MURDOCH RESEARCH REPOSITORY

This is the author's final version of the work, as accepted for publication following peer review but without the publisher's layout or pagination.

Diablogging about asylum seekers: building a counter-hegemonic discourse.

Farida Fozdar & Anne Pedersen

Farida Fozdar
Anthropology and Sociology
University of Western Australia
M255, 35 Stirling Hwy, Crawley, 6009
Australia
Farida.Fozdar@uwa.edu.au
61 (08) 64883997 or mob 0421 360 820

Anne Pedersen
School of Psychology
Murdoch University
Murdoch, WA, 6150, Australia
 A.Pedersen@murdoch.edu.au
61 (08) 9360.6488
61 (08) 9360.6492

Bios

Farida Fozdar is Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Western Australia. Her research interests include migration, cross cultural relations, identity, nationalism and discourse analysis.

Anne Pedersen is Associate Professor in Psychology at Murdoch University, Western Australia. Her research interests include cross cultural relations, prejudice, and anti-racism strategies.

Word Count: 9, 056.

Diablogging about asylum seekers: building a counter-hegemonic discourse.

Abstract

New technologies provide new forums for the expression and challenging of racism. This paper explores the potential of an interactive blog about asylum-seekers to serve as part of the Habermasian 'public sphere', facilitating debate between those with opposing views. We offer evidence that pro- and anti-asylum seeker arguments made in blogs construct a binary between those in favour, and those against. Arguments are collectively constructed producing relatively coherent discourses, despite being articulated by different individuals. We then explore the ways in which pro-asylum seeker postings utilize strategies which social scientists have identified as effective in challenging racism. As such the blog is a site where what has come to be called 'by-stander anti-racism' is being practiced, producing a counter hegemonic discourse. Our evidence suggests that despite arguments to the contrary, blogs are potentially useful sites for the development of communicative consciousness in relation to race issues, particularly the challenging of racism.

Key words: asylum seeker, discourse analysis, blog, Australia, by-stander anti-racism, public sphere, counter-hegemony

Background: Australia and asylum seekers

Australia's immigration policy includes a quota of around 14,000 per annum for those seeking asylum from persecution.[i] While most use the UNHCR to access asylum in Australia through applications made from refugee camps, some apply for refugee status after arriving in Australia – they are known as asylum seekers. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, increasingly stringent measures were introduced, designed to deter asylum seekers arriving by boat, including retaining them in detention centres until their cases were determined, and providing those found to be genuine refugees with Temporary Protection Visas which granted limited rights for a limited time (Crock and Saul, 2002; Hollinsworth, 2006; Mares, 2002). While some of these measures were abolished in 2007, detention remains common.

Concerns about asylum seekers continue to play a large part in public debate. The issue has regularly been used for political ends, and was credited for the conservative Coalition government's 2001 electoral win, and for the popular appeal of its Prime Minister, John Howard, who infamously proclaimed 'we will decide who comes to our country and the circumstances under which they come' (see Brett, 2003; Jupp, 2007; Gale, 2004; Johnson, 2007). While there have been some positive public representations of

asylum seekers (see Every and Augostinos, 2008; Tilbury, 2007), discursive analyses of the Australian media and of political speeches identify a pervasive climate of hostility surrounding them. Interestingly, the anti-asylum seeker discourses reproduce the main topic classes identified by van Dijk (1987) in his study of the discourse of prejudice against minority groups in the US and the Netherlands in 1987 – that they are different, do not adapt, are involved in negative acts (queue jumping, welfare abuse), and threaten the nation's socio-economic interests. Asylum seekers to Australia are routinely represented as a significant problem - illegal, deviant and threatening. The language of war and of criminality is used to construct asylum seekers as ungrateful, unworthy, aggressive, demanding, economically draining, and polluting (see Manne with Corlett, 2004; Mares, 2002; Pickering, 2001; Marr, 2007; Marr and Wilkinson, 2003, and Saxton, 2003 for analyses). Myths about boat arrival asylum seekers being 'queue jumpers' (jumping ahead of those waiting in UNHCR refugee camps) are part of common parlance (Gelber, 2003; Pedersen et al., 2006) and political arguments tend to be framed around discourses of the appropriate limits to Australia's humanitarian obligations (Every, 2008).

It is in this context that left-wing social commentator for the generally conservative national newspaper Phillip Adams, wrote an opinion piece in *The Weekend Australian,*

(Adams, 2008) tracking the processes that left an individual stateless asylum seeker, Wasim, in limbo for 10 years (see Pedersen et al., 2008a for background). Adams argued this treatment breached Australia's humanitarian obligations under various UN Conventions and called for a compassionate resolution to the case (Adams, 2008). Bloggers on the newspaper website immediately responded, with some supporting and some opposing Adams' position. It is this blog, approached as a case study which rehearses common themes in discourses around asylum seekers, that is the subject of the current analysis.

The blog as public sphere

Blogs are one of a number of technological innovations allowing different forms of communication, providing new forums for discourse analysis. They have become a popular form of computer-mediated communication (Lamerichs and te Molder, 2003) and are increasingly important in political social and economic life (Myers, 2010). Blogs originated as personal diary-style commentaries with links to related sites, but have evolved to include discussion-board sites, often with explicit political goals. To some extent they have taken up the function of newspapers and other sources of information (Myers, 2010). Traditional media outlets now often use blogs to engage the public; for example, television

channels and newspapers host blogs to encourage public discussion of their programs/articles, resulting in a forum for public engagement similar, in some ways, to 'talk-back radio' (certainly in terms of its ability to generate 'outrage' discourses, see Sobieraj and Berry, 2011). These blur the gap between media source and audience, encouraging not only news commentary but the co-construction of information. Blogs allow written conversation to occur between people who do not know each other and are not co-present in space or time – as such they do not share many of the features of other modes of conversation (Myers, 2010). They provide a relatively status-free and inclusive method of communication, being without the usual markers of social distinction. They generate 'inventive, personal and highly compressed writing' (Myers, 2010: 4) making the linguistic features somewhat different from other forms of writing.

While debate remains about the extent to which resources such as blogs constitute an example of an open and interactive Habermasian 'public sphere' (Habermas,1984, 1989), or 'blogosphere',[ii]   particularly in relation to the requirement that participants engaging in dialogue should be open to having their opinion changed, they do theoretically provide an opportunity for relatively democratic public dialogue. The result is an

opportunity for exchanges of information and, potentially, the development of 'communicative consciousness'.

Blogging is fundamentally about giving one's opinion – most posts take a stance, offer evaluations or suggest personal preferences (Myers, 2010). Habermas (1991: 399) says public opinion requires 'a public that engages in rational discussion' – arguably opinion derived from public debate, producing a better quality of knowledge than the cogitations of the 'few best minds' (Sunstein, 2008: 90). The blog holds potential as an opportunity for engagement in rational argument and the development of consensus because the opportunity to participate, provide information and make an argument is theoretically open to all. As well as providing an opportunity for democratic debate, the blog may serve as a counter to media convergence, allowing alternative positions to be voiced and heard, and hence real dialogue to occur. Macgilchrist and Bohmig (2012) argue that the blog offers a site for 'minimal politics', where counter-hegemonic discursive formations can be aired, developed and disseminated. In analysing blog discussion, researchers have an opportunity to engage with the 'common sense' expressed by everyday people as they deal with the sorts of ideological dilemmas Michael Billig and colleagues (1988) have identified.

However, a number of researchers challenge the effectiveness of the blog as a site for democratic deliberation due to the types of participants and disciplinary practices that have emerged. In a study of blog activity on a US presidential campaign website, Janack (2006) found that bloggers engage in self-disciplinary techniques (censure, criticism, *ad hominem* or name-calling attacks, deflection, and micro-punishment) to stifle real debate. Such anti-normative behaviours have been argued to be a feature of the de-individuation characteristic of computer-mediated communication (Postmes et al., 1998) and the anonymity offered therein (Holmes, 2009) – the normal politeness rules of social interaction seem not to apply, resulting in high levels of negativity, incivility and even outrage (Sobieraj and Berry, 2011). While recognizing their potential, MacDougall (2005) argues that blogs are just as likely to create and sustain insulated enclaves of intolerance, rumour and triviality, as they are to create open democratic forums for political debate. In answering the age-old question of whether birds of a feather flock together or opposites attract, Norris (2004) notes that the type of social connection the internet engenders encourages shallow and transient relationships, meaning that ease of exit where cognitive dissonance occurs (eg. where one's views are challenged, causing a level of psychological discomfort) makes commitment to serious engagement on blogs highly unlikely. Sunstein (2008) argues against the potential of blogs as a forum for Habermasian deliberation. He

suggests that group polarization effects mean that internet participants self-select into discussions with likeminded people, creating 'information cocoons and echo chambers' that simply reinforce (and exaggerate) bloggers existing views (Sunstein, 2008: 95). Sunstein cites a number of studies that show that up to 91% of blog sites contain links to like-minded sites, forming effectively segregated communities of attitudinally homogenous bloggers who simply reinforce each others' views with growing confidence, making their original position more extreme. Where others are engaged with, it is usually to cast ridicule and scorn on them.

It is unclear the extent to which such findings hold true for those blogs that do not contain clear partisan positions but are designed for discussion, such as the one currently under study. Mouffe (2005), recognizing the ways power permeates all attempts at democratic discussion, has argued that the public sphere must be agonistic, a space where hegemonic political projects can confront each other. Benhabib rejects the suggestion that communication between conflicting groups in such a sphere may be impossible due to incommensurability, however, arguing the Habermasian public sphere ideally enables rather than limits 'maximum cultural contestation' (Benhabib, 2002: ix).

Sunstein acknowledges the lack of empirical analysis of the potential for meaningful dialogue on blogs. While in a study of blogging about an anti-Muslim book, Macgilchrist and Bohmig (2012) offer evidence that organized blogging can have a significant impact on hegemonic discourses, there are very few examples of fine grained analysis of blogging interactions. It is hoped that the current paper will go a small way to beginning to address this.

Method

While other research analysing discourses surrounding asylum seekers, such as that outlined above, has used interviews, politicians' speeches, or newspaper articles as data sources, our interest is in naturally-occurring data from a blog site. Such data has a number of benefits (Edwards and Potter, 1992), apart from easy availability. The first is that it is relatively uncontaminated, not having been prompted by the researcher's questions or by political or media imperatives. The second is that naturally-occurring data is more likely to provide a full range of views, including extreme views, than is interview or focus group data, which may be more likely to suffer from the social desirability effect. Third, blogs are more conversational, and therefore more clearly interactional, than speeches, interviews or media articles. But most important for our purposes, blogs offer evidence of real life,

quotidian conversation where racism is being expressed and challenged. As such they provide the opportunity for analysis of counter-hegemonic discourses (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001; Macgilchrist and Bohmig, 2012), what has been called, in non-discursive analytical contexts, 'everyday multiculturalism' (Wise and Velayutham, 2009) or bystander anti-racism (Nelson et al., 2010).

This paper uses the methods of discourse analysis (DA) to unpick both what is said in the blog, and how it is said (see, for example, Edwards and Potter, 1992; van den Berg et al., 2003; van Dijk, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This type of DA tends to focus on naturally occurring data, as opposed to researcher-generated data; participants' orientations, rather than researchers' orientations; and communication as action-oriented rather than an abstract system of reference (Lamerichs and te Molder, 2003). It also focuses on rhetorical structures – the devices through which arguments are made; and semantic moves (van Dijk, 1987). The approach is inductive, avoiding pre-determined categories of analysis, and instead using categories and concepts made relevant by participants in their communicative activity. It takes as given that socio-communicative practice enacts moral order (Edwards, 2003), and seeks to explore how that order is achieved. Such an approach uses a range of analytical tools, including some from conversation analysis and linguistics. As Wetherell

(2003: 11) explains, it involves an interest in how people tell stories (their versions of events, and construction of their own and others' identities), and also how groups are constructed in discourse. But we are also interested in the interactional aspects of the blog, and the ways in which identities, power and argument are engaged with as part of a dialogue.

Thus the analytical approach borrows elements from rhetorical analysis (Billig, 1987, 1991; Cherwitz and Hikins, 1986; Sullivan and Goldzwig, 2004), which focuses on the structures of argument, and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993) which seeks to understand how power and in this case, resistance, are constructed, reproduced and challenged, through language. CDA focuses on the production and reception of power. It distinguishes "between the enactment, expression or legitimation of dominance in the (production of the) various structures of text and talk, on the one hand, and the functions, consequences or results of such structures for the (social) minds of recipients, on the other." (van Dijk, 1993: 259).

We were interested in two key aspects of the discursive structures within the blog for the purposes of examining their communicative functions – the interactive and the argumentative. First, we ask how were bloggers orienting interactionally (to each other and

to the author of the original article) and how is this orientation evident in the organisation and language of posts; and secondly we explore what functions were being served by these engagements. Thus analysis of the blog was approached to identify the ways in which participants positioned themselves and each other in terms of the arguments being made, and the ways in which the less popular or counter-hegemonic argument, which favours acceptance of asylum seekers, is put. Surveys consistently show that two thirds of the Australian population favour harsher policies towards asylum seekers, including returning them to their home countries, and four out of five are concerned about unauthorized asylum seekers coming to Australia (Markus, 2011). We were therefore interested to explore the extent to which, and the manner in which, these attitudes are challenged in a public forum, in order to ascertain the likelihood of such forums serving as sites for challenging this hegemonic perspective. While discourse studies have tended to focus on the reproduction of unequal power relations through racist discourse (eg. Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996; Van Dijk, 1987), it is important to recognise that resistance discourses (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1980) occur simultaneously, and to attempt to understand how these resistance discourses work.

There is a growing interest in the study of anti-racist discourse. Elsewhere Fozdar (2008) has illustrated how the content of racist and anti-racist talk is often directly

oppositional, producing 'duelling discourses'. Building on Billig's (1991: 17) demonstration that '[t]he argument 'for' a position is always also an argument 'against' a counter-position' and that when voicing an opinion, people offer arguments that not only state their views, but justify them and simultaneously criticize alternative views (Billig, 2001: 214), she demonstrated the ways in which racist and anti-racist arguments constantly signal the arguments against which they are constructed. The current study similarly shows how 'attitudes' about race relations are articulated in a dialogic (or as we argue here, a diablogic) form (Billig, 1987; Billig et al., 1988), and by focusing on their practical accomplishment, offers evidence for the potential of the pro-asylum seeker arguments to serve as a form of 'by-stander anti-racism'.

The data: an overview

There are a number of interesting features of the blog under consideration. First it rehearses many of the themes commonly found in Australian discussions of asylum seekers, particularly those which have been identified as 'common myths' and which have been challenged in a number of sites (Amnesty International, nd; RCoA, 2011).

Secondly, blog responses to newspaper articles function like 'letters to the editor', responding to what the article's author has said. However they are subject to a less stringent

selection process – since there is no space limitation all postings that are not downright abusive are generally accepted. This results in a large number of responses – in the current blog, 55 in all. An interesting feature is the low number of multiple postings. In the current blog most participants post once – only three participate twice. This makes the blog quite unlike a normal conversation. It is unclear what happens to participants once they have made a posting – do they disappear or are they 'lurking'? Not knowing makes it difficult to determine what effect other posts have on their views – do supportive or challenging arguments modify or reinforce them?

Thirdly, the most interesting feature of this 'single post' characteristic is that despite it, and while somewhat fragmented by time lags, the blog has a dialogic tone. The pro-asylum seeker arguments are made in response to the anti-asylum seeker arguments, and vice versa, but they are not made by the same individuals to-ing and fro-ing as in a face-to-face conversation between two individuals, but by people contributing a single posting oriented to support or to challenge other posters, which builds a body of argument with other like-minded contributors. This is not to say that it produces a 'group mind' phenomenon, but a collectively constructed argument.

Two significant characteristics of the blog discussion are now analysed in more depth. One is the way in which a binary between two groups of participants is constructed. The second is the way in which one group use strategies identified as effective anti-racism.

Constructing a binary

One of the key features of the blog is the construction of a binary between those supportive of asylum seekers and those critical.[iii] We do not wish to suggest this binary was absolute. However, it was a relatively simple task to independently categorise the postings, with 49% making points positive towards asylum seekers, and 45% making negative points.[iv] This challenges Sunstein's (2008) argument that bloggers self-select into groups of like-minded individuals.

In terms of the types of arguments, very few of the negative postings (only three) could be classified as racist in the traditional sense of characterizing particular groups of people as fundamentally inferior. This is not surprising given the ways in which racism is negatively constructed and the complexity of the ways in which racism is expressed (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986; Van Dijk, 1987, 2008; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Most of the negative postings drew on themes common in anti-asylum seeker discourses – that they

are queue-jumpers, might be terrorists, are culturally different, are an economic drain, and are generally undeserving of Australians' humanitarian impulse. Positive postings challenge these arguments directly, as will be seen shortly.

It is one thing for the researchers to identify postings as pro- or anti-asylum seekers, such categorization is meaningless interactionally unless it is something clearly oriented to by bloggers themselves (Hutchby and Woofitt, 1998). In fact there was constant orientation by bloggers to alternate positions in the blog. This orientation took three forms – naming, name-calling and direct argument.

The use of direct address (by name) of either the author of the newspaper article, Phillip Adams, or of another individual who had posted a message on the blog, was common. Over half of the postings directly addressed the author of the original article, using the colloquial 'Phil' more often than not. While this familiarity may be a feature of the egalitarianism for which Australians are known, it also indicates the intimacy encouraged by the medium of communication. Some of these posts were supportive, some critical - bloggers were pro- or anti-Adams, in the same way they were pro- or anti-asylum seekers. The critical addresses (three quarters of all anti-asylum seeker posts addressed

Adams directly) attacked Adams personally, or were dismissive, such as '*You were mildly entertaining in a groupie sort of way, Phillip, when interviewing authors and entertainers. You should have stuck to that.*' or '*take a chill pill and get some perspective back in your column*'. Sometimes these postings were very short, with little content, such as: '*Emotive garbage, Phil. Time to grow up.*'. Such postings often did not provide arguments against Adams, engaging only to the extent of name-calling or attempting to shut down discussion through their dismissive tone. Positive addresses of Adams were also common, featuring in about a third of the pro-asylum seeker posts. Most offered further arguments but began with statements of support such as '*Excellent article Phillip.*' Others simply praised his intervention: '*A truly free, liberal democratic society needs writers like Phillip Adams to highlight the injustices that governments and bureaucrats can impose on innocent people.*' and '*Keep up the good work, Phil. You are a national treasure*'.

Around a quarter of bloggers also addressed each other by blog name. Sneijder and te Molder (2009: 623) note the communicatory effect of this practice – "in the absence of face-to-face phenomena such as interruption overlap, gaze and continuers [naming] preserve[s] a sense of sequentiality". In the asylum seeker blog, names were used either to support the named blogger's post, or to directly address or challenge the posting. The

result, over and above the preservation of sequentiality, was a building of a sense of collective around like-mindedness and other-mindedness – in effect people named others who they saw as being 'on their team' or 'on the other side'.

The second indication of a binary orientation was to be found in the name calling that categorized bloggers as belonging to one or other group. Name calling was common on both sides, with those in favour of asylum seekers being called '*bleeding hearts*', '*leftist idealists*', and '*clueless do-gooders*', and accused of being emotional and immature, and those against accused of being '*lunatics*', '*intellectually and educationally stunted*' or simply '*mean-spirited types*'. An example comes from JJ, who characterizes the postings of anti-asylum seekers as '*ill-informed, ignorant (and in some cases semi-literate) drivel*', and a response from Ella calling JJ '*either ignorant of what you speak, or a liar*'. It was far less common for those in favour of asylum seekers to use direct name-calling however.

The third evidence of a binary construction is to be found in the direct response to arguments or facts offered in previous blog entries demonstrating engagement in a diablog. Thus, in contrast to Sunstein's (2008) suggestion that like minded individuals use blogs to

simply reinforce their own views, the majority of postings addressed issues they wished to

counter. This interchange, though not sequential on the blog, illustrates direct engagement.[v]

Ritchie, in support of asylum seekers says:

> *How embarrassing it is to be an Australian travelling internationally, with all of*
> *these travesties of justice on our watch!! Where's the conscience,* [Prime Minister]
> *Mr Rudd?*

Elaine, in response, says:

> *Ritchie…and the rest of you bleeding hearts - I have been travelling around for the*
> *past 12 years and NEVER has even one person said other than - you Aussies have it*
> *right, keep the doors closed to ILLEGAL immigrants. This is especially said by Brits*
> *- their country is a mess courtesy of feeding and funding illegals.*

Bronco Bill responds to Elaine's post with:

Elaine ... - the Brits (and the French) 'imported' zillions of people from the colonies when the indigenous lot were too good to drive buses etc. As ye sow etc etc.

Here one poster suggests it is embarrassing to be an Australian overseas, another counters with her experience that those overseas support Australia's stance as their countries are a mess due to illegal immigrants, and another challenges this argument noting that these migrants were needed to do the work locals refused to. The entire blog can be read in this way, as a dialogue, with counter arguments or supportive examples linking to new arguments being posited. Further examples can be seen in the extracts quoted below.

This binary construction can be understood using the 'social identity model of de-individuation effects' developed by Spears and Lea (1992). This posits that the de-individuation resulting from computer-mediated forms of communication, such as blogs, may accentuate the salient identity (in this case pro- versus anti-asylum seekers) and the normative response association with it. According to this model, blog participants will construct impressions of each other based on the few cues available to them within this media (which provides far fewer cues than other forms of communication). Key to the argument is that "if certain relevant context cues are lacking, people draw more heavily on

social categorization processes to form an adequate social context" (Lamerichs and te Molder, 2003: 456). The aligning of bloggers with the original article's author, and with, or against, each other, indicates such a categorization process at work.

But there is a further function of this tendency, which is the construction of a virtual, and momentary, collectivity. Macgilchrist and Bohmig (2012) note the strategic value of appearing as a symbolic collective in the challenging of hegemony, particularly in a blog situation. In Laclau and Mouffe's (2001: xix) words it helps to "establish a frontier and define an adversary". The apparent collectivity adds the weight of numbers to the argument and also builds strength and depth in a forum where concise posts are the norm.

Having constructed themselves as being on one side or the other, what then occurs? We turn now to the ways in which the counter-hegemonic arguments play out, looking at both their form and content, relating these to approaches recommended in the anti-racism literature.

Bloggers as anti-racist 'bystanders'

Since we cannot determine the effects of the engagement of pro-asylum seeker arguments on anti-asylum seeker bloggers, it is useful to consider strategies which have been identified in the social science literature as effective anti-racism strategies, to see whether such strategies are being used by the bloggers and hence extrapolate the likely effects on readers. Reviews of research into anti-racism strategies, including programs, interventions and experiments, indicate a number that are of use (see Challenging Racism Project, 2011; Pedersen et al., 2011). These include celebrations (or valuing) of cultural diversity; the provision of accurate information to dispel false beliefs; engagement in conversations and consultations with those who hold alternate views; leveraging emotions, particularly empathy; identification of positive commonalities and differences between the majority and minorities/outgroups; highlighting contradictions and inconsistencies in the beliefs and values of those expressing racist views; articulation of consensus and social norms to help those expressing racist views recognize they are not a majority and are expressing disvalued opinions; cross cultural contact; engagement with self and group identities; challenging of language that maintains and regulates negative intergroup relationships; identification and articulation of the functions of prejudiced attitudes; encouraging everyday anti-racism; addressing structural racism; and using social marketing and media.

While most of the studies on which these conclusions are based use experimental or correlational survey methods to determine the most effective strategies to directly engage with racism, there is growing interest in the ways in which the common person, or 'bystander', resists racism in everyday life situations. Nelson et al. (2010) undertook a commissioned review of the literature on bystander anti racism, which they define as action that communicates to the perpetrator of racism one's displeasure (Nelson et al., 2010). They argue bystander anti-racism occurs not just in the most blatant instances, such as intervention when someone of colour is being beaten by a white supremacist, but also where more subtle everyday forms of racism are occurring, such as when racist attitudes or negative stereotypes are expressed. Bystander anti-racism has both an immediate and a more wider ranging orientation - it 'has the objectives of stopping the perpetration of a specific incident of racism…and social harms that may result, as well as strengthening broader social norms that work against racism occurring in the future' (Nelson et al., 2010: 7)

While much bystander literature is based on studies of 'intention', which are methodologically problematic as they rely on reports of hypothetical action in hypothetical

situations, or on historical self-reports (see Kawakami et al., 2009 for a critique), the blog provides an example of the ways in which people actually do engage in challenging racism in a real world (if virtual) situation. It offers interactional evidence of the building of a counter-hegemonic voice.

Having outlined the ways bloggers construct themselves into 'pro' and 'anti' asylum seeker camps, we now track the ways in which bloggers demonstrate the use of some of the approaches identified above. We have selected four extracts as illustrative of the sorts of themes that were common among those bloggers arguing in favour of asylum seekers − as such they constitute examples of anti-racist action that *engages others in conversations and consultations with those who hold alternate views* and *uses social marketing and media*. We begin with a post by Ross.

Gina (1.02am) You have missed the point. Wasim is not allowed to work or pay taxes. If he did, he would be able to subsidise you in your struggle. Platypus (7.47 am) - My understanding is that bad decisions by the Tribubal cannot not be tested in court, but only the diligence of the process they used. But protesters all, whatever happended to compassion and mercy? What about peace on earth and goodwill to

men? Why the hatred and fear? Criminals are born to Australian citizens every day

of the year and yet we cannot be kind to a decent and courageous asylum seeker?

This blogger engages directly with other bloggers who have expressed negative sentiments, addressing them by name (Gina, Platypus). He addresses what he sees as their misconceptions directly, before making a general point about a broader humanitarianism. Ross specifically rebuts the arguments of bloggers who have said that asylum seekers come to Australia simply to seek welfare and do not want to work. He also addresses those who have argued decisions made by the Refugee Review Tribunal should not be questioned. Thus he is using the anti-racist technique of *providing accurate information to dispel false beliefs*, challenging the accusation that he, along with others expressing pro-asylum seeker views, is a 'clueless do-gooder'. He then goes on to focus on generalized compassion, kindness and mercy – in an appeal to 'protesters all', he uses the Biblical aphorism 'peace on earth and goodwill to men' to make the point, using a series of rhetorical questions that call the reader to recognize a shared view (Myers, 2010: 83), that definitions of those deserving of humanitarian sentiment should be more inclusive, indeed, universal.[vi] This is an example of *articulating consensus and social norms* in terms of a shared value of 'goodwill toward all' – by presenting the obligation to share a humanitarian impulse with

all as a social norm that all would recognize and share, he attempts to shift the thinking of the bloggers who argue that it is appropriate to limit their goodwill to exclude asylum seekers. Ross characterizes asylum seekers as 'decent and courageous', directly challenging allegations by other bloggers of them being 'fraudulent illegals', 'system abusers', and 'illegitimate detritus'. As such, this argument uses the anti-racist techniques of *leveraging emotions, particularly empathy;* of *challenging false beliefs*, and of *engagement with self and group identities,* specifically an attempt to encourage the other bloggers to see asylum seekers as like themselves and as people to whom a duty of care is owed. This feeds into another technique - *identification of positive commonalities and differences*. These six techniques should theoretically work to shift the attitudes of anti-asylum seeker bloggers. A similar approach is used by Woody, who supports an earlier post by Anne.

> *I have to endorse the sentiments submitted by anne of Fremantle. It's hard to comprehend that there are so many bitter and twisted mean-spirited types publishing on this page. If yuor own life is so miserable why do yuo want tor esort to kicking some poor bugger just like you - maybe he'll work, pay taxes and support yuor pension someday. I'm a 7th generation West Australian and it makes me sick to read the comments some of yuo lot are putting up. ... I'm glad some of you 'do*

badders' are not running the country like was formerly the case with your

miserable, un-Australian ideological leader John Howard

This post contains a lot of category work. Woody engages in name calling ('bitter and twisted mean-spirited types'; 'miserable'; 'do-badders') and a reversal, naming conservative Prime Minister John Howard, who built a political career on identifying certain minorities and values as un-Australian, as himself 'un-Australian'. He implies that the anti-asylum seekers are part of the Howard 'club', sharing his views and supporting his policies, by giving them ownership of him, through using the phrase 'your…John Howard'. Woody takes up the argument that Wasim would be happy to support Gina by paying taxes, if only allowed, making the point that this is a 'poor bugger just like you' – an example of the anti-racist strategy of *identification of positive commonalities between the majority and minorities/outgroups* working together with the strategy of *leveraging emotions, particularly empathy*. Woody's credentials as a seventh generation Australian validate his claims by signaling he is a 'true blue Aussie' and has no 'stake' in the situation (which might be the case if he were a new migrant or refugee himself), *engaging self and group identity* to support a more inclusive definition of 'Australian' as opposed to the more exclusionary definitions used by anti-asylum seekers.

Both Ross and Woody's postings also *engage with the use of language that maintains and regulates relationships offering alternate modes of talk*, specifically by attempting to redefine asylum seekers as courageous, and Australians as inclusive. Another example provides many of the same 'bystander anti-racism' techniques and particularly *highlights contradictions and inconsistencies in beliefs and values*

> *Phillip, it's a shame that all the cost accountants who want you to personally foot the bill for the asylum seekers haven't done their sums and realised that the current policy costs THEM millions in facilities and the money given to private American companies to run them - costs of treating these people like prisoners is enormous. No, your average Aussie tax payer is ropeable Phillip that you won't support their hard earned going to the profits of one of Johnny Howard's yank mate's 'correctional' companies. Jeesuz, Phillip we love our scapegoats, especially if their sun tanned.*

This blogger signals the irony of arguments that asylum seekers are a drain on the economy by pointing out that if they were not being detained the economy would benefit both from not having to pay for their detention but also, as Ross also noted, from the taxes

they would generate by working. This posting also highlights the contradiction in the highly nationalistic tenor of the arguments being made against asylum seekers, which ironically ultimately support the outsourcing of detention to an American owned company, and consequently the loss to Australia of any profits resulting from the enterprise.

As well as making general humanitarian appeals for compassion to be shown towards asylum seekers, a key feature of the pro-asylum seeker posts is their attempts to correct the mis-information and myth-perpetuation of the anti-asylum posts; in terms of anti-racism strategies these posts consistently attempted to offer *the provision of accurate information to dispel false beliefs*. The clearest example comes from Anne, who, in this comparatively long post, systematically lists what she sees as misinformation and offers alternative information and interpretations, apparently with the goal of changing the views of those perpetuating these ideas.

> *I have been a bit disturbed to read so much mis-information on asylum seeker issues on this blog. Specifically: 1. Joe's comment "How are the Aboriginals doing there Mr. Adams? Time to start with our own back yards first sir, then we can try to save the rest of the world ". Yes, no question that Indigenous disadvantage*

needs addressing. However, from an economic viewpoint, the hard-line Howard "solution" with regard to asylum seekers is not the answer. As reported by Immigration Minister Chris Evans, even aside humanitarianism concerns, the Pacific Solution alone cost the Australian taxpayers $309.8 million from 2001-2008. I believe that the money spent on the Pacific Solution and other unnecessary costs would have been better spent on issues like – say – Indigenous health. We do not need to trample on the human rights of asylum seekers in order to attempt to address Indigenous disadvantage. 2. I too would like Australian laws to be enforced. However, asylum seekers have not broken either international or Australian law by arriving without a visa seeking protection. Asylum seekers are not 'illegals'. 3. There is not rampant "illegal immigration". As we have not any common land borders, the amount of asylum seekers who arrive on our shores are very small compared to other countries like Pakistan. 4. The thorny issue of "queue-jumping". Contrary to public opinion, for many asylum seekers, joining a 'queue' is not possible because there is no queue. Many are forced to flee for their lives quickly and are not in a position to travel to an embassy (if one even exists) or to wait until a claim for refugee status has been processed. Australia can do better ...

In her attempt to provide accurate information to dispel false beliefs, this blogger uses a device identified by Fozdar (2008) as being used predominantly for liberal anti-racist arguments, 'the explicit use of factual detail'. Facts and figures are quoted, attributable to the Federal Minister, and arguments about breaches of law, borders and the application process are accompanied by factual detail. Anne also *challenges language that maintains and regulates negative intergroup relationships,* specifically the use of the term 'illegals' and the notion of 'queue jumping'. She *engages with self and group identities* in her closing call for 'Australians' to do better, again re-orienting the nationalism more commonly used by anti-asylum seekers, to argue for a more humane response.

Conclusion

We have outlined a number of characteristics of a diablog between people arguing for and against the rights of asylum seekers, suggesting the blog may provide a Habermasian style 'public sphere' for engagement between competing voices. The blog offers evidence of an engaged, rather than apathetic public – one can only assume the motivation for posting comments is to have one's views heard, and presumably to attempt to change other posters' opinions.

While most discursive analysis tends to focus on the construction and rhetoric of racist arguments, we chose to examine the anti-racist arguments being articulated by the general public, offering evidence of everyday or 'by-stander' anti-racism. Half the blog contributions made such arguments, using strategies identified in the literature as being likely to lead to positive change. Although it is not possible to measure whether other posters' opinions changed as a result, the fact that the approaches used reflect those identified as effective anti-racism indicates changed attitudes may result. The evidence provided thus supports Macgilchrist and Bohmig's (2012) argument that blogs, themselves increasingly popular mundane, quotidian, everyday practices, offer sites for a 'minimal politics' where 'tiny fissures' can be torn in current social formations.

The features discussed include the structuring of debate around a dichotomy where participants engage directly with the original newspaper article author, or with each other by name, or by referencing arguments made. This construction serves to polarize the postings of individuals into a more or less coherent extended argument in favour or against asylum seekers; and to create the bloggers as a community of interest. The discursive subject, thus, to some extent, disappears. It is worth noting here the criticism of Habermas' blindness to inequality of access based on gender, class and ethnicity (Lunt and Livinstone,

2013). This polarizing effect suggests that access may be less of an issue, in practice, at least insofar as the types of arguments that get made. As noted in the by-stander anti-racism literature, advocates needn't be 'members' to make arguments in support of minorities. The invisibility of gender, class and ethnic identities online makes detailed analysis of this question difficult, however. The suggestion (Van Dijk, 1989: 21) that "the powerless have literally 'nothing to say,' nobody to talk to, or must remain silent when more powerful people are speaking", while true to some extent in relation to access to the internet, is arguable given that an argument in their interests is being made.

By engaging in the debate publicly, those with pro-asylum seeker views make it quite clear to those expressing anti-asylum seeker opinions that their views are not shared by all – a common misconception held by prejudiced individuals (Hartley and Pedersen, 2007; Pedersen and Hartley, 2012; Pedersen et al., 2008b). This is important, since people who think their views are held by the majority are more forthright in expressing their attitudes and opinions, are less prepared to compromise, and are less likely to modify their views, than those who perceive themselves to be in the minority (Miller, 1993). Thus, in a context where anti-asylum seeker discourse is common, it is unlikely that those with pro-diversity and anti-racist views will 'speak up', with the result that the relatively prejudiced

may have more influence in an unregulated 'public sphere'. The blog is a good example of an 'everyday life' instance where this is not occurring, and racism is being directly challenged. Given Blanchard et al.'s (1994) findings that hearing others condemn racism significantly influences the way people respond to it, it might be that some effect on other bloggers is likely. At the very least it should function as a 'troubling' mechanism, unsettling otherwise normalised discourses (Nelson et al., 2010). Certainly it offered evidence of the ways in which a counter-hegemonic consensus is built.

While we cannot demonstrate that participants' views are being modified as a result of the interaction, we have provided evidence that at least dialogue is being engaged in, and that bloggers are hearing and orienting to each other both to support and challenge each others' views. While they do engage in the sorts of activities Janack (2006) and Sobieraj and Berry (2011) identified (censure, criticism, name-calling, deflection, insulting language, sarcasm, emotion display), these did not stifle discussion nor lead to a concentration of participants sharing similar views. This indicates the blog provides a 'blogosphere', a sphere in which public opinion about race relations, in this case asylum seekers, is being formed and modified. The types of engagement we have illustrated challenge Sunstein's (2008) argument that dialogue is not happening on the web and that

blog participants are hunkering down into homogenous speech communities. The potential of the blog to change people's opinions has also been demonstrated using evidence from proven anti-racism strategies.

References

Adams P (2008) Refugees without refuge. *The Weekend Australian Magazine* December 20-21. Available at: http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24819144-5013491,00.html (accessed 18 March 2113).

Amnesty International (nd) The facts on refugees and asylum seekers. *Amnesty International*. Available at: http://www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/comments/24506/ (accessed 19 March 2013).

Benhabib S (2002) *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Billig M (1987) *Arguing and Thinking: A Rhetorical Approach to Social Psychology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Billig M (1991) *Ideology and Opinions: Studies in Rhetorical Psychology*. London: Sage.

Billig M, Condor S, Edwards D, Gane M, Middleton D and Radley A (1988) *Ideological Dilemmas: A Social Psychology of Everyday Thinking*. London: Sage.

Billig M (2001) Discursive rhetorical and ideological messages. In: Wetherell M, Taylor S and Yates S (eds) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London: Sage, pp.210-221.

Blanchard F, Crandall C, Brigham J and Vaughn L (1994) Condemning and condoning racism: A social context approach to interracial settings, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 79(6): 993-997.

Brett J (2003) *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caldas-Coulthard C and Coulthard M (eds) (1996) *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*. New York: Routledge.

Castells M (2001) *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Challenging Racism Project (2011*) Challenging Racism – Findings, Challenging Racism: The Anti-Racism Research Project*. Available at: http://www.uws.edu.au/social_sciences/soss/research/challenging_racism/initiatives (accessed 31March 2011).

Cherwitz, R. and Hikins, J. (1986) *Communication and Knowledge: An Investigation in Rhetorical Epistemology*. California: University of Southern California Press.

Crock M and Saul B (2002) *Future Seekers: Refugees and the Law in Australia*. Federation Press: Sydney.

Dahlgren P (2001) The public sphere and the Net: structure, space and communications. In: Bennett W and Entman R (eds) *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.33-55.

Edwards D (2003) Analyzing racial discourse: The discursive psychology of mind–world relationships. In: van den Berg H, Wetherell M and Houtkoop-Steenstra H (eds) *Analyzing Race Talk: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Interview*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.31-48.

Edwards D and Potter J (1992) *Discursive Psychology*. London: Sage.

Every D (2008) A reasonable, practical and moderate humanitarianism: The co-option of humanitarianism in the Australian asylum seeker debates. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21(2): 210-229.

Every D and Augoustinos M (2008) Constructions of Australia in pro- and anti-asylum seeker discourse. *Nations and Nationalism* 14: 562-580.

Fairclough N (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fozdar F (2008) Duelling discourses, shared weapons: Rhetorical techniques used to challenge racist arguments. *Discourse and Society* 19(4): 529-547.

Foucault M (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. Brighton: Harvester.

Habermas J (1984) *The Theory of Communicative Action*. London: Heinemann.

Habermas J (1989 [1962]) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Habermas J (1991) The public sphere. In: Mukerji C and Schudson M (eds) *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.398-404.

Gaertner S and Dovidio J (1986) The aversive form of racism. In: Dovidio J and Gaertner S (eds) *Prejudice, Discrimination and Racism*. Orlando: Academic Press, pp.61-89.

Gale P (2004) The refugee crisis and fear: Populist politics and media discourse. *Journal of Sociology* 40: 321-340.

Gelber K (2003) A fair queue? Australian public discourse on refugees and immigration. *Journal of Australian Studies* 1: 23-30.

Hartley L and Pedersen A (2007) Asylum seekers: How attributions and emotion affect Australians' views on mandatory detention of 'the other'. *Australian Journal of Psychology* 59(3): 119-131.

Hollinsworth D (2006) *Race and Racism in Australia.* South Melbourne: Thomson/Social Science Press.

Holmes J (2009) The new invisible man: How anonymity corrupts. *American Communication Journal* 11(3):np.

Hutchby I and Woofitt R (1998) *Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices and Applications*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Hyers L (2007) Resisting prejudice every day: Exploring women's assertive responses to anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, heterosexism, and sexism. *Sex Roles* 56(1): 1-12.

Janack J (2006) Mediated citizenship and digital discipline: A rhetoric of control in a campaign blog. *Social Semiotics* 16(2): 283-301.

Johnson C (2007) 'John Howard's 'Values' and Australian Identity', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 42(2): 195-209.

Jupp J (2007) *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.

Kawakami K, Dunn E, Karmali F and Dovidio J (2009) Mispredicting affective and behavioral responses to racism. *Science* 323(5911: 276-278.

Laclau E and Mouffe C (2001 [1985]) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Politics*. London: Verso.

Lamerichs J and te Molder H (2003) Computer mediated communication: From a cognitive to a discursive model. *New Media & Society* 5(4): 451-473.

Lunt P and Livingstone S (2013) Media studies' fascination with the concept of the public sphere: Critical reflections and emerging debates. *Media, Culture & Society* 35(1): 87-96.

MacDougall R (2005) Identity, electronic ethos, and blogs: A technologic analysis of symbolic exchange on the new news medium. *American Behavioral Scientist* 49(4): 575-599.

Macgilchrist F and Bohmig I (2012) Blogs, genes and immigration: Online media and minimal politics. *Media, Culture & Society* 34(1): 83-100.

Manne R (with D Corlett) (2004) Sending them home: Refugees and the new politics of indifference. *Quarterly Essay*. Issue 13. Black Inc. Books: Melbourne, pp.1-95.

Mares P (2002) *Borderline: Australia's Treatment of Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Markus A (2011) *An Inventory of Australian Public Opinion Surveys*. Available at: http://arts.monash.edu.au/mapping-population/inventory-of-surveys.php (accessed 29 June 2011).

Marr D (2007) *His master's voice: The corruption of public debate under Howard*. Melbourne: Black Inc.

Marr D and Wilkinson M (2003) *Dark victory.* Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Miller C (1993) Majority and minority perceptions of consensus and recommendations for resolving conflicts about land use regulation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 19(4): 389-398.

Mouffe C (2005) *On the Political*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Myers G (2010) *Discourse of Blogs and Wikis*. London New York: Continuum.

Nelson J, Dunn KM, Paradies Y, Pedersen A, Sharpe S, Hynes M and Guerin B, (2010) *Review of Bystander Approaches in Support of Preventing Race Based Discrimination* North Carlton: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

Norris P (2004) The bridging and bonding role of online communities. In: Howard P and Jones S (eds) *Society Online: The Internet in Context.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, pp.31-44.

Pickering S (2001) Common sense and original deviancy: News discourses and asylum seekers in Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 14(2): 169-186.

Pedersen A, Kenny M, Briskman, L, and Hoffman S (2008a) Working with Wasim: A convergence of community, *The Australian Community Psychologist* 20(1):57-72.

Pedersen A, Griffiths B and Watt S (2008b) Attitudes toward out-groups and the perception of consensus: All feet do *not* wear one shoe. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 18(6): 543-557.

Pedersen A and Hartley L (2012) Prejudice against Muslim Australians: The role of values, gender and consensus. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*. 22 (3): 239-255.

Pedersen A, Walker I, Paradies Y and Guerin B (2011) How to cook rice: Ingredients for teaching anti-prejudice. *The Australian Psychologist* 4: 55-63.

Pedersen A, Watt S and Hansen S (2006) The role of false beliefs in the community's and the federal government's attitudes toward Australian asylum seekers. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 41(1)*,* 105-124.

Postmes T, Spears R, Sakhel K and De Groot D (2001) Social influence in computer-mediated communication: The effects of anonymity on group behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27: 1242-1254.

RCoA (2011) Myths about refugees and asylum seekers. *Refugee Council of Australia*. Available at: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/f/myth-long.php (accessed 19 March 2013).

Saxton A (2003) 'I certainly don't want people like that here': The discursive construction of asylum seekers. *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy* 109: 109-120.

Sneijder P and te Molder H (2005). Moral logic and logical morality: attributions of responsibility and blame in online discourse on veganism. *Discourse and Society* 16(5): pp.675-696.

Sobieraj S and Berry J (2011) From incivility to outrage: Political discourse in blogs, talk radio, and cable news. *Political Communication* 28(1): 19-41.

Spears R and Lea M (1992) Social influence and the influence of the social and computer-mediated communication. In: Lea M (ed) *Contexts of Computer Mediated Communication*. Heml Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, pp.1243-1254.

Sullivan P and Goldzwig S (eds) (2004) *New Directions in Rhetorical Criticism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sunstein C (2008) Neither Hayek nor Habermas. *Public Choice* 134: 87-95.

Tilbury, F (2007) "We are family': the use of family tropes in refugee/advocate talk", *Social Identities*, 13(5): 627-649.

van den Berg H, Wetherell M and Houtkoop-Steenstra H (eds) (2003) *Analyzing Race Talk: Multidisciplinary Approaches to the Interview*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

van Dijk T (1987) *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*. Sage: California.

van Dijk T (1989) Structures of discourse and structures of power. In: Anderson J (ed) *Communication Yearbook 12*. Routledge: London and New York, pp.18-59.

van Dijk T (1993) Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse and Society* 4(2): 249-283.

van Dijk T (2008) *Discourse and Power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wetherell M (2003) Racism and the analysis of cultural resources in interviews. In: Van den Berg H, Wetherell M and Houtkoop-Steenstra H (eds) *Analyzing Race Talk: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Research.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp.11-30.

Wetherell M and Potter J (1992) *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation*. Harvester-Wheatsheaf: Hertfordshire.

Wise A and Velayutham S (2009) *Everyday Multiculturalism*. Palgrave Macmillan: Sydney.

[i] The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948, adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) *Article 14,* states that 'Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution'. The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of Refugees defines a refugee as 'a person who: owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country'.

[ii] Habermas' examples were English coffee-houses and French salons of the 18th century. Recent scholars have argued that the interactive applications available through the internet have the potential to function in the same way (see Castells, 2001; Dahlgren, 2001). Lunt and Livingstone (2013) recently reviewed media studies' interest in the notion of the public sphere in a special issue of *Media, Culture & Society*, demonstrating how Habermas' thinking developed in the 50 years since his first publications. They suggest he moved from optimism about the potential of the public sphere to pessimism.

[iii] It must be noted that most bloggers did not address the particular case in point at all, but posted general arguments in relation to asylum seekers more broadly, giving the blog a somewhat 'scripted' tone in its coverage of relatively well-trodden ground (see Every and Augostinos, 2008; Gale; 2004).

[iv] Three postings could not be categorized; for example, one entry simply stated: '*couldn't agree more*', and given the time delay, it is unclear which response this person was agreeing with.

[v] We have not corrected the English and typographical errors, but used the blog entries verbatim. We have omitted using [sic] to indicate accuracy.

---

vi Another pro asylum seeker blogger made a similar Biblical reference: *Have we forgotton the old, but valuable saying 'do unto others as you wish others to do unto you' or something like that. ...*