) points out that these are not really values and in any case would apply to many countries. He suggests the values that attract migrants to Australia are more likely to be ‘equality, fairness, tolerance, aspiration and respect’ (Aitkin 2006, p. 32). Jayasuriya two years earlier made the same point:

What we all share and belong to is the public and ‘political culture’ of the nation, not some set of core values derived from a historic past, and associated with a ‘cultural nation’ (2004, p. 17).

Speaking of the situation in the United Kingdom in the 1960s, Ignatieff (1998) made the point that it is believing that values are unique to you that is important as a cohesive factor. ‘If they weren’t “your” values they could not meaningfully bind you’.

A further emphasis on values and citizenship has been seen in the renaming of the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Those applying for citizenship also will now have to pass a test about Australian values. ‘During the reign of John Howard, we have seen a shift in policy and rhetoric from multiculturalism to citizenship to values’ (Wakim 2006).

As can be seen from the above examples, while new racism as a concept has existed for several decades now, it seems that the public and government are generally no closer to recognising its manifestations as a form of racism. Now a newer and even more insidious form of racism has emerged. In Britain racism has recently been directed at asylum seekers, a term used synonymously with ‘illegal immigrant’ (Kundnani 2001, p. 43). The popular press has generated a ‘mock populism and state-sponsored racism [that] has led to the promotion of a new commonsensical popular racism directed at asylum seekers’ (Kundnani 2001, p. 48).
It is this demonisation of the people that the capitalist western world seeks to exclude – in the name of the preservation of economic prosperity and national identity – that signals the emergence of a new racism (Fekete 2001, p. 23).

This newest reincarnation of racism has been termed ‘xeno-racism’ by Sivanandan (2006). This xeno-racism is supported by international cooperation to actively encourage the migration of some people while excluding others from particular regions. By preventing access to legal routes for applying for asylum, people must use routes that are deemed to be ‘illegal’:

If it is xenophobia, it is, in the way it denigrates and reifies people before segregating and/or deporting them, a xenophobia that bears all the marks of the old racism, except that it is not colour coded. It is racism in substance, though xeno in form. It is xeno-racism, a racism of global capital (Sivanandan 2006, p. 2).

Xenophobia is often portrayed as a natural reaction, the human characteristic of preferring one’s ‘own’, but ‘own’ is defined in ways that suggest common cultures and backgrounds. The term ‘illegal’ immigrant is reserved for asylum seekers from impoverished backgrounds (Guild 2000, p. 17). The term is rarely applied to people from Australia who have overstayed their visas in the United Kingdom (Kundnani 2001, p. 51) and vice versa.

As with new racism, xeno-racism can also be seen in the arguments of some in the conservation movement. While arguing for less migration, the targets of these plans are often the poor and environmental refugees (Hartmann 2003).

Racism directed against asylum seekers and refugees appears to be on the increase. The Council of Europe identified people in the United Kingdom as displaying particularly hostile feelings towards asylum seekers. It blamed the media for coverage of the issues from a xenophobic and intolerant perspective, portraying asylum seekers as a threat to the economy, security and social cohesion (Black 2001, p. 1).

The creation of a system of welfare provision for asylum seekers, linked to immigration control, and the introduction of a special asylum detention regime, ensures that asylum seekers living in the United Kingdom are treated as a suspect and rightless community (Fekete 2001, p. 30).

Anti-terrorism laws have given ‘legitimacy to a new set of stereotypes: asylum seekers are phonies and fraudsters; refugees are terrorists and the “enemy within”’ (Fekete 2001, p. 39). When combined with anti-terrorism laws, xeno-racism becomes more and more acceptable (Sivanandan 2000, p. 71):
The war on asylum in fact pre-dates the events of September 11. But after the London bombings of July 7, the two trajectories – the war on asylum and the war on terror – have converged to produce a racism which cannot tell a settler from an immigrant, an immigrant from an asylum seeker, an asylum seeker from a Muslim, a Muslim from a terrorist (Sivanandan 2006, p. 2).

Xeno-racism is apparent in the policies of the Australian government. In October 2001, shortly before the Federal election, the government claimed that asylum seekers apprehended near Australia had deliberately thrown their children into the sea to force them to be taken on board Australian ships (Markus 2002). ‘Xenophobia is most virulent when it is supported from the top, whether directly or by just standing by’ (Horne 2002 p. 4).

While racism transforms into socially acceptable forms, the old forms do not go away, although they also change and adapt strategies to new environments. While racist activists have tended to be male in the majority, there are indications in Europe that women are joining neo-Nazi organizations in increasing numbers. Some such German organisations are now comprised of one third women, who are responding to nationalistic anti-foreigner discourse. Their presence serves to make these organizations appear to be more mainstream (Connolly 2001, p. 5).

In Australia, the older forms of racism exist in instances of individual behaviour and politically through such groups as the Lyndon LaRouche linked Citizens Electoral Council, the League of Rights, the Patriotic Youth League, Australia First, the Eureka Freedom Commemoration and the David Syme Foundation. Many of these groups are linked and share membership and resources (Birnbauer & Miller 2005, p. 4). While small in membership, they are often well financed through donations (Roberts 2005a, p. 25).

In Australia old style racism reappeared in 2004 when international students became the targets of the far right Patriotic Youth League, an arm of the Australia First Party. Posters claiming that international students were taking university places away from locals appeared on campuses in New South Wales and Victoria. The propaganda sheets also claimed that international students were being ‘soft marked’. The appearance of the posters coincided with several racially motivated physical attacks on students (Robinson 2004, p. 41). The posters also warned white women to beware of black sexual predators, using text that appeared to be taken directly from National Alliance tracts in the United States (Thompson 2004).
The following year White Pride Coalition, in Toowoomba in Queensland, was responsible for the distribution of racist material attacking Sudanese refugees (Murray & Lawrence 2005). The man identified as the perpetrator was also responsible for posting hate messages on the Internet (Roberts 2005b).

Sudanese immigrants were again the target in late 2005, this time from an academic. Andrew Fraser, an associate professor in public law at Macquarie University in Sydney, was responsible for an article in a local newspaper racially vilifying Sudanese immigrants. He claimed that they were of low IQ, had higher levels of testosterone and were therefore more inclined to commit crime. During the ensuing public outcry, evidence came to light showing that Fraser was an adviser to the Patriotic Youth League (Roberts 2005d). As Graves has pointed out, ‘because people (scholars included) assume the validity of our racial categories, they ascribe to them the power to explain human characteristics that they simply do not have’ (Graves 2001, p. 9).

The Fraser case is interesting because it draws on old, new and xeno-racism while also being entangled in arguments about free speech and academic freedom. Concerns were raised that Fraser was using his academic position to give credibility to his claims (Roberts 2005c). Michael Duffy, a regular opinion writer for the Sydney Morning Herald, claimed that Fraser’s views had legitimacy and that political correctness was preventing necessary debate about immigration (Duffy 2005b). In a letter to the editor of the Australian newspaper a few days later, several of Fraser’s colleagues maintained that ‘freedom to speak is not absolute’, that Fraser was not speaking from his area of expertise, and called into question whether it was appropriate for someone holding his views to be teaching students from overseas backgrounds (Osuri et al. 2005).

After initially being suspended by the University, his classes were discontinued in 2006 (Lane 2006, p. 35). However, he continues to receive considerable media attention including interviews. Macquarie University has recently allowed him to work on a book expounding his ideas (Roberts 2006).

In November 2005, Michael Duffy was responsible for an opinion piece linking many of the recent themes:

The big change no one talks about is the growing success of people of Asian background in the professions. If present rates continue, they could form a majority of Australian professionals within a generation or two. Such an outcome would be
unusual: perhaps the first time in history a nation’s elite has invited another group to come and replace it (Duffy 2005a).

Citing the migration rates from Asia and the numbers of international students from Asia who gain permanent residency on completion of their courses, Duffy raised the spectre of an Asian professional and managerial dominance in Australia. He quite rightly pointed out that government funding for domestic student university places had not increased while international places were expanding.

It is interesting that the Prime Minister, once a critic of the rate of Asian immigration, is now presiding over what amounts to the demographic reconstruction of the country’s elite, at the expense of the children of those once known as Howard’s battlers (Duffy 2005a).

But he failed to address the possibility that, far from taking the places of local students, this expansion was enabling universities to subsidise local places.

These views were repeated a month later by another commentator:

[Prime Minister John Howard] slashed public funding for higher education during the 1990s. The reason why the third point matters in the immigration debate today is that foreign students have been displacing Australian-born students at university. The skilled intake may make the immigration statistics more impressive in the short run but the people it brings have less loyalty to Australia than the children of non-English speaking migrants (Megalogenis 2005, p. 20).

The effect of increasing numbers of skilled migrants from Asia, due in large part to the onshore skilled migration program for overseas students studying in Australia, is being questioned in the media with increasing regularity (Carney 2005). An online reader poll in the Age newspaper <http://theage.com.au/polls/form.html> asked the question ‘should Australian-born students be given priority when applying for university places?’ Conducted on a Sunday (18.12.05), it received a total response of only 38 votes, but 68% were in the affirmative.

In late 2005 a paper in the journal People and Place entitled ‘Are Asians over-represented in training in the health professions’ (Dodson & Birrell 2005) also received media attention (Horin 2005; Leung 2005). The paper and the news articles that followed, concluded that while there was a higher proportion of students from Asian backgrounds studying towards some health professions, selection was and must continue to be based on academic merit. What is concerning, is why the question was investigated in the first place.
In summary, the term ‘racism’ can be used restrictively or widely. It has been used to refer to the Western European ideology or set of beliefs that race determines culture, leading to claims of racial superiority (Banton & Miles 1996, p. 308). Since the 1960s the term has encompassed practices and attitudes.

Although biological arguments for racial differentiation are now untenable, at least in mainstream debate, new arguments have appeared. These continue to justify the unequal treatment of groups of people (Jayasuriya & Kee 1999, p. 82). Based on this development, it can be argued that what ‘distinguishes racism as an ideology is that it asserts, a deterministic relationship between a group and supposed characteristics of that group’ (Banton & Miles 1996, p. 310). However, Banton suggests that this definition is so broad as to be analytically meaningless.

Miles maintains that racism is the granting of meaning to patterns of physical difference together with the ascription of other genuine or imagined characteristics to a group constituted by descent. These characteristics are then negatively evaluated and applied as the justification for the unequal treatment of the defined group (Banton & Miles 1996, p. 310).

This definition of racism does not serve to reify the attributed biological characteristics used to identify the group which is the object of racism. It also does not limit target groups to those identified as black. Thus groups of people can be the objects of racist ideology when they are ‘identified by reference to real or supposed biological characteristics and, additionally, have been negatively evaluated and treated’ (Banton & Miles 1996, p. 311).

The development of a new, refashioned racist ideology is a symptom of the present crisis in society (Lawrence 1982, p. 47). Racism can take many forms. It can be perpetrated by individuals and social groups, but it can also be seen in the dominant institutions and laws of a country. It can be the crude scientific racism, the insidious new racism appealing to commonsense and cultural homogeneity, or the, currently publicly acceptable, xeno-racism targeting all members of a cultural group identified as an economic or security threat.

We need to recognise that the cast of mind that encourages us to turn away from the suffering of others, to demonise rather than relate to fellow human beings, has its impact not only on asylum policy; it informs approaches to a range of concerns in this diverse nation of Australia (Markus 2002 n.p.).
While evident in individual discourse, xeno-racism also constitutes a new form of institutional racism that, because it does not have the hallmarks of old racism, can be denied. This:

… shifts responsibility and blame for the production of racist ideas and practice away from those who direct and formulate policy. Denial of institutional racism also rejects the idea that policy-makers and politicians have a direct impact upon the social conditions that encourage or discourage racist ideas and practice (Burnett & Whyte 2004).

The review of the literature has found that racism can be defined in many ways, and while the definition as provided by the United Nations (UNHCHR 1965) serves as a good starting point, it fails to acknowledge the changing characteristics of racism particularly the cultural and economic racism of recent years. It is unlikely that even these forms of racism will remain static, certainly newer forms will arise in the future.

4.2. Anti-racism

The preceding section dealt with how racism developed and its many manifestations. This section deals with the views of those who oppose racism. Racism should be opposed because ‘it is wrong, … damages its victims, … damages the rest of us, … stands in the way of other desirable social goals, … stops us doing our job properly, … eliminating racism is part of our legal and institutional obligations’ (Chambers & Pettman 1986 n.p.).

Anti-racist approaches reflect the underlying beliefs about the causes of racism and also the type of racism to be targeted; individual or institutional, old or new or xeno-racism. In this section, ‘much of the analysis is based on British literature because of the comparative paucity of Australian scholarship in the field’ (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 277).

Some anti-racism views racism not as an integral part of the political and social system but rather a deviation, that can be dealt with through legal, educational and psychological strategies. This belief that racism is not intrinsic to the overall social and political system, but is due to individual digressions, has led to an anti-racist approach concentrating on establishing anti-racist laws and participating in international declarations.

Gilroy challenges this approach, stating that:
Racism is not akin to a coat of paint on the external structures of social relations which can be scraped off if the right ideological tools and political elbow grease are conscientiously applied to the task (Gilroy 1987a, p. 11).

Tackling racism must involve confronting established institutions and ideas. It will not involve engendering tolerance alone, but redistributing resources and power (Bottomley 1984, p. 31).

Another anti-racist approach stresses the relationship between race and class:

Alliances between the anti-racist and the working class struggle are crucial, because the struggle against racism without the struggle against class remains cultural nationalism. But class struggle without race struggle, without the struggles of women, of gays, of the Irish, remains economistic (Sivanandan 1983, p. 11).

Gilroy is critical of this approach also, particularly for advocating race awareness training (Gilroy 1987a, p. 14). Ignatieff concurs with this criticism, saying that in the end, attempts to change people’s attitudes and beliefs are irrelevant because it is justice that is needed. So long as people act as they should, it does not matter what they believe (Ignatieff 1999). This is later articulated by Sivanandan:

Personal prejudice is not a matter of central concern to black people. They are not bothered whether white people like them or not – that is their problem. But when such prejudice is acted out in socially discriminatory ways to become racial discrimination, it does concern them … (Sivanandan 2000, p. 68).

Often the focus at the government and anti-racist organisational level has been on the instances of individual racism. While a necessary element of an overall anti-racist strategy, it has unfortunately also provided publicity for racist groups (Rattansi 1994, p. 66). In addition, by emphasising the physical threat of racist groups, it can appear that racism is arising solely from these organisations (Malik 1996, p. 191). By focusing on these groups, anti-racism tacitly supports the idea that this is the main form of racism. This leads to a failure to tackle the cultural arguments of new racism (Gilroy 1987a, p. 5), or the centrality of racism to politics and society:

The fight against racism cannot be reduced to a fight for culture … Nor does learning about other people’s cultures make the racists less racist. Besides, the racism that needs to be contested is not personal prejudice (which has no authority behind it) but institutionalised racism (Sivanandan 2006, p. 3).

In the United Kingdom, institutional racism has been the focus of several recent reports and strategy plans, particularly concerning racism within the police force.
Emphasis on this aspect of racism has led the Institute of Race Relations to declare that the ‘pendulum has swung too far’ and that a focus on institutional racism has diverted attention from growing incidences of individual and violent racism (Institute of Race Relations n.d.).

In Australia, Liffman has found that racism takes a form less linked to history and more to do with difference. People are subjected to racism because of how they appear to be different, necessitating a form of anti-racism that confronts attitudes to difference (Liffman 1995, p. 117).

Castles and Vasta (1996, p. 5) point out that anti-racist groups worldwide have failed to keep pace with changes in racist ideologies and practices. Anti-racism needs a new approach in response to the changing face of racism and needs the flexibility to tackle racism in all its manifestations (Castles 1996, p. 45). ‘There can be no single or homogenous strategy against racism because racism itself is never homogenous’ (Gilroy 1987a, p. 15).

Those who oppose far Right political parties will be most likely to reverse their rise if they adopt a more coherent strategy that fights not just the parties themselves but also the environment of ‘respectable racism’ in which they thrive (Kundnani 2006b).

Changes to the political landscape will result in new and varied instances of racism and anti-racists must be vigilant to these changes and ready to adapt strategies accordingly:

… the fight against institutional racism is a fight against state racism – against asylum laws, against deportations, against stop and search, against deaths in custody, against school exclusions, against miscarriages of justice…in the final analysis, institutional racism is the litmus test of a society’s democracy (Sivanandan 2000, p. 73).

It is challenging for anti-racism to tackle the new racism and xeno-racism because of the absence of overt references to race. Culture and identity have combined with nationalistic slogans to replace race as the terms of exclusion and inclusion. ‘We increasingly face a racism which avoids being recognised as such because it is able to link “race” with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism’ (Gilroy 1987a, p. 5).

In order to tackle the new cultural racism, the belief in the monolithic nature of culture needs to be addressed. New racism defines a nation as a unified cultural community and national culture invariably is identified as uniformly white (Gilroy 1987a, p. 6).
Anti-racism needs to establish that there are no clear demarcation lines between cultures and that culture is fluid, adaptive and always changing (Gilroy 1987a, p. 12). Culture is not, in any case, immutable and the behaviour patterns of individuals and groups alter as a result of experience and changing circumstances (Ricklefs 1995, p. 41):

‘Race’ and culture are not interwoven. Culture is a historical phenomenon shaped by time and circumstance, without biological basis. Race has no bearing upon it and itself does not exist … (Ricklefs 1995, p. 48).

This point is often obfuscated by the approach taken by anti-racist groups themselves, who support many members of the black communities in their focus on identity and culture (Gilroy 1987a, p. 8). This focus has the potential to develop into an ethnic nationalism which also relies on absolute ideas of culture (Gilroy 1987b, p. 65). Gilroy maintains that in the United Kingdom this has hindered the development of an all encompassing definition of blackness which can take into account the diversity of the black experience from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Gilroy 1987b, p. 66):

But anti-racist activities encapsulate one final problem which might outlive them. This is the disastrous way in which they have trivialised the rich complexity of black life by reducing it to nothing more than a response to racism (Gilroy 1987a, p. 14).

These issues have been given focus by the concept of multiculturalism. Some contemporary theorists argue that multiculturalism has watered down the anti-racist struggle. But the pursuit of multicultural policies does not mean that racism has disappeared (Vasta 1996, p. 70).

Just to learn about other people’s cultures is not to learn about the racism of one’s own. To learn about the racism of one’s own culture, on the other hand, is to approach other cultures objectively (Sivanandan 1983, p. 5).

Many anti-racists are critical of the effect of multicultural policy, claiming that it has resulted in vertical rather than horizontal divisions in society (Malik 1996, p. 170). Difference and inequality are tolerated because multiculturalism appears to provide a rational explanation for inequality (Kundnani 2001, p. 59).

Whereas racial theorists used to say that social differences were the inevitable product of natural differences and there is nothing we could do about it, multiculturalists argue that they are the product of cultural differences and there is nothing we should do about it. But this is simply to rename inequality (Malik 1998).
Multiculturalism can be seen as positioning ethnic groups as ‘external to the national body’ (Malik 1996, p. 179). Australian multiculturalism involves an image of a national culture primarily based on a history of British and Irish migration or ‘Anglo-Celtic culture’, and a mix of other cultures all of which are clearly delineated (Stratton 1998, p. 35). But this cannot be the reality of the lives of many people.

Multiculturalism often incorporates equal opportunity policy and practice which can result in a competition for resources between and within different ethnic groups (Gilroy 1987a, p. 13) resulting in claims that this has enabled the systemic control of those cultures seen as a threat to the dominant culture. Multiculturalism enabled these troubling cultures to be ‘institutionalised, managed and reified’ (Kundnani 2002, p. 68).

The problem for anti-racists wanting to argue against multiculturalism is that many racists also argue against multiculturalism (Vasta 1996, p. 47). One variant of new racism maintains that multiculturalism has become the new enemy, that multicultural policy has caused the present problems of society (Malik 1996, p. 180) and that multiculturalism, rather then racism, is responsible for community problems (Kundnani 2002, p. 70).

Malik’s criticism of anti-racism goes deeper than addressing differences over multiculturalism. He argues that the concept of race has never been truly challenged. Although all attempts to determine race by scientific measurement have failed, the concept itself has not been refuted (Malik 1996, p. 120). While many oppose scientific racism on moral grounds, they fail to challenge its underlying assumptions (Malik 1996, p. 126). Bottomley offers the same criticism of Australian anti-racism saying that race and racism are not confronted at the official level (Bottomley 1984, p. 29).

The above uncertainties raise problems for anti-racists. In addition, ‘rational argument and accurate figures are often ineffective in passionate debate, unless the complex emotional, cultural and ideological meanings of the argument are also addressed’ (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 261). Cunneen states that:

One potential problem with anti-racist politics is a tendency towards reductionism because of its interventionist stance and its concern with policy formulation and practice. To argue against reductionism is not to argue against antiracist activism per se. It is an argument for developing activism on the basis of sound historical and contemporary political analysis (Cunneen 1997, p. 139).
This is an approach that is supported by the critical realist methodology.

4.3. Disinformation

For the purposes of this research, information will be defined as data that has been collected, collated and organised. Information can also serve as the raw data for further information and can be presented or stored in many forms including in print, on computer systems or in oral tradition. Information is a resource that is useful to the recipient when it can be absorbed and comprehended, thus becoming knowledge (Fist 1998, p. 61). ‘Information is only useful if it provides an accurate representation of the current state of knowledge related to the topic in question’ (Schwartz 1997, p. 263). Knowledge can in turn become information when it is presented in a form that can feed further development of knowledge. Some of the issues related to information include ‘its production, access, distribution, and use’ (Hurley & Mayer-Schönberger 2000).

While the provision of access to information and thus the facilitation of knowledge development, is usually seen as desirable, this is not the case if the information provided is inaccurate, of low quality, or misleading (Mason, Mason & Culnan 1995, p. 258). Disinformation is information that is unreliable. Unlike ‘misinformation’, its provision is generally, although not always, deliberate with the purpose of deceiving or misleading the recipient. When information quality is unreliable its value is diminished, it is not useful to the recipient and cannot become knowledge.

Disinformation occurs when the original data is inaccurate, or through the mishandling of the collection, collation or organisation of the data (Floridi 1996, p. 510). This can arise in three ways; as a result of a lack of completeness where all the facts or data are not present, through a lack of objectivity such as occurs with propaganda and deliberate misrepresentation, or through a lack of pluralism as in the case of censorship. These three types of disinformation can exist in isolation or can be combined.

4.4. Web

The Web consists of electronic documents, in the form of text, pictures or sounds, held on computer servers linked through the Internet. These documents usually contain links to other related documents. By utilising a Web browser, a user can move between documents by clicking on these links. While each Web site or document has
a unique identifying address, most users initially encounter sites through clicking on links or through identification by search engines in response to user keyword search queries. While racism is evident in other Internet uses such as email, newsgroups and chats, the focus of this thesis will be on the Web as a primary disinformation source. Just as the study of racism requires a transdisciplinary approach, any study of the Web also will utilise sources from such diverse fields as the sciences, politics, sociology and media studies. As with many advances in information technology, developments related to the Web occur rapidly. While this project will attempt to keep apace with both technological and regulatory changes, it is expected that at the least the issues raised and suggestions offered will retain their utility for some time.

While the Web is in theory available worldwide, access is certainly not universal. Early users were predominantly located in the United States, where they not only had access to technology but also computer and literacy skills (Denny 1999). Early research in the United States suggested that users were also mostly white and economically secure, leading to calls for greater access to the Internet through libraries and information points (CNET News 1998). However, research conducted two years later in the United Kingdom, found that these forms of public access were predominantly utilised by those who already had access (Ward, M. 2000).

Use in Europe increased rapidly, but varied between countries with usage in Southern Europe lagging behind the north (MacMillan 2002). In Australia in 1999, 18% of households had access to the Internet (Hayes 1999). In 2006, there were 5.1 million households subscribed to the Internet through large Internet Service Providers (ISPs) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006). Information providers and users are still predominantly located in the West.

Research in 2000 found that links between sites on the Web varied greatly, with some sites barely connected at all (Mariano 2000). A significant number of websites were not indexed and not retrieved by search engines (Lawrence & Giles 1998, p. 100). The research did not report on the nature of these sites in any detail. Another study two years later (Curtis 2002), found similar problems but focused on the difficulty of predicting associative links.

Research conducted in Australia in 2000 found that coverage of the Web by search engines was declining as the number of web pages grew (Mitchell 2000). There are now over 100 million websites (Moses 2006a).
Who is using the Web, and how they are using it, will impact on any discussion of disinformation:

We need to construct a broad research base to try to understand and explain the experiences, behaviour and knowledge of cyberspatial users, and the mechanisms and processes that underlie cyberspatial use and development (Kitchin 1998, p. 71).

Web convergence, such as the incorporation of podcasts, and access through means other than a computer, such as mobile phones, will also impact on disinformation. There is potential for more people to originate and spread disinformation. As Nigel Paine, former head of Development and Learning at the BBC, stated recently:

The second wave [of digital changes] will be much more disruptive, and I think the main impact is going to be potentially millions of more people developing content, and wanting to be able to show and share content and perhaps thousands of ways of accessing that content (in ABC Radio 2006a).

Social networks such as MySpace <http://www.myspace.com> already have over one million registered users. The significance of these is that ‘online social networks have become a vital space for young people to express themselves and build their personal identities’ (Bowley 2006). These networks reinforce existing relationships and also encourage users to generate content.

Tim Berners-Lee, one of the founders of the Web, is concerned about the technical and social aspects of the converging technologies and community spaces on the Web. He is reported as believing that ‘certain undemocratic things could emerge and misinformation will start spreading over the web’ (Ghosh 2006). Information and disinformation on the Web has greater potential than print material to influence new ideas because of the ease with which it can be spread (Herrera-Viedma et al. 2006, p. 539).

4.4.1. Web disinformation

While the Web contains large amounts of useful and accurate information, it also contains vast amounts of unreliable and unverifiable disinformation. Much of this disinformation is provided intentionally. Because the Web provides a cheap and easy method for getting the message out (Vidal 1999, p. 20), the ease with which anyone can become an information or disinformation provider to potentially millions of people worldwide is one of the idiosyncratic qualities of the Web.
Intentional misinformation can include misconduct such as fabrication of data, falsification or the distortion of information, and plagiarism (Calvert 2001, p. 232). Voluntary or intentional disinformation is facilitated by the existence of three conditions; ignorance, coercion and impotence. Ignorance comes into play if the receiver of the information is not well informed on the topic and the provider is authoritative. These conditions facilitate the ready acceptance of the disinformation. Ignorance was initially not a serious issue because early Web users were well educated and presumably difficult to disinform, but as Web usage has increased and spread, a problem has developed. More users might lead to an increase in the plurality of sources of information (Myers 2001), but the more people that are online, the more likely that some will set about disinforming other Web users (Floridi 1996, p. 512).

Floridi was concerned by the potential of monopolies controlling information (Floridi 1996). Calvert found that this was not a serious concern of users (Calvert 2001). But an apparently recent phenomenon, termed web scrubbing, does raise similar concerns. Governments, realising that their older website content including policy statements and media releases can be used to hold them accountable, are removing content without advising that it is gone:

> Our Government is responsible and accountable to us all. But instead of stating its position and explaining later deviations, we have a Government that wishes to edit and manipulate history to create an illusory veneer of consistency (Tranter 2007).

However, both were focusing on monopolies of government or media businesses. Frechette is concerned about control of the technical information gateways such as through software filtering systems. Filters are marketed by private companies, the basis of the filter may well not be clear and so the information provided will be incomplete. The user may not be aware of what has been filtered out (Frechette 2005, p. 554). ‘Missing information is misinformation and librarians have fought the censorship battle at regular intervals for years’ (Fitzgerald 1997, p. 12).

Additionally control of the technical access to the Web may become an issue. Net neutrality is a concept central to the Web and entails that all legal content is available to all users regardless of applications, equipment or infrastructure used. There is now a fear that control by particular cable companies may
exclude others for market purposes. This may mean that some sources of information are not available at all (Bailey 2006, p. 122).

Coercion involves the suppression of alternative or counter information on the part of the sender. This means failing to acknowledge such information or actively preventing its publication. Propaganda is ‘muddying information streams, putting obstacles in the way of the long march towards the truth’ (Marthoz 2002).

Impotence is related to the ability of the user to control the level of objectivity, completeness and pluralism of the information they receive (Floridi 1996, p. 511). The user may not have the skill or knowledge to make certain that information they have received is reliable. Schwartz terms this ‘biased information’, that is, information that is not a complete representation of the state of knowledge in that subject (Schwartz 1997, p. 263).

Although distribution of disinformation is usually intentional, it can also arise unintentionally (Floridi 1996, p. 509). Information providers may reproduce, repackage and disseminate information that they have not verified. This is occurring in reverse with journalists reporting in the print and broadcast media, unverified stories sourced from the Web (Griffin 2001). “The internet and web certainly have given journalists greater access to information, but they haven’t diminished the need for verification and corroboration of facts” (Even Fidler in Bita 2001).

Based on personal knowledge they may genuinely believe the information to be accurate, but if their knowledge is outdated or imprecise, then their assessment of the new information may possibly be flawed.

This might occur with the best of intentions. For example there are websites that purport to provide information about indigenous cultures but are actually based on outdated and discredited material (Cubbins 2000). The racist disinformation that arises may then be reproduced quite innocently by others with an interest in the field. The immediacy of Web publishing encourages this involuntary disinformation as it is very easy to copy and republish information instantaneously without first checking its veracity. Search engines may find and distribute the disinformation quite extensively before it can be corrected (Calvert 2001, p. 237).
The original information may of course have been quite accurate enough for its intended purpose, but not for other uses (Mason, Mason & Culnan 1995, p. 259). The information may not have been intended for mass circulation, or it may have been provided as country specific information that reflected particular cultural values or conformed to specific legal requirements less stringent than elsewhere. Removing the information from its original context leads to disinformation (Calvert 2001, p. 233). Tim Berners-Lee sees this as an advantage:

The value of the Web is the unexpected re-use of information. People learned that if they went to the trouble of putting something on the Web for some reason, that others would benefit later in ways they never anticipated (Berners-Lee 2007).

New software developments may remove information even further from its original context as searches will be able to ‘hunt through web pages for exactly the information you are after, not just for pages containing the words you are interested in, as today’s search engines do’ (New Scientist 2006).

This issue of context has arisen in the French court case involving the United States based Yahoo company. This case attempted to make:

… material in a foreign language and not specifically aimed at the population of another country actionable under that country’s laws, simply because it is available there (Hearst 2000).

The information may also simply be out of date (Burkeman 2000). Search engines can take some time to index new or modified websites. This can lead to economic, scientific or political decisions being made based on outdated information (Lawrence & Giles 1999a). Google for example does not search the Internet, but rather a copy held on its computers. While this copy is updated regularly it is not in realtime and there can be a delay in information being placed on the Web and that information appearing in a Google search (Lanchester 2006). New protocols, now widely adopted, have made identification by search engines of new content on sites a little easier and faster (Age 2006b). As Google pursues its aim of digitising books, more concerns have arisen regarding cultural and commercial bias on searches. Books in English and English translation are most commonly found by searches (Appleyard 2007).
‘For ranking based on popularity, we can see a trend where popular pages become more popular, while new, unlinked pages have an increasingly difficult time becoming visible in search-engine findings. This may delay or even prevent the widespread visibility of new high-quality information’ (Lawrence & Giles 1999b, p. 109).

For documents presented in a language not known to the user, there are translation tools available on the Web. As yet, these are often not particularly accurate and can also lead to the user acquiring inaccurate information (Kushner 2000).

The provider may also be responsible for disinformation by unintentionally preventing access to complete information. For example, a badly designed data retrieval or indexing system could effectively deny a user access to information (Mason, Mason & Culnan 1995, p. 265) and lead to dead-ends or sources of potential disinformation. Similarly, the use of JavaScript and audio and visual plugins may make some documents inaccessible to users. This is because more recent technological developments cannot be utilised by many older computers.

While the potential for disinformation exists in all media, it is exacerbated on the Web because many people give more credence to what they receive via a computer. The Web also has an academic association that gives legitimacy to the content it carries (Ferrell 1997). However, for some people, the Web is a source of suspect information.

The safeguards that exist in other media do not necessarily apply on the Web. Stories and reports originating on the Web are often repeated, rewritten and recycled through other Web sites. As these reports evolve, the information becomes more and more removed from the original source and ever harder for users to distinguish what is true from what is bogus (Miller 1998, p. 13).

If a print newspaper publishes false information it can later publish a correction. But on the Web, because of the transient nature of information and of sites themselves, it may be difficult to correct information later found to be false. Similarly, the user of information may not receive updated corrections.

The use of hypertext links also has implications for accuracy. While the original site might be ruthless in its editorial standards, this may not be so for
sites to which it is linked, but the links can be seen to suggest endorsement of the sites.

Disinformation can be overt or subtle. Deliberate disinformation can take the form of overtly racist sites that espouse arguments based on spurious research. The most overtly racist sites, such as Stormfront <http://www.stormfront.org> are reasonably easy to distinguish as purveyors of disinformation. The more subtle however, are another story. The home page of Pauline Hanson (no longer online) <http://www.gwb.com.au/onenation/hanson/> used a more restrained approach, identifying issues involving supposed cultural incompatibility.

One site with the URL <http://www.martinlutherking.org/> purports to provide information on the life and writings of Martin Luther King Jnr. It is in fact a front for the racist web organisation Stormfront. However the only indication of this is in the contact email address, which would only be recognised by someone familiar with the name. Metatags embedded in the source code include other civil rights terms to try to ensure that the site is ranked highly by search engines (Mack 2000).

Metatags are the code that classifies the content of Web pages but many Web site developers can manipulate metatags so that search engines identify their sites first (Miller 1998, p. 13). For example, placing terms that relate to competitor’s sites in the metatags increases the chances of their Web site appearing in the results of a search engine when users are searching for information on a competitor (Hanlon 1999, p. 3). Some anti racist sites are also employing this tactic in reverse. Nizkor <http://www.nizkor.org> uses metatags including misspellings (Casimir 2000).

Hackers can also transform a reputable site by altering the content displayed. This is however usually a short-term problem that is quickly rectified by the page owner temporarily taking down the site.

Users may be responsible, intentionally or unintentionally, for self-disinformation. By limiting their own access to the Web by utilising searching and bookmarking tools and by entry through portals it is possible to restrict information to specific topics and perspectives. This is of course necessary to cope with an otherwise insurmountable volume of information (Gilster 1997, p. 94), but it also impedes access to alternative information and perspectives.
Companies are already creating more limited interfaces to sort out opinions for consumers, deliver audiences to advertisers, and assure originators of content a dependable stream of income. ‘Webcasting’ and ‘push’ media - which simplify the complexity of the Web by automatically downloading preselected information to the user – exemplify this shift. But to simplify is to exclude. Think of such a system not as censorship but rather as control of the means of marginalization (Starr 1997).

Clearinghouses for particular subject areas emerged early in the development of the Internet and Web. These sites used actual people to assess the quality of sites listed. But the assessment is only as good as the criteria used. In addition, regular updates of the assessment were important as sites assessed moved location or changed content (Sweetland 2000, p. 756). Other sites offer information written by experts in a relevant field. The articles are prepared or questions answered by identified people (Baer 2000). Users then rate these experts. These were particularly favoured early in the Web, however, recruitment standards varied. Also, the information and advice might be biased by the influence of sponsors or employers.

Excessive reliance on only a few Web sources can also limit information. Users may rely on these key sites because they have previously found them to be useful but, ‘believing ourselves to be more and better informed, we would be conditioned increasingly by our idiosyncrasies’ (Floridi 1996, p. 512). RSS feeds may also lead to users having a limited range of views presented to them. Subscription to news updates and services is a means of making information more accessible but may also restrict the diversity of that information (Bradley 2006a).

The search itself is problematic. Search engines have different methods of evaluating and ranking hits. Some include paid placement listings; this appears to be particularly relevant to meta searches. Paid placements are not necessarily bad and many are very relevant to the search term. The difficulty arises when the paid listings are not discernable from the editorially ranked listings. The user needs to be able to recognise what is a paid advertisement (Sullivan 2001, p. 4).

Search engines and newer tools are also enabling users to personalise their Web experience including the development of niche vertical search engines.
(ABC Radio 2006b; Houghton 2007), tailored results and alerts to suit individuals. As access to search tools becomes more seamless and the searches more tailored, there is a risk that users will not even think about the need to find alternative information (Bradley 2006b).

By limiting their information search to the Web alone, users are also running the risk of receiving incomplete information. The Web is a relatively recent phenomenon and most of the documents it contains are also recent compositions. For example, the popular Wikipedia <http://www.wikipedia.org> contains much detail on some topics while completely missing others (Sinclair 2006). The relative ease of researching from home has meant that historical perspectives can be missed. Also Web information tends to concentrate on popular culture with less information available dealing with broader socio-economic issues (Konrad 2000).

Still, disinformation is usually found unintentionally. Although search engines vary in the way they identify sites, most have limited facility for culling disinformation. For example a student conducting a search on Judaism is likely to find anti-Jewish sites within the first 5 hits of a search engine:

> It is not a matter of people going out to find these groups – school students, for example, who enter the word Aborigine or Christianity into a search engine as they research an essay can find themselves logging into the Ku Klux Klan’s home page (Ben-Moshe 1999, p. 15).

The results of Web searches can tend to give the impression of authority. But the lists of hits are often little more than a random selection of references. They often exclude the most relevant sources while picking up those that are inaccurate or worthless.

The situation is becoming even more difficult with an increase in the amount of unreviewed material available on the Web. With developments in file sharing over the Web, search engines may retrieve what is held on individual computers, not just servers (Healey 2000, p. 4). Peer-to-peer networking involves accessing files or storage in a partitioned space on an individual’s private computer (Spoon & Popovich 2000). Developments in this technology mean that users can share files without any record of the transfer being retained (Kleiner 2001).
There are differing views on the effect of the growing trend towards narrowcasting or niche media. Recent studies have shown that those who are extensive users of the Web are more exposed to political views that differ from their own (Dawson & Lyons 2006). But another study found that ‘eighteen percent of bloggers (and 22% of all internet users) say they prefer getting news from sources that share their political point of view’ (Pew Internet & American Life Project 2006), a situation probably not very different for all media users but:

As the world has become more interconnected, foreign coverage has, ironically, declined. And with the diversification of the media industries – the growth in niche titles, channels and programming – it becomes easier to cut oneself off from alien concerns (Kundnani 2001, p. 54).

4.4.2. Examples of Web disinformation

Inaccurate information of all types exists on the Web. It ranges from the most violent hate sites to the just plain whimsical. The Web is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of what used to be called ‘vanity publishing’.

Pseudo scientific sites provide false, misleading or deceptive information about scientific issues. They often claim evidence of paranormal or supernatural events. Conspiracy theory sites assert UFO cover-ups and Jewish conspiracies.

Hoaxes, are more usually transmitted by email (Anderson 2001), but they are also present on the Web. Photos that have been digitally altered are an example and have included a giant cat, and images related to the September 2001 attacks on New York (Spanbauer 2001). Spoof websites can also be used in support of hoaxes, some specifically set up so that links appear to validate claims on another site or in an email (Cohen 2001). Hoax sites are also apparently being used by law enforcement agencies to draw in terrorism suspects (Allard 2007).

Similarly, websites can present bogus claims and offerings, such as the hundreds of fake degrees from fake universities, all with a website, that are on offer. Some bogus sites make spurious claims such as statements that a percentage of the proceeds of a sale will be donated to charity (Ebbinghouse 2000). For example, an anti-Semitic website apparently bought several domain
names related to hurricane Katrina and sought donations supposedly for hurricane victims (Wire 2005).

Spoof websites can also be established to parody political parties or companies. These are set up to amuse and not to deceive (Young 2005).

Web hoaxes often involve claims of monetary gain or pleas for financial assistance. Financial scams include dubious investment offers, talking up stock prices through disinformation, and pyramid schemes. For the scammers, the Web is cheap, easy to use, provides some identity protection and offers access to potentially millions of people. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission has conducted several exercises demonstrating how online users are susceptible to manipulation (Cave 2000).

Online auctions are a common form of Internet fraud. The complaints are usually about buyers not receiving their goods or receiving goods different to those they purchased. Identity theft is reportedly increasing as more personal information and identity numbers are becoming accessible via the Internet (Clarke 2001, p. 2; ASIC 2006). Identity can also be hidden on the Web, with users taking on pseudonyms to protect their own identity.

Consumer information sites include medical sites that are amongst the most popular sites on the Web and can lead to disinformation. They offer medical advice, sometimes based on an on-line consultation. This may have advantages in that users are more likely to be honest answering an impersonal computer but there is debate about the precision of these instruments and whether they are appropriate for all medical conditions (Carey 2000). For example, a site that appeared to be a patient support group was disclosed to be a pharmaceutical company funded site promoting that company’s products (Marchant 2000a, p. 16).

Other medical sites present suggestions for cures for specific illnesses. Their credibility ranges from sites endorsed by reputable medical organisations, to sites run by specific companies and constituting little more than elaborate advertising. Some information that is now available direct to users was previously provided in filtered form through medical practitioners, while other information is so inaccurate or misleading that it could be life threatening (Darby 2000; Horey 2000a). However, as quality medical articles are becoming
more available online, doctors are also relying on the Web to assist with diagnoses (Stark 2006).

The Web-located information can complement a visit to a doctor but there is always the potential that those who are healthy may misdiagnose. This is however really an issue of how information is used rather than the accuracy of information and of course can also apply to information found in print media (Horey 2000a). Some health organisations are taking steps to provide some assessment of reliability of these sites including whether endorsements are disclosed (Health on the Net Foundation 1997; Sinclair 2003).

Some sites are personal pages set up by people with an interest in a particular topic. These sites can be very useful, but it should be remembered that these people are pseudo experts who may or may not provide accurate advice or information.

The ultimate example of pseudo expertise can be found on the Wikipedia online encyclopaedia. Authors are anonymous and references can be edited repeatedly. This may ensure greater accuracy but the user is still left without any way of assessing the author’s knowledge or expertise (Wallace & Van Fleet 2005, p. 101).

The Wiki way is … this fine-grained averaging of what everybody says. It doesn’t have an inbuilt quality mechanism, it sort of just has a faith that somehow quality will emerge automatically (Jaron Lanier in ABC Radio 2006d).

The anonymity of Wikipedia authorship is a potential contributor to disinformation if bias is intentionally introduced (Schiff 2006). The entry for Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal was amended on the day he died to state he was homosexual (La Canna 2005), and a recent newspaper report suggests that Microsoft had intentionally rewritten the entries on rival products (Moses 2007). Despite these concerns, recent analysis has suggested that the information available in Wikipedia is largely accurate, with 13% of articles containing errors (Chesney 2006).

Advertising is becoming more and more pervasive and sophisticated on the Web and it is often hard to distinguish from the rest of the content on a page, where entertainment, information and advertising are merged seamlessly. The mixing of researched media reports and unverified data and news releases on
the same site can also be confusing (Berenson 2000). However there are many reputable companies advertising on the Web with clear information and original content, although inevitably the information will be slanted positively towards the organisation. Separating news and commercial content and not providing ‘buy buttons’ within the information may demonstrate an ethical approach to Web business (Welch 2000, p. 36).

Community sites such as MySpace and YouTube <http://www.youtube.com> contain individual profiles but these can also include company and product profiles, and multiple pseudo profiles of celebrities and politicians. ‘For their critics, they have started an impossible conversation, a cacophony of views that never go anywhere or get close to some underlying truth’ (Bowley 2006). MySpace was recently the cause of concern when a profile claiming to be that of Australian High Court judge Michael Kirby was posted containing fabricated and offensive content and links to a hate site in the United States (Sexton 2007a; Sexton 2007b). Racist videos have been available on YouTube (Salusinszky & Hayes 2007). In addition, multimedia technologies now make it possible for video postings on YouTube to be remixed to convey a completely different message (Miller 2007).

Early concern about Web self publishing of material not deemed worthy of conventional publishing was based on non-Web circumstances. ‘With greater freedom and fewer safeguards, scholarly writing published on the Internet may be even less trustworthy (Fitzgerald 1997, p. 11). But academic blogs are now considered acceptable and even a crucial way of sharing ideas both with other academics and with a wider audience (Murphy & Burgess 2004; Mather 2006; Mitchell 2006). ‘Blogging democratises the function of the public intellectual’ (Farrell 2005).

Blogs and live journals certainly vary in quality but are fast growing sources of information on specific topics (Sinclair 2002). Many newspapers are now incorporating blogs into their websites and journalists often have blogs (Levett 2005; Jaffe 2006). But there has been concern about the merging of citizen journalism with professional journalism and that standards will fall. A survey in the Unites States found that 39% of Internet users access blogs and that 56% of bloggers verify the facts that they post (Pew Internet & American Life
Project 2006). Also, readers will be unable to rely on an authority assessment of the newspaper (Burgard 2005).

4.4.3. Dealing with Web disinformation

The issue then is how to deal with the inaccurate, malicious and simply wrong information (Schultz 1994, p. 113). While some form of censorship may be appropriate in extreme cases, most disinformation will need to be tackled by other means. The nature and characteristics of the Web and new developments in its technology may prove useful in such responses.

Developments in technology, termed the Semantic Web, are beginning to enable web content to be manipulated in ways far more advanced then basic search technology can allow (Herman 2007). New searches will be more accurate and will be able to ‘tackle complicated questions whose answers do not reside on a single Web page’ (Berners-Lee, Hendler & Lassila 2001 n.p.).

In the end, some people may not want to be disabused of the disinformation that they find. ‘Paranoid news is compelling in part because it turns ultimately not on truth but on complex matters of belief and self-identification.’ ‘The problem, of course is that a lot of people like things that fit their reality – in fact, the closer, the better’ (Dowe 1997).

An alternative idea, based on the value of intellectual freedom, is to allow disinformation to be posted and accessed but to also ensure that alternative arguments are available to balance the disinformation.

Balance, at its most basic, involves the notion that each idea is matched by a counter idea. It involves ensuring that all sides of an issue are equally represented. In practice this is virtually impossible to achieve, foremost because there is no way of ensuring all arguments have been identified or given equal weight (Williams & Dillon 1993, p. 53).

Additionally, the granting of equal weight can be seen to lend a spurious credibility to disinformation. Balance is not necessarily about equal weight but about fairness. Writing about journalistic balance, Loewenstein states that:

… the emphasis … is on actually being fair, rather than on meeting some artificial measure of balance, such as how many centimetres of copy their newspaper has published from each side (Loewenstein 2006, p. 201).
4.5. Summary

Racism has been shown to have many faces. The commonly recognised face is that of the extreme racism, a racism that most people would see as abhorrent. It is also a racism that is illegal in many countries.

However, racism has other faces. It can be seen in new racism and xeno-racism, which are a part of our social and political systems. As such, these forms of racism largely go unchallenged.

Disinformation, or unreliable information, can occur in many ways. It can be unintentional, intentional or voluntary. It can result from ignorance, coercion or impotence. The Web has unique potential to facilitate the development and distribution of disinformation.

The following chapter will look at the particular characteristics of racist disinformation as it occurs on the Web. This will be followed by a discussion of alternative strategies for dealing with this disinformation.
5. Racist disinformation on the Web

This chapter will examine the nature of racism on the Web, both its disinformation quality and also the tactics used by racist sites to distribute and inculcate racist disinformation. In line with a critical realist methodology that requires possible solutions be assessed, it will then proceed to look at alternatives for dealing with racist disinformation on the Web.

5.1. Racism on the Web

It pours from the Net like sewage from a broken pipe (Adams 1999, p. 32).

Racist organisations were amongst the first groups to recognise the potential of the Internet and Web, with the white supremacist site Stormfront identified as the first racist website in March 1995 (Lauerman 1999, p. 2). From that first racist site, the numbers of racist sites and sites providing links to racist sites initially grew rapidly. However, exact numbers have always been difficult to determine, largely due to varying definitions of ‘hate’ and ‘racism’. Depending on the definition, by late 2000 it is possible that the number of racist websites was approaching 2,100 (Black 2000, p. 5).

As well as differences in definition, racist sites also may be identified and counted in differing ways. Some large racist sites containing multiple pages may be counted more than once (Chaudhry 2000), while other assessments only measure those sites that are active over an extended time period. Some organisations have only recently been classified as racist groups, influencing the change in count over time (Kettle 1999).

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) only counts sites that have a real-world presence in the form of a relationship to racist behaviour such as rallies and hate crimes (Southern Poverty Law Center 2000). Most sites identified within this scope are necessarily located in the United States, because this is where the SPLC is located. The SPLC in 2000 identified a proliferation of unaffiliated sites run by individuals, a trend towards consolidation of sites, and also the mainstreaming of racist positions by mainstream groups (Southern Poverty Law Center 2000). In 2005, the SPLC identified 524 hate sites, an increase of 12% on its count for the previous year (Potok 2006). It did not differentiate specifically racist sites in this count.
Australian racist sites have followed a similar developmental pattern. In 1998, there were already several Australian-based racist sites including neo-Nazi, anti-Semitic, white power, Christian groups promoting Jewish conspiracy theories, anti-Asian and Holocaust denial sites (B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission 1998 Appendix). Many Australian racist sites are located on overseas servers (Birnbauer 2000).

The Web has revitalised racist organisations at the organisational level by facilitating contact with similar groups around the world (Ray & Marsh 2001). Increasingly, racists of various types are joining together and establishing links via the Web. These linkages can include Islamic extremists as well as Christian identity far right, ‘all finding in each other validation for their virulently racist ideologies’ (Gold 2002).

Those who have been actively involved in monitoring online racism believe that, increasingly, the Web enables groups who share a common hatred or belief in a common enemy, but arising from different ideologies, to find common ground (Whine 1999, p. 8) and brings together people who it would be better were kept apart creating a ‘quilting effect with other groups’ (Goldman 2000 author's notes from conference). However, a psychological study of hate groups on the Internet has suggested that these connections are less significant and that it is the ‘informal social interactions [that] are more strongly associated with supportive attitudes toward hate groups than other vehicles of contact, including the Internet’ (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino 2002, p. 215). Such social interactions are also facilitated through social networking sites and blogs.

Agre (2002) argues that the Web may have an amplification effect on beliefs, because those who use the Web for information are also those who access other media:

   The Internet is appropriated within the framework of existing institutions, and it contributes to the forces that those institutions have already organized …in analyzing new uses of information technology, the forces are analytically prior to the tools (Agre 2002, p. 319).

The Web has the capacity to amplify already existing connections, but Hara and Estrada (2003) maintain that this amplification then re-extends beyond the Web because the interaction of the Web with other media can influence those who are not initially receptive to the information. An example is the media interest in the Stormfront site, where the media focus has informed people about the site who previously had no knowledge of its existence (ZDNET 2000).
Through the Web, potential supporters of racist groups can easily be provided with disinformation. Web sites have taken the place of information leaflets, posters and radio talk back as the means of reaching prospective supporters (Hilliard & Keith 1999, p. 6). The simplicity of completing and sending personal information over the Web means that users can join organisations with ease, often without really understanding who they are joining (Hilliard & Keith 1999, p. 53).

As the Web becomes more and more pervasive and part of everyday life, a wider audience is open to the racist disinformation. The Web enables racist groups to target the educated middleclass (Jeffreys 1998, p. 58), and children have also become a target (Lauerman 1999, p. 3). Many racist websites have special pages for children that are made attractive through downloadable graphics and music (Ray & Marsh 2001).

Women are also specifically targeted, with some racist sites promoting the domestic and homemaker role of women. Women are seen as a key to sustaining the racist movement through the production of white children and through the indoctrination of those children. Other racist sites advocate a more active involvement for women in the movement (Anti-Defamation League 1998).

Sites that focus on recruitment tend to use restrained language and avoid trigger words that might alert the curious Web user to the extreme nature of the site (Thiesmeyer 1999, p. 122). But sites designed for those who are already members utilise repetition of ideological terms to reinforce the group connection (Thiesmeyer 1999, p. 119). These sites often use codes and symbols that only followers would recognise (Masterson 2000a, p. 6).

The connection between Web racism and racist acts is open to debate and it is possible that much of the racist extremism on the Web is just posturing. Some reports have suggested that using the Web to sustain racist beliefs has actually replaced the need to act on those beliefs (Whine 1999, p. 11). The Web ‘is creating a new space of deviancy, a space that provides a social context that the socially alienated can occupy and where they can play out their fantasies’ (Kitchin 1998, p. 119).

However, Australian racist sites have possibly facilitated actual harassment in Australia. Aborigines living in rural communities have faced racial threats from far right groups including the Ku Klux Klan. It is unclear whether these racists are genuinely linked to the Klan or just claiming to be so. The ease with which membership can apparently be arranged over the Web suggests that it is certainly
possible that a Klan group has established a base in Australia (Barkham 2001, p. 4) and there are websites purporting to belong to the ‘Imperial Klans of Australia’ such as <http://www.geocities.com/ika_australia> that provide Australian postal addresses.

When racist sites were first established, there was little evidence of websites leading to racist attacks (Martin 1998b). But racist sites, and hate sites in general, have always held the potential that individuals who see themselves as part of the racist community will take it upon themselves to commit racist violence even though the websites that inspired them may not have specifically called for violence (Dearne 2000b, p. 35).

While racist websites have proliferated, evidence of a related expansion of racism beyond the Web has been difficult to assess. Websites can be used to dictate direct action, for example by identifying certain geographic areas to be kept ‘foreigner free’ (Wilmoth 1998, p. 16). However, while racist attacks are increasing in some countries, particularly in what was Eastern Europe (Staunton 2000, p. 4), it is not clear if there is any direct connection with the expansion of racist websites. Increases in racist websites may also mirror increases in racism in the real world (Kettle 1999). Hits on racist websites and online forums after the Cronulla riots skyrocketed (Taylor 2005, p. 4).

The uses of the Web by racist groups are similar to those used by specific interest groups generally. While the potential of the Web to be used for organising protests was quite limited in 1999 due to limited Internet access (Australian 1999), only a few years later it was considered that protests of all persuasions could be organised and coordinated through the Web (Norman 2003). Concerns about the use of the Web to mobilise dissent has led the Australian government to consider blocking such activist websites (Parnell & Fynes-Clinton 2002).

The expansion of racist sites has occurred alongside an expansion in the number of websites generally (Martin 1998b) and the growth in hate sites now reflects the pace of the growth of websites generally (Ryan 2004). As Steve Purdham of filtering company SurfControl says:

‘There are two basic reasons for the growth. One is the relative growth of the internet. The other is the impact of headline news, in particular with regard to Afghanistan and now Iraq. In times of unease you tend to get extremist views forming and the internet is a global forum for this’ (in Barkham 2004).
While the extent of the relationship between online hate and racist actions is debatable, there is no doubt that the Web can certainly be used to harass and threaten. Harassment of individuals originally occurred online through Usenet groups and chats (Jargon 2000, p. 2) but has moved to websites, where individuals are harassed through the posting of their identities and contact details. Individuals who work to improve the circumstances of black people and also anti-racist activists have been targeted in this manner (Jargon 2000, p. 7).

The most notorious example of harassment through a hate site involved the anti-abortion site The Nuremberg Files. This site posted the details of 225 abortion doctors, and crossed their names off the list as they were murdered (Jargon 2000, p. 8). Similarly, some racist sites publish the identities and addresses of anti-racist activists, politicians and trade unionists. Although the sites do not explicitly advocate violence, the postings do appear to have led to physical attacks (Mulholland 2006). Other forms of Web-based intimidation have included hacking anti-racist or black activist websites and signing activists up to pornography sites (Birnbauer 2000).

In 2000, David Goldman predicted that the Web would more and more be used for active racism including hacking and intimidation (Chaudhry 2000). In 2003, Hara and Estrada found that ‘the Internet is increasingly being used as a mobilizing tool for grassroots groups’ of all kinds (Hara & Estrada 2003). For the targets of harassment, the instantaneous aspect of all Internet communication combined with the anonymity of the perpetrators, makes threats received electronically, including those posted on websites, acutely alarming (Gennacot 2000, p. 3).

The exposure that racist groups receive online may aid anti-racists because, while individuals have some anonymity online, racist organisations in general can be open to greater public scrutiny on the Web (Thiesmeyer 1999, p. 118; Chaudhry 2000). ‘The internet racists seem happy, even proud, to identify themselves. Perhaps it’s a generational thing – the new-wave loonies live in a world where hi-tech has all but dissolved the notion of privacy’ (Adams 2001b p. 28).

That scrutiny may be also less personally risky for researchers and activists as they do not risk antagonising racist individuals or groups. ‘Observation provides knowledge of the context in which events occur and enables the researcher to examine aspects that participants are not aware of or unwilling to discuss’ (Ray & Marsh 2001 n.p.). Racist groups have tended to be ‘underground’ and difficult to infiltrate and study. Now ‘researchers may also use the internet to access racialist materials allowing
society to better understand these groups and individuals’ (Becker, Byers & Jipson 2000, p. 40). Many anti-racist sites monitor racist sites on the Web. This requires a strong commitment to be able to face the racist propaganda on a daily basis (Berrett 2000).

While attempts have been made in some countries to tackle racist websites and racist disinformation, most goes unchallenged. Increasingly, it appears that disinformation providers consider themselves at liberty to say anything on the Web (Institute of Race Relations 1999, p. 30). The main categories of racism on the Web are outlined briefly below.

5.1.1. Categories of racism on Web

The following categories correspond with those employed by the larger anti-racist sites and include: hate, holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, Christian fundamentalist, neo-Nazi and white supremacist. As discussed above, there is much ideological and target crossover between racist sites. Some sites, particularly those of individuals, constitute a Web presence only. Other sites belong to organisations that also exist in the off-line world. The numbers of racist sites and even the membership count may not be an indication of the influence of the racist organisation off-line (Chaudhry 2000).

All racist sites are hate sites, but while hate sites often carry racist content they may also include anti-abortion extremist sites and anti-gay sites. While racist hate sites are best known as being white supremacist, there are also racist hate sites attacking people on the basis of their religion. Hate sites are intended to cause damage through direct intimidation of individual targets and also through the mobilisation of others who have been persuaded by the disinformation (Becker, Byers & Jipson 2000, p. 36). The hate speech evident on hate sites takes many forms:

Hate speech is any form of expression directed at objects of prejudice that perpetrators use to wound and denigrate its recipients. It is often, but not always, protected speech...hate speech presents itself in forms not readily identified as speech, for example, Nazis and Klan parades, hate web sites, and cross burnings (Boeckmann & Turpin-Petrosino 2002, p. 209).

Whereas pornography sites usually carry warnings of the type of material they carry and of its unsuitability for juveniles, hate sites carry few warnings and
can be particularly welcoming to young people (Gold 2000, p. 13). In fact some hate sites specifically target children by focusing on the videogaming culture (Perine 2000) and by providing primary school level online games such as a racist version of Hangman (Berrett 2000). Hate sites can range from single pages with racist imagery to well organised complex sites.

Holocaust denial sites are racist sites that either claim that the Holocaust did not occur, or that the deaths are seriously exaggerated:

The denial of a huge mass of data, the lives and sufferings of millions is not merely an exercise of freedom, not merely an eccentricity, but a lie to make further suffering possible (Peattie 1989, p. 97).

These sites often further claim that the Holocaust is a Jewish conspiracy (Anti-Defamation League 1999a). Holocaust denial sites have the appearance of academic and historical credibility. Their aim is to bring to public attention a version of history that would not normally be given space in mainstream media. These sites claim to be offering an alternative viewpoint and that this viewpoint is supported by historical research (Gold 2000, p. 13). The sites present their arguments as an interpretation of history.

Holocaust deniers attempt to discredit genuine evidence and documents by taking them out of context or identifying minor errors which they then suggest discredit the entire evidence (Berenbaum 2000). The Australian website, Adelaide Institute, has faced several court cases alleging it carries Holocaust denial material.

While usually linked to Western-based anti-Semitic organisations, there is evidence that since the September 2001 attacks on Washington and New York and subsequent wars, Holocaust denial has become more common in Arab countries (Grant 2002; Three Monkeys Online 2006).

Anti-Semitic sites are racist sites targeting Jewish people. Typical anti-Semitic propaganda claims that Jews have a universal goal to rule the world and that there is a global conspiracy to achieve this end (UNITED for Intercultural Action 1999). The Adelaide Institute, maintained by Fredrick Toben, carried the disclaimer ‘an Antisemite [sic] is someone who condemns Jews because they are Jews, something I reject in my maxim “Don’t blame the Jews, blame those that bend to their pressure”’ <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org>.
The websites linked to the Identity Church movement are united by a racist and anti-Semitic ideology that uses biblical references to justify the hatred of Jewish people and to condone violence (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1999, p. 15). Groups within this movement include the Aryan Nations and Posse Comitatus.

The websites linked to the Creativity Movement, formerly World Church of the Creator (Potok 2006), advocate the use of violence in order to incite racial holy war (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1999, p. 19). These sites often include teen and kids sections. Many utilise Candidus Productions, a Web publisher very active in offering professional looking websites for like minded organisations (Anti-Defamation League 1999a).

Neo-Nazi sites hold in reverence Nazism and Adolf Hitler. They espouse anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner outlooks. The Web has particular appeal to neo-Nazis living in European countries where the incitement of racial hatred and the display of slogans and swastikas is banned (European Race Bulletin 1999). Neo-Nazis and white supremacist organisations have a fluid membership. Constant organisational splintering has been aided by the Internet ‘permitting smaller organizations to maintain an existence and giving potential recruits a point of contact’ (Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism 2000).

The white supremacist sites of the Ku Klux Klan are notorious for recruiting via the Web (Roberts & Button 1999, p. 19). The organisation claims to be recruiting in Australia, with applications being lodged online (Roberts 1999b, p. 1). Prior to the Web, the Klan was suffering a loss of interest that it has now been able to turn around. The individual disparate Klans have their own websites, often linked, enabling recruitment and publicity (Anti-Defamation League 1999a). Stormfront, the oldest and most well known racist site, is the creation of ex-Klansman David Duke. It does not advocate violence directly but does link to like-minded sites many of which do espouse violence (Martin 1998b).

Other sites that often carry racist content include nationalist websites proclaiming ‘citizens of one nation to be superior to others’ (UNITED for Intercultural Action 1999) and conspiracy sites. Odinism, or neo-paganism, is growing in the United States prison system and among skinheads (Southern
Poverty Law Center 2000). It views the world as divided into light and dark (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1999, p. 20).

Australian websites specifically targeting Australian racist users have been slow to develop, while others mimic overseas sites. Speaking in 2000, David Hollinsworth (2000 author's notes from conference) noted that there were comparatively few anti-Aboriginal racist sites. This might be due to the Australian racist demographic being older and more likely to direct their racism through talk back radio, but:

A second more disturbing possibility is that hate sites are needed to incite hatred and hostility against groups no longer generally regarded as alien or a threat … racism and hostility to indigenous people may still be sufficiently endemic as to not require dedicated sites for its maintenance (David Hollinsworth in Dearne 2000a).

While most anti-racist organisations identify variations on the above categories, few identify new racism or xeno-racist websites.

New Racism on the Web was exemplified by Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party which was one of the first political parties in Australia to see the benefits of a Web presence. The website was a driving force behind increased membership and donations (Wright 1998).

Xeno-racism can be seen in sites such as the Patriotic Youth League website which states ‘we are totally against the industrialisation of our higher education system…in order to bring us into an Asian economic order’ (in O'Keefe 2004, p. 46). Such racism is also appearing in the reader sections of many online newspapers, directly linked from leading articles. A recent television report (ABC TV 2007) suggests that editors have varying opinions about what constitutes racism in the context of these reader postings. Many are allowing xeno-racist comments that particularly focus on Muslim immigration:

‘These messages are not only offensive, they are excessively divisive, derogatory and inflammatory. I am saddened and sickened. In my view, such forums do not constitute meaningful or constructive debate’ (National Race Discrimination Commissioner Tom Calma in ABC TV 2007).

For many groups in Australia it is the ‘official discourse of denigration’ that is most damaging (Hollinsworth 2000 author's notes from conference). Australian government websites carry content in the form of media releases, interview
transcripts, policy and legislation that can disparage and malign groups including asylum seekers, Muslim youth and Indigenous Australians. Examples may include media releases extolling the Government’s abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the new citizenship test, and Australia’s human rights record.

5.1.2. Tactics of racist websites

While racist sites carry much disinformation they often also rely on specific techniques and strategies to attract and retain users. Some racist websites provide services that are specifically targeted to racist individuals including dating services and scholarship programs for members (Ryan 2004).

Many hate groups are now selling racist paraphernalia, including music, videogames, clothing, flags, jewellery and literature via web sites (Perine 2000). Racist music in particular has ‘became the basis of a widespread neo-Nazi network in a way that more structured political organization could not’ (Rolston 2001, p. 59). ‘They don’t buy music to have an argument with it. The connection between the two legitimises both the creator and the receiver. It is a flowering of hate’ (McFadyn 2002 p. 17).

Resistance Records and its successors, the many smaller and newer labels, sell music that appeals to neo-Nazi skinheads (Potok 2006). But it is more often middle class youth who are attuned to modern media and music that are buying the music (Segal 2000). In addition to online sales, file sharing has facilitated the distribution of racist music. Members of the German band Landser received prison sentences for inciting racial hatred through their music, yet that music remains available on the Web (International Network Against Cyber Hate 2004, p. 15).

Many racist books that are illegal in some European countries are readily available through the Internet and are in fact amongst the most requested books ordered from those countries in which they are banned (Connolly 1999). In the past, racist hate books such as The Protocols of Zion and Mein Kampf have been sold online through mainstream booksellers, but most booksellers now include a disclaimer identifying the books as hate material (Zwar 2000, p. 17). Internet auction sites and e-commerce sites are also selling racist material and paraphernalia, with relics of the Third Reich being particularly popular. ‘These
sites call into question the point at which hobbyist collecting and amateur sleuthing turn into the unsavoury fetishising of the past' (Masterson 2000b p. 6).

Google advertisements have also been utilised by racist groups and far right political parties. These organisations pay for their ads to appear next to the results of relevant keyword searches (ICARE News 2006). Some racist sites also force users to stay longer on the site by employing technological innovations such a disabling the back button (Bowman 2001, p. 2).

The number and sophistication of online games that promote racism and racist violence are increasing dramatically (Birkner 2006). The Hate Directory <http://www.bcpl.net/~rfrankli/hatedir.htm in Jan 2007>, identified 23 racist games available on the Web.

Community sites such as MySpace, which vary in their user accessibility, are less open to balanced views, while their sense of community may reinforce views. Through the use of tags, members can assist others to locate information. Racist groups are increasingly using restricted access sites to facilitate internal communication and online meetings (International Network Against Cyber Hate 2004, p. 31). YouTube has also recently been used to distribute hate videos (Wolf 2006c).

Increasingly, blogs are used to ‘preach to the paranoid in a closed and unfalsifiable system of proof’ (Cannold 2006). In the latest edition of January 2007, the Hate Directory <http://www.bcpl.net/~rfrankli/hatedir.htm>, identified 23 specifically racist blogs and 14 racist Internet radio broadcasts.

While most existing websites tend to be static and provide information only, the convergence of new media cannot be ignored. Through the Web, users can access music, video, community sites, blogs, radio stations and games all of which blend seamlessly into a Web experience. Previously, websites have only served as gateways to this material (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2002a) but the impact of these newer formats needs to be raised, as increasingly they will be indistinguishable from conventional Web information pages.
5.2. Dealing with racism on the Web

It saddens me that much of the debate about material on the internet seems to start from the perspective of control of internet content, rather than a recognition of the liberating nature of the internet and its wonderful capacity to provide information dynamically (Horton 1999, p. 95).

For those who believe that access to racist content should be restricted, there are a number of possible technical responses, these include filtering and rating systems and the utilisation of proprietary Web environments such as kids sites (Frechette 2005, p. 559). Alternatively, sites or specific online material can be censored through the use of enforceable classification regimes or racial vilification legislation:

It is relatively hard to implement and enforce restrictions on creation and use and relatively easier to monitor the flow of information and to close the doors more tightly on access to and distribution of the information (Hurley & Mayer-Schönberger 2000).

However, for those who advocate freedom of speech; user education and the provision of countering information, or balance, is the preferred option:

…sustaining an Internet-based market economy whereby consumer software programs and proprietary environments become the antidote to inappropriate material is directly at odds with democratic means of dealing with these issues through public discourse, political action, and critical media literacy skills (Frechette 2005, p. 564).

The remainder of this chapter and the next will look at the issues involved in the various options for dealing with racism on the Web.

5.2.1. Filters

‘Blocking’ involves preventing access to a site based on its address, while ‘filtering’ involves preventing access to a site based on its content (Greenfield, Rickwood & Tran 2001, p. 5). Here, filtering is used as the default term to cover both these methods.

Filtering involves the use of software, either as an add-on or embedded in a browser, that allows the user to access non-controversial sites while preventing access to sites containing offensive or otherwise undesirable material. The filter can be placed at either the server or client level. There are three basic filtering models; blacklisting which blocks access to particular sites,
whitelisting which only allows access to selected sites, and models which allow full access but produce a record of accessed sites (Frechette 2005, p. 563).

Whitelisting, or inclusion filtering, is very effective at removing undesirable content but requires users to select the approved sites or rely on a preset list. Whitelisting results in the blocking of the majority of the Web and significantly reduces its functionality. Whitelisting is of most use to parents wanting to restrict their children’s access to sites that are identified as safe.

Blacklisting, or exclusion filtering, is the most popular filtering method but also carries many problems. This method relies on a list of offensive keywords, a list of offensive sites, or a combination of both these methods. Keyword filtering has the disadvantage that it often blocks sites that are not offensive. Additionally keyword filtering may not identify cultural or country specific language or pseudonyms.

Site-based blacklisting is usually ineffective because of the ease with which sites can move location. Additionally, sites that are new and have not been classified by the filter vendor may slip through the filter. In Australia, the Australian Communications and Media Authority notifies filter providers of sites that are refused classification so they can be added to the blacklists (Electronic Frontiers Australia 2006). Blocking of sites can however be slightly adapted to ensure only partial forms of the URL are excluded.

There is controversy over the content of prepared filter lists because, as most providers encrypt their lists to protect their investment, users and site operators may not know whether particular sites are filtered (Greenfield, Rickwood & Tran 2001, p. 6). As filtering becomes more sophisticated and able to filter out sites that also contain possible malicious code, the problem of inadvertently filtering legitimate sites does not improve (Woodhead 2007). Also, these filter lists, whether produced directly by humans or indirectly by algorithms, are not value neutral and will reflect the values of the country in which they originate and the authors and company responsible (d’Udekem-Gevers 1999).

Content filtering is a variant on the above methods and involves examining the content of each individual downloaded site before allowing access. But this method is also problematic, for example in differentiating pornography from a painting of a nude. It also cannot differentiate words used in different contexts
(Greenfield, Rickwood & Tran 2001, p. 8). This can to some extent be overcome by examining phrases rather than individual words:

But no filtering technology, no matter how sophisticated, can make contextualised judgements about value, offensiveness, or age-appropriateness on online expression (Heins & Cho 2001, p. 3).

In an attempt to overcome these problems some filtering companies employ staff to analyse sites, but this is massively time consuming (Schwartz 1999, p. 33).

Although all filtering methods are reasonably effective against pornography, few deal effectively with racist and hate material (Ellis, Kidman & Mehlman 1999, p. 119). A recent consumer survey in Britain found that computer based filters are still ineffective against racist material (Age 2005) and it would be impossible for a filter to keep pace with the rapid increase in podcasting, blogs, and online videos (Pesce 2006). There is also likelihood that filters based on racist keyword lists will additionally deny access to anti-racist sites.

The United States based Anti-Defamation League has developed a site-based filtering program specifically designed to filter out sites that advocate hatred and bigotry towards groups based on religion, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. If a user tries to access one of these identified sites, their browser can be redirected to the ADL anti-hate site (Anti-Defamation League 1999b).

Filtering can be implemented on the user’s computer or at the Internet Service Provider (ISP) level, the advantage is that the filter is optional and can be adapted to suit the individual need, however this method is also easier to override. It also relies on the user spending time updating and checking the filter specifications (Dearne 2000c, p. 49).

On the 1st of January 2000, the Online Services Bill made it mandatory that ISPs in Australia provide a filter option (Australian Consumers’ Association 2000). ISPs must now offer home filters free of charge to all users. While public libraries have the option of using the filters, the National Library is compelled to install filters (Murphy 2006).

Those who are against the filtering of public access terminals argue that it can increase the digital divide (Rosenberg 1999, p. 1). People with their own
computers can access the Web filter free, while those relying on library access can only view the Web through a filter (Bowman 2001, p. 3).

An alternative to local filtering is for the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to take responsibility for filtering out racist material. This would be accomplished through the utilisation of filtering software along the lines of that available for home use. However, the application of filtering software at the ISP level has the potential to slow access time (Ellis, Kidman & Mehlman 1999, p. 126). Some countries though are employing filtering at the country level through the ISP. Saudi Arabia caches approved sites which users can then only access from the cache. Some users do get around this by accessing the Web via satellite (Whitaker & Barkham 2000, p. 21).

Filtering allows ‘individuals to publish what they want on the internet while allowing end-users to filter out things they do not want’ (Balkin, Noveck & Roosevelt 1999, p. 7). But there are many consequences of filtering that go beyond the aim of preventing access to objectionable material and there is potential that filtering once started as voluntary could easily become mandatory (Mendels 1999).

Filtering shields users and thus prevents them from learning how to judge information and information sources and obviates the need for critical evaluative skills (Frechette 2005, p. 556). ‘There are critics who suggest that using filtering software to block the offensive content is similar to averting your eyes without dealing with the underlying issues’ (Siegel c.1999, p. 394).

While filtering can certainly limit access to conceivable threats, the resultant Web that could then be safely accessed would bear little resemblance to the total Web. Significantly, filters can block sites that tackle the very issues that are being blocked, such as anti-racist sites.

Certainly technical means exist to avoid objectionable material. However, with the exception of one filtering program, little attention has been paid to the avoidance of specifically racist content. The different forms of racism make attempts to filter anything but the most extreme racist disinformation likely to fail. In addition, the technical means have many other problems. Filtering is therefore not an effective solution to racist disinformation on the Web, however there are alternative approaches.
5.2.2. Rating

Site rating, fulfilling Floridi’s recommendation for the establishment of ‘services that can test and certify the integrity and quality of the information, and promote its plurality’ (Floridi 1996, p.512), offers a variant on the filtering model. It utilises a rating for sites which can then be used to inform individual access decisions. Sites may be self-rated or rated by an external and independent agency.

The Platform for Internet Content Selection (PICS) represents one of several attempts to adopt a standard rating system (Akdeniz 1998, p. 29). Sites can self rate against this standard and then receive a certification. These ratings can also be incorporated into filtering software that only accepts sites appropriately rated (Frechette 2005, p. 561).

The disadvantages of all rating systems involve the possible lack of consistency and predictability in applying ratings, and the problems associated with the ephemeral nature of Web pages, particularly those containing objectionable material. Rating systems may have similar problems to filters in that the categorisation may be value laden (Hunter 2000, p. 236), although, ratings are available in different languages (McGuire 2001).

Self-rating has its particular problems. It is not necessarily reliable, and it is costly and time consuming, particularly as existing ratings must be reviewed periodically (Mayer et al. 2006, p. 86). It is likely that time costs involved in self-rating for individual site owners would be prohibitive. But if sites do not rate their content they risk being blocked (Human Rights Watch 1999). This may mean that only the large commercial sites would bother to self-rate, and the smaller individual and unrated sites would be filtered out (Weinberg 1997, p. 10) leading to a situation where only commercial and media sites will be free from blocking (Macavinta 1999; Frechette 2005 p.570). Most significantly, it may lead to self-censorship and less diversity (Akdeniz 1998, p. 36).

The Bertelsmann Foundation (1999) advocated self regulation through rating, combined with reporting hotlines and prosecution. Many anti-censorship organisations opposed the proposal, saying that it merely shifted direct government censorship to indirect censorship (American Civil Liberties Union 1999).
5.2.3. Legislation - censorship

The borderless nature of the Internet means that, like chasing cockroaches, squashing one does not solve the problem when there are many more waiting behind the walls – or across the border (Wolf 2006d).

An alternative to removing racist content through filtering or identifying it through ratings, is to ban it through censorship. Questions around censorship include whether censorship is feasible and also whether it is desirable. This section will address these two questions in turn.

Censorship of racist material and the banning of known racist sites is one method of tackling Web racism. In Australia this is enabled through the Broadcasting Services Act and the Racial Discrimination Act.

The Broadcasting Services Act 1992 specifically targets illegal and unclassifiable material in several mediums including the Internet. Some categories of Internet content are classified under the Act by the Office of Film and Literature Classification (Neilsen 2007, p. 2). The material is thus treated in the same way as films, rather than as publications (Electronic Frontiers Australia 2006). Aimed primarily at pornographic material (Dearne 2000d, p. 59), the legislation relies on user complaints about the content of individual sites (Taggart 1999). It is not illegal to host prohibited content but it is compulsory to take it down if requested by the Office. Debus claims that, ‘classification has also become a euphemism for a broader attempt at control. Today films are not banned they are simply “refused classification”’ (Debus 2003 n.p.).

There is debate about the general effectiveness of the Act for handling any sort of objectionable material. In the first six months of operation, only a few local sites were the focus of complaints and most complaints were about overseas hosted sites. Unable to act directly, the authority then referred these complaints to filtering companies. Verification of the number of complaints was initially difficult for lobby groups, as the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA), now the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA), discouraged Freedom of Information requests for details of censored sites by imposing a significant charge to process the requests (Jackson 2000, p. 35). The ABA then refused to release details of censored sites claiming this would provide publicity for the sites (Dearne 2001, p. 25).
Even if the Act were effective for extreme cases, most racial hatred material does not fall under the Act. The legislation was not designed to rid the Web of racism, but rather to give some recourse to those who come across racist sites (Day 2000). There is also doubt as to the effectiveness of the legislation when dealing with material originating overseas. The Australian government is currently considering further legislation to standardise all electronic content classification (Age 2007).

While the Broadcasting Services Act has some limited utility, the main Act that applies to racism on the Web is the Racial Discrimination Act 1995. This Act, combined with the Racial Hatred Act 1995, is based on the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNHCHR 1965). The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 established the HREOC which now has the power to investigate complaints made under the Racial Discrimination Act.

The Act is intended to protect individuals and groups from racial vilification and applies to all racial vilification including occurrences on the Internet. Racial vilification includes speech, songs, images and publications in traditional media and also on the Internet. There are some free speech exemptions for artistic expression and academic research. An act of racial vilification is illegal if it is done in public and is:

reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate people against whom it is directed, and it must be done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the group against whom it is directed (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2002b).

The Racial Discrimination Act only applies to individual complaints. A member of the group that is vilified must make the complaint, while anyone else who finds the vilification offensive is not eligible to complain. This makes the application of the law very cumbersome and slow. It can take years from the initial complaint before any action is taken to remove the offending material from the Internet.

Another problem is that while there are racist websites and other Internet material originating in Australia, most comes via the Internet from overseas and is beyond the reach of Australian law. Australian websites found in breach of the Act can easily move to an overseas Internet Service Provider (ISP).
The main example to date of the application of the Act to Web racial vilification is the case of Jones v Toben (Federal Court of Australia 2002). This case illustrates all the problems of trying to deal with Internet racial vilification through Australian law. Australian Fred Toben has run a Holocaust denial site through the Adelaide Institute since 1997 (Debelle 2001). In 2000, following a complaint by Jeremy Jones on behalf of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission found that the site breached the Racial Discrimination Act because material on the site vilified Jewish people.

Toben became the first person in Australia to be ordered to remove racist material from the Web and to make an apology (ABC TV 2000). Toben refused and the case was brought to the Federal Court (Birnbauer 2000). It took another six years for the case to be finalised and the website content removed. But the matter remains unresolved as a recent Federal Court subpoena claims that the website continues to carry vilifying material (Akerman & Sproull 2007). While this case provides a message about what is acceptable behaviour, it ultimately will not stop people such as Toben as they can simply put their website on an overseas server (Wolf 2006d).

The application of the law is burdensome and difficult for an individual to utilise, probably explaining the paucity of cases related to racist material on the Web that have been pursued under the Act (Mortimer 2004). In addition, ‘a process that takes six years to resolve complaints about online content is useless in an environment where content can come and go in hours’ (Electronic Frontiers Australia 2002).

Many state governments also have anti-racist legislation, such as the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001. Under the legislation, individuals who publicly incite racial hatred could be jailed (Barkham 2001 p.4). Debate over this legislation has surrounded the issue of intent and the extent to which the legislation may impinge on religious freedom (Pargeter 2001; Powys 2001; Rollins 2001; Rubenstein 2001). The debate has also considered the relationship between speech and action:

The people who espouse the racism may not be those who go out and perform an act of racial violence, but it is myopic to ignore the nexus between words and deeds (Ben-Moshe 1999, p. 15).
As recent court cases overseas exemplify, Australia is not alone in experiencing the difficulty of using anti-racist legislation to prevent access to Web sites.

In France the promotion of racial hatred is illegal. As mentioned earlier, a French court has ordered the United States based Internet company Yahoo to prevent French users from accessing racist sites and auction sites selling Nazi memorabilia. The court instructed Yahoo to filter requests from users with French IP addresses (Horey 2000b, p. 8). Yahoo challenged the ruling in the Unites States, where some of the court voiced concern about the use of a United States court to challenge the determinations of the legal system of another country (Geist 2006). The ineffectiveness of these laws to deal with racism online can trivialise the laws (Sieber 2001 n.p.; Wolf 2006d).

In December 2000, a German court ruled that German law applied to people who were responsible for racist Web sites if the content was accessible in Germany (Kettmann 2000). Despite this ruling:

Laws addressed at Internet hate are perhaps the least effective way to deal with the problem, and create a sense of false security promoting inaction and under use of the other tools available to fight hate online (Wolf 2006d n.p.).

In 2000, in order to conform to the legal requirements of membership of the European Community, Britain adopted a Human Rights Act. The Act does not interfere with government legislation (Webber 2001, p. 77) and will not prevent institutional racism (Webber 2001, p. 91). In 2000, the Internet Watch Foundation commenced monitoring sites which published racist material that contravened British law (Travis 2000). Speaking of the situation in the United Kingdom:

Cultural and biologistic concepts of race and culture are inextricably intermingled. Perhaps this is why race-relations legislation is a conceptual mess, falling uneasily between social, political and folk constructions of biological race (Rose & Rose 2005).

In the United States speech becomes illegal when it contains a direct credible threat against an individual or organisation. However, most hate speech is protected by the provisions of the Constitution (Carr 1999). Because the origins and initial take up of the Internet was predominantly in the United States, many of the governing bodies of the Web are located there and the Web governance
thus reflects that of the United States. ‘The lack of established mechanisms for resolving political disputes means that the status quo prevails – and that is nearly always American’ (Carr 1999 n.p.).

Given the global reach of the Internet and the Web and the difficulties the above examples illustrate, ultimate searches for legal solutions will inevitably be multi-jurisdictional (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 54). International approaches to address content regulation on a global scale are underway, such as <http://www.stiftung.bertelsmann.de/internetcontent>. However progress will inevitably slow, given issues of sovereignty and cultural diversity (Akdeniz 1998, p. 32).

The Council of Europe has been leading the way in looking for an international approach, through a convention on cybercrime that includes a protocol against the publication of racist content (European Commission 2001). However, the United States, which is a member of the Council, has refused to sign the additional provision (Madigan 2002). The European Convention on Human Rights allows laws against hate speech (Wolf 2006a).

The European Union has also been addressing Web hate that is carried by new media including mobile phone video clips and Web podcasts. Regulation will be achieved through an amendment to the ‘Television Without Frontiers’ directive of the European Union and is specifically designed to protect children and prevent hate speech (Espiner 2006). While Google and Yahoo have been outspoken against the proposal, the EU emphasises that the legislation will not apply to amateur videos posted on sites such as YouTube (Rowland 2006). With the popularity of video sites, this leaves a significant amount of hate material available. Mobile phone operators in Europe have already agreed to an industry code of conduct to regulate phone Web access to pornography and hate speech (Jolis 2007). Convergence may also lead to convergence of the authorities dealing with content regulation (Bushell-Embling 2006).

While the EU initiative is an attempt to ensure consistent regulation of Web content including that available through different technologies, such as mobile phones, these technologies may already be censored differently. A recent article in *PC World* claimed that the Web on mobiles was filtered either intentionally or as a result of the various networks that the content needed to travel through (Spring 2006).
Non-government organisations in different countries have also been sharing resources to facilitate the enforcement of legislation. The International Network Against Cyber-Hate (INACH) is a, primarily European, network of non-government online complaints organisations dealing with hate on the Internet. It assists law enforcement agencies through education and notification (Marcus 2006).

Some anti-racist organisations also spend resources targeting the ISPs, search engine companies and online shopping and auction companies that are in breach of local anti-racist legislation. But technical means to thwart this censorship are also being employed by racist sites, for example, by locating encrypted sections of a document on multiple servers around the world thus preventing the removal of that document from the Web.

Post 11 September 2001, surveillance of the Internet in general has increased (Reporters Without Borders 2002). Individual Web use can be tracked:

Consider this: every computer has a unique IP address and every posting or visit to a website can be traced to the originating computer. This means that getting households wired to the internet will give governments such a China’s the ultimate surveillance tool – a spying device in every household and office (Backman 2006).

Concerns about surveillance can lead to self-censorship. ‘Internet users and not governments create a cyber world of “silence and conformity”’(Murray, L. 2006).

In summary, Australia’s Racial Discrimination Act 1995 is difficult to use and requires the complainant to have tenacity and legal resources. It cannot reach the large amount of racially vilifying material that comes from overseas. While Australia’s racial vilification standards are inconsistent with those of Europe, inter-agency cooperation will remain ineffective (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 2003). However, the Act does serve as a statement about acceptable behaviour in Australia.

The feasibility of legislation to deal effectively with racist Web content is doubtful, but there is also debate about whether legislative means are desirable at all. Anti-racist legislation is difficult to enforce and there are concerns ‘about cheapening the legal process by enacting laws which cannot be enforced from
which prosecution is easily escaped’ (Wolf 2004 n.p.). Such concerns are expressed by the Australian organisation Electronic Frontiers:

Moral and educational goals are better achieved without recourse to the blunt instrument of legal sanctions: persecution of individuals by the state is likely to spread positive views of the resulting victims by creating and publicising martyrs – or, where sanctions are unenforceable, successfully defiant heroes. Unenforceable rulings also risk bringing anti-discrimination law generally into disrepute and undermining its application in other areas (Electronic Frontiers Australia 2002).

Wolf maintains that ‘…episodic, individual prosecution will do little to affect the overall presence of harmful online content’ (Wolf 2004 n.p.). But while accepting that the law may be ineffective in addressing specific offenders, Hollinsworth maintains that the ‘legislation can bring about significant changes in expressed attitudes and in observable behaviour’ (Hollinsworth 1998, p. 299).

But anti-racist legislation in the main applies to public expressions of racism. While legislation may be relevant to library access, it is unlikely to apply to home usage. So there are two claims related to the utility of legislation; firstly, that it reduces respect for the law, and secondly, that it nevertheless sets a standard that most people will follow. Whatever the reality, such legislation will not eradicate racist disinformation from the Web. An alternative form of censorship is the acceptance of service agreements or voluntary codes of conduct for the Internet industry.

5.2.4. Service agreements

Increasingly, service agreements are forming a means of identifying and possibly self-censoring racist material:

Industry self-regulation, with companies responding to feedback from parents and advertisers, is an effective means of dealing with offensive but legal content online (Wolf 2006b).

In the United States, the First Amendment does not apply to free speech decisions of private companies such as ISPs (Wolf 2006c). Some ISPs have agreed to enforce acceptable use codes so they do not appear to be supporting racist groups (Anti-Defamation League 2000). ‘Most of the Internet space the
public uses is owned by private companies, which have a great deal of power to censor material they deem inappropriate’ (Spring 2001).

Among those groups seeking to prevent the dissemination of extremist content is the Simon Wiesenthal Society, which calls for accountability both from the authors of Internet content and from ISPs (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 65). In Australia, the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission has also sought input into the formulation of industry codes of practice in regard to racist sites (1998).

Many Internet services do have stated anti-hate policies, particularly regarding the incitement of violence. However they do not monitor their sites for hate speech, instead relying on complaints before investigating (International Network Against Cyber Hate 2004, p. 39). They are keen to appear neutral and to not be applying control over speech on the Web (Guernsey 2000, p. 3). This ‘neutrality’ of course goes to the heart of problems with the concept of balance, that content is not neutral. It is also possible that their legal liability for carrying racist sites may be less if they do not monitor; if they can maintain an appearance of a neutral service provider rather than an editor of the material their site carries (Guernsey 2000, p. 6).

However, pressure by anti-racist activists does appear to be bearing fruit. In France, the Skyrock website and blog provider, estimates that it ‘deletes roughly 6,500 articles and shuts down 10 blogs everyday that violate its policy prohibiting racist, obscene or violent content’ (Gain 2005). Yahoo! ‘pre-screen’ racist material from its auction sites (Kaplan 2001, p. 1). The Australian anti-racist site FightDemBack <http://www.fightdemback.org> claims to have successfully brought pressure on ISPs to remove approximately 30 racist sites in a two year period (Age 2006a). The site has had similar success with the removal of a racist online game based on the Cronulla riots and hosted on the United States ISP Angelfire. Significantly, the Australian government had been unable to act against this site using its regulatory system (Moses 2006b).

For industry codes to be effective, it is not just ISPs that need to adhere to the codes, ‘cooperation from the Googles of the world is an increasingly important goal’ (Wolf 2006d). The major search engines, and Google in particular, could effectively close down sites if they removed them from their search results.
Search engines can provide some level of explanation about how sites are rated. For example, the search engine Yep.com decided to use the term ‘usability’ rather than ‘quality’ when ranking a retrieved set of sites (Guernsey 2000, p. 2). Google uses algorithms that produce results without human interaction. Google has included explanatory text in response to a high rating for the racist site ‘Jew Watch’ (Wolf 2006d).

However, the experience by anti-racists in Australia and New Zealand of Google cooperation differs. Google has consistently refused to take down links to racist blogs, including some that identify the names and addresses of anti-racist activists (Age 2006a). Google has also refused to remove links to the far-right British National Party from its news search giving the appearance that these news items have the same credibility as those from the BBC (Day 2006).

While anti-racist campaigners are bringing pressure for the banning of hate speech, groups advocating freedom of speech are also pressuring the Internet companies. The American Civil Liberties Union has expressed concern about service providers banning sites. They believe there is a danger that only speech acceptable to all users in all countries will be allowed (Kaplan 2001, p. 1).

5.2.5. Free speech

Better the devil we know than the one we drive underground (Adams 1999, p. 32).

All the above options involve censorship in some form but whereas some argue that freedom of expression should always be allowed, others argue that freedom of expression is not absolute and must be balanced against other rights (Barkham 1999; Redmond 2006). The Internet has a history of being viewed as beyond regulatory control but censorship of the Web through the use of legislation has been justified on the grounds that ‘this would lead to a greater social good, even if individuals are limited in what they can consume on the Internet’ (Depken 2006).

Organisations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) argue that the existence of hate sites is already countered by the growth of anti-hate sites
and that censorship of the former would be both wrong and ineffectual. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) seeks to protect the principles of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights in respect of new technologies such as the Internet (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 67). In Australia, the Internet industry has generally come out against censorship, on the grounds of civil liberties but also because of the costs and practicalities of enforcement (Tebbutt & Riley 1999).

Web censorship may appear innocuous in relatively democratic countries, yet there are growing incidences of censorship of content deemed hostile to the United States. Most of this content is related to Arab or Muslim perspectives (Marthoz 2002). In the United Kingdom, ISPs can be prosecuted if they fail to remove content deemed by the police to be ‘unlawfully terrorism related’. ‘This mechanism therefore gives the police the effective ability to censor United Kingdom-based websites, generally without the likelihood of going to court’ (Kundnani 2006a).

There is a risk that repressive governments will use Web censorship, whether through legislation or filtering, to stifle political dissent and discussion. The Chinese government employs many thousands of Web censors to block websites and track down illegal content providers (Murray, L. 2006). This practise could lead to a divided Web, with large sections being subjected to various forms of censorship and the uncensored Web inaccessible to many people (Warner 2006). While these governments will use such tactics regardless of pressure from others, if democratic governments have previously requested cooperation in banning racist sites, it will be harder for them to in turn refuse to cooperate in the censorship of sites that are critical of other governments (Wolf 2006d).

Free speech can also be influenced by market forces which play a role when companies who wish to do business in a country with censorship must comply with those rules. Google, Yahoo and Microsoft have all agreed to censorship regimes in order to gain entry to the Chinese market (Murray, L. 2006).

Comparisons between search results conducted on Google in the United States, France and Germany have discovered that many sites located through the United States search do not appear on the French or German searches. The missing sites largely carry racist material:
The result is that one of the web’s most important tools is being deliberately broken at the request of governments, with no publicity, no legal review and no court orders (Thompson 2002).

Speech is never entirely free, even in the United States. The First Amendment does not protect speech that threatens, harasses or incites imminent violence against specific individuals (Anti-Defamation League 2000). Although determinations on what constitutes incitement of imminent violence with regard to websites has been problematic, for example the Nuremberg Files site was determined not to incite imminent violence (Sanchez 2001). In Australia, defamation laws have been applied successfully to material carried on the Internet, even if originating overseas (High Court of Australia 2002; Pullen 2002).

The Electronic Frontiers Foundation has actively campaigned against Web censorship saying it is counterproductive:

The EFA doesn’t believe the site should be banned, it just results in the further publication of the views of the Adelaide Institute. It gives them a platform over and above the Web site (EFA chair Irene Graham in McAuliffe 2000).

Graham has suggested that “you are better off leaving them buried in the dark reaches of the Internet” (in Debelle 2001). The problem is that they are not necessarily ‘buried’ but can appear in searches.

Leading professional bodies representing library and information science workers have explicit published policies on the right to freedom of speech and expression. In the United Kingdom, the Charted Institute of Library and Information Professionals maintains that individuals should have the right to access any information regardless of whether others might find it objectionable. The American Library Association (ALA) proclaims that intellectual freedom relies on an individual’s right to hold and convey any belief, and on society’s commitment to the right of unrestricted access to information irrespective of the communication medium (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 77) and that diversity of views no matter how unpopular is in the public interest (Kranich 2000, p. 88). The ALA has instead advocated acceptable use policies and locating terminals in spaces that are not immediately viewable to other users (Heins & Cho 2001, p. 3). The
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has a subcommittee on Internet regulation and has published extensive guidelines on public access issues (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions 2006).

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) in its ‘Statement on free access to information’ and ‘Statement on online content information’, also emphasises the user’s democratic right to free access to information (Australian Library and Information Association 2001; Australian Library and Information Association 2002). But ‘ultimately content providers and users of online information must be responsible for the information that is created and accessed’ (Australian Library and Information Association 1998, p. 3).

However, apart from the injury and offence that such freedom of expression can cause to the victims of racial propaganda and disinformation, there is always the risk that by making such views accessible and available, society could be lending them credibility:

> Free speech does not guarantee them the right to be treated as the ‘other’ side of a legitimate debate. Nor does it guarantee them space on op-ed pages or time on television and radio shows (Lipstadt 1993, p. 17).

Freedom of speech questions arose around the world following the publication on the Web of a series of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad. Islam forbids any representations of the prophet out of respect but also because it maintains that such images can lead to idolatry (Ramadan 2006). A conservative Danish newspaper, concerned about apparent self censorship in the media, had invited submission of the cartoons which were then published. In addition to the perceived insult of the depiction, the cartoons stereotyped Muslims as terrorists. Other European newspapers republished the images as outrage turned to violent protest leading to some deaths (Button 2006).

Many United Kingdom and Australian newspapers pointed out that freedom of speech is not an absolute right. Just because it is not illegal to print something, does not necessarily mean that it should be printed:

> But newspapers are not obliged to republish offensive material merely because it is controversial. It would not be appropriate, for instance, to publish an anti-semitic cartoon of the sort that was commonplace in Nazi Germany.
Nor would we publish one which depicted black people in the way a Victorian
caricature might have done (Guardian 2006).

In a speech made prior to the cartoon issue, Kenan Malik stated the opposite
view: that the right to freedom of speech should be unqualified:

It is precisely because we do live in a plural society that there should be no
such limits. In a truly homogenous society, where everybody thinks exactly
the same way then giving offence could be nothing more than gratuitous. But
in the real world, where societies are plural, then it is both inevitable and
important that people offend the sensibilities of others. Inevitable because
where different beliefs are deeply held, clashes are unavoidable and we
should deal with those clashes rather then suppress them (Malik 2005).

While playwright David Edgar stated:

Defence of free speech is not primarily a matter of the rights of the speaker
but the rights of the listener. In that sense, we all have the right not only to
offend but to be offended. Without it, we are all impoverished and disarmed
(Edgar 2006, p. 75).

While there are many means of limiting objectionable material on the Web, the
issue arises of how this material is recognised.

5.3. What is being addressed?

A concern with the use of legal or technical measures to censor material is that these
would only tackle hard core racism. While content produced by white-supremacist
organisations would be actionable under the *Racial Discrimination Act* (Roberts &
Button 1999, p. 19) racial vilification legislation is unlikely to be able to be used
against the populists such as Pauline Hanson:

Would you arrest the racists who phone talk-back radio. Or take legal action against
Philip Ruddock or Peter Reith for their imaginative slanders on asylum-seekers?
(Adams 2001a p. 28).

There is a difference between illegal content and content that is harmful (Akdeniz
1998, p. 31). And these need to be dealt with in different ways. While there can be
general agreement on the most virulent racism, ‘harmful’ may be more subjective
(Nusseir 1998).

So the issue comes down basically to whether or not the content of the Web should be
censored in order to protect the vulnerable and/or to prevent the dissemination of
undesirable messages. Clearly this raises the question of what is undesirable and to whom:

If the world can enact treaties that define the limits beyond which societies must not tread without contravening the basic rules of humanity, then surely now is the time for us to come to terms with a definition of acceptability on the internet (Gold 2000, p. 13).

In the light of the varying forms of racist disinformation and the varying understanding of these forms, neither legal nor technical approaches to the problem of racist disinformation on the Web are likely to be other than partial contributors to the search for solutions. The real issues here are social and cultural.

There are differences in the way in which access to controversial Web-based material is treated in different countries, and indeed, in what is deemed to be controversial or unsuitable. These are a reflection of the recent history of each country (Wolf 2006d). A 1999 survey suggested that a majority of Australians would support a ban on racist content on the Web (Needham 1999) and rated racist content higher than pornography in a list of things that should be blocked (Sinclair 1999). In Sweden, where sexual content is largely uncontrolled, racist material is not tolerated. In the United States, the First Amendment allows toleration of holocaust denial, whereas this is illegal in Germany (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 51). There is a clash of free-speech standards between many European laws and the United States (Perine 2000).

Regardless of the differing approaches among countries, user education combined with the provision of balancing information may offer a solution.

5.4. Education

Self-disinformation – ignoring information, or being accustomed to knowing things only in a distorted manner - is the easiest way humanity knows to survive the daily pressure of reality on the mind (Floridi 1996, p. 513).

In addressing the issue of disinformation on the Web, ALIA supports user education and the identification of quality Web sites (Nicholson 1999, p. 6). This is not a new approach, but reflects the needs of information seekers over many years:

I prize highly the freedom to read, but I prize more highly the freedom to know; and I want to know that what I read is in some sense ‘so’. Racism, pseudoscience, and government disinformation are antidemocratic….freedom is connected with knowing, and living the truth, and not just with shifting conflicting opinions (Peattie 1989 p.95).
User education to assess the reliability of information found on the Web may be a long term solution that is particularly pertinent to educational institutions and libraries. Robert Cailliau, co-founder of the Web, even advocates a user licence for the Web to regulate behaviour instead of content (Marchant 2000b, p. 42).

While some see the growth of Internet access as marking the end of the traditional intermediary role for librarians, others argue that the sheer bulk of material involved posits a continued role for intermediaries, including the production of Web bibliographies identifying acceptable resources (Brophy, Craven & Fisher 1999, p. 86). In an environment where content is often unreliable, the acknowledged trustworthiness of the librarian as an aggregator of reliable information is a key to the ongoing need for such a function (Irwin 2004). There may also be a role for specific courses such as that to be run by Emerson College, Boston (Ivey 2000). However, not all Web users will have access to this training through a library or educational institution.

‘The Internet is a wonderful mechanism for developing the skills of distinguishing fact from opinion and exploring subjectivity and objectivity’ (NetAlert 2005, p. 7). If children are shielded from inappropriate material on the Web, they will not have the opportunity to develop the skills necessary to differentiate such material (Huffstutter 1998, p. 12).

…in the end the best protection against hate speech, which can be implemented everywhere no matter what, is education, teaching how information on the Internet can be assessed for its validity and how to recognize the rhetoric of hate. Lots of low-profile websites and hate-language on web forums never comes to the attention of law enforcement, or agencies that combat hate on the Net. By and large it is this material that creates an atmosphere of hate and intolerance and ultimately generates an environment in which hate becomes acceptable behaviour to people who are infected with prejudiced information (International Network Against Cyber Hate 2004, p. 6).

Education in differentiating information and also in dealing with objectionable material is important. To be able to access this material in order to study and understand it is important to combating hate (Drobnicki 1999). Learning how to deal with disinformation is imperative because:

Sooner or later, your children will be exposed to everything you have shielded them from, and then all they will have left to deal with these shocking sights and sounds is the moral fiber you helped them cultivate (Ebbs & Rheingold 1997, p. 60).
5.5. Summary

Thanks to racial vilification laws which exist in this country, the words which can be used in public these days tend to be far more muted. However, the subtext and context of racially motivated communications, be they person-to-person or in the media, are becoming increasingly subtle to stay within the bounds of legislation, yet they are just as damaging (Gold 2002 n.p.).

The most extreme forms of racist disinformation may be curtailed through legislation or other forms of regulation and censorship. Racism in the form of new racism or xeno-racism though is not the subject of these restrictions. In addition, all forms of content control have associated problems.

Writing as early as 1999, Horton stated that ‘convergence of telecommunications means in any case that control of content will soon be almost impossible (Horton 1999, p. 92). One possible solution to the various types of racism, that also avoids problems associated with censorship, is the provision of balancing information by anti-racist sites. This will be examined in detail in the following chapter.
6. Balance on the Web

I happen to value and believe in the efficacy of allowing stupid people to say stupid things and to let them hang themselves by their own words (David Goldman in Dearne 2000e, p. 57).

Concern about racism on the Internet was evident internationally early (Hyman 1995; Capitanchik & Whine 1996), but in Australia as late as 1999 ALIA stated that ‘libraries are the major provider of access to and training for the internet yet there is little evidence within libraries of users complaining about being exposed to illegal or unsuitable material through the internet’ (Australian Library and Information Association 1999). However, the proliferation of racist disinformation on the Web now presents an unprecedented dilemma. The minority groups that are often the targets of racist disinformation are likely to be alienated from the Web if they are aware that racist material is available (Hollinsworth 2000). Many of these are the same groups who were previously alienated by the racist books held on library shelves. Much of the positive work to increase access to information for minority and disadvantaged groups may well be undone. An assessment of balance to racism on the Web will require an examination of; the balancing information, issues involved in its provision, and issues involved in the identification and use of the information.

6.1. Anti-racism on the Web

The issue is not getting bigots not to be bigots. That’s banging your head against the wall. It’s reaching out to good people in the U.S. and throughout the world who know that this stuff is vile and insidious and (inspiring) them to speak up. It’s apathy that allows this poison to grow (David Goldman in Lauerman 1999, p. 5).

While initially the production of Web pages did require some technical expertise and the results were often static pages that were infrequently updated (Myers 2001), software developments now mean that truly anyone can produce an interesting and dynamic site. ‘The voluntary sector, possibly more than any other, should be able to profit from the low cost, massive reach and vast communication channel that is the Internet’ (Williams, Dennis & Nicholas 2005). The Web can be a boon for anti-racist organisations and activists. It can facilitate networking, exchange of best practice information and better contact with users and government agencies.

As with racist sites, some anti-racist sites are maintained by individuals while others are connected to organisations (Hipschman 1997). Some anti-racist organisations
exist on the Web only, while others have both a real and Web presence. Some sites are specifically established to fight Web racism, while others simply provide information about the real world organisation that is then used by activists to organise real world protests (Myers 2001). Some are academic sites linked to a particular research centre or course of study such as the Online Hate course at Emerson College (Ivey 2000, p. 41), or may be online versions of anti-racist magazines.

Some anti-racist campaigners use the Web to monitor the activities of racist groups, and some encourage the reporting of racist material. ‘Sunlight can be a great disinfectant’ (Goldsborough 2001 p. 46). Another anti-racist campaigner stated that:

When we work through the internet, we watch them for a long time and collect information about them. A typical experimental extremist has none of his own copy on his website. His website has a copy-pasted content from many places (Samuel Althof in O'Dea 2005).

Some anti-racist organisations are taking the fight to another level by fighting ‘dirty’. BiasHelp <http://www.biashelp.org> has purchased several domain names with racist references, such as klansmen.com. When users go to these sites they are redirected to the BiasHelp site (Guernsey 2000, p. 6). But the ability of anti-racist organisations to put up the myriad of possible racist Web addresses is limited (Leibovich 1999), and there is potential for racist sites to use the same tactics:

So far, hacktivism has been dominated by social justice and left-wing issues, with the far right using the Internet only to organise and recruit. In one case, campaigners diverted visitors seeking the Ku Klux Klan site to hatewatch.org instead. Public reaction is likely to be very different when someone tries to do the opposite (Branigan 2001 p. 3).

This tactic has also been employed by general hate sites (Jargon 2000, p. 3). The anti-gay site The American Guardian had the rights to hatewatch.com and hatewatch.net that are very similar addresses to David Goldman’s hatewatch.org site.

The Internet acts as a magnifying glass for discontent. Individuals using computers can wield power they could never command on the street: it takes dozens, maybe hundreds, to occupy a building and unveil a banner but only one to hack into a computer system and take over a website (Branigan 2001 p. 3).

Denial of service attacks are commonly used by racist organisations to attack anti-racist websites and Australian websites are not exempt from this targeting (Stuff.co.nz 2005). Such tactics have apparently also been considered as a means of
dealing with racist websites. ICARE Anti-Racist News relayed a report from *Der Spiegel* that the German Government was considering the disabling of foreign Web sites that carry neo-Nazis material (ICARE News 2001).

Taking over sites or changing links is becoming a common tactic for both sides. In 2000 a former One Nation address was linked to an anti-Pauline Hanson website (Balogh 2000). Hacking of sites can lead to a tit-for-tat battle between racists and anti-racists which prevents the freedom of expression of both sides (Hipschman 1997).

While beyond the purview of this thesis, it should be noted that there are many Blogs set up to tackle racism. As is the nature of Blogs, these are usually run by individuals. Lipstadt states that ‘serious academics have been slow off the mark to use internet publishing and blogs constructively, leaving a dangerous vacuum’ (Three Monkeys Online 2006). This raises the possibility of well-intentioned but ill-informed content being carried by anti-racist Blogs.

Some anti-racist sites, such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) <http://www.adl.org > which ‘monitors and documents online bigotry’, advocate exposure or racist sites rather than censorship. Although the ADL does make requests to ISPs to remove objectionable material, its main work is in education and exposure (Wolf 2006a). This is the focus of many individual sites:

Individuals opposed to racism, operating alone or in very small groups, such as Dr. David Maddison of Melbourne and Alan Gold and his colleagues at the Writers Against Racism on the Net project, have found that the Internet allows them to make a significant contribution to efforts to counter the propaganda of hatemongers (Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism 2000).

Some anti-racist groups advocate documenting and maintaining a registry of racist sites. However, difficulties arise in agreement on a definition of a racist site and also because sites can change name and location easily. In addition, the list may serve the opposite purpose and enable racists to more readily access these sites via the list (Lejtenyi 2006). Debate on this issue was extensive after the now closed HateWatch site made links to categorised racist sites available on the website as an education tool (Ebert 2000; Hohman 2000; Ladd 2000).
6.2. Balancing racist disinformation

For every racist disinformation site, there are others that attempt to provide accurate information. These sites hope to counter bigotry and other disinformation with logic and truth, to balance disinformation with accurate and reliable information:

I think the remedy for bad speech is good speech, not no speech. Rather than taking down information I disagree with or that I personally find offensive, I think it’s more important to go out and discuss these things. Say what’s wrong with them. Open it right up and don’t try to pretend that they don’t exist’ (Robin Gross, EFF, in Van Winkle 2000 n.p.).

As was seen in the previous chapter, allowing access to disinformation can be seen as an endorsement of that content. This problem may be exacerbated through the provision of counter arguments. Although it can be contended that it is by exposing such opinions to public view that they can best be countered and discredited, the risk continues that less informed or discerning users will be misled by disinformation.

The attempt to provide balance may be giving credibility to the racist disinformation, by appearing to place it on an equal footing with the anti-racist content. Certainly, some racist groups do see the Web as a means of achieving balance for their extreme views:

The Internet gives you the opportunity to fully express your ideas, on equal terms to other ideas. People have the opportunity to judge the idea on its face, next to other ideas opposing it (David Duke in Martin 1998a).

Speaking about her refusal to engage Holocaust deniers in debate, Lipstadt stated:

The existence of the Holocaust was not a matter of debate. I would analyse and illustrate who they were and what they tried to do, but I would not appear with them. (To do so would give them a legitimacy and a stature they in no way deserve. It would elevate their anti-Semitic ideology – which is what Holocaust denial is – to the level of responsible historiography – which it is not) (Lipstadt 1993, p. 1).

But some years later, speaking of her court case in Britain in which she was sued by David Irving, Lipstadt stated:

Normally, I don’t debate with these people on principle because I don’t think they should be treated as the ‘other side’…It would be the equivalent of asking astronomers to debate whether the earth is flat. It’s lunacy. But if I hadn’t fought, he would have won by default and people would have thought his version of the Holocaust to be a legitimate definition (in Horsnell 2000, p. 8).
There is also the question of what is being balanced. As mentioned above, racism is not homogeneous, however most anti-racist sites that are set up to balance the racist disinformation on the Web only identify and target the extreme material.

This can lead to an impression that racism is restricted on the Web and only involves racial supremacy claims. This may serve to reinforce the views of new racists and xeno-racists who have escaped criticism. Also, even when addressing the extreme racism, these sites usually emphasise how indefensible the practice of racism is. The fact that, as discussed in Chapter 2, race itself is a social construct is rarely addressed (Cowlishaw 2006). ‘The fact that no races exist in our species has not been adequately communicated to the lay public’ (Graves 2001, p. 156).

Thus, a crucial part of the battle against the legacies of the social construction of race is to get across the message that biological races do not exist and that these types of correlations are spurious (Graves 2001, p. 193).

While the multiple sources of information provided by anti-racist sites on the Web may provide more opportunities to find balancing information (Calvert 2001, p. 238), there is no guarantee that the user will see or utilise the balancing information. Search engines may not pick up the anti-racist sites, and users moving between links may not move beyond the racist sites or have the skills to evaluate the content of the sites they do encounter.

6.3. Search engines and balance

The balance of material available on the Web is irrelevant if the user cannot access it. Most users access Web information via the results of a search engine query (Griffiths & Brophy 2005, p. 539). Search engines are ‘information retrieval systems whose collection consists of pages on the World Wide Web’ (Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi 2002 n.p.). Analysis, particularly by the library profession, of the efficacy of search engines commenced early and has been ongoing (Devlin & Burke 1997; Lawrence & Giles 1999c).

The effectiveness of search engines is usually evaluated by the factors of recall and precision. Recall is the ratio of the relevant documents found to the total of all relevant documents available. Precision is a measurement of the number of documents retrieved that comply with the user’s query (Eliopoulos 2003, p. 42). Because the number of relevant documents on the Web is unknown, recall and
precision are difficult measures to apply. The apparently ‘large recall sets give a false impression of comprehensiveness’ (Crespo 2004, p. 365).

New, Web specific, evaluation methods are being developed. These include comparing the results of the same search on multiple search engines, and comparing searches conducted several times over a given time period. Although this could be affected by the increase in the number of websites over the time period (Eliopoulos 2003, p. 43).

But any of these evaluations are also dependent on the variable of the search skills and approaches of the user. Many users only look at the first few results of any search and this means that the relevancy algorithms used by search engines must pay particular attention to relevancy of the first 20 results (Eliopoulos 2003, p. 48). Where these newer methods still rely on an assessment of recall and precision, evaluation of bias is another method.

Bias in retrieval systems is evidenced by undue inclusion or exclusion of certain items among those retrieved in response to queries; or it is revealed in giving undue prominence to some items at the expense of others (Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi 2002 n.p.).

Bias can be assessed based on the results of one query or multiple queries. By comparing the results of the same query on several search engines, it is possible to assess the bias of one search engine in relation to the ideal distribution of items in the retrieved collection. ‘The role played by retrieval systems as gateways to information coupled with the absence of mechanisms to insure fairness makes bias in such systems an important social issue’ (Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi 2002 n.p.).

But ‘detecting bias in an information retrieval system is different from analyzing the content of a message’ (Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi 2002 n.p.). ‘Bias is exhibited in the selection of items, rather than in the context of any particular message. The former may be termed indexical bias; the latter, content bias’ (Mowshowitz & Kawaguchi 2002 n.p.).

Concern about the limited view of the Web as given by search engines has been consistent and ongoing (Lawrence & Giles 1999b; Gori & Witten 2005). Added to this concern is the potential for websites to use technical means to increase their prominence in search results. This can be achieved by using likely key search terms in the page content, in the metatags or being hidden in the colour scheme of the page (Gori & Witten 2005, p. 116).
There are tactics that sites can use to ensure that they appear in searches. Websites can be designed to optimise the ranking in search engines such as Google. This may involve encouraging reputable sites to link to the site (Hayes 2006). It may also involve the linking of pages by descriptive text and using URLs that are clear and easy to duplicate (Manktelow 2002). But ultimately ‘the best way to increase a site’s search engine ranking is to offer valuable content and products’ (Liedtke 2005 n.p.).

6.4. Search skills and balance

Writing in 2001, Herring pointed out that the Internet does not contain everything, particularly academic papers and older material. Search engines do not access the whole Internet and important information can be missing without the user realising (Herring 2001). The keyword search may miss synonyms and while search strings can be used, ‘the simple search box now enjoys the popular perception that it is an efficient means of finding information’ (Beall 2006). Writing of electronic databases, Tennant pointed out that users will frequently settle for ‘good enough’ search results (Tennant 2001), this problem would also apply to the Web.

It appears that students at all levels of education tend to rely on the Web, and on Google in particular, as their sole information source. This may be because of a lack of knowledge of alternative information sources (Griffiths & Brophy 2005, p. 550). But it may also be because the Web is easy to access at home, the home or work environment is pleasant and, particularly for the young, a computer is less intimidating than a library. This however separates users from sources of search assistance such as librarians (Leibovich 2000). Focus groups of Web users in 2001, determined that information literacy would be the most effective and reliable counter to disinformation on the Web (Calvert 2001, p. 237).

Search skills are vital to finding information, so instruction in how to conduct searches is needed. Many users do not realise the extent of refinement possible with many search tools and do not understand the concepts of refined vocabulary and Boolean logic. However, research has shown (Eliopoulos 2003, p. 48) that as search engines have improved the difference in numbers of relevant results when users utilise Boolean techniques and not, has become less significant.

Nevertheless, refining searches will result in less hits and the greater likelihood that the user will utilise their evaluation skills to assess results. Failure to refine searches may be due to the user being unaware of how the search engine conducts a search
based on a given query (Griffiths & Brophy 2005, p. 541). Studies of search behaviour have also identified a small but growing tendency for some users to conduct multitask or successive searches. The interface facility to easily search in this manner may influence the ability to refine searches (Spink & Jansen 2004; Spink et al. 2006).

An assessment of searches conducted on Google and a library database suggests that ‘improving the skills of the searcher is likely to get better results from the library systems but not from Google. This has implications for user awareness and training programmes’ (Brophy & Bawden 2005, p. 510) and also for the likelihood that users will opt to use Google rather than other, possibly more appropriate, sources.

6.5. Utility and balance

Most users only look at the top few results from a search engine, but appearing in those results is only the first step to providing effective balance, as users must then find the site useful so they return (Sweetland 2000, p. 750). Writing about intranets, Cohen (1998, p. 55) stressed the importance of this as users will only try something a few times before giving up if it does not serve their needs.

Anti-racist websites can assess their usage through site logs that record the number of times the site has been accessed, although logs do not usually discriminate internal users and also multiple users, and by surveying users.

For a site to be useful it needs to be suitably targeted. Crespo discusses a study of health websites that found a significant disconnection ‘between the Internet’s potential to reach many audiences and the uniformity of its Web site sponsors and producers in aiming its content at a highly sophisticated and largely middle-and uppermiddle-class audience’ (Crespo 2004, p. 367).

Even if the primary audience is catered for, there is potential to extend the audience. A recent evaluation of the use of a voluntary organisation website (Williams, Dennis & Nicholas 2005), ascertained that although the site was aimed at a local audience, the international audience available through the Web could also have been catered for. This could have been achieved through something as simple as providing country-specific links from the site.

Users are more likely to apply assessment criteria to certain types of information sites. It is unclear if they are making this decision based on the content or the
information medium (Flanagin & Metzger 2000, p. 530). The effectiveness of websites can be assessed using tools that are based on journal impact assessments. The Web Impact Factor treats hyperlinks on a website like citations in a journal, measuring the number of links to that website. As an academic resource, it is not the same as a citation, because the types of links may not be to peer reviewed papers. Significantly, links can be synchronic, while journal citations can only link backwards (Noruzi 2006, p. 491).

While the Web Impact Factor is a useful measurement of the broader flow of information on websites (Li 2003, p. 407), what it may actually be measuring is the technical skill of the website owner in increasing access and the inflowing links score. A link impact factor measures ‘utility rather than quality. For evaluation of scientific quality, there seems to be no alternative to qualified experts reading the web site resources’ (Noruzi 2006, p. 494).

However, even if anti-racist websites follow all this information about how to make their sites accessible and useful, whether a user will actually see and utilise this alternate information is questionable and is dependent on search skills and web evaluation skills.

6.6. Website evaluation

‘An audience that has never been taught to evaluate evidence is not going to be convinced by any amount of it’ (Gillman 2000), so the user must develop critical skills to evaluate the information they locate (Gilster 1997, p. 89).

While it is important that a site has easy to use features and reliability, credibility is also a factor. In a review of the literature on how users assess website credibility, Wathen and Burkell, point out that this knowledge is critical for the producers of information. ‘The provision of credible information serves as a necessary, but not sufficient, component of any process designed to influence knowledge, attitudes or behavior’ (Wathen & Burkell 2002, p. 134).

‘Given that credibility strongly influences the impact of a message, it becomes important to understand how users decide what to believe’ (Wathen & Burkell 2002, p. 134). Drawing on research in psychology, sociology and communications, Wathen and Burkell found that user assessment of credibility is based on assessments of the source and the content, and is additionally influenced by their own characteristics. The balance of importance of these assessments will vary (Wathen & Burkell 2002, p.
Message sources chosen to match audience attitudes and context lead to higher perceived credibility and better recall of the information’ (Wathen & Burkell 2002, p. 136).

The review also found that users were more likely to give credibility to information on the Internet if the technical access aspects such as graphics and interface are well achieved. ‘Simply speaking, novices to both the topic and the computing process and those with a greater need for information will tend to make gullibility errors, while expert users will tend to incredulity’ (Wathen & Burkell 2002, p. 138).

Obviously, the message itself is critical for information credibility. The message should be internally consistent, and clearly presented. Audience characteristics are also important: audiences that are already receptive to a message will be more likely to view the information as credible (Wathen & Burkell 2002, p. 140).

In their review of the literature on user perceptions of website quality, Aladwani and Palvia (2002, p. 472) located three main aspects of this perception; technical, content and appearance. Further assessment though found that content had two aspects which should be assessed separately. Specific content related to such issues as customer support and privacy policies, while content quality related to the aspects of the information such as usefulness and accuracy. These aspects are useful for website developers, but the authors were also interested in developing an instrument for website assessment by users.

From an assessment of the evaluation behaviour of academic scholars and drawing on a range of interdisciplinary approaches, Rieh ascertained that:

People believe the goodness of information as a result of relative judgements, or comparing the Web page with their general expectations or with another Web page. The results of this study indicate that this is because judgements are not only based on external factors in terms of characteristics of information objects and sources but also on individuals’ own knowledge, which leads them to different predictions, expectations, and furthermore, different evaluations (Rieh 2002, p. 157).

The reliance on Web resources is increasing while the quality of these resources varies. Resources are frequently not what they at first appear to be, and there is little guarantee that information is accurate. While technical developments might offer some assistance in avoiding disinformation on the Web, the skills of Web site evaluation should not be ignored.
6.7. Criteria for assessing site reliability

New technologies do not change principles (MacColl 2006 n.p.).

Criteria are needed to enable the user to assess the quality of information found on the Web. To this end there is scope for the adaptation to Web resources of the evaluation criteria developed for print media and possibly also the creation of new criteria. This was recognised early by many in the library profession who were quick to provide guidelines for evaluating the quality of websites and web content (Kirk 1996; Harris 1997; Tyburski 1997; Abdullah 1998; Edwards 1998; Kapoun 1998; Tillman 2000).

However an examination of recent articles shows that, despite being recognised as crucial to dealing with information overload, over some time there has been little consensus about exactly which criteria should be used for website evaluation (Sweetland 2000; Rieh 2002; Mich, Franch & Gaio 2003; Herrera-Viedma et al. 2006). A comprehensive review of the literature by Judd, Farrow and Tims (2006) dealing with assessing websites solely as information sources, also reached this conclusion.

The primary focus of the evaluation debate, from diverse sources including government, has been on the issue of assessing health related sites (Commission of the European Communities 2002; Haddow 2003; Crespo 2004; Sellitto & Burgess 2005; Mayer et al. 2006). This interest is largely due to the high risks associated with disinformation, and to the large volume and range of quality of healthcare sites. It is also of interest because users are not knowledgeable in the field and so have no comparative criteria to assess the information on the site (Haddow 2003).

Despite the lack of consensus on suitable criteria and the likelihood that some new criteria will also be needed, there remain five key traditional evaluation criteria that most authors agree are relevant to the Web; these are authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency and coverage.

6.7.1. Responsibility / Authority

Responsibility relates to identifying who, either an individual or a publisher, is responsible for the site. Authority is an assessment of that individual or publisher.

Authority is determined by the reputation of the author. In traditional print media this is assessed by ascertaining the author’s qualifications on the subject
they are dealing with and the reputability of the publisher or authority. This is particularly important if a reputable author is writing outside their field.

Authority can be ascertained by consulting subject experts or looking at other works by the same author. The qualifications of the author should be clear or a statement included that the information is not from an expert or qualified professional (Health on the Net Foundation 1997). The affiliations of the author are also significant, as an indicator of possible bias or conflict of interest (Sweetland 2000, p. 758).

It is possible that an author may have no professional expertise but yet be very knowledgeable. Also, while an author may be knowledgeable, in a specific instance they could still be inaccurate (Judd, Farrow & Tims 2006, p. 20). The reverse is also the case, an author may have academic credentials and even testimonies from apparently reputable sources (Ray & Marsh 2001), but these may be false.

While the above methods of assessment from the print environment can be a useful guide, they are not so easy to apply in a Web environment. For example, authorship is not always evident on the Web and if the author is named, their qualifications are rarely listed on the same site or are difficult to corroborate. The identity of the publishing body may be even more obscure.

Even if the author is named, the user must still query whether the name is legitimate. Similarly if the provider of the site sounds authoritative, further investigation may find that they are pretending to belong to a reputable organisation (Tyburski 2002). The title ‘Adelaide Institute’ for example sounds like an academic think-tank rather than a few individuals operating from their homes (Conroy 1999).

The immediacy of the Web environment can make verification easier. Many authors are contactable by email and a simple query directly to the author may result in the necessary validation information (Hooke 1999).

Ideally, responsibility for the site should be clear from the first page. This can often be found in a link. Responsibility may also be determined by information contained in the URL, for example, if the URL is a university server. However if the searcher is not familiar with the subject field, the name of the author,
publisher or site owner may mean very little. It is important to know the reputation of the author or responsible organisation (Sweetland 2000, p. 758).

The URL as an indicator of authority is used by many users:

For all the tasks but the research task, the subjects responded that source reputation and the type of source influenced their judgements of quality and authority to a greater extent than did author/creator credentials (Rieh 2002, p. 157).

URLs raise the issue of ownership of addresses and cyber-squatting. As was seen with the aforementioned Martin Luther King Jnr site, false identity is easily achieved on the Web. An address can suggest that a site is something it is not.

This was evident in a recent presidential election in the United States. Sites were being set up suggesting they belonged to a candidate, when in fact they were providing propaganda for the opposition. ‘Anyone with a little free time, basic web design skills and a strong opinion or grudge can potentially wreak havoc for a candidate’ (Wittstock 2000 p. 15).

URLs can also be used to deceive in other ways. It is not uncommon for URLs to be bought that are a variation on spelling or domain name to another site that users may be looking for (Rosencrance 2002). For example the Tasmania tourism site is <http://discovertasmania.com.au>. A conservation group purchased the URL <http://discover-tasmania.com> and used it to criticise Tasmanian government forestry policy (Whinnett 2002).

Suggestions have been made for the creation of domain names that identify a site as being an official site or alternatively as being a site that contains personal opinion (Wittstock 2000). The World Health Organisation suggested creating a ‘health’ domain name restricted to accredited websites (Landro 2001). How compliance with these categorisations would be achieved is not clear. The United States consumer group, The Consumer Project on Technology, advocated the creation of new domains including .union, .customers and .ecology, where free-speech was permitted (Lemos 2000). Currently some guide to identification is provided through the use of such suffixes as .net, .org and .com, but these top level domains references are not a guide to the disinformation quality of the information provided.
In their instrument for website evaluation, Judd, Farrow and Tims (2006, p. 26), identified .gov URLs as not requiring evaluation because government sites must be by definition reputable and authoritative. Similarly, the URL .org was only included in the instrument to provide an example of good information and acceptable bias.

This may have implications for the assessment of content on a government site that may nevertheless contain racist perspectives. For example, the sites of some governments such as Zimbabwe would likely be particularly suspect in terms of racist material. Additionally, governments including the Australian Government have been found to manipulate content by ‘selective removal and creative editing of Government information on the internet’ (Tranter 2007).

Other indications of status of the responsible organisation are if the site or documents are indexed, and if the site has a feedback facility and an email contact link (Edwards 1998, p. 2). Preferably organisational information also should be provided. Sources for the information should be clearly cited, preferably with links to the original text if available on the Web (Health on the Net Foundation 1997). If the author claims to belong to an academic institution, that institution’s staff contact information should be cross-checked. If the site has been linked from another site it would then be necessary to check the reliability of the referring site.

As the Web develops, so too does the level of sophistication of sites. The creation and maintenance of sites is becoming much easier with new software developments. Assessment of authority is probably the most important criterion for the novice searcher. However, individual, non-official, unfiltered sites may nevertheless contain valuable information that is not available from traditional sources. Blogs are providing a voice for those in repressive regimes but also as a counter to anti-Muslim material in the media (Loewenstein 2007).

In an assessment of balance, the authority of the provider is important. Who speaks for the targets of racism and who has the right to provide balance are significant questions. This is particularly so if the targets are members of minority groups with less access to the Web:

… most importantly for combating Holocaust denial, older citizens of our world are far less likely to become Internet users – and they represent the key
segment of our society who are still in a position to give first-hand rebuttal to
the deniers (Hyman 1995).

‘The notion of authenticity deals with which voice in cyberspace can be
considered to be the one that can best speak about an issue’ (Mitra 2003 n.p.).

6.7.2. Accuracy

Accuracy involves the reliability and freedom from error of the information.
Traditionally, a good indication of reliability is that the information has been
assessed by an editor, a publisher, by peer review, or a combination of these
methods. Publication on the Web can circumvent these processes and in fact
virtually anyone can publish on the Web.

Some websites may have been exposed to academic external quality control,
for example peer review, but this is difficult to verify unless the site is of an
electronic journal or the information is also available in another format such as
print. Unsubstantiated claims that the information is filtered should be treated
with scepticism.

Users will have to assess the accuracy of facts for themselves or else accept
what the document claims and, in this regard also, scepticism may be the best
approach (Burkeman 2000). Certainly the listing of sources and a bibliography
may be an indication of rigorous processes, but again the sources listed will
need to be assessed for authority. Whether other reputable sites link to the site
is also important. However, the links to the site’s sources may not remain
accurate making it impossible or very difficult to verify (Fitzgerald 1997, p. 10).

One immediate indication of academic imprecision may be the presence of
spelling, grammatical or typographical errors in the text (Edwards 1998, p. 2).
Similarly the organisational structure of the information can give some
indication of quality.

Users also need to recognise their own bias, and assess all information
regardless of whether it appears to confirm the user’s views (Fitzgerald 1997,
p. 13). The user should apply critical thinking skills. A wide reading of the
topic, both on and off the Web, will aid the user to ‘construct contextual
frameworks’ to assess the material (Fitzgerald 1997, p. 12). ‘It is essential that
Internet users be able to differentiate arguments from facts and detect the logical fallacies that many arguments contain’ (Fitzgerald 1997, p. 12). Users should not accept information simply because it is in accord with their views on a topic.

6.7.3. Objectivity

Objectivity involves communicating the information without bias, or with any bias acknowledged. Many documents are placed on the Web with the intention of influencing the opinion of the user. The motivation of the author in providing this material is not always apparent.

The objectivity of the content may be difficult to ascertain. It might be assumed that information made available as a public service would be more accurate than that from a commercial provider, but this is quite a generalisation and involves assessing the definition of a public service. Advertising may be mixed in with apparent facts so that it is difficult for the user to differentiate, yet some commercial sites do contain often critical reviews of the company’s products. Ideally the funding affiliations of organisations on the Web should be disclosed. Of course this is often also not available in the print media (Fist 2000). How the site is then assessed will depend on the whether or not the user was looking for information from a particular perspective or bias (Judd, Farrow & Tims 2006, p. 20).

6.7.4. Currency

Currency is a key feature of Web information. In the Web environment currency is usually critical and can entail very frequent update requirements (Metz 2000, p. 713). If creation and update or ‘last modified’ dates are provided, these should be compared with the information in the document. The information should also be compared with information on the topic from other sites (Edwards 1998, p. 2). If the information is time-sensitive this should be compared to the frequency of update. The capacity of the information provider to maintain the information may be relevant. This may depend on the occupation of the provider, and whether they are dedicated to that site, or only working part-time. However, assumptions based on this should not be too
easily made, many of the most accurate and up-to-date sites are run by dedicated part-timers.

6.7.5. Coverage

Coverage involves the selection of topics and the depth with which the topics are dealt. Some sites include scope or mission statements. Links can also serve to extend coverage. If the user has some knowledge of the subject, they may be able to assess if information is missing, or an index or contents page may indicate this.

Coverage is also related to intended audience and whether the site provides material suitable for and satisfactory for its intended audience and purpose (Mich, Franch & Gaio 2003, p. 36). The user should find the purpose of the site and assess the material against this aim (Cubbins 2000).

6.7.6. Other issues unique to the Web that influence evaluation

However, from the information consumer’s perspective the quality of a Web document/site may not be assessed independently of the quality of the information contents it provides (Herrera-Viedma et al. 2006, p. 540).

While traditional means of assessing the credibility of a document are useful, they do not always apply on the Web. The physical presentation of a document is often a good indication of content reliability in the print world. However this may not necessarily be appropriate on the Web. Sites can be very sophisticated in terms of appearance. The author may claim apparently genuine academic qualifications. The site may belong to what appears to be an established research organisation. The more subtle the arguments, the harder it is for the user to assess reliability of information.

The speed with which information can be retrieved and the volume of that information may also play a part in the user being unable to access the information they are retrieving (Calvert 2001, p. 234). Often the information cannot be checked later because the specific URL or search history has not been retained (Calvert 2001, p. 236).

Floridi (1996) was concerned about the potential for monopolies including governments to control information on the Web. Calvert suggests that the
greater concern is the ‘public’s ready acceptance of trivia as a substitute for substance, and a disdain for information sources trying to discuss issues in a meaningful way’ (Calvert 2001, p. 234).

Technical aspects, such as the use of hypertext and frames, can also relate to the quality of information on the Web. Links, serving as citations on the Web, should be active and current (Sweetland 2000, p. 766). The quality of pages linked to the original page may vary, as may the quality of pages displayed within frames. This necessitates the assessment of each page individually.

Context can give some indication of the credibility of information (Haddow 2003), but ‘the problem for information seekers on the web is that information on Google has been stripped of its artefact’ (Gideon Haigh in ABC Radio 2006c).

Because search engines retrieve pages out of their original context, the user should always attempt to return to the originating source of information, often the homepage. However, Web pages may move or disappear. This may make it impossible to refer back later, or to check originating pages.

How well the site is maintained may also be an indication of reliability, including the presence of dead links and the announcement of downtimes (Social Science Information Gateway 2000, p. 2). Another point to be noted is the instability of Web pages and their vulnerability to alteration. Privacy, clarity of target audience and accountability are also very important factors for health related websites (Commission of the European Communities 2002).

In summary, the information should provide a complete and balanced treatment of the subject. Information given must be accurate, and fact and opinion clearly distinguished. Information should be current. All sources should be acknowledged and these can also be checked. The scope and intended audience should be clear. The style should be appropriate for the audience. The author’s qualifications should be checked and their political standpoint ascertained.

Some tools have been developed to make the evaluation process easier and could be utilised by end users as well as intermediaries such as filtering software. A relatively recent inclusion in some tools is the weighting of criteria (Sellitto & Burgess 2005).
The utility of these criteria recommendations, and any tools developed from them, will depend on their utility and ease for users. There were initial concerns that Web users were less likely to employ the evaluative skills that they used in the print environment, because they trusted the Web (Calvert 2001, p. 233). Information retrieved by search engines may often be accepted by users without assessment (Crespo 2004, p. 360). This is a problem because:

…in the age of information overload, it would be disadvantageous to develop an evaluation tool that is more complex to use and interpret than the health information that people may wish to assess (Sellitto & Burgess 2005, p. 263).

Flanagin and Metzger (2000, p. 531) found that users were more likely to assess Web information if the process was easy and involved opinion, and less likely if the process was complex and required action. Users are likely to need to be taught how to use these tools (Judd, Farrow & Tims 2006, p. 12).

6.8. Summary

As also discussed in Chapter 5, education will provide some assistance in handling the disinformation available on the Web. This education should involve evaluation and critical thinking techniques and impart an awareness of the fallibility of information available on the Web. The Web does not exist in isolation from the real world. Users need to be aware of the availability of a plurality of information sources in other media that may help to maintain scepticism in information seekers.

Web evaluation techniques are still under development. Because of the rapid advance of technology, standards and guidelines must be constantly reviewed and updated. For a novice user, particularly one with little research or subject experience, the list of pitfalls and things to look out for may appear daunting. A positive angle on this would be to suggest that some experience will make these assessments easier (Turner 1999). However, realistically, unless skilled intermediaries are involved, this may well be beyond the ability and attention span of the average Web user. ‘Like traffic signs, they can easily be overlooked’ (Crespo 2004, p. 372).

This chapter has examined what is involved in the provision and use of balancing information on the Web. These insights need to be assessed further. In the following chapter, anti-racist websites will be examined for their effectiveness against criteria determined from the examination of the literature.
7. Data collection

This chapter will describe the examination of anti-racist websites for their balancing characteristics. Three data collection methods will be identified and developed. The issues involved in each method will be discussed and final decisions explained.

7.1. What the literature suggests

The literature and an examination of the diversity of racist websites suggest that racism on the Web is a serious issue. There are many calls for technical solutions and others that emphasise the need for freedom of speech. While governments and interested groups argue over the most appropriate and effective solutions, websites in many countries are already offering anti-racist information to counter the racist postings. Determining the role that these sites play in offering a solution requires a closer examination of these sites.

Anti-racist sites are studied in the current context and also as they have developed over time. Because reality is stratified and no mechanism exists in isolation, the research must also situate the mechanism in a wider historical, social and political context (Outhwaite 1987, p. 58). The data is sought and analysed ‘so as to understand the history that has generated it, and the particular structure of relations and constraints that maintain it’ (Mingers 2001, p. 246).

While some quantitative data is collected, the research methods will be predominantly qualitative because such methods:

- Can seek to understand what general concepts like ‘poverty’ or ‘race’ mean in their specific operation, to uncover the conscious and unconscious explanations people have for what they do or believe, or to capture and reproduce a particular time, culture, or place so that actions people take become intelligible (Lin 1998, p. 162).

While anti-racism on the Web could be investigated through case studies that employ an examination of a limited number of specific anti-racist sites, a wider study will enable various interacting mechanisms and levels to be explored. This thesis examines many anti-racist sites over time, in context, and from a broad viewpoint:

Because any one method of data collection has both strengths and weaknesses, it is essential that researchers select the one(s) that best addresses the study’s problem.
statement, objectives, research questions, and hypotheses, and are consistent with the study’s research design (Hernon 2000 p. 83).

The analysis of the anti-racist sites is on three levels; sites are assessed for longevity, for site reliability, and by means of a questionnaire to obtain feedback from the sites themselves. Both the techniques of analytical examination and observation are employed.

The initial intention of the data collection was to identify sites, and examine them for the content that they carried in relation to balancing information. This was to be augmented by a questionnaire to assess longevity issues and collect qualitative information about the self-perceived role of the site.

One hundred sites were identified through links from other sites and searches. This sample size was arrived at purely as described; no attempt was made to circumscribe the numbers of identified sites. Following the initial identification of the sites, a forced break in the project occurred, preventing these sites from being analysed. As the population of anti-racist sites had changed during this intervening time period and other sites become available to be surveyed, a decision was made to reselect the population frame of anti-racist sites for the purposes of the website assessment and the questionnaire.

This did however provide the additional opportunity to re-examine the originally selected sites towards the end of the research project to ascertain longevity. The final outcome is that anti-racist sites are thus assessed for their balancing characteristics such as content, audience and accessibility through three data collection methods: longevity of URLs, website assessment, and a questionnaire to explore issues further.

7.2. Anti-racist website longevity

As outlined above, the opportunity was taken to examine the originally selected websites for longevity. A review of the literature on the topic provides some guidance as to what to assess.

Two studies in 2000 examined the issue of ‘link rot’ or the incidence of URLs that no longer deliver the intended website. Taylor and Hudson (2000) examined URLs identified in an Internet resources column in a journal and tested the URLs for currency at two intervals after publication. URLs not available were assessed for type of error and those unable to be located were sought using a search engine. The
authors found that URLs to personal home pages were more likely to be dead and suggested further research was needed to assess if the type of site had an impact on currency.

Kitchens and Mosley (2000) examined URLs identified in Internet guide books. They examined Web pages for accessibility and content changes. Like Taylor and Hudson, they also found that:

One problem that seemed to impact the URL accuracy was the inclusion of personal web sites, as opposed to corporate- or organizational-based domains, and student class projects from educational-based domains. The former … probably represent the most ephemeral and least scholarly aspects of the information found on the World Wide Web (Kitchens & Mosley 2000 n.p.).

They found that URLs that contained a file name were more likely to be inaccurate even if the main site was still active. They also found that non-profit organisation websites tended to change URL, possibly because the organisation was able to purchase a server (Kitchens & Mosley 2000 n.p.).

A comparative study of the longevity of websites that are identified by library resource guides or by random searches (Tyler & McNeil 2003 p. 615) also provides some useful insights into the issue of website longevity. The study identified two methods of assessing site durability: ‘diachronic’ studies check websites for link failure continuously over a given period, while ‘synchronic’ studies conduct checks twice at a determined interval.

Checks may be quite simple, involving ascertaining whether or not the site exists at the previous URL. More extensive checks may involve whether the previous URL lists a redirection, whether it automatically redirects, whether the site can be found at a new location by using a search engine, and whether the site can be found through deduction to the main domain name.

Their study also found that rechecking apparently dead links after a short period of time did result in some sites reappearing:

This characteristic of site and page intermittency, or the fact that many dead URLs can become undead over a short interval and can continue to behave thusly over several years, suggests to us that there are methodological problems for most of the bibliography-directed studies (Tyler & McNeil 2003).
They found that after 5 years, half of the sites listed in the guides were unavailable at the listed URL. This half-life was increased slightly to six years if redirects were included. Analysis of sites included in the more recent guides, suggested that sites are becoming more stable (Tyler & McNeil 2003).

Tyler and McNeil also aimed to assess whether the type of domain had a relationship to the site’s longevity (Tyler & McNeil 2003). While .gov sites were more stable largely through redirection, .com and .edu sites were more likely to be dead. The failure rate of .org sites was much higher. The server domain level of the URL was also related to longevity. However, many sites that were dead were able to be found through searches (Tyler & McNeil 2003).

Sweetland (2000, p. 766) identifies several possible results from an examination of whether a previously identified site still exits:

- Title has changed but the URL has remained the same … URL has changed but the old address provides a direct, automatic link … URL has changed but the old address gives the new address and a link, which must be clicked in order to access the site … URL has changed, site exists, but is now difficult to access … site is not at the old address and has no reference to a more recent address … server has been down for some time.

The previously identified anti-racist sites were checked after 5 years and assessed for longevity. Following from Tyler and McNeill (2003), the data collection involved checking the websites and noting the sites that were no longer located at the previous URL. The sites that could be located were recorded as being: at the previous URL, or the previous URL provided a clickable redirect to the new location, or the previous URL provided an automatic redirect to the new location, or the new location could be deducted to the main domain name. These findings were cross referenced with the type of domain where possible although, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this proved not to be as straight forward as previous authors have found. Those sites that could not be located, and were therefore apparently dead, were rechecked after three months.

7.3. Anti-racist website assessment

As outlined above, a new sample frame was determined for the purposes of the website assessment and the questionnaire distribution. Several anti-racist websites include links to other similar sites, providing a solid starting point for the
identification of current anti-racist websites. Two sites were chosen to provide links because of their comprehensive coverage and because the sites linked were self-identifying as anti-racist.

The population frame was determined from the sites listed on the anti-racist sites ‘I CARE Crosspoint Anti Racism’ <http://www.magenta.nl/crosspoint> and the ‘European Monitoring Centre’ <http://eumc.eu.int/eumc>, now called the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. The sites located from links were examined, and those that appeared to have no anti-racist content or to not be located at the URL were removed from the sample frame. The retained sites were then supplemented through searches on the terms ‘anti-racism’ and ‘racism’ on the search engines Google and Yahoo. All websites selected for the population frame are publicly accessible and are included in a list of anti-racist websites at Appendix B.

The sites of study were chosen for a number of specific reasons. They self-identified as anti-racist and they were accessible in terms of language used. Located sites that were not in English or did not have a full English translation were not accessed and are not part of the sample frame. This decision was made for expediency, and to ensure that translation issues did not result in judgements that caused data error, but also because all the sites would be accessible to Australian users. Sites from across Europe, United States, Canada, and Australia were surveyed. An attempt was made to locate English language sites in other areas of the world, including Asia, South America and Africa, but few were located.

The fact that many of the sites were identified through links from other sites may have a relationship to content in terms of the linking criteria used by the site on which the links were found. For example, sites that link to I CARE, nominate which one of a number of specified categories they are recorded under. These categories include ‘anti-racism’, ‘human rights’, ‘diversity and migrants’. Only those sites that were listed under ‘anti-racism’ were considered. There was significant overlap between the results of the two location methods, providing some reassurance that most overtly anti-racist sites had been located and that the population is representative.

The method of identifying the sample frame through links might be likely to select websites associated with more established organisations. However, a casual examination of the links suggests that a variety of sites were included. Nevertheless, the more established and interrelating websites are more likely to appear in both
search results and website links. Of course, as discussed in Chapter 6, this fact means that they are also more likely to be providing balance.

A final sample frame of 90 websites was determined. For the purpose of website assessment, a random sample of 20 sites was chosen from this population frame. This was achieved through double randomisation. The sites were first ordered in an alphabetical list by name. They were then given a number from 1 to 90, selected by random draw. The sites were then sorted according to this number order and the process repeated, through the allocation of a random number from a second draw. This ensured that the researcher had no input to the selection of the sample frame to be assessed. This was important as the project had obviously led to a solid understanding of specific sites and it was needed to ensure that there was no possibility to select sites that conformed to preconceived impressions.

The sites were then assessed for purpose, including role, type of racism addressed, and balancing characteristics. Location and format were also considered. The sites were also assessed against the criteria discussed in Chapter 6; authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency and coverage, in addition to an assessment of the physical and technical aspects of the sites. The purpose of this approach was to obtain a general impression of the potential of anti-racist sites to provide balance to racist web content.

The questionnaire sent to all identified sites then collected data on the ability of sites to provide balancing information, and the self perception of these sites in regard to their roles.

7.4. Anti-racist website questionnaire

The aim of the anti-racist website questionnaire is ‘to explore the factors that might explain …’ a phenomenon (Burgess 2001). The decision to use a web-based questionnaire, and the format that it would take, was determined after an assessment of the available literature.

Questionnaires are a useful method of data collection because they can reach many people, no interviewer bias is involved, anonymity may lead to more responses, and response quality may be improved because participants have time to consult with others and collect the information needed to answer questions. Problems with questionnaires include, increasingly low response rates and the possibility of participants misreading or misunderstanding the questions (Pinsonneault & Kraemer 1993; Litwin 1995; Robinson n.d.).
Clearly it is important that questions are worded to suit the audience, but the questionnaire design in general also must be in accordance with the research needs. These are determined through analysing the literature, researching the targets, and making sure that the questions could not be answered through other means (Hernon 2000).

The questionnaire development process involves determining the population and sample and how the questionnaire will be administered. Questionnaire design includes determining the questions, the number and format of the questions, and the sequence, layout, introduction, and contact details.

Web surveys are now used extensively for academic research but, despite the results of these surveys being published, analysis of the medium although increasing (Porter & Whitcomb 2003) has been quite limited (Granello & Wheaton 2004). In addition, technical developments have been so rapid that many of the issues raised and solutions recommended in earlier studies are relatively obsolete, at least in their specifics. For example, a guide (Ward, D. 2000) to conducting Web surveys produced by the American Library Association in 2000 is largely focused on the skills needed to design the required website and database. Most of these tasks can now be performed automatically by specifically developed Web survey software.

Web surveys have several advantages over other types of survey administration. They can be conducted over wide geographic areas, they are also much cheaper to conduct on the Web and are more environmentally friendly than paper-based methods (Yun & Trumbo 2000). Response times can be reduced greatly and costs are generally lower (Granello & Wheaton 2004, p. 388; Wright 2005). Many of the common problems with paper based surveys, such as data entry errors, can be overcome. Web surveys are suited to studying specific populations with a narrowly defined area of interest (Schmidt 1997, p. 274).

Web surveys have enabled far more people to conduct surveys and also far more people to be surveyed. These advantages have resulted in a wide variation in the quality of surveys. The prevalence of Web surveys also means that potential participants may be alienated by the frequency with which they are asked to participate in Web surveys. This difficulty has previously occurred with telephone surveys where the increasingly frequent requests for involvement in telemarketing and market research have reduced public willingness to participate in telephone surveys (Couper 2000, p. 474).
As well as questions of involvement, there are also a number of concerns about possible sources of error in Web-based surveys, these include issues related to coverage, sampling, nonresponse, and measurement error (Couper 2000, p. 466).

7.4.1. Coverage

While the Web is increasing in availability and usage, there remain many people and population groups who have limited access. This has led to concern that Web survey participants may not be representative of the group the survey is aiming to study.

Coverage error is ‘the result of all units in a defined population not having a known nonzero probability of being included in the sample drawn to represent the population’ (Dillman & Bowker 2001 n.p.). ‘Coverage error is presently the biggest threat to inference from Web surveys, at least to groups beyond those defined by access to or use of the Web’ (Couper 2000, p. 467).

Coverage error can result in coverage bias, both in terms of who responds and how they respond (Solomon 2001). The scope of this problem may alter in the future, but even if Internet take-up becomes near universal, coverage will still vary depending on the reason for the take-up. For example, there may be differences among the populations using the Web for information seeking, for communication or for entertainment. A related issue is the demographic and attitudinal characteristics of Web users compared to non-Web users (Couper 2000, p. 472).

There are of course some groups with very high Internet coverage. For example, many Web surveys have been involved with interrogating university students, who all have Internet access through their institution (Couper, Traugott & Lamiias 2001; Sills & Song 2002). Web surveys are moreover very suitable for studies of online populations, such as virtual communities and newsgroup members (Wright 2005).

As this thesis is surveying the providers of website content, it seems probable that coverage rate in relation to Web access will not be an issue.
7.4.2. Sampling

Sampling error occurs due to the difficulty of identifying the total population to be surveyed, the frame population.

Many Web surveys are undertaken as entertainment, with respondents volunteering themselves. The survey results then simply state that a certain number of people responded in a certain way. Such surveys do not involve probability sampling. The fact that a Web survey may generate many responses, has no relation to representative responses from which inference to a larger population can be made (Couper 2000, p. 473; Dillman & Bowker 2001).

Probability sampling in Web surveys can be achieved by limiting the sample to a known group of people who have Web access, or by ensuring that all participants can complete the survey either by providing Web access or alternatives such as paper questionnaires (Couper 2000, p. 485).

It may also be possible to sample something approaching the entire population. While it is not possible to know all the anti-racist websites in existence, there are several guides to anti-racism on the Web. These lists focus on well established and connected sites. There would appear to be no sure way of identifying other individual or more ephemeral sites. What can be said about the frame population then is that it is representative of those sites that are in a position to provide balance.

7.4.3. Response and nonresponse

We need to learn when the restricted population of the Web does not matter, under which conditions low response rates on the Web may still yield useful information, or how to find ways to improve response rates to Web surveys (Couper 2000, p. 491).

Response rates to surveys in general have been declining. Several authors (Dillman et al. 2001; Granello & Wheaton 2004) have reported analysis of early studies showing that email and Internet-based surveys tended to have a lower response rate than paper based surveys. But Truell, Bartlett and Alexander (2002) found that response rates to Web surveys had a comparable response rate to mail surveys. ‘… response rates are probably more dependent
on the population sampled than on any other factor’ (Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant 2003, p. 411), but ‘… variations in survey length may explain some of the inconsistent findings from earlier research on response rates for paper and Web surveys’ (Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant 2003, p. 424).

Nonresponse can occur in a number of ways. It can occur through the participant opening the survey but not going further, starting the survey but not completing it, not responding to certain questions, or not responding at all (Harley & Henke 2007).

Nonresponse occurs when not everyone in a sample is able to complete the survey. In addition, certain individuals or organisations may be more likely to respond, leading to the problem of self-selection or systemic bias (Wright 2005). Nonresponse error is ‘the result of nonresponse from people in the sample who, if they had responded, would have provided different answers to the survey questions than those who did respond to the survey’ (Dillman & Bowker 2001 n.p.).

If the population frame is unknown, it will be difficult to identify the extent of any response or nonresponse rate. Many Web surveys are publicised on Web sites or through email discussion groups. In this case, the numbers of people eligible to complete the survey, and thus the response rate, will be unknown (Couper 2000, p. 473). However, ‘low response rates alone do not necessarily suggest bias … when respondent characteristics are representative of nonrespondents, low rates of return are not biasing’ (Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant 2003, p. 412).

Yun and Trumbo (2000) compared responses to surveys administered by post, email and Web, and found little variation, although it appeared that response rates could be improved through using several modes for the one survey. They pointed out that most research has equated Web and email surveys with mail surveys, while a comparison with phone surveys would be useful.

There are several techniques that may increase response rates, these are discussed below. They include ensuring that the means of contact is appropriate to the population frame.

The two most appropriate methods for contacting individuals to invite their participation were considered. One method is to send an email to a topic-
specific email list requesting participation (Schmidt 1997, p. 278). One problem with this approach is the risk that the email will be viewed as spam, as one group of researchers found:

> The survey server was ‘hacked’ twice, presumably in response to the survey invitation, and from time to time we received unsolicited e-mail offers, some of which were pornographic in content or aggressive in tone (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece 2003, p. 203).

There are common problems with using email lists, however they are generated. More than one person may be responsible for checking the emails, the email address may be incorrect, or the email may not be received. Reasons for non-receipt may include that the recipient is away and not checking emails, that there are server problems, or that spam filtering has rejected the email (Smith 1997).

As well as the concern about the potential to annoy recipients, in the case of this research, it is also possible that racist individuals are subscribed to the email lists, increasing the possibility of aggressive emails or malicious completion of the questionnaire.

Using such email lists also creates difficulty in identifying how many recipients are in the sample population, which additionally varies from day to day (Hayslett & Wildemuth 2004). As well, there is a risk that reply emails mistakenly might be sent to the whole list, annoying the members (Yun & Trumbo 2000).

An alternative method of using already compiled lists of links was settled upon (Wright 2005). While compilations of emails are not available, some anti-racist sites have links to other sites which could then be searched for an email contact. Each site in the population frame was therefore examined for a contact address.

Weighing up the available literature on this issue, Trouteaud (2004) suggests that the numbers of potential respondents who had email but did not check their emails during the surveys was negligible. Of course, many of these access problems also apply to paper surveys and requests for participation sent by post (Wright 2005). Nevertheless, known undelivered emails would need to be removed from the population, or an alternative email address or means of contact found (Yun & Trumbo 2000).
There is limited research on the advantages and disadvantages of variables in the email sent to potential participants in Web surveys and the relationship to response rates. In a study of this issue, Porter and Whitcomb (2003) compared response rates from various contact variables. They examined the effect of subject lines, evidence of personal or organisational responsibility, information about the survey, deadline information, and information about ‘selectivity of participation’. They found that deadline and selectivity information together may increase response rates.

Another study (Hayslett & Wildemuth 2004) found that giving a short deadline of two weeks led to the rapid receipt of responses. However, the authors found that personalisation of the email, through address or salutation, had only a slight effect. They suggest that for participants who are very familiar with email, the techniques to encourage reading of the email will be well known and therefore less effective. This may be because these techniques are common to spammers (Porter & Whitcomb 2003). Heerwegh (2005), in a study of student behaviour, however found that not only did email personalisation increase response rate, but it did not decrease responses to sensitive questions.

The effect of email subject lines on response rates was later specifically examined by Porter and Whitcomb (2005). They tested three subject lines that mentioned the survey, named the sponsoring organisation, or asked for help. None of the three subject lines had any significant effect on the respondent’s decision to view the survey. However, having a blank subject line actually increased the viewing of the survey and completing the survey. They concluded that ‘techniques will need to be custom tailored to the individuals we are trying to reach’ (Porter & Whitcomb 2005, p. 385).

The content of the email can include the estimated completion time. Trouteaud (2004) found that providing a short and accurate estimate leads to quicker responses. Emails should also include information about the research and relevant contact details, although providing contact details does increase the risk of receipt of abusive emails (Wright 2005). The email can also facilitate the commencement of the survey by including a URL link to the Web survey so participants only need to click on the link in order to start the survey (Solomon 2001).
Technical factors to ensure the email can be read also should be considered, including sending in plain text format (Trouteaud 2004). Length of subject lines ought also be taken into account as some email programs truncate subject lines (Schmidt 1997, p. 279).

Response rates may be increased if participants are offered an inducement to complete the survey. However, financial or prize inducements may encourage several responses from the same individual or may be ignored because they are similar to hoax offers that are common through email (Wright 2005). Also, those who may be encouraged to respond to inducements may differ from the population who do not respond to such approaches (Harley & Henke 2007).

A more appropriate inducement for an academic survey might be to include a statement of the benefits of the research (Sills & Song 2002, p. 27). This could involve an undertaking to make the results available:

> Another Internet community norm is sharing information. In this spirit, online researchers should post summaries of their research or offer other valuable information. This creates the impressions that survey researchers are part of the community rather than an alien presence (Cho & LaRose 1999, p. 432).

This technique also conforms to the requirement that critical realist research should be transformative. Through the sharing of the results of the research, anti-racist sites will be better informed about the role they play in the provision of balancing information.

The timing of the survey could also be important. While the time of day may well be relevant for locally distributed surveys (Trouteaud 2004, p. 386), for most Web surveys, seasonal and geographic holidays and other events may need to be considered (Crawford, Couper & Lamias 2001, p. 152).

Response rates can also be improved by sending reminder emails (Strachota, Schmidt & Conceicao 2005), although this may also annoy potential respondents. In any case, because of the anonymity of Web surveys, there can be problems with follow-up to nonresponders, as was experienced by Hayslett and Wildemuth (2004). They worked around this problem by sending reminder emails to the entire sample, but included a ‘thank you’ for those who had already responded. Crawford, Couper and Lamias (2001) suggest also sending a closing notice reminder.
The logical design of the survey itself may also influence whether someone commences the survey and whether they complete the survey. The first page should be welcoming and ‘motivational’. The first question should be easy to understand and answer (Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998). Dillman, Tortora and Bowker suggest that demographic and background questions should not be addressed first.

Simple survey design ensures that the survey loads quickly and potential respondents do not lose interest while waiting for the survey to load. Newer survey software allows for response tracking. This can be done through a requirement that the respondent include an email address (Wright 2005). But this does raise confidentiality issues.

The above discussion relates to persuading the potential participants to respond. But the questionnaire itself can have an impact on the quality of those responses.

7.4.4. Measurement error

Measurement error can occur when respondents do not care about or do not understand the questions, when they deliberately enter erroneous answers, or when the survey instrument is poorly designed or worded (Couper 2000, p. 475). In other words, measurement error can arise from respondent error or from instrument error.

The Web provides a reasonable guarantee of anonymity. But this anonymity might also jeopardise the data validity. This may happen unintentionally, where the respondent submits the survey more than once. However, multiple submits can also occur intentionally if someone is trying to sabotage or skew the survey results (Solomon 2001).

There are some technical solutions to this problem. Restricting access to the survey can be achieved in a number of ways. Participants can be personally invited to respond through an email that contains a password (Schmidt 1997, p. 275), or the first page of the survey can ask participants if they have already completed the survey (Nozek & Banaji 2002, p. 171). Administrators can also check for multiple responses from the same IP address. However, while an IP address does identify a computer, often these addresses change each time the computer is logged on (Nozek & Banaji 2002, p. 165).
Cookies can be used to check if the survey has already been sent from a particular computer, but this does rely on cookies being enabled on the participant’s computer (Trouteaud 2004). The use of cookies though can ‘compromise the researcher’s ability to guarantee the confidentiality of the data’ (Hamilton 1999 n.p.).

Konstan et al. (2005) suggest a number of ways to verify that a response is valid and to ensure that multiple responses from the same individual are detected. Most of these suggestions, including verifying payment accounts, would seem to breach privacy requirements. These are important considerations as Cho and LaRose found that:

> Online surveyors commit multiple violations of physical, informational, and psychological privacy that can be more intense than those found in conventional survey methods (Cho & LaRose 1999, p. 421).

Incomplete responses can also be a problem. Survey software can ensure that respondents have to answer all questions, but this may also annoy participants and lead to them deciding not to complete the survey. In addition, it may contravene ethics committee conditions of approval (Schmidt 1997, p. 276; Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998).

Dillman et al. (2001) investigated whether mode differences were evident in Internet surveys. They were concerned that responses to survey questions administered on the Internet might differ from responses to paper or other means of administering the survey. They found that there was little response variation in any of the self-administered surveys. An examination by Hayslett and Wildemuth (2004) of the available literature on mode effects in computer-assisted surveys also arrived at this conclusion. A comparative methodological evaluation by Denscombe (2006) additionally found little support for a mode effect in Web surveys.

A common dilemma in both paper and Web surveys is whether to use questions that ask the respondent to ‘check all boxes that apply’. If the list of options is lengthy the participant might satisfice, or check the number of boxes that they think is enough. They may not even finish reading all the options before finishing the question (Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998). Alongside question development, design features are therefore clearly of importance.
7.4.5. Design features

…the appropriateness of a particular design must be evaluated in the context of its intended goal and audience (Couper 2000, p. 476).

There is much variation in the design quality of Web surveys. Design is important for all surveys but Web surveys have additional visual and technical elements that need to be considered because they can aid or hinder the respondent in completing the survey (Couper, Traugott & Lamias 2001).

Unlike paper based surveys, participants in Web surveys often have no visual clues as to how close they are to completion. Progress reminders during the questionnaire may encourage some users to continue the survey where they would otherwise have abandoned it, but such reminders can slow the download time and so frustrate the user (Couper, Traugott & Lamias 2001). Alternatively, ‘transition sentences’ can be used to encourage completion (Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998).

Layout should be clear and uncluttered with minimal use of graphics. Consideration should be given to background colours and screen configuration (Dillman & Bowker 2001). Design should take into account that the user is operating a computer at the same time as completing the survey. Even if the user is computer-proficient, they may have little experience of completing questionnaires (Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998).

Radio buttons, check boxes, or free text boxes can be used, but some guidance in how to enter and delete data for each format should be provided (Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998). Couper, Traugott and Lamias (2001) found that radio buttons are most commonly used by designers as they are able to be checked with a mouse and take less time to complete. Use of text entry boxes can lead to more incomplete data, but short-entry free-text boxes are more likely to be left blank than are longer entry free-text boxes.

In another evaluation, Couper et al. (2004) found that response format affected answer choices and therefore response distributions. To avoid this, response options should all be visible because respondents are more likely to choose what they initially see. Options that require the least effort from respondents are the best, these are usually radio boxes. They found some minor evidence in favour of the random ordering of response options. ‘Unless the items follow a
logical order … randomizing the response options may mitigate the effects of response order’ (Couper et al. 2004, p. 125).

Web-based surveys may offer a means of avoiding the problem of data runs, where respondents provide the same pattern of response for each question. In a Web survey, each question can appear on a new page, making a data run less likely. However, in an exploration of this issue, Boyer et al. (2002, p. 369) found no evidence to support this contention.

Smyth et al. (2004) examined the impact on responses of grouping questions. They found that listing possible responses into subgroups encourages participants to think, erroneously, that they need to provide a response in each subgroup.

DeRouvray and Couper (2002) examined the use of a ‘don’t know’ response option in Web surveys. The explicit availability of this option increases the likelihood of this response in self administered surveys generally. They suggest that interactive options available with some Web surveys may help to overcome this problem.

Open-ended questions, which require the most effort from respondents in both thinking and keystrokes, are the point at which surveys are often abandoned (Crawford, Couper & Lamias 2001, p. 158). These types of format should therefore be kept to the end of the survey so that, at worst, participants will not complete just those questions rather than not completing the survey at all.

Writing in 1997, Schmidt (Schmidt 1997) raised the issue that browsers vary in how they display text and forms. While text-only browsers are now not an issue, the problem of display remains. The survey should be trialled on several browsers.

Overall, design should be appropriate for the type of questions and target respondents (Couper, Traugott & Lamias 2001). The quality of the Web survey as a whole should be assessed against the benefits of the chosen approach and alternative approaches (Couper 2000, p. 466).

7.4.6. Survey software

… an enormous challenge facing web questionnaire designers is how to keep questionnaire content simple, while the cutting edge of what’s possible to
include in web questionnaires continues to advance (Dillman, Tortora & Bowker 1998).

There are now many proprietary Web survey software products available. Most software offers the options of different question types, required answers and randomised answer choices, and a means of dealing with missing values. Data collected via this software can be placed straight into a database, and can be saved in varying formats. It can also be exported to statistical and other data manipulation and presentation programs (Wright 2005). Survey software enables ‘error detecting’ variables to be assessed, such as date, time, and IP address (Granello & Wheaton 2004). There are a number of comparative sites and also some academic research that compares available software (Strachota, Schmidt & Conceicao 2005). Decisions about which product to use rest on an evaluation of the aims of the research, time constraints and costs (Wright 2005).

The product selected for this research was SurveyMonkey <http://www.surveymonkey.com>. It provides basic analysis and, in comparison to similar products, is not expensive. A free version is available, but the limits on question numbers are too restrictive. The professional version can be subscribed to on a monthly basis. The product allows for randomising of question response options, required answers, conditional logic, and filtered results. Additionally, data can be exported to statistical software (Rosenbaum 2006). Data collected is owned by the researcher and an extensive security infrastructure is in place.

While there may be apparent overlap in the information being assessed by the three methods, the questionnaire allows for the perceptions and opinions of the content providers to be examined. Such perspectives have a bearing on how the website will contribute overtime, in particular in relation to adaptability to changes in the racist disinformation being addressed. The two observational methods undertaken would not provide this deeper understanding. Accordingly, questions were developed to provide further insight to the already accumulated body of information about the role of anti-racist websites in providing balance. Sites were contacted and the questionnaire developed, in accordance with the best practice identified from the literature.
7.4.7. Development

To be sure, balancing topical breadth and depth with the need for high respondent counts and a representative sample is one of the many challenges in survey research, regardless of survey format or mode of administration (Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant 2003, p. 423).

The decision to use a Web-based questionnaire was made after consideration of all the above issues. The potential problems outlined above could be eliminated or controlled. In addition, the advantages of using this method were very compelling.

The sites chosen to be surveyed were those identified for the website assessment, but the entire sample was used for the questionnaire. This ensured that the breadth of available anti-racist sites was as fully reflected as possible, by including small and large sites and sites from different types of organisation and geographic location. These are important considerations in any survey sample (Kitchens & Mosley 2000).

An effort was made to locate other research projects that surveyed the providers of Web content. It was hoped to ascertain, and allow for, the problems that have previously been encountered with this approach. Smith (1997) surveyed ‘web presence providers’ who she defined as ‘an entity who (or which) takes an active role in developing, maintaining, or promoting content on the web’. She examined characteristics, ‘changes in their services and staff, and … their professional networking activities and affiliations’. Her report of this research served as a timely reminder of how important it is to think through all possible problems before commencing data collection.

For this research, websites were identified through lists of links, meaning that those sites that were not on the lists may not be included. Using directories of links can be problematic if they are too broadly based. ‘With countless directories in existence, researchers could not even judge the likelihood that they sampled a subset of such directories’. ‘The sampling frame not only deviates from the target population but the degree to which it deviates changes regularly’ (Best et al. 2001, p. 134).

If the unlisted sites have particular characteristics, such as new or individual websites, then the representativeness will be affected. ‘… it is impossible to
ensure that Internet users excluded from the sampling frame do not differ systemically on certain hypothetical measures from those included in the sampling frame’ (Best et al. 2001, p. 135).

Arising from this, possible problems for this research are that the sites listed are probably the more established sites, possibly belonging to organisations rather than individuals. As mentioned, this may mean that the population is not representative of all anti-racist sites. But adding sites located through search engines may improve the representativeness. In any case, for the provision of balance, a site would need to be locatable through either links or searches. Those that are not, are therefore outside the frame population.

The method of directly approaching identified sites by email was employed. Clearly, all identified websites had Internet access and could be contacted by email. So the potential participants were representative. As participation was invited by personal email, the response rate could be known. This method also minimised the chances of unfriendly or mischievous responses. The alternative, of emailing a request to anti-racist email lists, was considered potentially risky in terms of the validity of the data and the unknown population frame.

Nevertheless, the chosen means of contact by email was still a concern with regard to response rates. It is probable that at the smaller sites the person checking the generic email would also be the appropriate person to answer the questionnaire. But at the larger sites, the questionnaire would need to be forwarded to the appropriate person. This leaves many opportunities for the questionnaire to be ignored, and also makes follow-up of non-response problematic.

However, the advantages of the chosen method and the possible serious problems with alternatives led to the decision to go ahead with the direct email approach.

Each website was examined to find an appropriate email contact. These email addresses were not always easy to find. The most appropriate person to complete the survey would be the person responsible for the content of the site, although they may need to seek additional answers from others involved with the site. Initially, appropriate personal email contacts for each website were sought. However, very few individual personal emails could be identified. Using a mix of the identified personal emails and other located generic emails
was considered but rejected as this may have influenced the response rate in unknown ways. Additionally, there is some evidence that personalising emails may actually make recipients more suspicious that they are being spammed (Cho & LaRose 1999, p. 422). It was therefore decided to use the main email contact as listed on the website.

In most cases only a generic site contact email was listed, such as ‘enquiries@’ or ‘info@’. If a suitable contact could not be identified at all from the website, the site administrator was emailed with a request for the survey to be passed on to the appropriate person. Three of the larger sites utilised form contacts instead of direct email addresses. This appeared to be an attempt to minimise the occurrence of malicious emails. In these cases the form was utilised to invite participation. No email contact at all could be ascertained for 4 sites, these sites were removed from the population frame, reducing the population to 86.

The salutation was personalised to the extent that it was addressed to the individual website. This was time consuming in terms of sending each individual email. However, due to the nature of the email system being used, this tactic of sending separate emails to each target was required to enable easy tracking of bounces and other transmission problems.

Ethics approval for the conduct of the survey was obtained early in the thesis project. The application ascertained that there was no risk to participants and that no personal information would be collected. Additionally, participants would not and could not be identified. Email contact was in accordance with institutional requirements.

Following suggestions derived from the literature, the email invitation included all relevant information. Consideration was given to including an explanation of the method of sampling so that recipients could know how they were identified, but this was ultimately rejected as the invitation email was becoming too lengthy.

The subject line of ‘Anti-racism on the Web: Academic Survey’ was chosen with the above considerations in mind. Specifically it was designed to appeal to the target group. ‘Anti-racism on the Web’ defines their role, ‘academic’ provides authority, and ‘survey’ explains what they can expect the email to be asking. There was some concern that the term ‘survey’ may be filtered out as
spam. However, an email with an honest subject line if received may be viewed more favourably by the recipient.

The first screen of the questionnaire included confidentiality information and users had to agree to this before proceeding (Schmidt 1997, p. 277). This initial screen also provided the opportunity to explain the authority and credibility of the researcher. This was achieved through a clear statement of purpose, provision of contact details and links to the institution (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece 2003, p. 196). The questionnaire also separated the consent page from the survey questions (Cho & LaRose 1999, p. 429).

Academic authority of the researcher is a key factor in response rates (Cho & LaRose 1999, p. 431). So to ensure that this was as clearly evident as possible, an email alias on the student account was created with the full name of the researcher and the institution’s address. Combined with a link to the department homepage and the inclusion of the postal and street address of the department, it was anticipated that this would provide assurance that the provided information was genuine. This student email account was only used for the survey and some institutional correspondence. It was hoped that this would confine any possible spam or other unsolicited email that may be received (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece 2003, p. 206).

Assurances of confidentiality are essential, and Burgess (2001, p. 14) provides an example of wording that can be used to assure confidentiality while still being able to list the participants in the resultant report. It is important that the method of ensuring confidentiality is explained (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece 2003, p. 188).

Of course data is never entirely secure on the Web. It can be intercepted while being sent, or accessed in storage on the data file server (Nozek & Banaji 2002, p. 165). Given that no personal information was being collected, and individuals were not being identified, the risk involved was negligible.

The questionnaire was designed to be simple and easy to complete in a minimum time. Section one commenced with an explanatory screen duplicating much of the information in the invitation email. The questions were divided into 5 further sections, each starting on a new page.
Section two was headed ‘About your website’ and asked demographic type questions to find out the type of organisation responsible, whether it operates only on the Web, the country in which it is located, the source of funding, its longevity, and the anti-racist focus.

Section three was headed ‘About your staff’ and contained questions to determine the numbers of people contributing content to the site, whether or not they worked on the site fulltime, and whether this work was paid or voluntary.

Section four was headed ‘About your target audience’ and asked the site a number of questions to ascertain who they were targeting, whether their reach was regional specific and whether they provided content for children.

Section five was headed ‘How does your site counter racism?’ It asked questions about the content of the site, tactics used to counter racism, how the site was publicised, whether the site supports censorship, and interaction with other anti-racist sites.

Section six was headed ‘I am interested in your ideas’ and contained five open ended questions to be completed in free text boxes. This section explored questions about the definition of racism, the problems of racism on the Web, trends in racism on the Web, developments in anti-racism on the Web, and gave the opportunity to provide additional comments.

A final section offered to provide information on the results of the research and requested an optional email contact address.

On completion of the survey, the respondent was taken to the SurveyMonkey homepage.

While the software allows many different types and formats for questions, it was decided to follow the findings of the literature and keep the design as simple as possible. All questions, other than the free text responses in section six, were answered by choosing only one answer from a vertical single column list of possibilities. Where suitable, these options were randomised for each respondent. Selection was made by clicking a radio button. Where appropriate, an option of ‘other’ and a one line free-text box was provided. No question had answers required, so respondents were free to skip questions.
The default design layout and colour scheme was used as this seemed clear and easy to read.

The questionnaire was piloted locally to test both the questions and the survey software (Granello & Wheaton 2004, p. 390). Informal face-to-face discussions were held with some anti-racist website owners to confirm that the type of information to be sought in the questionnaire would be of use to them. A pilot questionnaire was developed and tested on colleagues with extensive knowledge and experience of surveys. This resulted in some minor changes to question length and complexity. Interestingly, one question with overlapping scales was not picked up through this process but was noticed later. The Web questionnaire was also examined by several colleagues for possible technical issues.

The invitations were distributed through the course of one day on a Tuesday, which would be Monday in most time zones. A two week deadline was clearly disclosed. Each email was sent to an individual recipient in the hope of circumventing spam filters.

7.5. Summary

The data collection occurred on three levels. Firstly, the longevity of anti-racist websites was assessed through an analysis of the viability of URLs over time. Secondly, a sample of current anti-racist websites was examined for balancing content and also assessed against criteria for general website reliability.

Thirdly, the literature was reviewed to assess the potential for a questionnaire to be administered over the Web. Advantages and disadvantages as they apply to this research were considered in regard to the frame population (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece 2003, p. 192). A decision was made to proceed with a Web-based questionnaire, announced by an email invitation to identified websites. The email and questionnaire were customised.

The following chapter analyses the results of the three data collection methods.
8. Results

This chapter provides the results of the data collection for each of the three methods discussed in Chapter 7. The results for each method are first analysed separately. The discussion of the questionnaire results includes a summary of the issues arising in the administration of the chosen instrument. The analyses of the three data sets are then cross referenced where appropriate.

8.1. Anti-racist website longevity

The opportunity to examine the longevity of anti-racist websites was afforded by an unexpected intermission in the research project that necessitated a re-identification of the anti-racist website population frame. Rather than waste the initial effort expended in identifying the anti-racist sites, a decision was made to use these sites as a basis for supplementary research. Early studies of longevity of websites provided a basis on which to assess the longevity of anti-racist websites. While interesting in its own right, the results of this observational assessment might then be used in a comparison with the results from the questionnaire. While the timeframes and population frames differ, that very difference may provide some insight into the changes that have occurred in anti-racist sites over the last few years.

8.1.1. Sites

Of the 100 sites initially identified in 2002, 49 were still able to be located 5 years later in 2007. A further 6 were located but no longer had any anti-racist content, while 45 were apparently dead (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Website longevity](image)

*Figure 1. Website longevity  n = 100*
8.1.2. Dead sites

Of the 45 dead sites, 14 were sites that used a URL consisting of a domain name only, while 31 had a URL indicating a path after the domain name. This means that 31% of dead sites had a domain-only address, while 69% used a path hierarchy in the URL. In making this assessment, if the URL included a path that indicated English, or index, this was considered to be equivalent to a domain address.

As type of domain had been found to be indicative of likely longevity (Tyler & McNeil 2003), this was also recorded. However, it was not possible to determine the type of domain in all cases, and 15 URLs were indeterminate. This problem appears to be related to the naming requirements in different countries. Of the 30 that could be determined, 14 were .com, 1 was .edu, 6 were .net and 9 were .org.

A closer look at the .com URLs found that many of the sites were not companies in their own right but were sites located on the servers of Web hosting companies. The host companies have changed type of service provision in the past 5 years. Similarly, .net is now less commonly used by individuals and not-for-profit organisations.

8.1.3. Live sites

For the 49 sites that could still be located and contained anti-racist content, a record was made of how easily they could be found. Following Tyler and McNeill (2003), they were recorded as: at the same URL; at a new URL which was indicated by a clickable link from the old address; at a new URL which was automatically redirected to from the old address; or could be found by deduction from the old URL (Figure 2).

Of the 49 sites, 34 remained at the same URL. This suggests that the half-life of anti-racist sites is considerably shorter than that of other sites, as Tyler and McNeill (2003) found that a half-life of 5 years was average for website longevity. However, again following Tyler and McNeill, a recheck of the apparently dead sites after a period of 3 months, found that 8 sites had revived. These revived sites are not included in the following analysis.
A clickable link was provided for 3 sites, although one of these went to a site that was not working. Automatic redirects were employed on 3 sites and 9 could be deduced from the original URL. Of these 9, 2 no longer had any English content.

![Diagram showing distribution of URL types: Same URL 70%, Deduced 18%, Redirected 6%, Linked 6%]

*Figure 2. Live sites located n = 49*

Again looking at the domain types, 14 of the 49 sites could not be determined to correspond to a specific domain name convention, 7 were .com, 1 was .edu, 1 was .gov, 4 were .net, and 22 were .org. In the case of both found and dead sites, the numbers of identifiable domain types were quite low. However, it does stand out that the found URLs contained significantly more .org sites.

A number of authors (Kitchens & Mosley 2000; Tyler & McNeil 2003) identified non-profit organisations and those with a .org domain as more likely to move URL or to become dead. The longevity assessment of anti-racist sites appears to contradict these findings as .org sites were more commonly found to be live. Care in drawing conclusions from this must be taken however, because changes in naming conventions and in accessibility to the .org domain may have played a part.

The live sites with a domain-level URL numbered 32, while 17 had URLs indicating a path hierarchy. This meant that 65% of sites found and still containing relevant content had a domain-level URL. When compared with the addresses of dead sites, it appears that Kitchens and Mosley (2000) were correct to suggest that URL level has a relationship to longevity.

Of the 6 sites no longer at the URL but redirected through either a clickable link or an automatic redirect, 4 had a path-level URL. Of the 9 sites found through deduction from the old URL, 6 had a path-level URL. Therefore, of
those sites that had moved address, two-thirds had a URL that included the path hierarchy.

8.1.4. Longevity analysis

It does appear that sites with a domain-level URL are more stable over time. In some respects this is to be expected. Such sites usually have their own domain name. This means that even if they change webserver, their URL can remain consistent. It is also likely that the acquisition of a domain name indicates a level of stability. While this may not be the case in the present day where domain name purchase is more common, the purchase of a domain name relatively early in the development of the Web may be an indication of probable longevity.

Sites established today are more likely to be able to purchase their own domain name and so not go through the domain migration that the earlier sites needed to traverse. These more recent sites will appear stable because their domain name remains current.

8.2. Anti-racist website assessment

The second observational assessment was conducted looking at 20 randomly selected current anti-racist websites. The sites were assessed for balancing content as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, and also for their reliability as discussed in Chapter 6. Both these assessments are subjective and based purely on the understanding and knowledge of the researcher. But this process mimics what would be required of a Web user to assess an anti-racist site.

8.2.1. Website purpose

The purpose, or role, of the website indicates whether the site carries information that can balance the racist disinformation on the Web. The role of the sites was determined from the description found on the site, usually under a link to ‘about us’. Supporting material for anti-racist activists was provided by 4 of the 20 sites, 3 provided anti-racist information, 11 were a Web presence for an off-line organisation, and 2 provided access to reports on off-line racism.
The type of racism addressed by the site was determined from the self description and also from an examination of the content (Figure 3). Racism as defined by the United Nations (UNHCHR 1965) was the focus of 10 sites, 1 dealt specifically with racism targeting African Americans, 1 dealt with racism specifically targeting Muslims, 6 dealt with the most extreme forms of racism, while 2 targeted all forms of racism including that directed at asylum seekers.

![Figure 3. Type of racism addressed](image)

Therefore, only 10% of the anti-racist websites in the sample targeted all forms of racism. This will be discussed further in the analysis of all data.

Whether the sites contained balancing information was determined from the type of content carried by the site and the topics addressed by any text or documents. Content that challenged or balanced racist arguments was provided by 9 sites, while 11 did not provide such content.

Those 11 provided content in the form of media reports, links, and descriptive text about their organisation. The 9 sites that provided balance did so primarily through documents covering specific topics and included the 3 sites found to have ‘access to information’ as their main purpose.

Australia was the location of 3 sites, 1 was in Asia, 1 in Canada, 5 in Europe, 2 in the United Kingdom, and 8 in the United States (Figure 4). All the sites that targeted extreme racism were located in the United States. The 3 Australian sites addressed racism as defined by the United Nations.
The 2 sites that targeted all forms of racism were located in Europe and the United Kingdom. They were both aimed at anti-racist activists and did not provide balancing information.

So while approximately one-half of the sites provided balancing information, this information was balancing extreme forms of racism and racism as defined by the United Nations. In addition, only 3 of these sites were balancing racism as found on the Web. The other sites were providing information about racism as experienced off-line.

Significantly, no site was provided balancing information to racism on the Web that included all forms of racism including new racism and xeno-racism. This will be further discussed in the analysis of all data.

8.2.2. Website assessment

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, websites can be assessed for authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, coverage, and physical and technical features. Authority may be determined by assessing responsibility, the authority of those responsible, contact information, and the type of top level domain.

Of the 20 sites assessed, responsibility for the site was clearly indicated in 15 cases, and could be deduced in 1 additional case. Responsibility was not apparent in 4 sites.

An indication of the authority of the responsible person or organisation was provided by 13 sites. This was not provided by 8 sites.
With the exception of 1 site, all provided extensive contact details. The 1 site that did not did provide an email address.

Domain type was assessed in terms of the top level domain. Some countries have the equivalent of this level as their second level, for example .co.uk is the United Kingdom equivalent of the .com domain. Where this occurred these sites were included in the appropriate generic domain. The domain type of .com was found to apply to 4 sites, 1 was .edu, 2 were .gov, 1 was .net, and 12 were .org. Of the 4 .com sites, 3 were in the United States, probably as a result of the lack of restrictions in that country on access to the .com domain. None of these .com sites belonged to Web hosts, but instead the URL indicated ownership by the anti-racist site of the domain name.

Accuracy may be assessed by whether or not the site includes an outline of organisational structure and by the existence or absence of errors. Organisational structure was indicated in 12 sites. These correlated very closely with the sites that indicated the authority of the responsible organisation.

None of the sites appeared to contain errors, either in the content itself or the presentation of the content. It was not possible to fully assess 1 site as only some of the site content was available in English. Errors are perhaps now less common on websites with improvements in authoring software. Additionally, blogs and pages on community sites such as MySpace may be replacing personal websites that previously carried errors.

Objectivity can be assessed by the existence or acknowledgement of bias, the presence of advertisements indistinguishable from content, and the disclosure of affiliations. Bias was acknowledged by 19 sites, through stating the purpose of the site and the site’s position as anti-racist. The only site where this was not clear was quite confusing on other levels, and was the only site that would clearly fail a user assessment.

No sites carried advertising and so there was no issue with advertising being mixed in with content. One site did advertise its own publications for sale, but these were clearly demarcated from the content.

Affiliations were disclosed by 14 sites. These sites again correlated with those that indicated organisational structure and authority.
Currency can be assessed by the existence of ‘modification’ and ‘new additions’ dates. Only 7 sites included a ‘last modified date’ or similar indication of currency but 2 of these sites were not current. In another 7 sites, currency could be deduced by other means, such as content consisting of dated documents or media reports. Another site had a ‘last modified’ indicator on its main site but not on the English language page. A further 5 sites had no indication of currency at all. The lack of an update indicator is common problem on websites generally and even sites that do carry an indicator, may be simply automatically updating the date from the host server (McInerney & Bird 2005).

Coverage can be determined from the scope, existence of contents pages and the relationship of contents to scope. The scope of the site was outlined by 18 sites. In all cases, the content appeared to conform to the scope as described. Contents pages as such were not provided, but 16 sites had clear navigation buttons linked to pages arranged by content and structure. With improved website design software and technical features including Web content management systems, the need for separate contents pages may have been superseded.

The physical and technical aspects of the sites include layout, and use of graphics and colours. Layout of the sites was in many cases quite poor. A negative rating was given to 12 sites on this assessment. The main problems were, confusing and complex layout, and content that did not fit on the screen thus necessitating multiple scroll bars on one page.

While viewing other anti-racist sites in the course of the research, several sites were noted to have very poor use of colours, particularly backgrounds. This made legibility of the sites almost impossible. However, in this sample of 20 sites, all but 1 made restricted use of graphics and colours. This restraint aided useability and to some extent compensated for poor layout.

8.2.3. Assessment analysis

While most of the sites did well on the site assessment, the general impression of the potential of these sites to provide balance to racist disinformation, as discussed in Chapter 6, is quite poor.
Of the sites that provided balancing information, only 3 did so for Web racism. Of these, 1 did poorly on the assessment. The other 2 are government or intergovernmental organisations. All 3 are only challenging United Nations defined racism.

The 2 sites that had a stated scope of challenging all forms of racism were aimed at activists in the off-line realm and did not provide information to balance Web racism in any form. So although the sites appeared to be well aware of the various manifestations of racism, they would not play a role in balancing this racism online. However, they may do so indirectly through the actions of the activists they are assisting.

Given the small total number involved, a sample of 22% of identified sites may be insufficient to generalise about all anti-racist sites. However, the findings of the assessment do suggest that while most sites are reputable and robust, their role does not involve challenging the many forms of Web racism. Instead, they address the officially recognised and extreme forms of racism existing off-line.

These observations and the perceptions the sites have of their roles were further explored through the questionnaire.

8.3. Anti-racist website questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to explore in more detail the findings from the literature and the website assessment. While the website analysis provided a snapshot of the sites from a user perspective, the questionnaire was aimed at exploring the perceptions and opinions of those who provide the websites; the website purpose rather than actual use. The potential of the anti-racist sites to contribute over time, adapt to the changing environment, and provide balancing information was considered. The aim was not to make predications or generalise to the whole population, nevertheless some general trends and indications can be observed.

8.3.1. Administration of the questionnaire

As discussed in Chapter 7, the email inviting participation in the survey was sent to the identified 86 anti-racist websites. Survey responses were received almost immediately.
Bounces were received from 20 emails. Additionally, one site emailed to say that they were too busy, and another replied suggesting contact be made with a specific staff member and provided a new email address. An email was consequently sent to this address.

The sites that generated the bounced emails were examined. Of the 20 bounces, 7 sites were found to be either not current or the server could not be found. These 7 sites therefore were removed from the population frame.

Of the remaining 13 bounces, 5 were found to have occurred as a result of a typing error. A range of transmission errors accounted for the other 8 bounces. These errors were related to the site server or the site email server being down or the recipient’s email box being full. These total of 13 bounced emails were therefore resent. This resulted in a repeat of 4 bounces. These 4 sites were also removed from the population frame.

The final population frame was therefore 75 websites. Of course not all emails that are not received result in bounces. So it is not possible to know exactly how many of the population frame received the emails. But this problem applies to self administered surveys generally (Wright 2005).

The responses were monitored (Figure 5). Responses received on the first day numbered 4, with a further 4 on the second day. Between the eighth and eleventh days, 4 more were received. On the thirteenth day, 2 were received together with an email pointing out that the date range provided in the invitation email was inconsistent with the stated two week timeframe. The draft of the invitation email had been checked by several colleagues, demonstrating that even the most rigorous scrutiny can fail on occasions.

This possible confusion, together with the fact that the SurveyMonkey site was to be down for one day, led to a decision to extend the survey for an additional 3 days. As with the first email, a personalised reminder email was sent to the entire population. This reminder email gave a very clear closing date and time that took into account time zone differences.

As suggested by the literature (Hayslett & Wildemuth 2004), because it was not known which sites had completed the survey, the reminder commenced with a ‘thank you’ to those who had already participated. The subject line was also altered to ‘Anti-racism website survey: final request’. This established that
this was a new email, but also linked it to the previous email. It also demonstrated this was the final time the site would be emailed.

The reminder email sent on day 14 resulted in an immediate 5 new responses with another 2 on day 15. One site replied by email that they did not consider they were relevant to the survey. No further responses were received in the final 2 days (Figure 5). The final responses totalled 22.

![Figure 5. Responses per day](image)

8.3.2. Response rate

As 22 responses were received from a population frame of 75, the final response rate was 29%. As discussed in Chapter 7, the literature reports much lower response rates for Web surveys and suggests that, ‘it is doubtful whether response rates above 20% can be reached …’ (Andrews, Nonnecke & Preece 2003).

The emails received and the comments on the questionnaire were all encouraging and positive, and 10 sites requested information on the results. This suggests that it is likely that the particular population sampled and the relationship that that population feels with each other may have been a contributing factor to the willingness to participate. Certainly the undertaking to share the outcomes was well received, with such comments as:

Kudos to you for taking on such a volatile, yet critical, issue.

I think this is a really interesting idea and I’d be really keen to see the finished result.
8.3.3. Measurement error

The nonresponse to individual questions was also very low. Questions in the first 3 sections were only skipped by 1 individual respondent. The open ended questions resulted in approximately 50% skipped questions. However, those that did complete this section clearly put considerable thought and effort into their responses. This characteristic was also noted in all of the questions where the ‘other’ option was selected.

The early responses were received from Europe, which initially appeared unusual as there were comparatively fewer sites from these locations in the sample frame. Of course this distribution in fact reflected the differing time zones in relation to Australia.

Responses were monitored several times a day and no unusual activity was observed. Spikes in the response rate coincided with the first and second emails, and the initial closing date. There were no unusual responses and no apparent duplicates.

When the responses to the questionnaire are cross referenced with relevant items in the website assessment, such as organisation type and location, it appears that the response population for the questionnaire is typical of the anti-racist website population.

Nonresponse error may be evident in the skipped open ended questions. However, a comparison of all the responses for the group that answered these questions, with all responses overall, found very similar patterns. The only slight difference was that this group was more likely to focus specifically on anti-racism than on human rights or anti-hate more generally. As those that responded to the open ended questions appear to be those that are most involved in anti-racism on the Web, they form a discrete population frame and their open ended responses are therefore very pertinent.

Language did not appear to be an issue, as 5 responses were from non–English speaking countries. The 1 site that skipped nearly all the questions was from the United Kingdom, so it is unlikely that language was a reason for the skipped questions.
8.3.4. Questionnaire administration summary

The questionnaire was designed and administered by means that had been identified through the literature as having achieved the best outcomes in previous Web surveys. The subject line, personalised email, and reminder email all appear to have played a part in achieving a good response rate and responses from a variety of types of site. Considerable time and effort was put into these aspects of the questionnaire. While the resultant response rate appears to support the literature on Web surveys, the particular characteristics of the population being surveyed may also be relevant.

Anti-racist organisations and individuals may have a strong sense of group identity and rely on networking. The opportunity to share ideas through the survey, combined with the undertaking that they would be informed of the results, may well have carried a particular incentive for this population.

8.3.5. Responses

The detailed responses to all individual questions except the open ended questions are provided in Appendix D. The full text of the open ended responses is not included, as some responses identify the responsible organisations.

When discussing specific questions, all percentages given are a percentage of the number of sites that responded to the given question, not a percentage of the number of responses overall. Where the ‘other’ option has been utilised and the written response is very similar to one of the provided options, these responses have been merged for the purpose of the discussion below. For example, sites that stated they are funded by the European Commission are considered as ‘government funded’ for the purposes of the discussion.

Q. What best describes the type of organisation responsible for your website?

Of the 22 responses, 12 or 54.5% were from websites that belonged to non-government organisations (NGOs). The next largest group represented were personal websites accounting for 5 or 22.7% of responses (Figure 6).
Q. Where does the responsible organisation or individual operate?

Only 4 or 18.2% of respondents operated solely on the Web.

Q. In what country is your website based?

There were 2 websites located in Canada, 3 in Australia and New Zealand, 5 in Europe, 5 in the United Kingdom, and 7 in the United States (Figure 7).

Q. What is the primary source of funding for your site?

Self funded sites comprised 33% of respondents, while 14.3% of respondents relied on donations. The next most common form of funding was from government.

Q. How long has your site been on the Web?

All sites had been on the Web for at least 2 years, with 72.7% in existence for 5 years or more.
Q. What is the primary focus of your site?

Anti-racism was the focus of 63.6% of sites. Anti-hate was the focus of 18.2%, with human rights in general the focus of 13.6%, while 1 site was specifically concerned with anti-Semitism (Figure 8).

![Figure 8. Website focus (n = 22)](image)

Q. How many people contribute content to your site?

The question of how many people contribute content to the site generated response clusters of under 5 and over 10.

Q. How are they employed?

The employment of full-time and part-time staff was reported in similar numbers.

Q. What are their employment terms?

Voluntary staff were employed at 42.9% of sites.

Q. Who is your primary target audience?

None of the sites had holders of racist beliefs as their primary target audience. For the majority of sites, including those who chose the ‘other’ option, the general public, in some instances including children, were the primary target audience. Anti-racist activists were the primary target of 2 sites.

Q. Where is the target audience located?

A home country audience was the target of 38.1% of sites, with 19% aiming at their own region and 42.9% aiming at a worldwide audience.

Q. Does your site provide information in a format specifically for children?
Of the 21 responses, 5 provided content in a format aimed at children.

Q. What is the primary content of your site?

The primary form of content carried for 40% of sites was in the form of documents and publications. A further 25% focused on links and networking, while 35% used a mixture of content.

Q. What is the primary technique used by your site to counter racism?

The provision of accurate information was the main means of countering racism for 45% of sites. Many of the sites that answered ‘other’ also utilised this technique. Only 2 sites publicised racist sites. This is interesting as earlier in the development of anti-racism on the Web, this technique was more commonly employed. A further 2 sites used government lobbying to counter racism.

Q. What is the primary technique used to publicise your site?

Email lists were the most commonly used method of publicity, closely followed by the use of metatags. Few sites submitted to search engines, with 1 response pointing out that this is not always free of charge.

Q. Does your site support censorship of racist websites?

A question regarding support for censorship of racist websites was answered by 19 respondents. Censorship was supported by 47.4%, with 52.6% against.

Q. Do your staff interact with other anti-racist sites to share ideas and cooperate?

The respondents almost unanimously reported that the staff at their site share ideas and cooperate with other anti-racist sites. While this may be accurate, it is possible that this question was answered in the affirmative because of a perception that it was the acceptable answer.

Filtering the responses to the questions provided some opportunity for more detailed analysis.

Of the 5 sites that were personal websites, all relied totally on voluntary labour, with 4 of the sites the work of one person each. Responses based on region provide some interesting results. Of the 7 sites located in the United States, 4 were personal websites. All 7 United States sites opposed censorship of racist sites.
Of the 3 sites located in Australia and New Zealand, 2 were non-government organisations that relied on donations and part-time voluntary staff, the third was a government organisation with paid full-time staff. All 3 sites aimed at an audience in their own country or region.

Sites located in the United Kingdom numbered 5. These were 80% non-government organisations. Of 4 that answered the question, 1 provided information in a format specifically for children. Only 3 sites answered the question regarding support for censorship, with 1 being against.

There were 5 sites located in European countries other than the United Kingdom. These were either non-government or personal websites. None provided information in a format specifically for children. The question regarding support for censorship was answered by 4 sites, with 75% being against.

Information in a format specifically for children was provided by 5 sites. These sites were located in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, and represented a range of organisational types. A position on censorship was reported by 4 of these sites, with 75% being opposed.

The open ended questions provided extensive insight into the aims and perceptions of the websites. Selected quotations from the open ended responses are used in the following discussion, and are edited to remove identifying information.

The request to provide a definition of racism resulted in 12 responses. While several used the term ‘race’ as if it had objective meaning, most recognised that it was a socially constructed term. Most definitions included the issue of power, while two focused on race as hate. Two definitions allowed for the term to comprise the newer forms of racism including xeno-racism:

  Discrimination and exclusion of people of difference based on colour, ethnicity, national origin, religion or culture. Racism also includes xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and anti-Roma, and the inequality of treatment between European Union citizens and third country nationals.

  A power relation grounded on race or a constructed perception of race aiming at ensuring the supremacy of a specific ethno-cultural group in a specific area/country/region.
The question ‘what do you see as the main threats posed by racism on the Web?’ was asked to see if these threats differ from those raised in the literature.

Responses pointed out that Web content is not as ephemeral as it originally appeared to be. Racist content can be regenerated and repackaged and even sites that are taken down can reappear. One response expressed concern at the harassing potential of Web racism. Two responses were concerned about the particular impact on young people, while others emphasised the accessibility of racist material and the recruiting potential of the Web. Of the 11 responses, 8 viewed Web racism as exacerbating racism generally.

Two responses raised the issue of racism as disinformation:

- Dissemination of myths and ‘lazy’ racism, taken for granted shared assumptions. More seriously and for some users, a development of a systemic racist frame of reference.
- Misleading and misguiding people through presentation of false data. Also the sharing of ideas across the world, instantaneously in such a way as to make it difficult for the public at large to determine the veracity of the materials.

The question ‘what recent trends have you noted in racism on the Web?’ was asked to see if these sites had noted a change in the characteristics of Web racism. As all the sites have been on the Web for several years, the responses to this question should be well informed.

Three responses considered that racism on the Web in general is increasing and that racist sites are increasing in numbers faster than are anti-racist sites.

Two responses focused on the use of new technologies, such as YouTube, to promote racism:

- Racist groups are also sophisticated in their use of new technologies, and integrate these into their websites.

One response considered that the incidences of scientific racism websites were increasing but these sites were now employing more sophisticated arguments:

- A trend towards more and more scientific racism, advocacy of biological causes for black-white IQ differences, use of statistics such as crime rates, generally a greater number of intelligent and educated racists.
Responses from three sites highlighted significant changes in the characteristics of racism on the Web:

In the UK, some switch in opposition to white immigration and emphasis on cultural exclusivity rather than biological superiority, though the latter is always there under the surface.

There’s an increase of racial hatred in ‘common’, ‘mainstream’ fora, chat rooms, which are not linked to racist websites. It is even more difficult to tackle as the people expressing themselves are just ‘normal’ citizens and not hardcore, easily identifiable racists or extremists.

It has become a tad more mainstream. That is, there is less uber-extreme racism, while there is more general racism/hidden racism. This has been going on for the past years and it is a sign that the ‘serious’ racist wants more power (they want to be something that can give them power).

The question ‘what do you see as future developments in anti-racism on the Web?’ was asked to ascertain ideas for new strategies for anti-racist websites.

Reflecting the concerns expressed in the previous question, three responses stressed the need for anti-racist sites to utilise new and emerging technologies:

Racist groups are going to continue to embrace the tools of Web 2.0 to spread their message, so it’s important that anti-racist groups can remain a step ahead to counteract that message.

Four responses felt that legal and lobbying strategies need to be increased, broadened and coordinated across regions and worldwide. One stressed the benefits of sharing of best practice, and information sharing in general. Another suggested that xenophobic racism should be included in any anti-racist legislation.

However, one site felt that anti-racism on the Web:

Will be forced to confront intelligent arguments by racists rather than just shutting down debate.

One response suggested that the Web is less of an issue as:

I think it is drowning in an overwhelming mass of information. I think that both racist and anti-racist now are well connected (through social networks) and that the importance of being on the Web is not as evident as before.
8.3.6. Discussion and analysis

As the balance provided by anti-racist websites is the primary focus of this research, the responses need to be analysed with this in mind. An analysis of the answers to the short questions will assist in an assessment of the viability of anti-racist sites for providing balance.

A site needs to be viable over a period of time in order to effectively provide balance. This is because it takes time for a new to be recognised by search engines. At a minimum, it would need to exist for several months before it was included, and had a chance of rating well, in search engine results. Similarly, it would be unlikely to be linked from other sites unless it was well established. All the websites that responded had been in existence for at least 2 years and most had been operating for at least 5 years.

At 5 sites, only 1 person contributed content, which would seem to put these sites at some risk if that person became unavailable. Of these sites, 4 were personal websites. This might suggest that these sites are in jeopardy in the long term. Nevertheless, most had been in operation for at least 5 years, indicating a level of interest and commitment that has sustained the sites.

A similar situation exists with the employment terms of the staff who contributed content. While 71.5% of sites who responded to this question relied on voluntary labour to some extent, given the length of time that the sites had operated, it appears that reliance on volunteers is not a negative indication of a site’s viability in the long term. A reliance on volunteer staff does not provide an indication that the site is at risk of closure.

Similarly, type of funding source does not appear to provide any indication as to the viability of a site. As would be expected, most of the personal websites were self funded, but overall the sites reported a mix of funding arrangements. Nothing can be assumed regarding funding continuity for each funding source. Perhaps a question regarding security of funding may have been more relevant to an evaluation of site viability.

Again, as all sites that responded had been in existence for several years, the type of organisation responsible for a website cannot in this case provide any indication of its long term viability.
As the sites all seem to be viable over several years, the next issues are whether or not they are providing balancing material, what type of racism they are balancing, and whether they have the capacity to adapt to changing manifestations of racism on the Web.

The provision of balancing content in the form of accurate information was the primary technique of almost half the sites, with many others also carrying such content. Again, the main content type of approximately half the sites was documents and publications. However, from the more detailed answers given to the ‘other’ option, it appears that some of this material is designed for use in the off-line environment, such as for school projects and campaign posters. It is not carried specifically to challenge racism on the Web.

All sites dealt with anti-racism in some format, with 31% also addressing other human rights or hate issues. The answers to the open ended questions show that many of the respondents were identifying racism with the older forms of racism based on characteristics such as physical appearance. Nevertheless, the fact that almost unanimously, the respondents stated that their sites interact with others to share ideas is encouraging. Certainly within Europe, Australia and New Zealand there does appear to be some evidence of awareness about the newer forms of racism and the need to address these.

The target audience of the majority of sites was the general public. Interestingly, no sites targeted holders of racist beliefs. It seems that going ‘head to head’ with racists except to expose their lies is not considered worth the effort. There is some evidence to support this, with findings that reasoned argument is ineffective with holders of strong beliefs, ‘you might sway the uncommitted, but preaching to the opposition is usually fruitless’ (Ayton 2000).

Several sites did however provide content in a format specifically designed for children. Whether or not this is an effective counter to the child-focused racist sites, is not known. Most of the child-focused content appeared to be for the use of teachers and for school projects.

Despite Web content being available to a worldwide audience, 57% of respondents stated that their site aimed its content at a local or regional audience. This may mean that they focus on local manifestations of racism and are therefore more likely to address racism in its newer forms. The 3 Australian
and New Zealand sites focused 100% on that region. Many of the United Kingdom sites also focused locally. The United States sites were more oriented to a worldwide audience. The small numbers of sites overall, and the fact that some are a Web presence for an off-line local organisation which obviously would focus locally, mean that only general indications can be identified.

As discussed in Chapter 6, even if sites do provide balancing information, the sites need to be seen by Web users in order for that balance to be effected. The sites were chosen because they appeared in search results or because they were linked from other anti-racist sites. So clearly, these sites are visible to Web users. However, it is interesting to see how they achieved this visibility.

Only 1 site did not use any publicity techniques and few submitted to search engines. Use of metatags was the primary publicity technique for 4 sites, and was also used by 1 other. The majority of sites used email lists and several reported circulation of information within relevant communities. This is supported by the fact that many of the sites in the population frame were identified through links from another anti-racist site which relied on link submission.

Targeted publicity is obviously of importance to these sites. Particular attention is paid to publicity that may reach the target audience:

Originally it was paper flyers to every school in the country, then links to other relevant sites, especially government recommended curriculum sites.

Most of the sites are visible to an audience that is looking for anti-racist information. Further research would be required to see how many of these sites appear in searches using terms that may relate to racist content.

Judging from the results of this analysis, anti-racist sites are generally well established, are stable and are viable in the long term. They appear to have well thought out scope including target audience and to provide content to suit that scope. Over half the sites focused on a local country or regional audience. This, together with the interaction with other sites, may mean that local variations of racism may be balanced.

While many sites are aware of racism on the Web and have observed trends, few have the provision of balance to Web racism within their scope. The
content that they carry may well provide such balance, but it is not their primary aim.

While the open ended questions were only answered by some respondents, they provided an opportunity for the anti-racist sites to reflect upon their roles. The questions were designed to examine the perceptions and opinions of those responsible for anti-racist content on the Web. While the majority of the questionnaire consisted of questions suggested from the literature, the open ended questions were included to try to ensure that no other issues, not apparent from the literature, were missed. The answers may also provide further corroboration of the findings of the literature.

The responses indicated a well thought through perception of racism. While the depth of that perception varied, most definitions were complex and considered. However, the briefest definitions were also those that did not acknowledge ‘race’ as a socially constructed term. As discussed in Chapter 4, appreciating the nature of the term ‘race’ is a necessary step to tackling racism (Malik 1996; Hollinsworth 1998; Graves 2001). Common assumptions about race need to be challenged along with challenging racism itself.

While most of the sites that responded to this question did demonstrate an understanding that races do not exist, of concern is those majority of sites that did not respond to the question. Sites that challenge racism while accepting that races exist are imparting disinformation despite their best intentions.

As mentioned, only two of the provided definitions covered all forms of racism. While the numbers of responses to this question were low, this knowledge gap nevertheless raises some concerns. The Chapter 4 analysis of the literature on racism found that racism takes many forms. While the crude scientific racism is still very evident, newer forms have evolved that many people do not recognise as racism and so do not consider to need addressing.

While it is encouraging that some responses did recognise the xenophobic character of newer forms of racism, it appears that Castles and Vasta (1996) are correct in suggesting that many anti-racist groups have not kept pace with changes in racism. It is vital that anti-racism raises awareness of all the many forms of racism and does confront racism whatever its outward appearance.
The responses to the question regarding the main threats posed by racism on the Web mirror the findings from the literature as detailed in Chapter 5. The early problems identified with Web racism clearly continue to exist. As with Web content in general, racist content is difficult to completely remove:

Once racist content is on the Web, it will never disappear.

The site that provided the above quote also made the point that once on the Web, the racism is then in the public domain and has an impact that also will not disappear.

- ease of accessibility to racist information
  - it’s much easier to access hardcore texts that would have been virtually impossible for a young person to access pre-Internet
  - reaching a much larger audience thereby spreading hate quickly and more effectively

As was previously raised by Hilliard and Keith (1999), recruitment to racist organisations is identified by several respondents as a persistent aspect of Web racism:

- It’s a much more effective youth recruiting tool than those used in the past.

The Web replaces pamphlets and posters, and the dynamic aspect of this propaganda was also pointed out. Technical aspects of the Web mean that information can be presented in an interesting format and can be updated very easily.

Several authors (Birnbauer 2000; Chaudhry 2000; Gennacot 2000) have predicted that the Web will increasingly be used for active harassment of individuals. While this was not a major point in the responses, several did raise the issue, particularly as it applied to students.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the opinion in the literature was mixed on whether Web racism exacerbated off-line racism. However, responses to the questionnaire were in no doubt that there was a connection, and that Web racism:

- may inspire hardened racists to commit acts of violence.

As well as leading directly to physical attacks, the impact on community attitudes was also of concern as Web racism could:
lead to a ‘divisive community’ and ‘community disharmony’.

racism on the Web clearly fuels hate and creates a sense of ‘we’ and ‘them’
which are taken and applied in the real world.

Web racism as disinformation was raised in 2 responses. The provision of false
information in combination with the ease with which that disinformation could
be distributed was highlighted. The issue was seen as even more worrying
because users would have no way to assess the truthfulness of what they read.
These responses reflect the opinions in the literature discussed in Chapter 4
regarding the interrelatedness of Web characteristics compounding the
difficulty of tackling racism on the Web.

The question regarding trends in racism on the Web brought responses noting a
continuing growth in racist websites. Concern was expressed that anti-racist
websites were not growing at the same rate. Certainly, the current edition of the
Hate Directory, a website that monitors racist and anti-racist organisations on
the Web, lists 126 pages of hate websites and only 1 page of anti-hate sites.

However, an examination of the Australian racist websites listed in the Hate
Directory found that of the 28 sites listed, only 1 still existed 5 months after
publication of the latest edition of the Hate Directory. It appears that racist
websites are particularly short-lived.

As discussed in Chapter 5, exact counts of racist websites are difficult to
achieve, as are comparisons of counts over time. Nevertheless, the experiences
of the respondents do concur with the available evidence in the literature.

While the literature proposed that racist organisations have been revitalised
through the Web, one respondent suggested that the characteristics of Web
racism mirror those of racism off-line:

Racist groups on the Web have begun fracturing in the same manner as their
real-life counterparts (maybe slightly quicker). Personality clashes and power
plays lead to splinter groups being formed and those divisions sometimes spill
out into real-world divisions. Everyone wants to be fuehrer, I guess.

It may be that to some extent it is these divisions that are leading to a
proliferation of racist websites, rather than them being created by newly
involved organisations or individuals. As Kitchin (1998) states:
Life on-line is not completely divorced from non-virtual life but is highly situated within it. On-line spaces are not completely disembodied but rather are highly embodied, with real-world discrimination and abuse reproducing itself in a new space. In this context, cyberspatial studies would be interested in the social and cultural processes operating at the intersections between virtual and non-virtual worlds, the interplay and historical context involved between individuals and institutions, and how cyberspatial developments and interactions are situated within broader political and economic structures and mechanisms (p. 98).

As mentioned, many other responses to this question focused on the content of the racist websites. These responses echo the findings from the literature reviewed in Chapters 4 and 5 in regard to what is occurring in the off-line world. While many of the extreme forms of racism are utilising apparent scientific arguments and academic status to support their contentions, newer forms of racism are also becoming evident on the Web. The public acceptability of the cultural arguments of new racism and xeno-racism are clearly a major concern for some anti-racist sites. As in the off-line world, countering these racisms is extremely difficult, when most people do not view them as racism.

Responses regarding both trends in Web racism and future developments for anti-racism on the Web, stressed the utilisation of new and emerging technologies. Racist groups were quick to see potential in the Web and, as discussed in Chapter 5, have been equally quick to utilise new Web-based technologies. While many of these newer technologies are currently able to be differentiated from other Web content, it is likely that they will very soon be indistinguishable. Blogs, community spaces, alternative reality sites, video sites, games, and streaming images and audio files, are already commonly linked to or even incorporated within websites. Yet more developments are on the horizon. Anti-racist sites will need to keep up with these changes and be ready to tackle racism in any medium.

One site however suggested that being on the Web, is not as necessary for anti-racist groups as it once was. While this response may be peculiar to that organisation’s situation, it may also relate to the utilisation of new technologies. For the operation of both racist and anti-racist organisations, links through social network sites such a MySpace may enable the sharing of
ideas and tactics that were formally shared through a public website. Similarly
membership recruitment may be facilitated through these sites. In terms of
providing balance to racist material though, social network sites have privacy
provisions and do not usually appear in search engine results. Certainly,
research will be needed into how racist groups are utilising these new
technologies.

8.4. Analysis of all data

The three data collections methods were employed to examine the research question
on a number of levels. The role and effectiveness of Websites can be studied in
multiple ways and from the perspective of many different disciplines. The present
research has drawn on several of these disciplines and attempted to find a
transdisciplinary approach that enables many levels of assessment to be undertaken.
Research methods were combined, without ignoring the particular requirements of
each method. Information derived from this combination can lead to a deeper and
more accurate understanding of the occurrence. The data collection methods can to
some extent be triangulated for cross referencing and also to identify trends that may
only become apparent through a comparison of results from several data collection
methods. Nevertheless, it is important to be clear what conclusions the evidence does
and does not allow to be made.

The website longevity assessment was carried out on sites that had been identified 5
years previously. While this allowed comparison with published findings from
assessments over similar time periods, it does not allow direct comparisons with the
findings from the questionnaire which involved a current population frame. However,
the comparison does give an indication of changes in stability of anti-racist websites
over the past 5 years. These may also relate to changes in websites generally over this
time period. Therefore, the findings provide an indication of trends in anti-racist
website stability.

The website assessment examines a sample of websites taken from the same
population used to conduct the questionnaire. Because the overall population is small,
caution should be exercised in drawing conclusions, but the results can certainly be
compared with those of the questionnaire to identify trends and corroborate findings
related to particular groups of websites within the overall population.
Web questionnaires have been noted in some research to have several administration problems, leading to low response rates and measurement error:

... nonrandom sampling, technological problems with delivery, inconsistencies with the medium of delivery, security issues, problems with Internet junk mail, and other factors converge to make Web-based surveys a problematic delivery method even for select populations that use the Internet in their everyday lives (Sills & Song 2002, p. 23).

Other research has described the identification of these issues as being, ‘based upon considerable, but unsystematic, observations of questionnaires and individuals attempting to complete them’ (Dillman & Bowker 2001 n.p.).

From an analysis of the varying conclusions in the literature, best practice principles as applied to a discrete identifiable population of Web users were developed. This included considering the specific characteristics of that group.

While an attempt was made to include all members of the defined group, sampling error may have occurred because of possible noncoverage. But because of the multiple methods used to identify the entire population of anti-racist sites, this sampling error would be limited.

Websites that identify as anti-racist are not numerous, so sampling was not employed to determine the population frame. Reported response rates for Web surveys have varied widely (Sills & Song 2002, p. 25), but a response rate of 29% can be considered very good.

The results, while providing an indication of the situation for all such sites, should not be generalised to the entire anti-racist website population. This is because the method of analysis relies largely on observation and qualitative analysis. In addition, the small total population frame means that responses from, or observations of, individual sites can significantly influence the quantitative data. Nevertheless, the findings ‘do offer insight into respondent’s behaviours that are the focus of this exploratory research’ (Flanagin & Metzger 2000, p. 533).

When combined with the results from the other data collection methods, more certainty can be arrived at. However, a critical realist approach does not seek findings that can be generalised. Such research cannot result in universal laws but rather leads to deeper understanding within a clearly demarcated set of conditions.
8.5. Summary

The findings from the three data collection methods have provided some insight into the role of anti-racist websites in providing balance to racist websites. Broadly, anti-racist websites are stable and assessable to users. They have clearly identified scope and carry content that fulfils that stated scope. They address racism both on and off the Web and are up-to-date with the potential of new technologies. However, their balancing capacity is limited by the types of racism they are targeting and their limited knowledge and understanding of the newer forms of racism.

The concluding chapter considers these results in the light of the earlier findings from the study of the literature. This involves situating the results within the open system in which the Web operates and discussing the implications of the interrelatedness of Web and off-line environments. As the aim of a critical realist methodology is to be transformative, the outcomes of this research as potential for leading to action will be discussed. Final conclusions are drawn including recommendations for future research.
9. Conclusions

The research examined the phenomenon of racist disinformation on the Web and posited that anti-racist sites may provide balance to this racism. The racist disinformation was examined and alternative means of countering the racism were investigated through the literature. None of the alternative means were without problems, and discussion of these problems frequently arrived at the conclusion that balance was the only long-term solution.

A critical realist methodology demands that multiple interacting mechanisms be studied, but recognises that not every mechanism can be assessed. In such a complex area as the focus of this research, it is not possible to conduct research from every possible approach. Opportunities may be missed in the attempt to assess and to influence every aspect of the phenomenon.

The adoption of a critical realist methodology enabled particular aspects of the phenomenon to be identified as suitable for study, while at the same time recognising that other aspects could also be chosen. Critical realism suggests that research methods need to be shown to be appropriate to the aspect of the problem being studied. But the selection of research methods also depends on access to the study site and on the previous experience of the researcher. The use of multiple methods of study in conjunction with the recognition of the limits of the chosen methods aims to avoid the dilemma of the research methodology causing more problems than it solves, or else:

Like a pair of binoculars, it can help us see some things very clearly, but it can cause tunnel vision that excludes that essential background. And used the wrong way round, it ruins perspective by making important things look insignificant, and vice versa (Wilk 1999 p. 39).

With this in mind, the literature assessment was as significant an element in the study as the data collection. The methods of data collection could not have been identified without the thorough study of the literature. Additionally, this literature study enabled the phenomenon to be situated historically and culturally. This informed the recognition that the research site is not a closed system, and that the characteristics of an open system entail complexity and the need for multiple-level analysis.

9.1. Findings from the literature

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 reviewed the available literature on a range of issues relevant to the phenomenon under consideration. Firstly the concept of race, and the
development of racism were considered. Race was shown to be a political and social construct as there is no scientific evidence to support the concept of the differentiation of human populations based on skin colour and other superficial characteristics. While this fact is acknowledged in scientific circles, it is not widely understood by the public in general who continue to act on the belief that the existence of races is an objective fact.

The literature on racism was analysed as it applies particularly to Australia. This necessitated extensive discussion of the literature from the United Kingdom, as Australian racism draws much from United Kingdom developments and the academic examination of Australian racism is relatively limited. This analysis situated the phenomenon within an historical and cultural setting, enabling a deeper understanding of the relationship with Web-based racism and anti-racism.

Racism was shown to take many forms and to be adaptive to political and cultural circumstances. While racism in its older form of scientific racism is largely discredited, it still exists in instances of physical and psychological abuse and within some institutions. However, this type of racism is largely abhorrent to the general public and is frequently banned through legislation.

Racism has now taken on the forms of new racism and xeno-racism, which do not discriminate against people on the basis of skin colour, but simply on the basis of difference, be that cultural, national, economic or some other determinant. This has enabled prejudicial comments, discrimination and inequitable treatment to be carried out by individuals, organisations and governments while denying that such actions are racist.

The combination of the persistent belief in the actuality of race, and the failure to understand the various forms of racism has led to a situation where racism is frequently not recognised, not exposed and not challenged.

The literature related to the disinformation capacity of the Web was assessed. Disinformation can be created from a lack of completeness, a lack of objectivity, or from a lack of pluralism. It can be unintentional, intentional or voluntary and can arise from ignorance, coercion or impotence. The Web has great potential for the spreading of disinformation because of the ease and speed with which content can be disseminated, and the relative absence of checks on the quality of information.
Racist websites can spread disinformation by using fabricated data, distorting truth or not providing the complete facts about an issue. Instead, such sites selectively choose historical evidence and quotations from eminent individuals to distort the information they provide. The spread and acceptance of this disinformation can be facilitated by the users of the sites through their ignorance of the topic, their lack of ability to distinguish authoritative websites or their impotence to control the information they receive via search engines and links from websites.

Through the literature, an assessment was made of the various alternatives for addressing racist disinformation on the Web. Alternatives included anti-racist legislation, censorship, filtering and rating systems, and service agreements. All the alternatives were problematic and the outlook appeared to be getting worse for the application of controls that did not unduly inhibit the positive information sharing capacity of the Web.

The possibility of allowing free speech, combined with the potential to provide balancing information to the racist disinformation, was seen as a prospective alternative. Anti-racism in general faces problems in addressing the various types of racism, and the resultant divergent approaches are evident in anti-racism on the Web. The capacity of anti-racist sites to provide balance will depend on the effectiveness of the anti-racist sites. To be effective, such balancing information would need to address the many types of racism present on the Web and be seen and utilised by Web users.

9.2. Data results related to literature findings

The data collected from the website assessment and from the questionnaire suggest that there are certainly many websites that provide anti-racist perspectives and challenge racism. These websites are not as numerous as the racist websites, but this in itself may not be an issue if they have high visibility and credibility.

The sites in the study had been in existence for several years and appeared to have viable funding sources and a consistent staff profile to provide content. They were located across many countries and, while some provided an anti-racist perspective that was aimed at a world-wide audience, many targeted specific content to a local audience.

Whether the sites are seen by users is to some extent beyond the control of the sites. However, most did attempt to publicise their sites, although largely to an audience
already receptive to an anti-racist message. Because the sites had been on the Web for some years, the likelihood of them appearing in search engine results is good.

The sites scored well on a website assessment for authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency and coverage. The results of the questionnaire demonstrate that sites do give consideration to scope and audience. However, the capacity of users to make their own assessments of a comparison of the veracity of information from racist and anti-racist websites is problematic. As discussed in Chapter 6, search proficiency and the ability to assess websites are both skills that take some time to acquire and may require user education.

To provide effective balance, anti-racist websites also need to carry content that does balance the content carried by the racist websites. It is the findings in relation to this area that leave doubt about the efficacy of anti-racist websites to provide balance to racism on the Web.

Most of the sites in the website assessment and those that responded to the questionnaire focused on addressing manifestations of racism in the off-line world. They were established to provide support for anti-racist activists, to supply anti-racist curriculum material for teachers, to provide publicity for real world anti-racist initiatives such as museums, to supply anti-racist project matter for school children, or to provide a place of support for those who have been subjected to racist harassment.

These objectives are all critical to the variety of tasks needed to combat racism, but they do not address Web racism directly and few provide balancing material to Web racism. ‘While information on-line might seem geographically dislocated, information is only as useful as the locale within which the body resides’ (Kitchin 1998, p. 16).

Those that do provide this material are targeting the extreme forms of racism. There is a danger that if this is the only anti-racism on the Web, the impression will be given that this is also the only form of racism on the Web. This will lead to a continuation of the belief that racism only exists in extreme forms.

This reflects the findings from the literature that anti-racism often focuses on occurrences of individual racism involving physical threats from extreme racist groups and individuals. As in the off-line realm, this can give the false impression that racism is only committed by individuals and that it is not present in governing
institutions. It also fails to identify and address racism in its newer cultural and economic forms.

Of course, the Web is not an isolated phenomenon. By providing support for off-line anti-racism, anti-racist websites may indirectly influence the disinformation potential of racist websites. Certainly, users who have been exposed to anti-racist information in their schools and communities will be better equipped to recognise racist disinformation when they encounter it on the Web.

The anti-racist websites, through their support of off-line anti-racist activities, may also ease the impact of Web-based racism. The questionnaire responses identified concerns with Web racism beyond the disinformation aspects. These concerns included ease of recruitment to the racist organisations, harassment of individuals and groups, and the impact on the wider community.

The challenge for anti-racism on the Web, as with all anti-racism, is to be adaptive to the changing face of racism, to recognise the individual and institutional expressions of racism, and to understand the historical, political and cultural systems that create and support varying instances of racism. Without these understandings, it will not be possible to effectively challenge racism.

The responses to the open ended questions did demonstrate a level of understanding and appreciation of the complexity involved. Responses also recognised the changing use of technology and the recent changes in focus of some racist websites. This, together with the networking and communication that appears to be undertaken among anti-racist websites, suggest some hope that such websites will be adaptive to changes in the racist field of reference, even if this adaptation lags a little behind the racist phenomenon that it is challenging.

This research has raised the complex issues involved in identifying and addressing racist disinformation on the Web. Racism has been defined as covering much more than the extreme and well recognised forms. Appreciation of the interrelationship of the Web and off-line environments has provided key insights to the research.

9.3. Research in a complex system

Central to a critical realist approach is the recognition that, in the social sciences, sites of study are never closed. This is particularly pertinent to any study of the Internet and clearly a crucial point in the present research. The impact of Web racism is
significant for Web users but it also extends into the off-line world. The Web is part of a wider political, social and cultural system and it is an element that is becoming increasingly indistinguishable from other forms of social interaction and information sharing.

Through an historical analysis of the development of racism and an assessment of the current impact of Web racism, this research has attempted to understand the structure of relations and constraints that influence both Web racism and the attempts to counter that racism. Without this understanding, no explanation of the phenomenon would be possible.

Additionally it must be recognised that not all interrelating aspects can be studied in the one research project. An awareness of this fact and an acceptance that other factors may be at play is also crucial to any understanding:

… we need to consider the Internet within a framework that extends beyond the analysis of isolated Web sites and computer-mediated communication. The world is not cut-off by the Internet; we need to take other social forces, such as media, time frames, and resources into consideration. Everything is connected (Hara & Estrada 2003).

Society is replicated and altered by human actors. It is important to understand why they do what they do within a particular time, culture and place. Changing social norms, beliefs and values must be understood as they influence social actors. From the data results it is evident that there are differences in approach among the respondents depending on the physical location of the websites and the category of organisation or individuals responsible. But given the worldwide purview of the Web, these variations can influence perceptions and actions everywhere.

The various interacting mechanisms and levels within this study demonstrate that the Web is a complex system in its own right, but when historical, current political, social and cultural circumstances, and possibilities for significant changes in the near future, are also considered, the multifaceted and intricately interwoven levels make understanding and explanation particularly challenging:

While I think that cyberspace is going to have significant impacts upon our lives…our analysis of how these effects will take place needs to be framed in the wider context in which we live our lives (Kitchin 1998, p. xiv).
9.4. Understanding but not prediction

For this reason, understanding and explanation are the most that such a study can achieve. Generalisation and prediction are not considered possible in the types of sites in which a critical realist methodology is employed.

Predication is additionally made impossible by the particular nature of the Web, and the unrelenting development of new technologies and innovations. Such developments may influence the ways in which searches are conducted, results sorted, and information filtered. They may also influence the ways in which the Web is utilised, for example some users are migrating from using the Web as an open information source to social networking in an enclosed and semi-private environment.

The following quotation written in 2000 remains pertinent today:

One of the key challenges to scholars conducting Internet research: It is difficult for research to keep pace with a medium that is evolving so quickly. In effect, this is an exciting, daunting, and necessary task if we are to chart the course of the Internet’s evolution. Important to the enterprise is to note the specific points at which snapshots of this evolution occur (Flanagin & Metzger 2000, p. 535 notes).

New search capabilities that enable searches for documents containing structured information may help to make search results much more specific and in accordance with the intent of the search query (Golson 2000, p. 53). The Semantic Web is enabling more exact searches drawing on multiple websites and platforms to produce results that accord exactly with user needs:

Many commentators have made the error of dealing with technological innovation as self-contained and autonomous, rather then situating their thoughts within the context of wider debates and changes (Kitchin 1998, p. 22).

Convergent technologies mean that the Web can be accessed in a variety of ways and the material available increasingly less resembles the static documents of a newspaper or a book. Attempts to predict where this will develop in the next few years show that legislation and technological solutions for one part of the problem will not necessarily work in the future:

In view of the accelerating technological change going on around us, Governments must face the fact that the intellectual and legal framework of the traditional censorship regime is rapidly being made redundant (Debus 2003 n.p.).
With awareness of this ever changing environment, a response to the research question can only provide an indication of the current situation.

9.5. Research question

The research question was: Is the ‘balance’ provided by anti-racist sites a viable means of countering the dissemination of racist disinformation on the Web?

An evaluation involves deciding if something is achieving its goals. The anti-racist sites all provide content suitable to their scope. But very few purposely provide content to balance the racist disinformation present on the Web. However, they do provide content in support of anti-racism off-line. As the Web is part of an open system, campaigns and actions undertaken off-line will have an impact on the user perception of the information they locate on the Web.

The fact that few anti-racist sites challenge the newer forms of racism is a reflection of anti-racism in general. However, the sites located in the United Kingdom and Europe were aware of xeno-racism and the need to address it. One Australian and New Zealand site was also particularly concerned with cultural racism. This leads to the conclusion that anti-racism in general in these locations is rising to the challenge of the need to address this newer form of racism.

How users perceive the information they locate will also depend on their prior beliefs and how well developed are their critical analysis skills and ability to assess websites. Studies have found that ‘both sceptics and believers rated reports that backed their prior beliefs significantly more favourably than studies that didn’t’ (Ayton 2000).

Exposure to balancing information will not alone change people’s views (Davidson 1999, p. 425) and the Web may actually make it easier to avoid alternative views:

Strangest of all, the availability of alternative points of view doesn’t appear to have mellowed anyone’s prejudices – quite the contrary … in fact, as information multiplies, it grows ever easier to choose to read (or watch) whatever best matches your particular bias, whether national or ideological’ (Applebaum 2003 p. 11).

Finally, the issue of balance is related to the interactions and power relationships existing off-line. Balancing information must be available and accessible on and off the Web. Racist disinformation, in all its forms, must be challenged everywhere it is encountered:
Even though the Internet’s architecture treats all hosts equally in qualitative terms, little follows about the quantitative consequences of the equality, for the simple reason that power in society depends on other factors besides the ability to exchange data on a network (Agre 2002, p. 313).

The ‘balance’ provided by anti-racist sites is a viable means of countering the dissemination of racist disinformation on the Web. But it cannot be effective if it is the sole means of countering this disinformation. Balance alone combined with free speech will not address racist disinformation. Users need to be educated in the skills required to access information on the Web. The range of racism needs to be balanced. Any strategy to balance racism must consider the interacting mechanisms involved and the particular political, social and cultural circumstances in which it occurs.

9.6. Results to be transformative

The introductory chapter identified three categories of potential beneficiaries of the research. These were those who provide Web access, Web information providers in particular anti-racist sites, and Web users. A critical realist research project should aim to produce results that are transformative. The extent to which this can be achieved will vary.

Those who provide Web access include Internet Service Providers, government agencies, libraries and educational institutions. It is these providers that most usually have to deal with requests for censorship of Web sites. Libraries have taken an anti-censorship standpoint combined with a commitment to user education. Other providers have often been compelled to implement some form of censorship.

This research provides information on the issues involved in the debate and demonstrates that the existence of anti-racist content, while a viable means of balancing racist content, will not alone provide balance to racism on the Web. Decisions about how to address this racism cannot be made based on the current situation on the Web alone, but must consider the off-line environment as well. Additionally, the rapidly changing nature of the Web makes any legislative tactics effective only in the short-term, if at all. The analysis provided by this research should aid Web access providers in making informed decisions that can be justified on considered grounds and that will lead to increased information sharing.

The second category, information providers, should find the discussion in Chapter 4 regarding race and racism particularly useful. Providers who want to ensure their
websites are racism free will have a better understanding about racist disinformatio.
The information providers that are particularly targeted by this research are anti-racist websites. While the content of the entire study is of relevance to these providers, the results from the data collection provide an insight into the roles they play both as providers of balancing information, and more generally in the fight against racist disinformation and the related aspects of violence, harassment, discrimination and exclusion.

To this end, the undertaking given in the questionnaire to share the results of the research is an important follow-up step in this research. The respondents to the questionnaire who indicated they would like to receive this information have been sent an email thanking them for their assistance and advising them that they will be provided with a summary of the results.

As well as the information related to anti-racist content, the findings related to methods that sites can use to be visible and useful are also important. There are several strategies that appear to be successful in the long term.

The site’s ownership of its own domain name is quite crucial. This allows users to make an assessment of the authority of the site, and also facilitates a smooth transition, without broken links, if the site needs to change ISP. This is particularly important for anti-racist sites as many rely on links from other similar sites for publicity and networking. The sites that link to them do check the maintenance of links, but a problem arises because they are only checking the existence of live links. The link may still exist, but go to something else not relevant.

The third category of potential beneficiaries of the research was users and potential users of the Web. The initial concern was that this group may be deterred from using the Web because of the racist content to be found there. Certainly the aim of providing information to enable access providers and information providers to make informed decisions about how to deal with racism on the Web, should at least allow users the confidence that they may be able to avoid some racist content. But as has been shown, censorship and filtering options will not eliminate or filter out all racism.

The most important finding for users is the need to actively promote a ‘plurality of information’ (Floridi 1996, p. 513). Combined with some basic information assessment skills:
If you employ Internet content as part of a broader package of information that includes other forms of media, including television, radio, newspapers and books, then you will be able to weigh what you see off-line against what you see on the web (Gilster 1997, p. 94).

‘The social consequences of technology depend upon the social context within which the technology is utilized’ (Tyler 2002, p. 201). Without this plurality of information sources combined with the skills to access and assess the information, users run the risk that:

… through lower educational standards, declining intellectual competence, diminished zest for debate, and social sanctions against skepticism, our liberties can be eroded and our rights subverted (Sagan & Druyan 1994, p. 234).

9.7. Recommendations for future research

This research has combined the fields of race relations and information science. As discussed in the literature review, other disciplines also have a contribution to make to the study of the phenomenon of racist disinformation on the Web. Further research might incorporate research and approaches from multiple disciplines. A critical realist methodology would certainly support this extension of the research.

The sites studied are not numerous and although the questionnaire achieved a very good response rate, further data collection of information from anti-racist sites would confirm the findings and make generalisations more feasible:

The best defense against deception that researchers may have is replication. Only by conducting multiple online surveys with the same or similar types of Internet communities can researchers gain a reliable picture of the characteristics of online survey participants (Wright 2005).

Anti-racist websites could also expand on this research by undertaking their own studies of users of their sites. Research conducted by anti-racist sites could include examining user logs, conducting site surveys, and geolocation studies (Harley & Henke 2007). The ever present issue of how to assess non-users should also be considered.

The website assessment exercise produced useful results, but some aspects of the assessment had limited applicability to the anti-racist websites under consideration. In particular the recording of whether sites were personal websites, contained errors, had maintenance issues, had indications of currency, and included contents pages, did not
seem relevant to the reliability of the sites. Perhaps advances in website development in recent years have meant that these categories of assessment need revision generally. As website development progresses, further research into the applicability of current website assessment exercises may be required, particularly as such assessment is crucial for users.

While this research has examined anti-racist sites as possible sources of balance, balancing material may be found on sites not identifying as anti-racist. Whereas anti-racist sites clearly identify their content as such, these other sites may carry content that would require a high level of user understanding and critical analysis skills to differentiate it as material suitable to challenge racist disinformation. This other source of balancing information might be assessed through comparison of the results of search engine queries on particular topics that may be expected to result in racist disinformation.

9.8. Conclusion

This research has applied ideas and concepts related to race and racism from the United Kingdom and Australia to the issue of racism and anti-racism on the Web. This has led to an understanding of racism in the Australian context and as it applies on the Web. This has generated an appreciation of what is involved in balancing racism on the Web, so that simplistic solutions will not be taken.

The research has provided insights into racism in Australia. This is significant as the ‘Australian literature on racism remains scanty and fragmented, leading to a diminished understanding of racism’ (Jayasuriya 2002). These insights have then informed an information science perspective, resisting a simplistic understanding of the issues and instead delving into the multilayers and mechanisms involved:

> If the Internet has ‘effects’, it has many effects scattered throughout the structures of society, so that it is difficult if not impossible to compute a resultant of the vectors along which the various effects run (Agre 2002, p. 315).

Crucially, the various forms of racism have been identified and the mutable characteristics of racism have been recognised. Those involved in the information science field and those websites attempting to challenge racism should to be aware of these characteristics and the fact that, ‘the debate on culture has recreated the assumptions of racial thinking but in a form that can allow cultural exclusivists to deny that they are racist’ (Malik 1996, p. 187).
Comments made in regard to sharing advances in developing technologies are equally applicable to the aims of this research:

Human endeavour is caught in an eternal tension between the effectiveness of small groups acting independently and the need to mesh with the wider community. A small group can innovate rapidly and efficiently, but this produces a subculture whose concepts are not understood by others. Coordinating actions across a large group, however, is painfully slow and takes an enormous amount of communication. The world works across the spectrum between these extremes, with a tendency to start small – from the personal idea – and move toward a wider understanding over time (Berners-Lee, Hendler & Lassila 2001 n.p.).

This research brings a contribution to the field of information science by extending the understanding of racism from the discipline of race relations to the discipline of information science in such a way as to demonstrate the application of this understanding to an issue confronting information providers on many levels. This is of significance because:

To speak out against racism, therefore, is not just an exercise in intellectual freedom, but an act which expresses freedom’s very essence, the dignity and truth inherent in every individual (Peattie 1989, p. 101).


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Appendix A

Glossary of Common Terms

**Associative links**
Hypertext links to related information through freeform association such as ‘see also’

**Blogger**
Individual who provides content on a blog, or website containing information that is written in chronological order

**Boolean**
Logic functions used in information systems and in many search engines. Boolean searches enable very specific searches to be undertaken.

**Browser**
A software application used to access the Web. It enables the user to move between and within websites through the utilisation of hyperlinks.

**Check box**
A small on-screen box that duplicates the box symbol in a paper based survey. Multiple check boxes can usually be chosen.

**Cookies**
Information sent multiple times between a user computer and a website or server. Cookies enable authentication and tracking of individual users, or computers, accessing a website.

**ISP**
Internet Service Provider. Company that provides user access to the Web.

**Meta-narrative**
Abstract idea that provides an explanation of historical events and overall experience. It provides the story behind the circumstance.

**Metatag**
Information stored on the webpage that is not seen by the user but is read by the accessing program. It can be used for searching the website.
**MySpace**

Online community for friends, or people with common interests, to share information and exchange messages.

**Radio button**

Circle beside an option in an online survey or form. Unlike check boxes, multiple radio boxes usually cannot be chosen.

**RSS feed**

Document provided through a software reader that summarises all new content from user-designated news services, blogs and websites. Enables users to easily receive updates from multiple online sources without having to separately check each source.

**Wikipedia**

Web encyclopaedia that is written and amended by users who are not necessarily subject experts.

**Xeno-racism**

Form of racism that does not necessarily discriminate against people on the basis of skin colour, but on the basis of difference, be that cultural, national, economic or some other determinant. This has enabled prejudicial comments, discrimination and inequitable treatment to be carried out by individuals, organisations and governments while denying that such actions are racist.

**YouTube**

Website that enables the sharing of video.
# Appendix B

## Anti-racist websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-racist website</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alliance Working to Achieve Racial Equality</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uky.edu.StudentOrgs/AWARE">www.uky.edu.StudentOrgs/AWARE</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Pictures</td>
<td><a href="http://www.american-pictures.com">www.american-pictures.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adc.org">www.adc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti Racism Project</td>
<td><a href="http://www.antiracismproject.com">www.antiracismproject.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Asian Violence Network</td>
<td>janet.org/%7Eebihara/aav.html</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-Defamation League</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adl.org">www.adl.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antifa Scotland</td>
<td><a href="http://www.antifascotland.uk.md">www.antifascotland.uk.md</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Hate Organisation</td>
<td>members.tripod.com/~ARpunx/index.html</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup</td>
<td><a href="http://www.enar-eu.org/anti-racism-diversity-intergroup/">www.enar-eu.org/anti-racism-diversity-intergroup/</a></td>
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<td>Anti-Racism Information Service</td>
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<td>AntiRacismNet</td>
<td><a href="http://www.antiracismnet.org">www.antiracismnet.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racist Alliance</td>
<td><a href="http://www.antiracistalliance.com">www.antiracistalliance.com</a></td>
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<td>Applied Research Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.arc.org">www.arc.org</a></td>
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<td>Artists Against Racism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.artistsagainstracism.com">www.artistsagainstracism.com</a></td>
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<td>Australians Against Racism</td>
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<td>b:RAP</td>
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<td>BiasHELP</td>
<td><a href="http://www.biashelp.org">www.biashelp.org</a></td>
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<td>Black Holocaust Museum</td>
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<td>Britkid</td>
<td><a href="http://www.britkid.org">www.britkid.org</a></td>
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<td>Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute</td>
<td><a href="http://www.blhrri.org">www.blhrri.org</a></td>
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<td>Buraku Liberation League</td>
<td><a href="http://www.blrl.gr.jp/eng.html">www.blrl.gr.jp/eng.html</a></td>
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<td>Canadian Race Relations Foundation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.crr.ca">www.crr.ca</a></td>
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<td>Citizens Against hate</td>
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<td>Colorlines</td>
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<td>Commission for Racial Equality</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cre.gov.uk">www.cre.gov.uk</a></td>
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<td>Committee Against Racism and Fascism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.carf.demon.co.uk">www.carf.demon.co.uk</a></td>
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<td>Committee on Race Relations and Cross Cultural Understanding</td>
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<td>Crosspoint Anti Racism</td>
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<td>Derechos Human Rights</td>
<td><a href="http://www.derechos.net">www.derechos.net</a></td>
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<td>European Council on Refugees and Exiles</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ecre.org">www.ecre.org</a></td>
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<td>European Federation of Intercultural Learning</td>
<td><a href="http://www.efil.afs.org">www.efil.afs.org</a></td>
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<td>European Network Against Racism</td>
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<td>European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights</td>
<td><a href="http://www.europa.eu/eumc">www.europa.eu/eumc</a></td>
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<td>Fair Go Australia</td>
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<td>Fightdemback</td>
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<td>Football Against Racism</td>
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<td>Forum Against Islamophobia &amp; Racism</td>
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<td>International Possibilities Unlimited</td>
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<td>National Conference for Community and Justice</td>
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<td>Show Racism the Red Card</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simon Wiesenthal Centre</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wiesenthal.com">www.wiesenthal.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Poverty Law Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.splcenter.org/intel/hatewatch">www.splcenter.org/intel/hatewatch</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Regional Council</td>
<td><a href="http://www.southerncouncil.org">www.southerncouncil.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewatch</td>
<td><a href="http://www.statewatch.org">www.statewatch.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop Racism Committee</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/stopracism">www.fp.ucalgary.ca/stopracism</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop the Hate.Org</td>
<td>stop-the-hate.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Against Prejudice</td>
<td><a href="http://www.teachersagainstprejudice.org">www.teachersagainstprejudice.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Monitoring Group</td>
<td><a href="http://www.monitoring-group.co.uk">www.monitoring-group.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nizkor Project</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nizkor.org">www.nizkor.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Runnymede Trust</td>
<td><a href="http://www.runnymedetrust">www.runnymedetrust</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unite Against Fascism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uaf.org.uk">www.uaf.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unite Against Racism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.naar.org.uk">www.naar.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as Allies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.women-as-allies.org">www.women-as-allies.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Against Racism Foundation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.endracism.org">www.endracism.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Against Racism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.angelfire.com/rebellion/youthagainstracism/">www.angelfire.com/rebellion/youthagainstracism/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Against Racism in Europe</td>
<td><a href="http://www.yre.org.uk">www.yre.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth End Racism</td>
<td><a href="http://www.anti-racism.org">www.anti-racism.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear xxxx

My name is Sally Skinner. I am a doctoral student in the School of Business Information Technology, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

My research is entitled: 'Racist disinformation on the Web: the role of anti-racist sites in providing balance'.

My project examines whether the balance provided by anti-racist sites is a viable means of countering the dissemination of racist disinformation on the Web. It is my aim that the results will benefit anti-racist sites by providing an insight into the role they play.

I invite your participation in a survey of anti-racist sites. I am interested in your ideas about the role played by your site in providing balance to racism on the Web.

This survey would most easily be completed by the person responsible for the content of your site.

Please note that the results of this research may be published in some form. However, responses will be confidential. Data will be recorded in such a manner that subjects are not and cannot be identified.

Participation is of course voluntary. If you require clarification at any time of any aspect that concerns you, please contact:

Sally Skinner, Research Student
sally.skinner@student.rmit.edu.au

Professor William Martin, Senior Supervisor/Advisor
bill.martin@rmit.edu.au

The survey will be open for 2 weeks only, from 7th May until 14th May inclusive.

If you would like to participate, please click on the link below.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=571463781140

Thank you for your assistance

Yours sincerely

Sally Skinner
School of Business IT, RMIT University
Level 17, 239 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia
www.rmit.edu.au
sally.skinner@student.rmit.edu.au
Appendix D

Questionnaire responses

What best describes the type of organisation responsible for your website?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government organisation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental organisation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial organisation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal website</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 22
(skipped this question) 0

Where does the responsible organisation or individual operate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Web only</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web and real world</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 22
(skipped this question) 0

In which country is your website based?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 22
(skipped this question) 0

What is the primary source of funding for your site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-funded</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 21
(skipped this question) 1
**How long has your site been on the Web?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or more and less than 2 years</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years or more and less than 5 years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 22

(skipped this question) 0

**What is the primary focus of your site?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-racism</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Semitism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-hate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 22

(skipped this question) 0

**How many people contribute content to your site?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 21

(skipped this question) 1

**How are they employed?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of full-time and part-time</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 21

(skipped this question) 1
### What are their employment terms?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paid</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix of paid and voluntary</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 21
(skipped this question) 1

### Who is your primary target audience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holders of racist beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General public</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-racist activists</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 21
(skipped this question) 1

### Where is the target audience located?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your own country</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your region</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldwide</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 21
(skipped this question) 1

### Does your site provide information in a format specifically for children (under 16 years)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents 21
(skipped this question) 1
### What is the primary content of your site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Type</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Documents and publications</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Links and networking</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and answers</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event notification</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What is the primary technique used by your site to counter racism?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide accurate information</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicise racist sites</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise events</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby government and agencies</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobby ISPs and search engines</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### What is the primary technique used to publicise your site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission to search engines</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of metatags</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email lists</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Does your site support censorship of racist websites?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondents</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(skipped this question)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Do you or your staff interact with other anti-racist sites to share ideas and cooperate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is your definition of racism?

What do you see as the main threats posed by racism on the Web?

What recent trends have you noted in racism on the Web?

What do you see as future developments in anti-racism on the Web?

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Your email contact?