



**Third International  
Conference on Racisms in  
the New World Order:  
*Realities of Culture, Colour  
and Identity*  
Conference Proceedings**

Proudly supported by the School of Indigenous & Australian Studies, James Cook University Singapore and the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Molecular Sciences.



**Third International Conference on Racisms in the New World Order: *Realities of Culture, Colour and Identity.***

29<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> August, 2012, Pacific International Hotel, Cairns

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*Published by The Cairns Institute, James Cook University, Cairns*

Year of Publication: 2013

ISBN 978-0-9875922-6-2



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# Foreword

The new millennium continues to present us with increased complexities in dealing with racist practice and racialised discourses. The continued unrest across the world fuels debates around national security and the war on terror, debates that in turn focus on and demonize marginalized groups in society. The overarching reach of the media increasingly exacerbates moral panic in the public arena around asylum-seekers, Muslims and all those who are visibly different. State paternalism has led to increased attempts to control the lives of Indigenous Peoples even to the extent of suspending protective legislation, such as anti-discrimination legislation.

Questions of national identity and citizenship continue to hold centre-stage, often conjoined with fears of the 'other'. Racism continues to permeate our lives in both subtle and overt forms, even as many people continue to assert either that 'racism does not exist' or, in a modified form, that 'all people are racist'.

The replacement of overt forms of racism by indirect and covert forms of 'new racisms' that use ideas of insurmountable cultural differences brought about by alien cultural values and lifestyles has made the task of challenging racism all the more difficult. And yet, racism continues to impact severely on the life chances of large sections of people across the world and, as such, cannot be ignored.

The Third International Conference on Racisms in the New World Order: *Realities of Culture, Colour and Identity* was jointly organised by The Cairns Institute James Cook University and the Australian Human Rights Commission. The themes of the conference were significant nationally and internationally and included:

- Manifestations and Impacts of Racism
- Fear, Nationalism and Race Hate
- Racism in Specific Contexts
- Developing Anti-Racist Futures – Visualising alternatives for the future

The Conference was held on 30-31 August 2012 in Cairns. A call for papers was made to the public and abstracts were submitted and accepted by the conference steering committee. Academic and practice based papers were presented at the Conference. The Conference was overseen by the co-convenors and an advisory committee. The Conference had keynote presenters and participants from all around the world.

The presenters were invited to submit their papers for inclusion in these conference proceedings. Guidelines for the papers were provided by the convenors. Each paper has been blind-refereed by two other academic peers and complies with normal academic referring processes. This peer review process has ensured scholarly rigour and independent assessment of each paper.

The papers in these Conference proceedings provide thought provoking studies and ideas from diversity authors and make a significant contribution to scholarly knowledge in this field.

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# The ordinariness of Australian Muslims: attitudes and experiences of Muslims

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**Keywords:** Muslims, Australia, everyday multiculturalism, ordinary cosmopolitanism, racism.

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<sup>2</sup>**Professor Kevin Dunn** has worked in the field of cross-cultural relations for over two decades. He is globally recognised for his work on anti-racism, and he steers the leading national research project on racism and anti-racism in Australia – The Challenging Racism Project. In this field he has published over 15 refereed journals articles, and delivered over 40 conference papers. He and his team have provided numerous briefings to government agencies at all levels. Most recently, he has briefed the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and the Department of Immigration, on the direction and content of the National Anti-Racism Partnership. Dunn also has long-standing research relations with Muslim communities in Australia, especially those within Sydney and to lesser extent in Melbourne.

**Over the last decade there has been a rapid expansion of scholarship on the difficulties of Muslims living within western countries. On the one hand Muslims are seen as not “fitting in” and, on the other they are being prevented from belonging through mechanisms of social exclusion. This research samples at the deeper-end of disaffection and reproduces a discourse of non-integration. There is no compelling empirical evidence in Australia to support the case for widespread radicalisation (or vulnerability to it) among Muslims, nor is there evidence to suggest widespread alienation. UWS conducted a survey together with the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy to collect evidence as to whether incompatibility (radicalisation etc) and disaffection is as widespread as the research and inquiries to date infer. The project is anchored within the emerging scholarship on ‘everyday multiculturalism’ and ‘ordinary cosmopolitanism’ which emphasise the everyday unproblematic nature of most cross-cultural encounters in culturally diverse societies. Three hundred and forty five surveys were completed by ISRA volunteers at Sydney Mosques, Islamic centres, and Eid festivals in September 2011. The results show a very strong sense of belonging amongst the Australian Muslim community. There was a relatively high incidence of experiences of racism. Australian Muslims have ordinary desires and needs,**

**ranking education and employment as the most prominent of their concerns. They feel comfortable identifying as both Australian and Muslim. The findings highlight the non-problematic and everyday nature of the lives of Australian Muslims, with the exception of their high rates if experienced racism.**

## **Introduction**

Over the last decade there has been a rapid expansion of scholarship on the difficulties of Muslims living within western countries. One branch of this research leverages from angst around Muslim incompatibility with 'western values'. This is manifest in political statements, in policy documents, in research and in news media. Some of this angst focuses on the threat from radicalisation, if not terrorism. A good deal of government funded research in Australia on Muslims since 2007 for example has come from funding schemes with a de-radicalisation mission. In Australia this has included the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security (Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (MCIMA), 2007). A second general branch of inquiry has looked into the experiences of Australian Muslims, specifically their experiences of racism, in the form of physical attacks, abuse, exclusion and discrimination (Dunn *et al.*, 2007; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 2004; Poynting & Mason, 2007; Poynting & Noble, 2004). A justifiable focus of this research has also been upon the negative consequences of these experiences. The morbid outcomes of this racism include a degraded sense of personal safety, corrupted belonging and citizenship (Brondolo *et al.*, 2009; Dunn & Kamp, 2009; HREOC, 1991; Paradies, 2006; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). There have been some research projects, with this emphasis, that received funding from the earlier mentioned de-radicalisation schemes (Yasmeen, 2008). These literatures are reviewed and critiqued in more detail below.

There is a cumulative negative inference from the two brands of scholarship discussed above. On the one hand Muslims are seen as not 'fitting into' Australia, on the other they are being prevented from belonging through mechanisms of social exclusion. Both sets of scholarship help build assumptions that the experiences and perspectives of a small proportion of Australian Muslims are shared by the majority. For example, the attention to radicalisation or the vulnerability to radicalisation become generalised, as part of the nefarious process of stereotyping that is strong in regard to Muslims in the west. Similarly, the negative interactions that some Muslims have with non-Muslims become assumed as characteristic of the lives of most if not all Muslims. The negative effects of racism on belonging and social inclusion are similarly generalised. Our conviction is that the abovementioned research samples at the deeper-end of disaffection and reproduces a discourse of non-integration. This research project set out to collect evidence as to whether incompatibility (radicalisation etc) and disaffection is as widespread as the research and inquiries to date infer.

## **"Everyday Multiculturalism"/Banal Cosmopolitanism**

The project is anchored within the emerging scholarship on 'everyday multiculturalism' and 'ordinary cosmopolitanism' which emphasise the everyday unproblematic nature of most cross-cultural

encounters in culturally diverse societies. The scholarship on 'everyday multiculturalism', sometimes referred to as 'ordinary or banal cosmopolitanism', has been championed by social geographers and by cultural studies researchers working at the local levels of micro publics (Ho, 2011; Noble, 2009; Delhanty, 2006; Wise, 2005). In these micro publics (such as parks, sporting fields, malls, backyards, lunch-rooms, community gardens, etc) there are daily pragmatic negotiations across ethnic difference (Amin, 2002; Gow, 2005; Wise, 2009). Authors in Australia and the United Kingdom have referred to these interactions across ethnic difference as 'unremarkable', 'ordinary', 'mundane' and 'banal' (Phillips & Smith, 2008; Noble, 2009). These positive encounters are under-researched and under-acknowledged, such that encounters across ethnic difference are mostly seen through the prism of the poor relations that receive most public and policy attention. Adopting an 'everyday multiculturalism' perspective draws our research attention towards the banal and ordinary lives of Australian Muslims, including their cross cultural encounters with non-Muslims.

In reflecting on the poor public perception of British Muslims, Hopkins (2004, pp. 268-9) suggested three remedies: changing the racialisation of Islam that occurs through the media, improving public understandings of Islam, and expanding public recognition of Islamic heterogeneity. This research contributes to such a project, especially the second remedy, by generating a picture on the attitudes and experiences of a wider array of Australian Muslims. This includes moving explicitly beyond those who feel marginalised or who are vulnerable to radicalisation. The normal, integrated, ordinariness of Australian Muslims are empirically demonstrated through this study.

## **Generating an alternative vision of Muslims in Australia**

With the aim of determining a sense of the broader Muslim community attitudes and experiences, UWS partnered with the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy to conduct a survey to gather empirics on the normality, integration and ordinariness of Australian Muslims. The survey dealt with experiences of racism, participation in the labour force, civics and the voluntary sector, and cross-cultural contact (including inter-faith contact). The survey also collected data on attitudes, including senses of belonging and disaffection, cultural (and religious) tolerance, and views on relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Data on demographics, socio-economic status, cultural background, religiosity and the religious practices of informants was also collected.

The survey is comprised of two stages. Stage One, reported on here, is complete and took the form of a face-to-face survey delivered at Sydney Mosques, Islamic centres, and Eid festivals in September 2011. Office bearers, staff and volunteers from the Islamic Sciences and Research Academy (ISRA) conducted 345 face-to-face surveys. Approximately 50% of the surveyors were male and 50% female, so as to seek a gender balance in the final sample. The surveys at the mosques and cultural centres took place after Friday prayers. A diversity of Sydney mosques were used including those established by Turkish-Australian Muslims (e.g. Auburn, Bonnyrigg), Lebanese-Australians (Lakemba, Arncliffe), Iranian-Australians (Earlwood), Bangladeshi-Australians (Sefton), Bosnian-Australians (Smithfield), and the multi-ethnic mosques (Rooty Hill, Surry Hills, Leumeah). Data from the face-to-face delivered surveys were placed into an SPSS data set by the UWS

Research Assistant. The CIs and staff from ISRA together devised a coding regime for the open response comments. Stage two of the survey will be delivered via telephone in early 2013.

The table below compares the gender mix obtained through the face-to-face surveys with those of the Muslim population in Greater Sydney (2011 Census of Population and Housing). Where there are any inconsistencies, Stage Two of the project should help to balance them out and generate an even more representative sample of the Australian Muslim community in Sydney.

**Table 1: Gender, Sydney Muslims**

	<b>UWS &amp; ISRA, 2012</b>	<b>Census 2011</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Male</b>	44.7	51.8
<b>Female</b>	55.3	48.2
<b>Total %</b>	100	100
<b>Total <i>n</i></b>	<i>n</i> = 340	<i>n</i> = 208,149

The sample collected by the UWS and ISRA survey is fairly reflective of the Australian Muslim population throughout Greater Sydney, with a slightly greater proportion of females (55.3%) and slightly less males (44.7%).

In terms of birthplace, the sample obtained is comparable to the birthplace of Muslims in Greater Sydney (2011 Census of Population and Housing). With almost half the sample group, Australian-born Muslims make up the largest birthplace group of all Muslims in Greater Sydney in both the UWS & ISRA survey and the Census (40.6% and 42.8% respectively). The remainder of the major birthplace groups are fairly reflective of the Census data, with more respondents born in Turkey represented in the UWS & ISRA survey (13.3%) than in the Census (4.3%).

**Table 2: Birthplace, Sydney Muslims**

	<b>UWS &amp; ISRA, 2012</b>	<b>Census 2011</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Australia</b>	40.6	42.8
<b>Turkey</b>	13.3	4.3
<b>Lebanon</b>	7.5	11.6
<b>Bangladesh</b>	6.1	6.8
<b>Afghanistan</b>	4.9	4
<b>Pakistan</b>	3.8	5.3
<b>Egypt</b>	3.8	1
<b>Other</b>	17.1	22
<b>Not stated</b>	2.9	2.2
<b>Total %</b>	100	100
<b>Total <i>n</i></b>	<i>n</i> =345	<i>n</i> =208,149

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of religion in their day to day lives. This was to provide an indicator of the religiosity of the sample, and to enable cross tabulations of that

religiosity with experiences and attitudes. This sample of Australian Muslims had a high level of religiosity. A large majority of respondents (84.4%) said that religion was important in their day to day lives. The locations of the survey delivery (at mosques, centres and religious events) helps explain this level of religiosity. This profile needs to be born in mind when analysing the findings below. Stage 2 of the survey, using telephone delivery to a randomly selected sample of Sydney Muslims households, may assuage the religiosity of the combined sample.

**Table 3: Importance of religion in daily life\*, Sydney Muslims, 2012**

	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Very important</b>	286	84.4
<b>Important</b>	44	13.0
<b>Somewhat important</b>	5	1.5
<b>Not important at all</b>	4	1.2
<b>Total</b>	339	100.0

Question wording: How important is religion in your daily life?

## Experiences of racism and senses of belonging

With the lack of empirical evidence to support the widespread notion that Australian Muslims feel alienated from Australian society as a result of social exclusion, the UWS and ISRA survey sought to obtain data on the incidence of racism towards Australian Muslims and the nature of this racism. Respondents were asked how often they had experienced discrimination on the basis of their religion. This was compared with the national data set from the Challenging Racism Project (2011).

**Table 4: Experiences of racism, Sydney Muslims (2011-12) and Australia (2001-2008)**

<b>Place of discrimination*</b>	<b>Sydney Muslims % (n= 345 2011-2012)</b>	<b>Total survey respondents % (n= 12512 2001-2008)</b>
In the workplace	61.2	17.5
In education	59.7	16.6
<b>Type of discrimination**</b>		
You are called names or similarly insulted	62.6	27.0

Question wordings: \*How often have you experienced discrimination because of your own ethnic origin/religion in the following situations? \*\* How often do you feel that because of your own ethnic origin.

\*\*\* Percentage 'Yes' are those who answered any of: Very often; Often; Sometime, and; Hardly ever.

Australian Muslims had a significantly higher experience of racism compared to the population as a whole. Almost two-thirds said that they had experienced racism in the workplace (61.2%) compared with less than one-fifth nation-wide (17.5%). Similarly, two-thirds of Australian Muslims had experienced racism in education (59.7%) compared with the nation-wide rate of 16.6%. Two-thirds

of Australian Muslims have experienced name-calling or similar insults, with less than half that amount nation-wide (27%).

Despite this, the majority of Australian Muslims do not endure a daily experience of racism (Table 5). One-third of respondents said that they had never experienced racism (28.4%) and only about 16% had experienced racism frequently. For about half (45.5%) racism happens infrequently.

**Table 5: Rates of experience of racism in the workplace, Sydney Muslims, 2011-2012 (n:345)**

	Non-valid %	Never %	Hardly ever %	Sometimes %	Often %	Very often %
In the workplace	10.4	28.4	21.2	24.3	9.9	5.8

Question wording: \*How often have you experience discrimination because of your religion in the following situations?

The survey also sought to look at the attitudes of the broader Australian Muslim community in terms of belonging and integration into Australian society. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements which dealt with these themes and included questions around belonging (national, religious, place, ancestry/ethnic), levels of disaffection, tolerance levels (religious and cultural), and the discursive bases of their tolerance, views on the consistency of Islam with Australian norms and society, views on relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia, perceptions on state policy regarding religious minorities, particularly Islam and views on levels and nature of susceptibility to radicalisation.

The majority of respondents (72.2%) felt comfortable in identifying themselves as Australian. An even stronger majority (81.7%) indicated that it was important to them that their children be accepted as Australians. These responses clearly challenge the assumptions around “clashes” between Islam and Western culture and the notion of “problematic hyphens”. The findings support the conclusions of Hopkins (1998) and Cleland (1993) in that being Muslim and being Australian are not mutually exclusive identities.

**Table 6, Sense of belonging, Sydney Muslims, 2011-2012 (n:345)**

	% Yes/Agree*
I feel I am an Australian	72.2
It is important to me that my children are/would be fully accepted as Australians	81.7

\*Percentage ‘Yes/Agree’ are those that answered Strongly Agree or Agree.

The negative picture created by the assumption of cultural clashes is further challenged by the fact that only about 16% of Australian Muslims see an inconsistency between Australian society and Islam. The majority of Muslims appear to be very comfortable with being both Muslim and Australian. However, there is a strong critique of media influence on non-Muslim attitudes. An

overwhelming majority felt that Australian media portrayal of Muslims is unfair (84.3%) and that these media reports impact on non-Muslims' views of Muslim (83.2%). This may be linked to the perception by one-third of respondents that there is a lack of trust between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia (32.8%). However, half the respondents (43.8%) did feel that relations between these groups were friendly. This aligns with the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria (IWWCV) findings in Victoria (2008) where 60% of respondents (telephone survey n:600) felt that the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim Victorians was generally friendly (El Matrah & Dimopoulos, 2008, p.11)

**Table 7: Attitudes about Muslims' integration in Australia, Sydney Muslims, 2011-12 (n:345)**

	<b>Yes/Agree*</b> %	<b>Disagree</b> %
Islam is consistent with Australian norms and society	59.7	14.8
Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia are friendly	43.8	17.1
There is trust between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia	29.6	32.8
The Australian media's portrayal of Muslims is unfair	84.3	4.9
Media reports impact on non-Muslims' views of Muslims	83.2	4.6

\*Percentage 'Yes/Agree' are those that answered Strongly Agree or Agree.

## Ordinary desires

In seeking to delve into the broader attitudes and needs of Australian Muslims, the survey also dealt with the experiences of civic participation, asking respondents to rank the issues most important to them and their families. Education and employment are the primary issues for Australian Muslim families. Almost two-thirds (58.3%) ranked education as the most important issue for them. About 90% ranked education and just over 70% ranked employment as the first, second or third most important issue to them and their families. Inter-faith relations were considered a secondary issue with only about 17% ranking it as the most important issue to them. These data reflect a lack of concern in this area and highlights the ordinariness of Australian Muslims needs. A lack of concern with international affairs (2.9% ranked it highest) is also reflective of the distance felt towards these conflicts and the unproblematic and "everyday" nature of the lives of Australian Muslims.

**Table 8, Important issues for ordinary Sydney Muslims, 2011-12**

	Ranked 1		Ranked 1-3	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
<b>Education</b>	201	58.3	201	90.1
<b>Employment</b>	71	20.6	71	73.9
<b>Inter-faith relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia</b>	58	16.8	58	51.6
<b>Crime rates/changes to safety and security</b>	23	6.7	23	34.5
<b>International affairs and conflicts</b>	10	2.9	10	16.2
<b>Transport</b>	5	1.4	5	11.9
<b>Environmental issues</b>	8	2.3	8	13.9
<b>Animal rights</b>	9	2.6	9	7.2

Question wording: Which of the following issues are important to you and your family? Please rank from 1 to 8 (where 1 is the most important).

## Conclusion

Most research on Muslims living in Western countries has sampled at the deeper end of disaffection, reproducing discourses of non-integration. There is no compelling empirical evidence in Australia to support the case for widespread radicalisation (or vulnerability to it) among Muslims, nor is there any evidence to suggest widespread alienation. In fact, the results from Stage One of the UWS and ISRA collaborative research project into the ordinariness of the lives of Australian Muslims shows the contrary. The findings suggest a very strong sense of belonging amongst the Australian Muslim community. However there has been a relatively high incidence of experiences of racism, and this requires attention and ought be an urgent focus of anti-racist effort. Australian Muslims have ordinary desires and needs, ranking education and employment as the highest of their concerns. They feel comfortable identifying as both Australian and Muslim. Stage 1 results are also from a sample who are likely to have above average levels of religiosity. The findings highlight the non-problematic and everyday nature of the lives of Australian Muslims. The data being collected ought be a counterweight to those discourses of disaffection and radicalisation that swirl in public commentaries, and which undermine trust and comfort between Muslims and non-Muslims.

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# The construction of 'Indigenous identity': Racism, the media and the Bolt case

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**Keywords:** Racism, media, freedom of speech.

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**The media “are not only a powerful source of ideas about race, but they are also one place where these ideas are articulated, worked on, transformed and elaborated” (Hall, 1981: 37). The media are so influential that they construct for us, positions of knowledge and identification which allow us to identify with ‘ideological truths’ as though such ‘truths’ originated from ourselves (Hall ,1981: 30, 31).**

**Using the case of Eatock v Bolt [2011] FCA 1103 (28 September 2011) as a backdrop, this paper analyses the impact of the media on the construction of racism and attempts to define Indigenous identity in Australia. The paper commences with a presentation of the facts and decision of the case. The Federal Court of Australia determined that the comments made by Andrew Bolt in reference to ‘fair skinned’ Aboriginals in the Herald Sun newspaper in 2009 were in breach of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) as the comments were likely to humiliate, offend and intimidate ‘fair-skinned’ Indigenous Australians. The next section of the paper traces the comments made by some columnists and politicians following the decision of the Federal Court of Australia. Broadly these columnists and politicians argued that the decision amounted to censorship and a curtailment of free speech.**

**It is argued that representations of ‘Aboriginality’ reflect the oppressive relationship between Indigenous Australians and the state/wider society. Historically, the classification of Aboriginal people was used by the Australian state to ideologically legitimize the incarceration of Aboriginal people and to separate Aboriginal children from their families. The media plays an important function in this process of classification. It is argued that aboriginal identity is linked to notions of self-concept and attachment rather than skin colour. Confining of the debate to solely freedom of speech ignores the immense power played by the media in the construction of racism in Australia. For Indigenous Australians, the Bolt case goes beyond**

**arguments about freedom of speech and directly impacts upon the question of who has the right to define the identity of Australia's first peoples.**

## **Facts of the case**

In April and August 2009, Herald Sun columnist Andrew Bolt published two opinion articles in the Herald Sun entitled - "*It's so hip to be black*" (Bolt, 2009a) and "*White fellas in the black*" (Bolt, 2009b). Both articles concerned 'the identification of 'fair skinned' aboriginal people as Indigenous. In the first article, Bolt listed 16 Indigenous Australians, and inferred that some had identified as aboriginal for financial gain (Bolt, 2009a). The second article, (Bolt, 2009b) also related to the same theme and listed seven people, some of whom he again accused of identifying as Aboriginal for financial gain and furthering their careers. The language used in the articles was sarcastic and several factual assertions regarding the heritage of some of those named were incorrect. Bolt also asserted that the self-identification by such people as solely Indigenous adversely impacted upon 'racial cohesion' in Australia (Bolt, 2009a; 2009b)

In response to these articles, nine of the people named in the articles (Pat Eatock, Geoff Clark, Anita Heiss, Bindi Cole, Leanne Enoch, Graham Atkinson, Wayne Atkinson; Larissa Behrendt; and Mark McMillan) instituted legal proceedings against Andrew Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times under section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975), Cth. They alleged that the publication of the articles by Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times breached section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975), Cth (RDA), which reads:

"(1) It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:

- a) the act is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people; and
- b) the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person or of some or all of the people in the group."

Essentially, the plaintiffs had to prove that the conduct by Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times was undertaken due to the race, colour or ethnic origin of the Indigenous people concerned and that it was likely that fair-skinned aboriginal people were likely to be offended, intimidated, humiliated or insulted by the conduct. Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times on the other hand argued that the articles of April and August 2009 were written in utmost good faith and that the contents of the articles were in the public interest, and thus pursuant to section 18D of the Racial Discrimination Act. Section 18D of the Act provides that there are defences to a claim under Section 18C where any publication or comment is made in good faith and is in the public interest: "*A fair comment on any event or matter of public interest is deemed as an expression of genuine belief held by the person making the comment*" (s. 18D, Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth) )

# The Decision of the Federal Court of Australia

In a lengthy judgement delivered on September 28, 2011, Justice Bromberg ruled in favour of the plaintiffs. Justice Bromberg held that Bolt's articles implied that 'fair skinned' Aboriginal people named in the articles were not genuinely from an Indigenous background and that the people named had falsely identified as Aboriginal and thus the contents of the articles were reasonably likely to offend, humiliate, insult or intimidate 'fair skinned' Aboriginals. Justice Bromberg stressed that each of the Aboriginal persons targeted by the articles did actually identify as Aboriginal and did not opportunistically use their Aboriginal identity for any material gain. That Bolt's articles were written due to the race, colour or ethnic origin of the 'fair skinned' people referred to in Bolt's articles and thus in breach of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Cth. At paragraph 171 of the judgement, Justice Bromberg stated that: *"It is a notorious and regrettable fact of Australian history that the flawed biological characterisations of many Aboriginal people was the basis for mistreatment, including for policies of assimilation involving the removal of many Aboriginal children from their families until the 1970s. It will be of no surprise that a race of people subjected to oppression by reason of oppressive racial categorisation will be sensitive to being racially categorised by others"*. Justice Bromberg (at paragraph 296) emphasised that the articles written by Bolt had the potential to adversely impact upon vulnerable and younger Indigenous Australians so that that they could potentially fear or be pressured from identifying with their race.

Although Bolt argued that his aim in writing the articles was directed at 'better race relations' and that self-identification as Aboriginal was a trend which undermined race relations (paragraph 444), his defence based on section 18D of the Racial Discrimination Act was not upheld on the basis of the sarcastic language used and on the basis that the factual errors in the articles were of significance (at paragraph 302). For example, at paragraph 392, Justice Bromberg stated: *"... the absence of any significant cultural reference in the newspaper Articles to the Aboriginal cultural upbringing of the individuals dealt with, leaves an erroneous impression. As I have found, each of the nine individuals who gave evidence have either always identified as Aboriginal or have done so since their childhood. They all had a cultural upbringing which raised them to identify as Aboriginal. The fact that this is not disclosed to the reader of the Newspaper Articles in any meaningful way creates a distorted view of the circumstance in which the individuals exemplified in those articles identify as Aboriginal"*.

At paragraph 425, Justice Bromberg determined that the comments made by Bolt were not made in good faith: *"What Mr Bolt did and what he failed to do, did not evince a conscientious approach to advancing freedom of expression in a way designed to honour the values asserted by the RDA. Insufficient care and diligence was taken to minimise the offence, insult, humiliation and intimidation suffered by the people likely to be affected by the conduct and insufficient care and diligence was applied to guard against the offensive conduct reinforcing, encouraging or emboldening racial prejudice. The lack of care and diligence is demonstrated by the inclusion in the Newspaper Articles of the untruthful facts and the distortion of the truth which I have identified, together with the derisive tone, the provocative and inflammatory language and the inclusion of gratuitous asides. For those reasons I am positively satisfied that Mr Bolt's conduct lacked objective good faith."*

Bolt was not ordered to apologise as Justice Bromberg felt that there was no point of compelling someone to apologise when there was the absence in the belief for an apology. Instead, Justice Bromberg ordered that a 500 word corrective notice be published next to Andrew Bolt's columns, twice over a 14 day period. (paragraph 468). Essentially such a notice is directed at redressing the esteem and social standing of the people

## Reactions to the Bolt case: attack on free speech

Outside court on the day of the judgement, Bolt said that he wanted to go through the judgement before making conclusive comments. He however said *"this is a terrible day for freedom of speech in this country". "It is particularly a restriction on the freedom of all Australians to discuss multiculturalism and how people identify themselves". "I argued then and I argue now that we should not insist on the differences between us but should focus instead on what unites us as human beings"* (Bolt 2011).

The decision resulted in a barrage of opinion pieces by columnists and politicians. In an article appearing just 4 days after Justice Bromberg's ruling, Bolt himself argued that he was not a racist and that his message was always consistent (Allan, 2011). News Limited columnist Brendan O'Neill, stated: *"The terrifying thing that this ruling codifies is the idea that people's feelings are more important than free speech. In short, the case confirms the modern-day sanctification of the Offended Minority, whose personal and emotional interests must override the rights of the rest of us"* (O'Neill, 2011). On 29 September, Chris Merritt from the Australian wrote a comment piece, arguing that the Federal Court decision would *"turn Australia into a nation of tribes... protected species too fragile to cope with robust public discourse"* (Merritt, 2011).

George Brandis, wrote that section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act *"had no place in a society that values freedom of expression"* (Brandis, 2011: 12). Former Howard Government Minister, Kevin Andrews argued that the Bolt case demonstrated *"the dangers that flow from the assertion of groups rights"* (Andrews, 2011). David Kemp argued in The Australian newspaper that section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act was contrary to the principle of freedom of speech and called for the abolition of the Racial Discrimination Act as soon as possible (Kemp, 2011). Similarly, journalist David Marr argued that in a democratic society, vigorous public discussion can always insult or offend some groups and that Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act as it currently stands should be repealed (Marr, 2011)

Australia is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 19 protects freedom of speech and states:

- Everyone shall have right to hold opinions without interference
- Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of their frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

- The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For the respect of the rights or reputations of others;

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.

Section 3 (a) thus calls upon people to respect the reputation of others and to refrain from unsubstantiated attacks on others. Bromberg's decision was that section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act does not outlaw freedom of speech as has been proclaimed by some sections of the media and conservative politicians. Rather, it demands that any reporting be reasonable and conducted in good faith and absent of false claims and allegations. These matters were discussed by Justice Bromberg at paragraph 425 (discussed above) of His Honour's judgement in the context of the Racial Discrimination Act. Justice Bromberg stated in essence that whilst democratic societies cherish the notion of free speech, they also impose restrictions on absolute freedoms which result in the deliberate vilification directed at individuals and groups.

There is now widespread discussion amongst academics, the legal profession and the wider community that section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act as it currently stands is too broad and potentially unconstitutional. These concerns may have merit from a legal perspective but the merits of this discussion lie outside the scope of this paper.

Confining the Bolt case to arguments about free speech ignores the immense power exercised by the mass media in shaping and reinforcing public opinion (Bahnisch, 2011). Importantly, the Bolt case needs to be assessed from the perspective of Indigenous Australians.

## Mainstreaming Racism

In Australia, the media continues to play a central role on the construction of what constitutes 'Indigenous' and who is seen as being 'Indigenous' (Bullimore, 1999; Mickler, 1997 and 1998). Historically, racist terminology, such as half caste, quadroon, half caste etc. was used to classify 'Aboriginality' (Langton, 1993). In modern times, resort to the racist language of the past is not palatable. Instead, the 'Aboriginality' of those who are 'fair skinned' is often questioned (Mickler, 1997).

Although notions of Indigenous identity have been contested (as is evident from Bolt's articles), Indigenous identity does not relate to the colour of an Indigenous person's skin or to their blood. Rather Indigenous identity is founded upon descent, culture, life experiences and upbringing (Paradies, 2006). It is premised upon perceiving oneself as Indigenous and being part of the Indigenous community. Descent does not involve "*genetics as inherited essential characteristics but to the historical connection that leads back to the land and which claims a particular history*" (Morrissey, 2003: 59). As Berry (1999) points out, in essence, the notion of identity is linked to the notion of self-concept, a sense of attachment: social identity is "*that part of an individual's self-*

*concept which derives from one's knowledge of one's membership in a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership"* (Berry, 1999: p. 3).

Since the colonization of Australia, the white settler society has been 'obsessed' with the classification of Australia's first peoples into 'half castes', 'full bloods', 'hybrids' etc, a practice which continues until today through the use of different terminology such as 'fair skinned'. The concept of 'Aboriginality' has been historically used to ideologically legitimize state policies and practices to control and assimilate Indigenous communities and cultures. Yet in all of these classifications, the voices and visions of Indigenous Australians has been absent (Dodson, 1994).

Whilst the colonization of Indigenous Australians has had numerous devastating consequences, one of the most profound outcomes of the categorisation of Indigenous Australians has been the removal of Indigenous children from their families. It was widespread practice across Australia for Aboriginal children who were deemed as 'half caste' (that is part white) to be forcibly removed from their families into schools and missions so that they could become 'civilised' and thus live like other white people in mainstream society (HREOC, 1997). Haebich (2000) describes the removal of Aboriginal children as a widespread systematic nationwide process which not only was directed at assimilation but also the disintegration of Indigenous communities.

Modern racism is articulated through subtle language and rhetoric based on egalitarianism and liberalism (Van Dijk, 1987) (Jakubowiz, 1994; Mickler, 1998). Additionally, Simmons and Lecouteur (2008) state that *"contemporary racism is typically accomplished in terms of subtle, flexibly managed and locally contingent discussion of the 'problems' associated with minority groups"* (Simmons and Lecouteur, 2008: 667). In this context, the media, *'initiate, monitor and control the majority and most influential forms of institutional and public text and talk....may set or change the agenda of public discourse and opinion making'* (Van Dijk, 1995:4 ). For Indigenous Australians, the Bolt case is not just a case about debates concerning freedom of speech, but one which is personal and essential to their self-definition (Bahnisch, 2011). An extract from Justice Bromberg's judgement (at paragraph 171) highlights this significance: *"It will be of no surprise that a race of people subjected to oppression by reason of oppressive racial categorisation will be sensitive to being racially categorised by others"*.

It is for this reason that the plaintiffs most likely took an action under the provisions of the RDA rather than one based on defamation. Had the plaintiffs initiated a defamation action, there is every possibility that they would have succeeded and the consequence of a success would have been much more adverse for Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times. Both Bolt and the Newspaper would have likely to be ordered to pay substantial monetary damages (Bahnisch, 2011). The Plaintiffs most likely chose to initiate legal proceedings under the RDA as an attack on 'fair skinned Aborigines' goes beyond the personal grievances of the plaintiffs themselves. The plaintiffs were thus concerned with utilising the RDA to protect Indigenous Australians from being vilified by the media (Bahnisch, 2011) and enabling them to assert their own right to identify with their culture and heritage.

Hall points out that when journalists select information to include in a news report or an editorial piece, they assert their professional judgement and values – thus their professional ideology (Hall, 1981). Various rhetorical practices are commonly utilised to legitimize racism. These include the denial of any intention of racism (Van Dijk 1993) and the invoking of egalitarian and liberal principles (Augoustinos, *et. al*, 2002). Although the manner in which social problems are constructed and portrayed by the media impacts upon the public's perception and understanding of those issues (Thomson & Ungerleider , 2004; Farquharson & Marjoribanks, 2006; Van Dijk 2002, 1988; Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Morris, 2005), journalists often deny that they have made racial and incriminating statements and deny that they had any such Intentions (Van Dijk 1993: 180). Rather, they often go on the defensive and state that they have been understood inaccurately and that they are claiming to tell the truth as the journalist saw it (Van Dijk 1993: 180, 183, 184; Van Dijk 1988: 223-224; Liu and Mills, 2006; Augoustinos & Every, 2007)

In their analysis of the Bolt case, Hirst and Keeble's paper summarises the stance taken by Bolt and the impact of such a stance: *"Bolt's discourse follows the classic lines of 'symbolic racism'; denial of racist motivations; the imputation of a racist motive to critics and the subjects of the story and the representation of the 'myth of privilege' in regards to indigenous Australians"* (Hirst & Keeble, 2011: 8). Quoting Van Dijk (1983), Hirst and Keeble assert that *"Bolt's plea to identity allegiance to white group solidarity coupled with strategies of denial of racism," "have a socio political function, delegitimising the need for the measures to combat racist attitudes. Van Dijk states that denials, "challenge the very legitimacy of anti racist analysis..... as long as the problem is being denied in the first place, the critics are ridiculed, marginalised and delegitimated"* (van Dijk 1993: 181; Hirst & Keeble, 2011: 8-9).

## Conclusion

The Andrew Bolt case is important from a number of perspectives. Firstly, it has revealed the falsehoods in Bolt's articles. In the words of Thampapillai, *"if the articles stood unchallenged, these falsehoods would have remained on the public record. A Democracy must be a marketplace of ideas, but no market prospers when false claims go unchallenged"* (Thampapillai, 2011: 2). Secondly, the case should not be looked at solely from the narrow confines of a limitation of freedom of speech. It has been argued that the Bolt case concerns the application of the Racial Discrimination Act in the public interest (Hirst & Keeble, 2011). The case has prompted debates on whether the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act are too broad and there is no doubt that this matter will continue to be debated in Australia.

Thirdly, the case is significant as it concerns a minority group's freedom to define its own identity. The issue of racism continues to be very significant in Australia. Racism continues to be articulated through the media in a more subtle manner, under the cloak of fairness, privilege and equality. Whilst the judgement in the Bolt case will not alter racism in Australia or the structures which perpetuate racism, the decision and legal reasoning can and should be used as an educational tool to combat racism.

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# Role of Discomfort and Disruption in Anti-Racism

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**Racism is a complex issue and can have strong impacts on the feelings, views, attitudes and values held by people involved. Open discussion of racism has potential consequences or implications or threats to individuals, community groups, civil society, government, industry or other stakeholders. At the core of any intervention to challenge racism are ways to critically think about racism and how they are reproduced. However, racism is a 'sensitive' topic for discussion, research and policy. There is a need to 'disrupt' the way we think about racism. The way that this disruption can occur is to work through the discomfort that discussions on racism produce to reach a position of awareness and develop new possibilities. This paper explores what constitutes sensitive discussion, then addresses issues of racism denial and focuses on ideas of discomfort.**

## Introduction

Issues of racism, racial/ethnic identity, citizenship and nationalism receive high media attention and stir up highly emotional debates and responses. Hollinsworth (2006) points out that racism is a relationship of dominance and subordination between social groups and is subject to variation over time and space. Racism has been located in different settings such as individual, institutional, informal, formal, direct and indirect. A number of writers note that racism now is often not demonstrated by direct acts of hostility but rather by more covert comments relating to moral character, alien cultural values and lifestyles (Pedersen et.al 2004, Fraser and Islam 2000). Racism operates at various levels, has multiple manifestations and its language, logic and expression shifts over time. Racism is not only about the spectacular or violent events such as those that took place in Cronulla (Babacan 2006), and the ordinary 'every day' racisms silently experienced by individuals and communities are of equal importance (Essed 1991).

Research indicates that racial discrimination and negative attitudes towards Indigenous and culturally diverse Australians remain prevalent throughout the Australian community. For example Dunn *et al.*, (2009) found that 63% of Indigenous Australians experience name-calling, ridicule and abuse on a daily basis. Dunn *et al.*, (in a research project on racism to which one of the authors is also principal researcher), in a large national study, demonstrated that 78 % of Australians believe humankind is made up of separate races, 41% believe that there are cultural groups that do not fit

into Australian society, 85% believe there is racial prejudice in Australia although, paradoxically 87% believed that it is a good thing for society to be made up of different cultures. The same study found anti -Asian sentiment (24%), anti-Indigenous sentiment (28%), anti-Muslim sentiment (49%), and anti-Semitic sentiment (23.3%). Babacan and Hollinsworth (2009), in a Queensland wide study, identified a range of racist incidents including physical violence, threat of violence, verbal and written abuse, property damage, humiliating behaviour, racist graffiti, racist media coverage, direct acts of discrimination and institutional discrimination. Surprisingly 17% of respondents had experienced racially motivated physical violence. The authors identified primary sites for incidents of racism on the street, at work, in educational settings (schools and universities), renting, seeking employment, public transport, social-recreational-sport settings and media.

As Kershan (2005) argues such occurrences are not novel in settler societies. The recurrence of key elements such as socio-economic disadvantage, media hostility, the real or imagined anxiety that immigration is 'out of control' is a feature of the politics of over the last century. However, Kershan notes (in the context of migration) that what is different is the combination enduring and new variables, together with the changing global context of migration processes which brings a sharp edge to the contemporary political saliency of racism. Babacan and Babacan (2012) point out that new boundaries of inclusion and exclusion have been drawn in Australia, exacerbated by the conjoining of the 'war on terror', Indigenous welfare reform and concerns over asylum seekers. The adoption of a 'protective framework' has been accompanied by an erosion of civil liberties, freedoms and human rights. All along discourses have been couched in liberal and egalitarian tropes that position the speaker as rational, fair-minded and non-prejudiced (Mitchell *et al.*, 2011). Such constructions legitimize current inequalities by 'blaming the victims' while evading any responsibility. It is now possible to convey racist views without seemingly being so and to be concerned about democracy. In this way racism, and its denial, are reproduced in everyday contexts by ordinary members of the majority group (Augoustinos & Every 2007, Mitchell *et al.*, 2011).

Strategies to confront racism are multi-dimensional and incorporate a diverse range of targets and methods (Anthias and Lloyd 2002). At the core of any intervention to challenge racism are ways to critically think about racism and how they are reproduced. However, racism is a 'sensitive' topic for discussion, research and policy. Thus the dialogue on racism which is required to address the issue at different levels does not occur. Racism denial, disavowal and censorship prohibit any meaningful exploration about the way racism is reproduced in everyday situations. This paper argues that there is a need to 'disrupt' the thinking on racism. The way that this disruption can occur is to work through the discomfort that discussions on racism produce to reach a position of awareness and develop new possibilities. This paper explores what constitutes sensitive discussion, then addresses issues of racism denial and focuses on ideas of discomfort.

# Racism as a Sensitive Topic

Racism is a complex issue and can have strong impacts on the feelings, views, attitudes and values held by people involved. Open discussion of racism has potential consequences or implications or threats to individuals, community groups, civil society, government, industry or other stakeholders.

There are many phenomena that, within specific cultural and social contexts, are "sensitive". They may be defined as "sensitive" if they are private, stressful or sacred, and discussion tends to generate an emotional response (McCosker *et al.*, 2001). These include difficult topics, including taboo subjects, which "are laden with emotion or which inspire feelings of awe or dread" (Lee 1993:6).

Renzetti and Lee (1993:6) identify dimensions of sensitivity to include: a) where there is intrusion into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience; b) where there is concern with deviance or social control; c) where it impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or domination; or d) where the discussion deals with things that are sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned. Renzetti and Lee's work is important in highlighting the issue of power and vested interest. They argue that there is a tendency to avoid subjects such as racism either due to motivated explicit identification or through emotional group identification. Sieber and Stanley (1988:55) convincingly argue that shying away from controversial topics, simply because they are controversial is a form of avoidance of responsibility.

Riggs (2005) outlines that speaking of 'race relations' requires the speaker to elaborate on many things, including where they speak from, what it means to speak from that position, how they understand 'race' itself, what the implications of this understanding, who are they accountable to. Nyamathi (1998:65) suggests that in sensitive conversations those who are 'impoverished, disenfranchised, and/or subject to discrimination, intolerance, subordination, and stigma', including women, children, ethnic communities, immigrants, sex workers, the homeless, gay men and women, older adults, and the mentally ill are in the most vulnerable populations. As Jacques (2003) notes, the dominant or powerful group has a huge vested interest in its own privilege and will often be oblivious to its own prejudices. It will regard its racist attitudes as nothing more than common sense. Only when challenged by those on the receiving end is racism outed, and attitudes begin to change (Jacques 2003).

## Racism Denial

*There are two subjects that we are never permitted to discuss with any seriousness: race and religion, and how our attitudes toward the first are rooted in the second (Vidal 2003: 73).*

Racism denial has been widely identified as one central manifestation of 'new racism' that is pervasive and subtle, yet powerful in its capacity to exclude those signified as 'other' due to their racial, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and characteristics (Augoustinos and Every 2007). By racism denial I refer to the widespread belief that racism is no longer a feature of modern social relations, which is articulated through commonly expressed views such as; 'racism was in the past', 'it only

exists in a minority of the population' or 'we need to focus on what unites us and our commonalities' (Babacan 2008). Such beliefs and views are generated through discourse or, as van Dijk (2000) puts it, '...they are expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk, such as everyday conversations, board meetings, job interviews, policies, laws, parliamentary debates....'. While race denial may appear to be less harmful than effects inflicted by 'old racisms', its power lies in normalising and sanitising dominant belief systems while excluding and marginalising the beliefs and views of those defined as 'other'. Statements such as 'I'm not racist but...' render racism invisible and legitimates racist behavior (Augoustinos and Every 2007). Such statements position perpetrators outside the boundaries of racism, while still expressing derogatory views about particular groups and assuming a power to define who belongs and who doesn't within a given community or society according to racial and cultural characteristics. As such, the effects of race denial are harmful and serve to reinforce patterns of inclusion and exclusion, dominance and subordination.

Hook (2004) provides a useful differentiation between *denial* and *disavowal*. Denial is understood as the refutation of another's claim or statement, and the subsequent blanking out of the affect associated with the occurrence of that claim while disavowal is understood as an act of perception that, whilst refuting the knowledge of another's claim, actually evidences the ongoing impact on affect that the claim makes. Disavowal is like 'contradiction management' in people may believe they hold non-racist views, yet their behaviour may be racist (Hook 2005:17).

Riggs (2005) identifies that there is 'a collective psychical nature of racism' rather than an individual one. This means that at the unconscious level individuals of the 'dominant society' have already invested in racism. However, when incidence of racism is voiced there is an implication for the individual. This is an outcome those individuals resist as they have difficulty in accepting that they have invested in racism, are beneficiaries of it and need to be accountable. At the individual level, the sense of belonging of those affected by race denial is constantly challenged with negative psycho-social results. Recent social psychological research for example shows how race denial is manifested in subtle and usually unconscious 'micro-aggressions' that serve to invalidate and devalue the racial and cultural identity and lived experience of those outside dominant groups (Derald *et al.*, 2007). These processes contribute in very subtle ways to denial strategies and is achieved by not locating self in understanding racism, not challenging unearned privilege and not placing or seeing self in a network of racialised power relations in that society. Derald *et al.*, (2007:275) state that "The power of racial microaggressions lies in their invisibility to the perpetrator and, oftentimes, the recipient". This also denies that dominant or 'white' subjectivities, as well as those of minorities, have been shaped in the historical context of colonial, racialised violence, the legacy which lingers today. Finally, the denial of racism can also send a clear message that racist behaviours are permissible and will not meet with sanctions.

Often people who are targets of racism are blamed for overreacting to a particular event, incident or person. The responses for minorities are contextual and arise from a variety of life experiences of individuals (Derald *et al.*, 2007). For minorities, a particular incident may not be the first time that

similar situations had occurred. What may appear as a random event to a member of the dominant culture is a familiar and repeated experience for the person from minority culture. People from dominant cultures, while making appraisals about whether a situation or event was racist do not share these multiple experiences, and they evaluate either the incident or their own behaviours in the moment through a singular event (Dovidio & Gaertner 2000). Thus, they fail to see a pattern of bias and can easily deny any form of racism or discrimination (Sue 2005).

## Disrupting Racism

The emergence of contemporary forms of racism has been continually contested (Winant 2001). Paradies (2005) argues that “anti-racism” strategies comprise any approach that reduces power differentials through advantaging subordinate racial groups and/or disadvantaging dominant racial groups. The complexity and the multi-layered nature of anti-racism have been echoed in scholarship. For example Winant (2006) urges us to distinguish between the *experiential* dimensions of racial politics (micro-level raciality, the *personal or small-scale* aspects of racial formation) from the *social structural* dimensions of racial politics (macro-level raciality, the institutional, governmental, and world-systemic aspects of racial formation). There is a need for understanding racism not as an intrapsychic phenomenon, but rather as a social phenomenon that structures the lives of people and are played out in a range of contexts (Leach 2005, Riggs & Augoustinos 2004). Howarth and Hook (2005:425) invite to us to consider the social and psychological possibilities and conditions for *disrupting* racialising practices and claims to privilege, belonging and knowing. They note that in order to challenge racism we need to understand it by a set of critical questions:

- How do our own subjectivities shape the ways in which we research racism and assert ‘anti-racist’ objectives?
- Should we study ‘whiteness’? Or could this simply re-centre ‘whiteness’ as an insidious basis of social norms, ideals and unspoken claims to historical privilege?
- In what ways is racism exposed, critiqued and disrupted in ‘doing’ identity—in contestory forms of discourse and oppositional subject-positionings? (p. 426).

Disruption is a strategy to enable us to unravel the psychological and political, subjective and ideological, local and global dynamics of racism and to problematise the reproduction of how racialised differences come into being and perpetuated. As noted by Howarth and Hook (2005:429) we need to “to provoke, to disrupt the ways we think about, deny, ‘do’ and so perpetuate racialised categories, spaces, practices and identities—both in the day-to-day and in the institutionalised settings”.

Understanding that human agency is critical to all forms of racism and subjectivities are formed in relation to power and discourse (Butler 1997, van Dijk 2000). Some scholars advocate a move to a ‘post-race’ paradigm. It is argued that as ‘race’ does not exist we should not be engaging with it as it reinforces the binary definitions of this social construct (Gilroy 1998, 2002). However, authors such as Mason (1994:845) remind us that consideration of ‘race’

... is a legitimate concept for sociological analysis because social actors treat it as a real basis for social differentiation and organise their lives and exclusionary practices in terms of it".

Howarth & Hook (2005:426) make an important point in relation to this. They state:

Recognising that 'race' and difference are constructed, performatively produced and embodied in particular ways that protect particular investments, particular identities and particular relations of privilege and oppression, does not mean that we can now simply deconstruct 'race'. Nor does this mean we can now move into relationships, locations, subjectivities and practices that are somehow 'above and beyond' the significance and materiality of 'race' and racism across local and global contexts

Challenging everyday racism is complicated because it is seen to be too confronting, disrupting the flow of conversation, social expectations to fit in and nature of relationships, fear of provoking conflict or aggression, whether they could make a difference causing offence, threatening individual and group identity (Condor, 2006, Babacan, Mitchell *et al.*, 2011). Authors have pointed to the 'conspiracy of silence' around racism for a long time (Sue 2005). For example, Augoustinos and Every (2007) find that accusations of racism attract greater social censure than the racist talk itself. Dei and Vickers (1997) assert that Canadians are at least as likely to be punished for breaking the silence about racism as for perpetuating it. It is argued that racism necessitate that 'whiteness'<sup>1</sup> is constantly worked up and defended in discourses that appear as assertions of cultural connection, empathy and anti-racism (Green & Sonn 2005).

Disrupting racism requires a critical gaze on our relationships at different levels, beginning with self and interpersonal levels. Mitchell *et al.*, (2011), in their research, concluded that most people will only speak out where they feel comfortable. However, given the power and contextual relations that privilege groups and support racism, there is unlikely to be a situation in which there will be a level of comfort in challenging racism (Kennedy & Pronin 2008, Czopp *et al.*, 2006). Mitchell *et al.*, (2011:339) state that

a possible approach, rather than aiming to eliminate discomfort, may be to develop strategies to engage with discomfort, in both the challenger and the person(s) being challenged.

Through discomfort, people can go towards dealing with their inner racism and via a process of introspection go onto comprehensive awareness. Sue (2006) suggests a 5-stage approach of racial and cultural identity development to describe how people of racialised others and dominant culture individuals come to terms with their own inner racism or exposure to discrimination. The stages are as follows: 1) denial (of being racist or seeing incidents as racist); 2) when an event or a person challenges the individual's belief system and prompts them to begin questioning their racial understanding and perceptions of racial groups; 3) feelings of anger and/or guilt as they come to an

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<sup>1</sup> I acknowledge problematic nature of 'whiteness' theories. There is no scope for discussion in this paper about the topic but there is ample scholarship on the topic. The term can be substituted by concepts such as privilege, dominance and power.

increasingly fuller understanding of culturally sanctioned racism; 4) introspective role and more balanced appreciation for the strengths of all cultures alongside a maturing awareness of racism and oppressive social structures; and 5) a state of integrative awareness, which involves acceptance of oneself as a cultural being and a deep commitment to eradicating oppression of all forms.

However, part of the difficulty allowing oneself to experience discomfort in relation to racism relates to what Tatum (1997) calls the 'paralysis of fear' in which people fear the consequences of open discussion about racism. Tatum argues that "in order for there to be meaningful dialogue, fear, whether of anger or isolation, must eventually give way to risk and trust" (Tatum, 1997:200).

Authors emphasise the importance of instigation of real and open-hearted discussions relating to racism (Favaro 2004, Tatum 1997). Racism needs to be challenged by exposing the historical, institutional and political (re)production of dominance, privilege and power, while engaging with other knowledges as spaces of critique, resistance and social transformation. What this implies is a series of strategic interventions into the production of meanings and thought (Green and Sonn 2005). It also means that we turn the direction of the gaze away from the 'racialised other' to how power, privilege and dominance are reproduced (Hall 2000). Ring (2008) urges us to not be afraid to deal with the denial, confusion, and anger that may emerge, and have confidence in the ability of people to reflect, reconcile, and grow through the process. Appropriate support, skills, resources to build this in appropriate settings (classrooms, workshops) are encouraged (Mitchell *et al.*, 2011).

It is only through such critical approaches that we can begin to imagine new forms identity, belonging and community.

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# Cyber-racism in schools

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**Racist violence in schools is on the documented increase worldwide. This paper will make the argument that the nature of and motivations for such attacks are changing as a function of the new electronic communication technologies available to students. The prevalence in school communities is thought to be under-represented due to the under-reporting of incidents to authorities. Victims may belong to visible minorities, new migrants, or refugees. Precursors to incidents of racist violence include physical appearance, languages spoken, and learned discriminatory attitudes from within the family and community at large. Combining these variables with the multimedia interpersonal and inter-group communication technologies available to young people, the scene is set for the prevalence of racial vilification to escalate within our school settings.**

Despite the many personal, social, cultural, intellectual and political levels on which the battle to defeat racism has occurred, it remains a destructive element of human behaviour present in cultures and countries around the globe. Although racism may be enacted on macro-social levels, a particularly destructive and personally distressing manifestation of new racism is in more specialised niches, such as schools, as indicated in this Daily Mail report:

"We are seeing a real increase in racism in some areas which is down to factors like a growth of Islamaphobia in society which is filtering into classrooms. Racism towards Eastern European and Gipsy and Traveller communities is also on the increase".

(Talwar, 2012, np)

The infiltration of racism into schools has been aided by vectors such as new information technologies. The resultant "cyber-racism" is an emerging and so far un-theorized area of interest in the field of new racisms. Although the following two quotes are not examples of cyber-racism, they conform to the more typical forms of racism experienced by school students around the country. The following examples are from school students cited in the 1991 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report and epitomize the type of racism that is experienced by school students on a frequent basis.

"They call me names and won't let me join their group. They steal my things, put smoke(s) in my bag and make trouble for me with parents and teachers, abuse me for something I didn't do and also quarrel with me over silly things. I know it's racist because they told me I should go back home and that they don't need black strangers in their country".

(Moss & Castan, 1991, p. 159)

"It happened more than once. Several Australian students have tried to corner me during recess. They said Asian students were never wanted at their school and that I would invite trouble if I hang around any Australian girls".

(Moss & Castan, 1991, p. 158)

The potent combination of racism and bullying in schools can result in serious trauma and sometimes tragic outcomes, as in the following report:

"A school bully who drove a 14-year old girl to the brink of suicide has been convicted of racial harassment. His victim was subjected to six months of abuse. It included chants of "White, white, white is right, kick them out, fight, fight, fight". She was also told "Go back to your own country".

(Parker, 2009, np)

The newsworthiness of such events can bring unwanted attention to both victims and perpetrators. The latter of which may be subject to legal repercussions. However, in this paper the focus will be on racism in schools and how an understanding of cyber-racism might be developed.

## Definitions

Racism is a historically persistent behaviour in human interactions. It can encompass an attitudinal component, a behavioural component, or both. Beliefs or attitudes about a particular race can result in dangerous circumstances if directed towards a particular individual or target group. The

behavioural component finds expression in racist violence (see Gilovich, Keltner & Nisbett, 2011). The National Inquiry into Racist Violence by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Nugent *et al.*, 1989) defined "racist violence as a specific act of violence, intimidation or harassment carried out against an individual, group or organisation on the basis of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin" (np). Connolly (1996 cited in Aveling, 2007) acknowledges that racism is complex and that it is "not a static, fixed, or coherent set of beliefs that uniformly influences the way individuals think and behave regardless of context" (p. 70). Furthermore, Raby (2004) makes the point that there is a plurality of racisms and that racism can come in a multiplicity of forms (p.368). How racism finds expression among youth, when issues of identity are at a formative stage, is not clearly understood and further complicated by the emerging manifestation of cyber racism.

Traditionally, racist violence has been carried out overtly in the form of physical aggression generally amongst males, and covertly in the form of emotional harassment amongst girls. With the latest technological developments racism has been transformed into virtual forms which are difficult to manage and control.

Clearly, racism and how it manifests itself has changed over time. Gilovich, Keltner and Nisbett (2011) define modern racism as "prejudice directed at other racial groups that exists alongside rejection of explicitly racist beliefs" (p. 445). Back (2002) argues that cyberspace has enabled online racism to flourish. While in the past, prejudice, discrimination and individual racism found expression in the material world, physical boundaries no longer protect an individual from cyber attacks in the virtual world. Cyber bullying can be regarded as a form of covert bullying that is mediated through the use of technology, such as mobile phones or the Internet (Li, 2006), devices that have been embraced by the so-called 'digital natives'. Racist rhetoric can easily be disseminated and accessed through email, instant text messaging, Facebook, discussion boards, and Twitter to name a few.

There are also several aspects of cyber-racism that have not been related to previous forms. Cyber-racism is like cyber bullying but its focus would be on issues of racism and wouldn't distinguish between gender, age or geographical location. For the perpetrator it offers anonymity, privacy and the capability of fast if not instantaneous launching of racist attacks against numerous wide-spread targets on the one hand, or highly specific individual targets on the other. For the victim, any cyber-attack will be distressing, may increase paranoia and suspicion, may render the victim defenceless and helpless, and may even be life-threatening. Another individual involved in a cyber-racism scenario is often the bystander who may be witness to the cyber-attack but may play a voyeuristic role, evading any instinct or responsibility to intervene in the belief that someone else will do something about the situation. Placing all of this within a school context, where we would expect to find youth with varying vulnerabilities and abilities to deal with such stressors, the scene is set for an explosive expansion of racist attacks that may be difficult to detect, prevent and contain.

# Theoretical Perspectives

In order to try and understand cyber-racism and its impact on the individual (particularly on younger people of school age), it is essential to consider some of the theoretical perspectives of racism per se. Some research has focussed on how long-term cumulative experiences of racism can lead to the development of the invisibility syndrome (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000). That is, victims of racism subjectively report experiencing little acknowledgment from society in general regarding their abilities and achievements. In this situation, the victims of racist attitudes and stereotyping experience a denigration if not erasure of their individuality and talent. The psychological conditions produced as a function of this constitute the syndrome symptoms. The victim experiences this as a microaggression. According to Sue, Line, Torino, Capodilupo and Rivera (2009) racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 183). If not resolved these can cause mental health problems such as chronic indignation, anxiety, anger, violence, lack of self-esteem, depression, stress, or substance abuse, and in the worst case scenario, self-harming behaviours, suicide and even death (see Franklin, 2004). It follows that the insidious and pervasive influences of cyber-racism might well amplify the prevalence of the invisibility syndrome given the scale and power of modern cyber technologies.

In other basic theoretical work on racism, Harrell (2000) has identified six types of stress related to racism which can lead to intense emotional and psychological reactions including anxiety, anger, a sense of vulnerability, and sadness. These are (1) racism-related life events, (2) vicarious racism experiences, (3) daily racism micro-stressors, (4) chronic-contextual stress, (5) collective experiences, and (6) transgenerational transmission (Harrell, 2000).

Each of Harrell’s stress types can be applied to the school environment.

1. Racism-related life events are significant life experiences with racism that often involve overt discrimination. One example could involve using a school child’s appearance to discriminate against them by denying them the opportunity of gaining a leadership role within their school because of their appearance, and then this being used as a taunt via instant messaging in alternate settings.
2. Vicarious racism experiences may not occur directly to the school child but to his or her friendship group, family members or strangers from the same race or community. When peers are receiving these cyber attacks the school child also experiences racism through its ingroup membership.
3. Daily racism micro-stressors can be construed as being constant reminders, references or cues regarding one’s race—such as might appear on bulletin boards or Facebook pages. They tend to be subtle putdowns or exclusions which can develop in intensity as a result of being continual and omnipresent. The victim thus feels that no space can provide safety from such micro-stressors.

4. Chronic-contextual stress relates to societal structural inequities and diminished opportunities for individuals that are racially different from a perceived mainstream dominant group. Within the school context this could occur if students were blocked from possible online friendship groups on the basis of not belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group.
5. Collective experiences involve the perceptions of the effects of racism on ingroup members. Disparities in the allocation of wealth, socioeconomic status and political power are representative of such discrimination towards a particular racial group. Within a school boarding setting the students of a minority group may be accommodated in the rundown buildings with older or non-existent technology, while the mainstream group are housed in the newer modern buildings with access to the latest equipment. Such an overt imbalance in conditions can become the inadvertent situation for future online taunts.
6. Transgenerational transmission focuses on the historical context of the group. This is stress connected with the inheritance of racism. For example, the school child's parents experienced discrimination so the expectation is that the child will also be a victim of such discrimination, with the added possibility of it migrating to an online environment.

Although all of these types involve an aspect of subjective interpretation, this nevertheless does not diminish the degree of stress that may be experienced by the school child. The child enters a state of hypervigilant arousal, unable to predict when and how often the next cyber attack is likely to occur. The severity of exposure increases the risk likelihood for psychopathology in the school child. While Bevans, Certone and Overstreet (2009) were not considering cyber bullying as their trauma example, they do however advocate early detection of symptomatic responses to a trauma.

Trauma theory offers another framework for understanding the impact of experiences such as neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and being the recipient of bullying behaviour on a child's development and inter-relationships. Specifically, this theory focuses on the importance of addressing the complex effects of trauma and toxic stress. According to Sanchez-Hucles (1999) trauma theory fails to address the accumulated effects of devalued status for ethnic minorities that begins with birth, persists through a lifetime, and carries threats to individuals' well-being even when actual violence is not acted out. Children belonging to visible minorities, or who are new migrants, or refugees are not immune to this devalued status and the possible effects emanating from this.

Clark *et al.*, (1999) proposed a biopsychosocial model of perceived racism and its effects on health outcomes. It is argued that when visible minorities, new migrants, or refugees perceive an environmental stimulus as racist, possible outcomes can include psychological and physiological stress responses, which all have the potential to compromise both mental and physical health, as well as an individual's overall well-being. Some of the possible health outcomes may include anxiety, major depression, hypertension, heart disease, and poor immune functioning. Quite clearly, cyber-

racism aimed at a particular target has the potential to set in motion devastating effects such as some of the health outcomes mentioned above.

Another aspect related to racism is the area of segregation, which has been particularly endemic within American public schools. The percentage mix of different cultural groups in any one school creates the potential for inequalities to occur. According to Kozol (1991) societal and institutional racism is a consequence of chronic underfunding. Such inequalities create a domino effect affecting staff, students, families and the community as a whole. For example, when student's performance on standardized tests is not appropriately normed for their particular ethnic group, this can have huge repercussions in terms of how they may be perceived by the mainstream students, thus creating the risk of cyber racism occurring as a function of their performance on such tests. How this situation is handled by the student victim and the bystanders, be they the teachers, the school executive or the family, can determine the school child's well-being.

Despite the lack of specific theories addressing cyber-racism directly, the theoretical perspectives just discussed do offer insights into the consequences that cyber-racism may have on the school child. The next section will focus on some of the research that has investigated the outcomes of violence which is racially motivated, and the potentially catastrophic outcomes of such violence.

## **Outcomes of Racially-Motivated Violence**

Racially-motivated violence has traditionally had an overt expression. A cursory examination of the statistics from the United States attests to this serious issue. Eisenbraun's (2007) paper presents some shocking statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics for a one-year period in the United States. In the 1996-1997 school year, there were 11,000 fights or physical attacks in public schools involving weapons; 190,000 attacks without weapons, 115,000 thefts, 7,000 robberies, 98,000 incidences of vandalism and 4000 incidences of rape or other sexual violence (Eisenbraun, 2007). Several years later there was the horrific school shooting at the Columbine High School in Colorado. There are a number of reports that show that school violence in Australia is on the rise too. Doneman (2009) reports that 383 Queensland high-school students were arrested for assault in a one-year period. Unfortunately these are not isolated incidences or one-off occurrences.

There are a number of risk factors that have been associated with school violence. These include gang membership, intolerance towards difference, ethnic background, and minorities as perpetrators of violence (Eisenbraun, 2007; Soriano & Soriano, 1994). For a vast majority of incidents such as vandalism, rape and other sexual assaults, gang membership has been cited as a possible factor. Students believe that it is acceptable to ridicule a peer if there is variation from the norm, and that a potential victim is at least partially to blame for his or her own persecution (Eisenbraun, 2007, p. 463). The larger the number of minority students within a school the more likely the presence of violent crimes. All of these risk factors can be exacerbated when their presence is transported into the virtual environment of cyberspace, given the ongoing and increasingly sophisticated technological advances and affordability of communication devices, and the fact that most 'digital natives' are accessible via smartphone or email 24 hours a day. Naïvely, students viewed the more

traditional forms of bullying as an exercise in “teaching group values; conveying group beliefs and making the victim stronger” (Oliver & Hoover, 1994). This could easily apply to cyber racism. In short, any of the violent outcomes or consequences of bullying which traditionally relied on physical bullying and emotional bullying can now be translated into the extended reach of cyber-space and escalated through cyber-racism.

A Toronto study (Raby, 2004) which interviewed 12 teenage girls about adolescent issues, included one question which asked how adolescence might be experienced differently on the basis of cultural background and race. Below is an example of some of the qualitative information reported in Raby’s (2004) study.

“And there’s this one girl, she’s new to the school. I think she’s from Africa or something, she’s really dark. No one wants to talk to her because of that. People walk by her ‘oh my god she’s so dark!’”

“I don’t really think that’s racism. It’s just that people think if they hang around with her things are going to be said about them because she’s not considered part of the cool group. People don’t want to be with her because of the colour group, because of how dark she is kind of thing.”

(Raby, 2004, p. 371)

Even while students denied racism, clear instances of racism were cited. Despite the fact that the students didn’t perceive this as racism, a clear lack of understanding of what racism is as well as an inability to take the perspective of the receiver are evident. One could easily imagine how a Facebook comment or a Tweet such as this could be endlessly replicated and retransmitted. Unfortunately the study was not able to provide victim reactions to these so called “just joking around” statements.

Attempts have been made to deal with racism in British schools. It is extremely unfortunate that for some students “being racially harassed is a way of life” (Troyna & Hatcher, 1991, p.17) despite a number of inquiries and school policies. Troyna *et al.*, found that educationists tended to export the problem of racial harassment to somewhere beyond the school gates. Such a denial of the problem increases the space and potential for the proliferation of cyber-racism. Individual racist incidences resulted in the emergence of an array of policies to deal with the issues. Frameworks for analysing racist school incidents were developed but failed to alleviate the occurrence of racial harassment. Troyna *et al.*, (1991) argue that the curriculum should emphasise the importance of tolerance and respect for other cultures as a strategy to prevent racist incidents.

According to Bryan (2012) however, race and racism are often subject to “discursive (mis) representation” (p.1) in formal school curricula. While ostensibly seeking to dispel racist attitudes in students, the discourses of the instructional material used preserve traditional views of race and difference, perpetuate dominant narratives of racial conflict, and reinforce the reification of the term ‘race’ (p.2). Bryan’s research has focused on comparing curricular representations of racial

difference and young people's understandings of race and racism. Students from a Dublin-based, ethnically diverse school provided qualitative data for the study supporting Bryan's position. Quite clearly this aspect deserves further investigation.

Racism in the Australian school context has not always been acknowledged as an issue. In 1998 Western Australia released its anti-racism policy and guidelines for complaint resolution. A qualitative study interviewed a number of white male principals (n=35) from a range of Western Australian schools as to how the policy had impacted their management of the schools (Aveling, 2007). The questions asked focused on "the extent to which the school developed and implemented programmes to promote an understanding of the causes and effects of racism among students and employees and encouraged schools to work towards racial harmony; and the extent to which the school integrated knowledge and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds" (Aveling, 2007, p.71). Overwhelmingly, racism was not seen as an issue but was constructed as 'bad behaviour' dealt mainly through other policies such as anti-bullying. Constant denial by school principals means that racism can safely morph into cyber-racism with even less possibility of it being detected or dealt with in any way. For the perpetrators, cyber racism offers anonymity by removing their wrongdoing from the school environment. For the victims it becomes even more difficult for school authorities to intervene on their behalf—even if they want to.

## **Conclusion and Future Directions**

Studies have shown that cyber-bullying uses different technologies to accomplish the same ends as traditional forms of bullying, and that the bully-victims and perpetrators of cyber-bullying are often those who have engaged in traditional bullying (Li, 2007). Another disturbing possibility is discussed by Beran and Li (2005), whereby cyber-bullying which begins in the virtual world may then expand to include face-to-face bullying. Given that numerous studies have established racism as a major motive for traditional bullying, it is to be expected that traditional forms of racist bullying will transition to the use of new technologies of cyber-bullying, or cyber-racism.

Unfortunately, there appears to be a lack of consensus as to what racism itself is and therefore it is probably premature to consider cyber-racism as a uni-dimensional construct. While a lot has been written about racism in schools there is a miniscule amount of research on cyber-racism. There are references to racist slurs within the cyberbullying literature but cyber-racism per se has not yet had the attention it deserves.

Traditionally the literature on racism has dealt with aspects of the perpetrators. The victim perspective occasionally makes its appearance. It is important that work on cyber-racism makes a concerted effort to investigate both the perpetrator and victim perspectives especially since the internet can easily obscure perpetrators while vastly multiplying their influence on victims. Furthermore, the role of the bystanders is also an interesting avenue to pursue.

Schools are making some progress on the issue of racism. There are a number of proactive initiatives trying to address racism in schools, including Cultural awareness programs, NAIDOC

(National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week, involving indigenous and ethnic community members in school activities, language programmes, international cultural exchanges, and changes in school curriculum. Some argue that these are tokenistic measures and that there is a need for social and institutional changes. Within the school setting, the school hierarchy and its teachers embrace racial equality perspectives. In turn this needs to be supported by parents and the community in order for change to occur. Children require good role models in order for the cycle of racist attitudes and behaviours to be curtailed. It is unfortunate that face-to-face racism has not been eradicated, and that we are a long way off stopping cyber-racism.

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# **“I tell ya who needs educatin’”: non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness in prisoner education**

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**Keywords:** critical whiteness studies, white noise, Aboriginal sovereignty, critical ally, cultural self awareness, adult prisoner education.

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**Glen says, “current education is colonial; it ain’t ours. I tell ya who needs educatin’, wadjellas”. Glen is a Noongar man who, along with several other Aboriginal adults living in Western Australia, teaches me in a PhD research project about prisoner education from their perspective. His words pose a question for wadjellas like myself who are raised, taught and work in a white neo-colonial society. We have been raised in, taught in and work in a colonial system. As non-Aboriginal people we have unearned privileges which are often invisible and unacknowledged. How then to address the outcomes of this in a way that might lead to working co-operatively alongside Aboriginal people? What kind of ‘educatin’ could teach us about our own unacknowledged privilege and the disadvantage this can lead to for others? Is the standard cross-cultural awareness training enough?**

**This paper shares some of the teachings of Glen and other participants in this research. It expresses the view that, ultimately, the usually unacknowledged legacy of colonisation and associated issue of denied Aboriginal sovereignty lies at the heart of much of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people today when considering education and the prison system. Addressing gaps in non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness by learning from Aboriginal people is an important factor in improving their experiences of education.**

## **Locating myself and the research**

I begin by introducing myself, the research and the participants. Moreton-Robinson (2000: xv) states, “the protocol for introducing one’s self to other Indigenous people is to provide information

about one's cultural location." Identifying as wadjella (the Noongar term for whitefellas like me) situates both the research and I on Noongar country in the south west of Western Australia. I would like to honour the sovereignty of the people of the Noongar nation on whose country I live, work and have undertaken this research.

During the course of this PhD study, *Closing the Gap in Indigenous Prisoner Education*, I have listened to and learned from Indigenous adults about what helped and hindered their experiences of education in Western Australian prisons. The research has been conducted from the standpoint of a critical ally and is therefore driven by underlying questions such as those identified by Carnes (2011b: 20)

- How has colonial history impacted on sovereign First Nations people?
- How can the sovereignty of First Nations people be respected?
- What can be learned from listening to First Nations people?
- How can I be sure that I am not making things worse for First Nations people?
- Am I following an agenda of importance to First Nations people?

Following a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the research, the paper explores an issue of concern for participants and identified as a hindrance in their experiences, namely non-Indigenous Australians' lack of awareness of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. Glen sums this up when he says, "***I tell ya who needs educatin', wadjellas***".

I argue in this paper that developing cultural self-awareness by non-Indigenous Australians and their ongoing learning about the impact of white noise is required for lasting change in the experiences of education in prisons by Aboriginal people. Based on what this PhD research has shown, the paper will outline possible tensions in purposes of education, the role of unacknowledged privilege and denial of Aboriginal sovereignty as impacting on how Aboriginal participants have experienced education. Discussion then shifts to potential ways of building whitefellas' cultural self-awareness.

## The participant-teachers

Like Iseke & Brennus (2011: 247) I argue that research is a way of learning. Therefore, while I have a number of roles, a significant one is learning from rather than about participants. This makes them my teachers and is why I refer to them as participant-teachers. These participant-teachers have been imprisoned on and hail from a range of First Nations countries in Australia including Noongar, Yamatji, Wongi, Eora, and Ngaanyatjarra. To show respect for the voices of these teachers their words are italicised and bolded.

People self-selected into this project and agreed to yarn with me, some in groups and some as individuals. Yarning is a culturally and academically rigorous research method (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) that respects the accountability I have not only to individuals but also to community.

It was never intended for the research to try to provide a representative sample of Indigenous people in Western Australia. The participant-teachers ranged in age from eighteen to well into their sixties. Some were men and some were women and some had been in a number of prisons many times. For some English was not their first language. Some came from metropolitan Perth and others from remote communities. All together fifteen people yarned with me either individually or in groups. They had the option of using their own first name or a pseudonym; most chose to use their own name.

Responses from the participant teachers to the question "*What helps and hinders education in Western Australian prisons?*" go beyond a prison setting and western concept of education. The impact of experiences in prisons was not seen as divorced from the web of relationships, country, colonisation, justice and personal experiences of the teachers lives.

## **Theoretical underpinnings**

The research was based on the understanding that whiteness is not a physical characteristic. It is "the invisible norm against which other races are judged in the construction of identity, representation, subjectivity, nationalism and law" (Moreton-Robinson, 2004: vii). The privilege and dominance of whiteness establishes conditions that privilege non-Indigenous people (Gillborn, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009, Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2003; Riggs, 2004, 2007) and leads to a cultural deafness that does not consider the legitimacy of other worldviews (Carnes, 2011a:171). The resulting *white noise*, has been noted by Carnes (2011a) to occur in the thinking, decision making and communication of dominant Settler cultures in relation to Indigenous people. Like the indistinct, fuzzy static of a not quite properly tuned radio white noise inhibits a clear reception and prevents hearing messages distinctly. As much a systemic issue as an individual one, it results from assumed privilege and lack of knowledge of worldviews other than those that dominate.

Attending to white noise and privilege, I maintain, requires opportunities for whitefellas to experience shifts in what Mezirow (2000: 17) calls habits of mind, "broad, generalised, orienting predispositions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience". These habits of mind, otherwise referred to as norms, values, attitudes, thoughts and beliefs, are considered by English and Peters (2010: 105-106) to "shape, among other things, our psychological self-image, cultural expectations, and epistemic frameworks about what counts as important knowledge". It is not enough I contend for Indigenous people alone to have to make such shifts in thinking in order to match expectations of white world views. Changes and shifts are also required of non-Indigenous people's habits of mind and it is this kind of education that Glen's comments refer to.

The story I tell here dares whitefellas to listen speak, live, practise, research and ultimately learn from a "place of discomfort" (Powis, 2008). Therefore it is not always easy for whitefellas to hear this story because a temptation of white privilege can be to dismiss uneasiness. Though based on research conducted in the Western Australian context, what is discussed may also ring true in other colonised parts of the world. The remainder of this paper will consider, from a critical allies

perspective, gaps perceived in whitefellas cultural self-awareness and what could assist in closing those gaps.

## **“Education is colonial, it ain’t ours”**

Historically, Aboriginal people have always been educated, just differently and for different purposes to the western world. Deep listening in education based on an oral tradition utilises all of aural, oral, visual and kinaesthetic senses. Learning is not an added on activity, it is part of all and every day. Diversity is valued, all people are of equal value and have a right to be heard (Atkinson, 2002; 35-36).

White teacher, Green (1983: 9-10) explains what he is taught by Ngaanyatjarra people about the centrality of the kinship system, the principle of reciprocity that is based on the obligation every person has to every other person and the learning of decision making processes around the campfires. Another white researcher, Welch (1998: 207) states,

“Aboriginal education was not so much a preparation for life, as an experience of life itself ... This spirituality helped impart a unity to Aboriginal traditions of education, without the subject divisions common to white schooling practices.”

This way of learning is not relegated to the past. “A traditional spiritual learning basis that is related to their own country is still essential for Aboriginal people to feel strength, pride and a sense of wholeness” (Bessarab, 2008: 57-58). This is so no matter if people live in the bush, a city or a country town. Education provided in prisons does not appear to address such a spiritual learning basis. As Glen says, **education is colonial, it ain’t ours.**

## **Post-colonisation: The purpose of education of Aboriginal people**

From the time of colonisation formal Aboriginal education stayed exclusively in the hands of the colonizers who Welch (1998: 208) says have provide this education in ways that have included ignorance, disdain, separation, assimilation, integration and self determination. All of these approaches have been decided upon by mainstream education systems In the 1800’s the purpose of education of Aboriginal Western Australians provided largely by Christian missions, was to tame and bring civilisation to the savage who, was seen as inherently inferior to the white colonisers (Brooks, 2007: 135). Thus education was provided to meet the needs of the colonisers, rather than the needs of Aboriginal communities, families or culture. In the twenty first century, education decision making still lies in the hands of colonial systems and agencies who for example introduced interventionist policies such as tying receipt of Centrelink benefits to children’s school attendance. Trials of such a policy have been held in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia, largely in communities where a high percentage of Aboriginal people live.

At the initial conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities in 1937, A O Neville, (Chief Protector/Commissioner of Native Affairs in Western Australia for decades) states that the policy of protection in Western Australia for Aboriginal children is that “The child is taken away from

the mother and never sees her again. Thus the children grow up as white, knowing nothing of their environment” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937: 11). Those affected by such policies, which continued until the early 1970’s, are now referred to as the “stolen generation” and some of their history recorded in *Bringing Them Home* (HREOC, 1997). The impact of history such as this is still felt in policy making and development of processes and programs across the education sector as children who lived under them become parents and grandparents and descendants live with the repercussions from one generation to the next (Atkinson, 2002). Non-Indigenous people still have the largest say in what, how and why Aboriginal Australians are educated.

## Different purposes - a basis of tension between Western and Indigenous Education

Based on Grande (2000:356) Figure 1 illustrates tensions between underlying purposes of Western and Indigenous education. It is important to note that experiences of education by Indigenous people since colonisation has led to a much more complex picture (Kumar, 2009: 53) than that indicated by this table. The purpose of including it here is to illustrate the focus in white, western education on economics and “equality” at the expense of Aboriginal sovereignty and self-determination. Unfortunately equality can be interpreted as “everyone being the same and being treated the same” which reinforces white privilege. When education in Australia prioritises “getting a job” and a vocational agenda above all else (Down & Smyth, 2012), any gap in education is defined, addressed and evaluated by an economic, equality agenda and the focus remains on absorption into a white world.

<b>THE ISSUE</b>	<b>WESTERN/“WHITE” VIEW</b>	<b>INDIGENOUS VIEW</b>
<b>World crisis is</b>	Economic	Spiritual
<b>Education’s central question is</b>	Democracy and greater equality	Sovereignty Self determination

**Figure 1 Sources of educational tension**

Nationally, prisons have the educational goal to provide prisoners and offenders with ‘educational and vocational pathways which will support their productive contribution to the economic and social life of the community’ (ANTA 2001: 3). The decision of what constitutes a ‘productive contribution to the economic and social life of the community’ and what the “community” consists of is totally in the

hands of the dominant white culture. Considering this, it is not a surprise when Lesley says, ***"In prisons and in schools, you people don't take the f...n' time to teach us ...we have a different pedagogy of learning, OK? So you need to stop doing that shit with us."***

Aboriginal people were traditionally seen as a "problem" as exemplified by the aforementioned meeting of States and Commonwealth held in Canberra to discuss the "Aboriginal problem" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937). Kate's comment indicates that this is not a thing of the past, ***Aboriginal people are seen by departments as this insurmountable problem... "We don't know how to deal with it so we'll just ignore it". Western Australia is the biggest education area in the southern hemisphere and there are lots of differences. In central office they don't understand... in the Kimberly you've got something like 54 language groups, you've got different protocols and you can't say "this is what is going to happen across the state". It won't work. They don't understand the differences and that each region and community is different to one another.***

Like Glen, Kate believes that whitefellas need education; ***Wadjellas have so much to learn from Aboriginal people if only ...Wadjellas would just shut up and listen. ... "You've got all the qualifications and you know everything... but will you just bloody shut up and listen?"***

Daisy too refers to the need for whitefellas to learn and listen, ***Shouldn't be Aboriginal people having to change all the time; white people need to do that too. Teach them what they have done to us so they understand.*** On another occasion she says, ***Government and politicians need to come to the lands for a week and see how people live, how they are crowded in houses like sardines, not just fly in, talk some rubbish and leave. ...come three times; once to see, once to learn and once to understand. They need to sit and listen.*** The cacophony of "white noise" (Carnes, 2011a) from fly in/fly out visitors must be deafening to Aboriginal ears.

## **With privilege comes denial**

Black and Stone (2005: 251) believe that "privileged persons live in a distorted reality" similar to the denial of someone with a chemical dependency. Denial serves to maintain the status quo and avoid the unpleasant consequences of acceptance, including the need to act to bring about change. Being privileged enshrines the option of denial and disrupts the chance to build strong relationships. Challenging the assumptions under denial is required to build relationships of trust Armstrong & Shillinglaw (2011) see as necessary for effective education in any setting.

The dominant history of Western Australia is a series of denials and myths providing a basis of Aboriginal policy (Milnes, 2005). Terra Nullius, the founding myth upon which Australia is colonised, enables settlers to "render a people invisible" Milnes (2005: 15). There is still a very long way to go. The Australian government in September 2012 postponed a referendum to change the constitution to recognise First Nations Peoples in Australia as the first inhabitants. The disturbing reason given for postponing is that "there is still not enough community support for a successful referendum" (Cullen, 2012). Despite the 1967 referendum including Aboriginal people in the Census statistics,

white privilege still dictates to the majority of Australians that the First Peoples of the continent need not be acknowledged as such.

In the twenty-first century “mutual obligation” is another myth used to excuse interventionist policies. In effect such policies do little more than perpetuate welfare dependency and continue to deny Aboriginal sovereignty (Cronin, 2007). Sovereignty of Aboriginal people in Australia has never been acknowledged; there has been no treaty or constitutional protection of Indigenous rights (Hocking, 2005, 268). As Lesley said, *This is my f...ing land and I've got nothing. You've ... taken my family, you've taken my f...ing culture, you've taken my lifestyle, you've left me with nothing. And then blamed me, said this is because I'm a lazy black. She pauses for a long time before adding quietly, "And you wonder why we're cranky."*

Denying sovereignty denies the very existence of Aboriginality. Svensson (1992) acknowledged this by saying, “Cultural survival is closely connected to self-determination and political rights” (cited in Hocking, 2005, 249). Katherine speaks of her experience of denial of sovereignty, ***I didn't grow up with culture and that's really hard and I struggle with that... It stuffs you up to not know who you are... I felt I was despised everywhere you know. I had a real loss of identity and a lot of our kids face that kind of loss of identity.*** This comment epitomises the experiences of thousands of Aboriginal people (HREOC, 1997)

As western and Indigenous views on education differ, so do meanings of the term sovereignty. This difference is highlighted here because it is another point of tension in the white, dominant discourse. Sovereignty, as whitefellas understand it, developed originally in Europe as a way of ensuring the power and privilege of the monarch or the church (Falk & Martin, 2007; 35). In this model the power resides in a figurehead and is exercised downward (Brady, 2007: 142). In colonised countries, lands are claimed in the name of the sovereign king or queen. Over time, the meaning changes to include independence of a state from any other state (Falk & Martin, 2007). Today, however, sovereignty is variously used to mean domestic, dependent nations as in the USA, connected to self-government as in Canada or, as Cunneen (2005, 52) describes, “a state of denial” as in Australia.

## Aboriginal Sovereignty is more than mere statehood

Redbird (1995) believes white institutions and law are based on political understandings of sovereignty as outlined above. To the Aboriginal teachers I listen to, however, it is much more than this and does NOT refer to statehood (Behrendt, 2003:102).

Aboriginal sovereignty is based on responsibility, community and belonging; it is who someone is, how they identify and where they belong in the world. Sovereignty is held within the individual in the context of the family, community and country. The ‘belonging’ is geographical, communal, familial and spiritual. As Brady (2007: 148) says, “when Indigenous Australians are removed from, or choose to leave, the land of their nation, we do not locate it outside of ourselves, but in contrast carry that connection within our being.” Sovereignty of self is inextricably tied with where a person is from and their kinship system.

For Australia's Indigenous peoples, self-determination is key crucial to sovereignty. Self-determination is not, as so often used in Australia, a distinct administrative policy to be implemented by mainstream colonial institutions such as education and policing (Cunneen, 2005, 55). It is, as clarified by Waters (2005: 192) "about having political power to exercise community or individual self-determination".

Aboriginal sovereignty does not require permission or paternalism from whitefellas to exist. "It is maintained through pre-existing, pre-European models of governance. Such models continue to be culturally and politically sustainable, regardless of a lack of legal recognition by Australian governments" (Birch, 2007: 107). As Vicki says about Aboriginal culture, It's **a living thing, whether you believe it or not. It's living and in here** (she gestures to her heart).

## Beyond cultural awareness to cultural self-awareness

Glen is clear about what kind of education is required, *The Aboriginal side of history needs teachin' as well*. Daisy's words clarify this further; *White people should learn about their place in the history of Aboriginal people from Aboriginal people point of view and learn from Aboriginal people*. Whitefellas need to learn about white privilege if denial is to be addressed. Such recommendations were made fifteen years ago in Bringing Them Home (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997: 255-256). Recommendations 8a, 9a and 9b specifically advise that primary and secondary school students, professionals working with Indigenous people of any age, and all undergraduates and trainees in relevant professions should include, as part of core and compulsory "education about the history and effects of forcible removal."

As far as I am aware this has not yet occurred. It is time for the privileged decision makers amongst us to ask "why?"; "what assumptions underlie the decisions to continue not to act?" Fredericks (2008: 81) calls for similar action when she highlights the need to "extend beyond knowledge gained through cross-cultural awareness training to ... programs designed to raise awareness of and address white race privilege ... and that knowledge should encourage and instil the will for change and action."

I call such a training process cultural self awareness. The focus is on white privilege and the impact it has on us all; it requires turning the mirror onto the whitefellas world and the way it works to exclude and disadvantage Indigenous people. It requires white organisations and individuals to be honest about assumptions and examine critically the quality and reliability of their sources of information. It does not focus on guilt but on transformative inquiry, education and learning. It is a process that requires willingness and commitment, not a one off, 'tick-a-box' duty.

Such training differs from standard "diversity" training because it focuses on developing relationship with Aboriginal communities and assumes Aboriginal sovereignty. The training is based upon learning from Aboriginal and other Indigenous academics and authors as well as some media such as movies that show an Aboriginal view of history.

The discomfort mentioned at the beginning of the paper can really kick in when whitefellas are challenged. To extend the chemical dependency metaphor of Black and Stone (2005), there is likely to be an “arcing up” and “acting out” similar to that often witnessed when someone with a chemical dependency is challenged about their addiction. Therefore, this type of work requires committed critical allies who are able to stay with the journey it will be and who themselves have a strong, trusting mutually respectful relationship with Aboriginal people at a personal level.

As exemplified by Martin’s (2008; 131-133) research protocol, respecting sovereignty begins with relationship building and maintenance of agreed good manners in a way that is operationalised into demonstrable researcher behaviour. For example, respecting culture is evidenced in self-regulating researcher behaviour of “not moving objects, nor taking anything from Buru (country) and giving priority to the needs of Buru Bama and Community” (Martin, 2008: 133). Based on ‘the principles for maintaining personal and communal relatedness’ (Martin 2008; 132) this form of respect happens out of desire for strong, reciprocal relationship, not duty. Whitefellas do not have to wait for governments to “get on with tackling the rules of co-existence” (Brennan *et al.*, 2001: 8)

## Humility

Powis (2008: 86) ponders the difficulties of how to do whiteness differently and decides that increasing self awareness is not “singular epiphanies ... grand moments on the road to Damascus: rather they recur for me, return to me, in the ordinariness of every day.” (Powis, 2008: 86). She believes that being reflexive and aware of being in dialogue with all the voices with which she is in relationship is a place to begin. This resonates with my own journey over the last decade of an emerging understanding of the importance and place of humility. I would add, however, the importance of avoiding self-indulgent navel-gazing that makes my whiteness rather than Aboriginal sovereignty the issue.

Powis (2008: 90) also recalls being confronted by an Indigenous Australian with, “you haven’t been around that long – where do you fellas come from anyway?” Her response describes my experiences in this learning project. “In that moment I felt humbled by an apprehension of similarities and profound differences in the form that ‘our’ historical work might assume: .... I touched the edges of humility, and realised ...how little space we give humility in conversations within psychology.” The same is true of conversations in education. Yet, for me, grappling with humility is one of the most central and vital things I am learning. Whitefellas transformative education needs inclusion of conversations about humility.

## Holding up the mirror

On the journey I take, the prioritising and privileging of Indigenous voices gives me an opportunity to hold up a mirror to my own white privilege and see a reflection containing some of what the Aboriginal teachers would see in me. Jo’s teaching for example comes to mind when I reflect on white privilege, ignorance and the need to learn humility.

***The Judge ... made a statement ... "before I sentence these young men I want every parent of every one of these kids to do something about the feuding. I don't care what they do and I want evidence." Do you know how ridiculous that was?!!!! Who is going to talk to a feuding family member and say "well what are we going to do about this?" The judges and the white people they don't get the full thing about Aboriginal family feuding.***

## Aware, sensitive, competent, safe... or culturally self-aware?

It has been found that training in cultural awareness does not always ensure cultural competence and culturally safe service delivery (Westerman, 2007: 138). Bin-Sallick (2003: 21) acknowledges that education can learn from health in relation to culturally safe practice when she says, "We need to extend [cultural safety] from our psyches and put it out there to be developed, discussed, debated and evaluated. This is what is beginning to take place within Indigenous health – so why not Indigenous education?"

Based on the teachings of the teacher-participants in this research, I argue that increasing cultural self-awareness in mainstream institutions such as prisons and schools is a necessary step. This need is further supported by indications from reports from the Western Australian custodial inspector (OICS, September, 2010; August, 2010) who indicates inadequate provision of even basic cultural awareness to prison staff.

What it is called	What it is usually about	The focus is on	Usefulness of training limited by
<b>cultural awareness</b>	Acknowledges we do not all have one shared history; demystifies the unknown.	Focus is on learning about our difference	The level of whitefellas cultural self awareness
<b>cultural sensitivity</b>	Sees differences are not right/wrong, better/worse ... they just "are". Involves a growing awareness that actions impact on others		
<b>cultural competence</b>	Improves the skills of professionals and their ability to honour and respect beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of clients and staff		
<b>cultural safety</b>	<p>'is about ... learning together with dignity and truly listening'. [Eckerman <i>et al.</i>, 2006: 213].</p> <p>Has a focus on building relationships with diverse groups in the community and being guided by them as experts in their own needs and lives.</p> <p>Means becoming more and more aware of how you are perceived by and impact on others.</p> <p>Works to extend the frame of reference beyond a merely western one</p>	Us learning how to relate	

**Figure 2 Defining cultural awareness, sensitivity, competency and safety**

The Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS, September, 2010; August, 2010) reveals that the 'one size fits all' cultural awareness training on offer does not work effectively in either metropolitan or regional prisons. The staff at Greenough prison for example "had concluded that the Department's training package was too metropolitan focused and not culturally appropriate for the prisoners held at Greenough" (OICS, August 2010: 34). On the other hand at Casuarina, the largest metropolitan prison, the Inspector concludes that "despite the very high numbers of Aboriginal prisoners, this inspection found that little training in culturally appropriate custodial management had been provided to staff" (OICS, September 2010: 49). Prison Support Officer staff at Causarina speak of the need for ongoing cross cultural training and the perceived ignorance of many custodial staff of what is and is not culturally appropriate (Carnes, 2011c: 9)

Figure 2 provides my understanding of some of the common terms in use in “cross cultural” training. It draws heavily on work from the health sector, especially from the Australian publication *Binan Goonj: Bridging cultures in Aboriginal health* (Eckerman et al., 2006). I also am informed by *Anti-racist Health Care Practice* (McGibbon & Etowa, 2009) and *Cultural Safety in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Wepa, 2005). It is also important to note that models exist that aim to increase non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness. One such process has been developed by Indigenous Australians in the form of an audit sequence for individuals and organisations outlined by Walker & Sonn (2007: 173-176). What is emphasised is not so much the content of learning but the ongoing process that needs to be adopted.

## **The impact of white privilege and ignorance is not Aboriginal bliss**

White ignorance has not led to Indigenous bliss. For Aboriginal people, the outcome of colonisation, dispossession and loss of sovereignty is a legacy of historical trauma, loss and grief (HREOC, 1997: 4). Symptoms of trauma and loss include social disadvantage, economic disadvantage, community disintegration, health problems, self invalidation, dysfunctional relationships, inadequate education, suicide, homicide, accidental deaths, domestic violence, child abuse and alcoholism (Cajete, 1994: 189; Sotero, 2006: 99; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998: 56). Walls & Whitbeck (2012: 1289) argue that such disadvantages traverse generations.

Aboriginal sovereignty and the impact of trauma for Aboriginal peoples as a legacy of colonisation, remain largely unacknowledged by mainstream Australia. In the 1990's there were reports and inquiries such as *Bringing Them Home*, the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*. Unfortunately, as Hocking (2005, 268-269) notes, official and government responses to these reports “contributed to the failure to achieve full reconciliation in Australia”. This leaves Aboriginal Australians living the consequences of decisions past and present that continue to be made about them, and fighting for recognition as Australia's First Peoples. Despite this Aboriginal culture, though severely harmed, has not been totally eclipsed and in many ways stays strong in the hearts of people, their families and communities. I think Glen captures what is necessary when he says, **“I tell ya who needs educatin', wadjellas”**.

## **Conclusion**

The teachings of Glen and other participants in this research reveal a gap in whitefellas cultural self-awareness. This gap is related to persistent white noise created by being raised in, taught in and working in a colonial system. As non-Aboriginal people we have unearned privileges which are often invisible and unacknowledged. Ultimately the heart of the resulting gap links to an unacknowledged legacy of colonisation and the associated denial of Aboriginal sovereignty. Addressing this gap in non-Indigenous cultural self-awareness by learning from Aboriginal people and adopting ongoing review of the impact of white noise is an important factor in improving education provision in any context.

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# Tracking Experiences at Universities: A Call for Cultural Competency

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**Keywords:** Indigenous higher education, pronominal systems, ethnomethodology, interaction, experience, cultural competency.

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**This small scale study explores the everyday experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons in university. This is a methodological study that draws on Ethnomethodology (EM) and its analytic methods, Conversation Analysis (CA) and Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA). The analysis uses CA to examine the sequential organisations and MCA to examine the categorial organisations that are created and re-created in and through the stories shared by these Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, who are yarning about life at university. The particular focus is on the ways in which these participants produce the first person pronoun 'we' to tell their stories. Through applying an inclusive/exclusive distinction to a tracking of these participants' productions of 'we', this study provides empirical evidence of the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in universities. The results indicate that more needs to be done if we are to visualise an alternate future in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons share the experience of university life, together and as co-members of the university. Hence, the study indicates that more research is needed to move beyond the indirect and covert forms of 'new racisms' in universities towards developing anti-racist futures for a new world order where 'we' all get to feel that 'we' belong.**

## Indigenous Higher Education

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gained access to Australian higher education institutions as recently as the 1970s. Since that time, a range of legislative (e.g., Aboriginal Education Policy), financial (e.g., Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme), academic (e.g., Indigenous Tertiary Assistance Scheme) and other support mechanisms (e.g., the National Indigenous Cadetship Program) have been implemented to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander success at the tertiary level. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain under-represented in universities.<sup>1</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> The author has published extensively in the area of Indigenous higher education.

fact, ensuring parity in the sector will prove a serious challenge for the *Review of Higher Education and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, particularly given the findings of the 2005 National Indigenous Higher Education Network (NIHEN)<sup>2</sup> Report, which found that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on university campuses had been subjected to episodes of racist slurs and other offensive acts (Anning, Robertson, Thomas & Demosthenous, 2005, p. 49). Similar findings were previously reported by Anderson, Singh, Stehbens and Ryerson (1998, p. 33) in their pioneering study into the structures of universities and Indigenous rights, which concluded that 'the university is still predominately an institution for the white person'. Much of the research (e.g., Arbon, 2006; Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999; Bin-Salik, 1990; Demosthenous, 2012; Dodson, 1994; Nakata, 1993) indicates this has important implications for outcomes in Indigenous higher education, and goes to the heart of this methodological study.

## Framework

This paper draws on a bigger project that explored the everyday experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons in university (Demosthenous, 2012/2010/2009/2008). The framework informing the project comes out of Ethnomethodology (EM). EM is interested in understanding *how* ordinary members of a culture mutually construct a shared sense of order and intelligibility in everyday social life (Garfinkel, 1967/1984). EM provides understanding of social action, the nature of intersubjectivity and the social constitution of knowledge. It permits the documentation and examination of the commonsense knowledge that ordinary members of society use to 'make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstance in which they find themselves' (Heritage, 1984, p. 4; Liddicoat, 2007).

## EM's Analytic Methods

EM's analytic methods, Conversation Analysis (CA) and Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) emerged out of the collaborative work of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (e.g., Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), and especially Sacks' *Lectures in Conversation* (see, 1992a, 1992b). Sacks (1992a, 1992b) aimed to show his students how 'categories' could be heard or seen to be, according to Schegloff (2007, p. 463), 'articulated embodiments of "anyman's" vernacular or common-sense understandings'. For instance, anyone hearing the utterance 'the baby cried; the mommy picked it up', would common-sensically interpret that the mother who picked up the baby was the mother of that baby.

Categories (such as 'mother' and 'baby') are organised into collections of categories (e.g., 'family') because they 'go together' (Schegloff, 2007, p. 467) as paired-categories or standardized-relational-pairs (SRP) (Sacks, 1992a, p. 218). In other words, it is not a knowledge of individual or specific persons that generates a projection common to members but 'the features of a perceived *class* of

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<sup>2</sup> NIHEN is a former national representative peak body committee of the Indigenous higher education sector.

persons that is relevant' to the incumbents of the category (Jayyusi, 1984, p. 23). Further, Sacks (1992a, p. 590) explained,

[t]he application of the categories of some collection to a population, is an operation that can be talked of as "partitioning" a population into various categories. One consequence of that operation - in the first instance for analysts, but then perfectly obviously as a matter that's oriented to - is that we get a population that can be considered to be composed either of co-members or cross-members of some category, or of all co-members or all-cross members.

Further, Sacks found that persons do not simply talk about being co-members in a category, but may talk about being co-members by reference to their membership in other collections, such as 'mother' from the collection 'family, or 'Indigenous' from the collection 'race'; simply, a speaker can be mother and Indigenous, or Indigenous mother. In this study, the expectable categories relate to the category, 'students', which belong to the collection 'university', and 'Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander/Indigenous', which belong to the collection 'race'. As stated earlier, this paper is interested in understanding the collections and categories that participants orient to as a means of understanding who it is that these participants say they shared their experiences of university with, which can be explored through their use of personal pronouns.

## Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns can substitute for noun phrases. They are used in the grammatical classification of words, and their projection can serve to express varying sorts of solidarity and differentiation as they invoke collective identities and group memberships (e.g., Demosthenous, 2008; McHoul, 1997). Interestingly, the English language contains only one non-singular first person plural pronoun (i.e., 'we'), to refer to collective or group membership.<sup>3</sup> However, over half of the Indigenous languages of Australia (e.g., Torres Strait Island Kriol) and many languages of the world (e.g., Chechen) make a distinction between the 'inclusive' and 'exclusive' varieties of 'we' (Dixon, 1980), and is the system applied in this study. Dixon explained,

[t]here will be two separate duals - inclusive 'you and I' and exclusive 'I and someone other than you' - and plurals - inclusive 'you and I and one or more others' and exclusive 'I and two or more others, not including you' (1980, p. 277).

The inclusive form refers to inclusion of the addressee in the collection being established, whereas the 'exclusive' form refers to the exclusion of the addressee from the collection being established. Dixon (1980) has shown that many languages make a further distinction between varieties of 'we' - dual and plural. The dual system includes a maximum of two persons in the collective (i.e., the

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<sup>3</sup> English makes a marginal distinction through the inclusive, 'let's'. The directive, 'let's eat' can include the person addressed, and therefore be an invitation to the addressee to eat (i.e., 'let you and I eat'). Alternatively, 'let us eat' - formal usage - can exclude the person addressed, and be a request to leave the speaker alone, (i.e., 'go away so that I - and one or more unnamed others - can eat').

speaker and one other person), while the plural system includes more than two persons in a collective (i.e., the speaker and two or more persons).

Although there is no grammatical category of this system in English, these distinctions provide (i) a tool for distinguishing different uses of 'we' that are otherwise hidden in English, and (ii) are of relevance because these distinctions exist in the first languages of the group (Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander languages and Kriol), so the distinctions are likely to be more salient to them.<sup>4</sup> Further, application of this linguistic repertoire here distinguishes persons and complements of persons as members, into categories of members. It can provide insights into relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in institutions, such as universities.

## Research Design

### Selection of Sites and Participants

The data for this study were collected from a single yarning circle (or focus group) interaction conducted in an Indigenous Higher Education Support Centre in an Australian university. Much like the focus group method, the yarning circle method can be understood as an important 'key starting point' in EM research, as it is 'sufficient to attract attention and analytic interest because the instance is an event whose features and structures can be examined to discover how it is organised' (Psathas, 1995, p. 50) and 'orderly for its participants' (Schegloff, 1968). In other words, in EM studies, a single, interactional event such as the yarning circle is a consequence of its being talked-into-being and is thus an interactional achievement of the practical actions of participants.

It is important to note that research typically provides a snapshot of participants in terms of macro-sociological variables (e.g., educational background, income) and personal background, but that this is incommensurate with the analytic method employed here. Participants' 'missing data' (ten Have, 2000, p. 55) is provided when made relevant by a participant in their talk. In other words, it is the aim of this research that '[t]he existence and relevance of such identities are, strictly speaking, to be discovered in the analysis, as products of the local practices of participants' (ten Have, 2000, p. 55), which fits with Indigenous research (e.g., AIATSIS, 2000).

### Ethical Clearance

This study is underpinned by the ethics, values, principles and themes for ethically-appropriate research practices with Indigenous people, as recommended by the National Health and Medical

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<sup>4</sup> Note, this study is not suggesting that these distinctions (i.e., inclusive/exclusive or dual/plural) exist in English grammar, but are a useful tool to uncover the various referents of we/our/us.

Research Council (NHMRC, 2003/2007) and others, and has satisfied the requirements of the principles of ethical research set down by Griffith University's Ethics Committee.<sup>5</sup>

## Transcription Procedures and Conventions

The starting point for analysis is to engage with the data in an unmotivated way; without pre-conceived notions or ideas of what one might find, because it is the features of the interaction itself that are of relevance to the analysis. Noticings<sup>6</sup> and discoveries for how people take turns talking, how they emphasise their talk, what they say when they talk, how they talk, and other features are made possible through the close and repeated listening to the recorded data and in the process transcribing (e.g., Jefferson, 1989; Sacks, 1987). Further, the transcription conventions for representing details of talk used in this study are based on, and simplified from, those provided in Jefferson (1989).

## Reliability and Validity

Reliability is a key issue for research because reliability establishes consistency and truth and objectivity of the findings (Peräkylä, 1997). With regard to the reliability of using tape-recordings, Sacks (1984, p. 26) said:

I could get my hands on it and I could study it again and again, and also, consequentially, because others could look at what I had studied and make of it what they could, if, for example, they wanted to be able to disagree with me.

The validity of the data was ensured through the gathering of authentic, naturally occurring (that is, not-experimental and not co-produced with the researcher), which were audio-recorded and later accurately transcribed to represent the social phenomena to which it refers. In EM studies the validity of the interaction is not a problem of the research design because the validity of the talk and actions, as trustworthy, are determined by the participants themselves (e.g., Garfinkel, 1967/1984; Sacks *et al.*, 1974)

## Analysis and Discussion: Tracking 'We'

Presented below are a series of excerpts from a yarning circle in which Indigenous (i.e., Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) and non-Indigenous students are sitting together, sharing stories about their experiences at university. Readers are reminded that the study focuses on the collections and categories that participants orient to in their retrospective accounts of university life, as established through the personal pronoun 'we'.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on ethically-appropriate research with Indigenous people, see Demosthenous, CM & Demosthenous, H.T. (2010). *Indigenous Women's Research Consortium Proposal*, Indigenous Community Engagement, Policy & Partnership, Griffith University, Australia, 978-1-921760-23-5

<sup>6</sup> 'Noticings' is an accurate term in CA studies.

## Non-Indigenous Accounts

Immediately prior to the production of data displayed in Extract 1, the yarning circle moderator (Mod) has been informing the parties of their rights and responsibilities in the yarning circle. However, in her opening, the moderator (Mod) neglects to state the topic that the Indigenous (I) and non-Indigenous (NI) participants have been brought together to discuss. One of the participants initiate a sequence of action (or talk) to clarify the task at hand, '↑O(hh)kka: whada we- whada we doin'=' (line 11).

### Extract 1: Task At Hand

- 11→ NIF: ↑ O(hh)kka: whadya {we}- whadya {we} doin'=  
12 Mod: =Oh, the the question 'What are your experiences at  
13 university?'  
14 (.)  
15 °Thank you°  
16 NIF: Uh: (.) like any sorta experiences?  
17 Mod: Ye::s (.) as a student (.) as a tutor, anything at all.

One of the first things we see is 'we' being produced in line 11, twice. Simply speaking, these projections of 'we' indicate that the person asking the question is speaking on her own behalf and that of co-participants in the yarning circle. Had that speaker selected the singular first person pronoun, 'I', to ask her question, the implication would have been that she was representing herself as an individual and speaking on her own behalf to ask her question, and not on anyone else's behalf. This first 'we' establishes a group of people that includes all of the participants in the yarning circle; that is, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

In Extract 2, the speaker from Extract 1 takes up the floor again; this time to share a story about her experience in a university tutorial-class. It is right up front at the start of her turn that the speaker uses 'we', which lets listeners know that her forthcoming story is about an experience that she shared with others.

## Extract 2: Lines 73-109

73 NIF: In the class there were there were two Indigenous students ↑  
74 both female.  
75 And then there were a group of (.) ↑ th- the res- (.) >the remainder  
76 of the group were *also* females and they were Non-Indigenous  
77 students.  
78→ Ah:: ↑ oddly enough, {we} didn't have any males in the class at'll.  
79 And I remember in the *beginning* (.) there was: (.) > a little  
80 bit of friction<  
81 y'know the- they were all sitting in line ↑ and there  
82 was a bit of friction between ↑ some of the students (.)  
83 that were non- Indigenous ↑ and the Indigenous ones.  
84 One of the Indigenous students was older and mature ↑  
85 >then there was °a young girl° who w'z >in the class<.  
86 An' ah, at first they had a problem (0.2) but as thur thuh  
87→ whole semester wore on, {we} did'a lodda talking ↑  
88 abou' (.) life and experiences, and one of the  
89 Indigenous student's started to tell a story where  
90 (0.4) she said they went to a parkk,  
(16 lines omitted)  
106 So that sort of started a good discussion in the class  
107 (0.2)  
108 an::: helped people to see things from another  
109 perspective =like why was it okay to drink from a glass  
(story continues)

It is in the description of 'the class' (line 73) that the speaker's 'we' at line 78 can be seen to resemble the exclusive plural variety, and is one that includes a bunch of other people from different collections and categories. That is to say, 'the class' includes, 'two Indigenous students↑, both female' (lines 73-74), one who was 'older' (line 84) and 'a group of' (line 75) 'Non-Indigenous students' (lines 76-77), who were 'also females' (line 76) and '°a young girl°' (line 85), but excludes all yarning group recipients (i.e., addressee/s) of the talk. In terms of the application of the categories in the story, the people being included in the speaker's project of 'we' are (i) cross-members in terms of race (i.e., 'Indigenous/Non-Indigenous'), and university status (i.e., 'student/tutor', and with regard to age (i.e., 'young/old'), and (ii) co-members in terms of gender (i.e., 'females/girl'). This cross- and co-member grouping (or category) has been designed as part of the background information in this story teller's elaborate account.

Although the story teller's 'we' excludes all co-participants in the yarning circle, the speaker does not use 'we' to identify the racial group to which she belongs. However, the story teller's non-use of an available category implies that she is doing a membership categorisation description of herself as not Indigenous. This 'is achieved by virtue of the contrastive work done' (Jayyusi, 1984, p. 23) over the extended sequence. It is possible that the story teller produced the story using the collections and categories she did on the basis of having identifiable Indigenous participants in the group,

rather than as a result of the speaker's own routine practices for responding to an invitation to discuss experiences of university, 'Ye::s (.) as a student (.) as a tutor, anything at all.' (line 17).

The excerpt is an example of a Non-Indigenous Female (NIF) participant's retrospective account of experiencing university life with people from different racial backgrounds and of different ages and genders. It produces a category comprising both non-Indigenous and Indigenous persons, which is typical of the types of membership groups that the non-Indigenous participants in the yarning circle talk-in-being when they share their experiences at university.

## Indigenous Accounts

In Extract 3, one of the Aboriginal Student's (AS) in the yarning circle takes up the floor to give an account of an 'unbelievable' (line 399) experience in a tutorial-class.

### Extract 3: Aboriginal Student's Account

397 AS: [as I wen' through university my↓sel↑f=fair while ago now,  
398 >I graduated in ninety-nine<, when I first started .hhh over at  
399→ ((university)) (.) it w'z unbelievable what {we} 'ad to put up  
400 ↑with.  
401→ {We} were sitting there in one one section and ah >all the  
402 Aboriginals were sittin' in the fron' row<, 'nd this  
403 bloke (.) would of'en say to us in sociology yihknow, 'bout  
404 the Aboriginals dyin' out and everything,  
405→ en' 'e'd look straigh'- at us an' I'd go, '↑woo↓oo ↑{we}  
406 still ['ere:!  
407 AS2: [((laugh))

The talk begins in overlap (as indicated by the left bracket), with the Aboriginal Student producing an action that informs co-participants that she will be sharing a personal experience, '[as I went through university my↓sel↑f' (line 397). The Aboriginal Student then produces an assessment of the yet-to-be-told experience, 'it w'z unbelievable what we 'ad to put up ↑with.' (lines 399-400). The utterance not only informs co-participants to listen out for something assessable as 'unbelievable' (lines 399), it makes explicit that the treatment that she was subjected to was something she endured with others. Those others include 'all the Aboriginals' (lines 401- 402) 'over at' another university 'in sociology' (line 403), but not the Aboriginals participating in the yarning circle, nor any other member of the yarning circle; which also includes Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people. What is hearably 'unbelievable', as self-assessed by the Aboriginal Student, might not be attributable to the speaker's claim of having had such an experience, but to the fact that '↑we still 'ere:!' (line 405).

Further, the story is designed to 'appeal to [the] intersubjectivity' of co-participants and does not have to spell things out for them, as shown in the use of place connectors (e.g., 'sittin' in the fron' row<'). While these provide internal coherence for the story, their 'heard motivation' could be to 'enable recognition to take place' and 'information that you want to convey for the story' (Sacks,

1986, p. 133). So, for instance, 'fron' row' might be significant because of 'who' it is that is said to conventionally sit in the front row in classrooms: those normatively positioned as 'A-students' and 'bright students' and not 'D-students' and 'under-performing students', who typically sit in the 'back row'.

Taking up the floor to share this experience allows the speaker to display and challenge particular, historical, institutional and societal wrong beliefs about Aboriginal people. The story alludes to that socio-historic form of organisation in which the extinction of the Aboriginal race was promoted as a part of the normative racial discourse in Australia (e.g., Schegeloff, 1996; Whitehead, 2007). It projects 'we' that are all of the exclusive variety, and allow the speaker to identify her incumbency in the category 'Aboriginal', which is a membership group that excludes all non-Aboriginal persons.

Later on in the yarning circle, a Torres Strait Islander Student (TSIS) self-nominates to share a story, which is her first turn at talk in the yarning circle interaction. In first taking up the floor, the speaker momentarily holds the floor with the utterance 'My um' (line 695), which she repeats, and which is followed by a brief silence, as indicated by the dot in brackets. With a high pitch onset, the Torres Strait Islander Student produces a personal experience about her first year at university, which she informs 'has been ve:ry different to everyone here'ya↑' (line 695-696).

#### **Extract 4: Torres Strait Islander Student's Account**

695 TSIS: My um, my um (.)↑I suppose my time at uni has been ve:ry  
696 different to everyone here'ya↑ 'cause I do journalism and pr.  
697 An:d=um, first year w'z a bit rocky because I come from  
698 Thursday Island and I've never been to like Brisbane  
699 beforehand um >living life< so it w'z a big it w'z a  
700 big jump fa me= an' although, like, although I'm not dark in,  
701 like, my colour of my skin it's still inside (.)  
702→ like (1.0) the way {we} live back home is very diff'rent to the  
703→ way {we} live down here, and I just foun' thad I stuck to  
704 Islanders and Aboriginals down here because (.) other  
705 people outside our culture didn't respect like thuh  
706→ morals that {we} had and I didn't find them to↑.

The Torres Strait Islander Student reports that her experience is very different to 'everyone' in the yarning circle group because she (i) studies 'journalism and pr' (line 696), (ii) comes from 'Thursday Island' (line 698), and (iii) had never been to Brisbane, 'living life' (lines 698-699). In other words, the speaker begins her turn-at-talk by informing co-participants that what she is reporting is not something she shared with others, but something that she experienced alone, as indicated by her production of the singular forms of the first person pronouns, 'My' (line 695) and 'I' (lines 695, 696, 697, 698, 700). However, as the telling unfolds, the Torres Strait Islander Student can be seen to be making different pronominal choices to tell her story.

In the sequence, the first 'we' (line 702), second 'we' (line 703) and third 'we' (line 706) all refer to the racial group 'Thursday Island' (line 698). In all three utterances – (i) 'the way we live back home' (line 702), (ii) 'the way we live down here' (lines 702-703), and (iii) 'thuh morals that we

had' (lines 705-706) – 'we' makes explicit all Thursday Island people. Here, an all co-members 'all persons from Thursday Island, but excluding all Non-Thursday Island persons' category is being produced under the racial-group collection. This category can be seen to be of the exclusive variety because there are no other persons in the yarning circle that are from Thursday Island (although there are participants in the yarning circle from the other islands in the Torres Strait).

In her production of the pronoun in the possessive case, 'our' (line 705), in the phrase, 'other people outside our culture' (lines 704-705), the Torres Strait Islander Student alludes to, or hints at (Sacks, 1992a, p. 595), the relevance of 'culture' with regard to 'we'. She talks-into-being a set that makes a sharp distinction between members making up the category 'Indigenous', as it includes, 'all Islanders and Aboriginals down here and all persons from Thursday Island'. In alluding to the category, 'culture', as a sub-set of the category, Thursday Island, and comprising all Thursday Island persons and 'Islanders and Aboriginals down here', the Torres Strait Islander Student is indicating that the categories 'Islanders and Aboriginals' shared greater membership possibilities with 'Thursday Island' people than people outside her culture (line 704), which is why she *hangs out* with them.

Although the Torres Strait Islander Student talks-into-being an 'all persons from Thursday Island' category that seems to exclude the addressee/s, her talk around the category 'culture' alludes to a category in which Islander and Aboriginal persons in the yarning circle event are aligned as people *inside* our culture, that is, as members of 'our culture'. Further, the Torres Strait Islander Student's understanding is not one that can be disputed because it is something that she personally experienced, as marked by her shift back to the first person singular ('I') in the utterance, 'I didn't find them to†' (line 706).

Like the Aboriginal Student's (AS) projection of 'we' in Extract 3 above, the Torres Strait Islander Student's (TSIS) projections of 'we' in Extract 4 do not include non-Indigenous persons; that is, those projections do not include non-Indigenous persons from the yarning circle or wider university population. What this means is that neither the Aboriginal Student nor the Torres Strait Islander Student report sharing these experiences with people who were non-Indigenous. What is more is that an examination of the entire corpus of talk indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants do not typically include non-Indigenous participants in their retrospective accounts of university life, which connotes a type of 'us' against 'them' dichotomy. That said, a 'we' was produced much later in the yarning circle which provided an alternate group makeup to those typically produced by the Indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.

## An(other) Account

Extract 5 provides an(other) account; that is differently composed to those discussed. It follows on from a discussion in which some of the yarning circle participants have been talking about making appeals against grades that have been awarded on assessment items. The talk below involves two speakers, an Aboriginal Student (AS) and a Torres Strait Islander Student (TSIS). The first line of the excerpt is from an Aboriginal Student.

### Extract 5: Lines 1148-1155

1148 AS: But if you know you put the work in↑  
1149→ TSIS: That's what {we}'re saying, it doesn't matter if you put the  
1150 work in.  
1151 AS: I know with some of my marks I've gone, I've gone one-  
(story continues)

The design of the talk makes explicit that the claim that the Aboriginal Student has uttered (line 1148) has already been rejected by this Torres Strait Islander Student and a non-Indigenous participant, 'That's what we're saying, it doesn't matter if you put the work in' (lines 1149-1150). The line 1149 speaker, who is a Torres Strait Islander Student, produces an exclusive dual (or even an exclusive plural) 'we' that includes at least one non-Indigenous participant from the yarning circle, and excludes the Aboriginal Student, the person she is addressing her disagreeing comment to. The Torres Strait Islander Student's 'we' adds weight to her correction of the Aboriginal Student's *optimistic* but wrong understanding about appealing marks and grades, as it highlights that it is something that the Torres Strait Islander Student and non-Indigenous yarning circle participant know about or have experience in common. Hence, this exclusive 'we' brings together an Indigenous and non-Indigenous participant in an all co-member category (Schegloff, 1999, p. 406) that invokes the relevance of the yarning circle group, albeit with a different composition than that previously established in the yarning circle.

## Tracking Experiences

Overall, with regard to the pronominal system that was applied here, participants' productions of 'we' align the persons included in a particular projection of 'we', and exclude those not included in projections. What happened here was that all of the productions of 'we' in the stories shared by Indigenous and Non-Indigenous participants in the yarning circle were of the exclusive variety; some were exclusive duals, others were exclusive plurals. There was only one projection of 'we' that was inclusive, and this was an inclusive plural that included the entire yarning circle population of Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants and was produced to clarify the task at hand, '↑O(hh)kka: whada we- whada we doin'=' (line 11).

The findings show that these Indigenous and Non-Indigenous participants partition and align the university population in different ways. Non-Indigenous participants reported sharing experiences at university with people from different membership groups to theirs, that includes: 'students/tutors', 'females', 'older/younger persons' and 'Indigenous/Non-Indigenous persons' - all of which are 'expectable categories' or persons one would expect to belong to the collection 'university'. In contrast, Indigenous participants reported sharing experiences and *hanging out* only with members of their own, racial group 'Aboriginals', 'Thursday Islanders', 'Torres Strait Islanders' and 'Indigenous'. In other words, the results show that Indigenous participants' experience university as 'racialised' persons in line with their 'racial' group and experience university with 'Indigenous' co-members, including 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' (and 'Thursday Island') persons.

However, the findings also show that, after the participants have been talking and sharing stories together in the yarning circle for some time, one of the Indigenous participant's goes on to produce a 'we' that includes non-Indigenous participants in its projection. This 'we' is not produced as part of a story per se, but is nonetheless a 'we' that establishes an Indigenous and non-Indigenous category relevant to an experience at university. It is a projection of 'we' that establishes a group comprised of co-members of the university (as yarning circle participants) and cross-members under the collection 'race' (as Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons). Whatever is happening here, an Indigenous speaker produces a 'we' that includes at least one other non-Indigenous person to relay an understanding and experience that is held in common by these racially different persons, which is very different to the membership groups that the Indigenous participants in the yarning circle typically produce. What we have is an Indigenous participant in the yarning circle producing a 'we' that includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people; albeit a 'we' of the exclusive variety.

## **Towards Developing Anti-Racist Futures**

As a methodological study, this chapter shows that application of the inclusive/exclusive dual/plural distinction to an examination of the non-singular first person pronoun, 'we' is a useful tool for distinguishing different uses of 'we' that may have otherwise remained hidden in English. Application of this system shows that 'we' can only be understood on a moment-by-moment basis, and that it is a powerful resource for interpreting how 'we' experience university and with whom 'we' share those experiences. The study also points to the flexibility of 'we' as a marker of solidarity; and one where Indigenous participants typically report experiencing university as members of a 'racialised' group of the Indigenous population, rather than a 'student' group of the university population. While the study has been underpinned by the belief that it is important that 'we' establish(es) co-membership and cross-membership categories under the collection 'university', more research is needed if we are to move beyond the indirect and covert forms of 'new racisms' in universities towards developing anti-racist futures for a new world order where 'we' *all get to feel that 'we' belong*.

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# Social Structures and Processes Linking Anger, Humiliation Power and Violence in Racist Societies

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**Keywords:** anger, Australia, crime, humiliation, Indigenous, power, processes, racist shame, societies, social structures, unconscious conditioning, violence.

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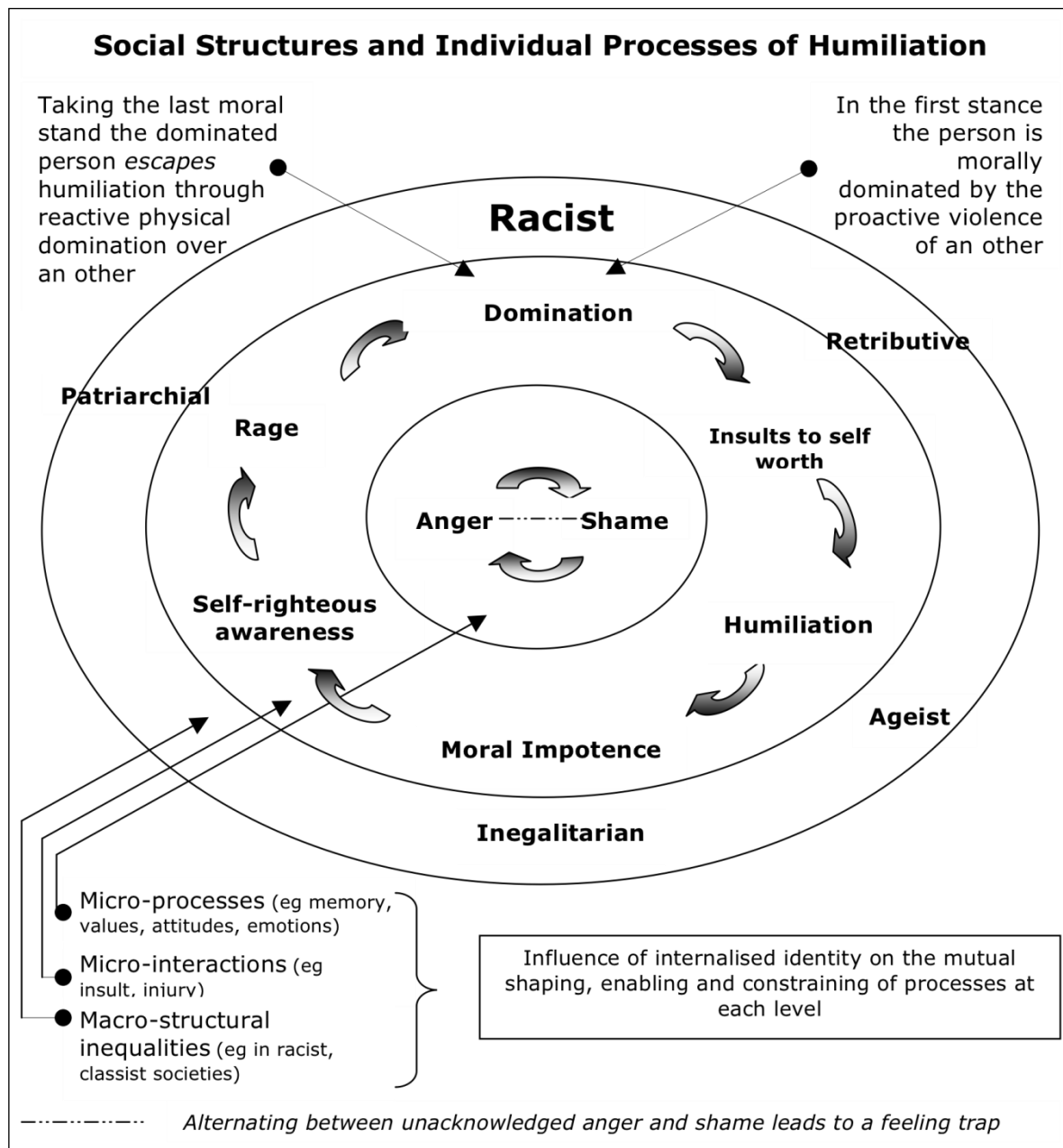
**This paper examines the social structures and individual processes that link anger, humiliation, power and violence in racist societies, such as ours in Australia. The paper holds that individuals internalise values and attitudes during, in and through the socialisation process and oppression and humiliation of the least powerful members of society becomes the norm into which most of us have been unconsciously conditioned. It draws on seminal works, like Braithwaite's (1991) philosophical republican analysis of the social structure of humiliation, which is particularly useful for making sense of the complex connections between racism and violence because it permits an explanation of the micro-processes (such as emotion, and reason), the micro-interactions (such as insult and assault) and the macro-structures (such as inequality between the races and sexes) that simultaneously shape, enable and constrain each other. Following Braithwaite (1991), and to a lesser extent Katz's (1988) explorations of violent crime, and the findings of psychodynamic scholars, including Scheff and Retzinger (1991), this work advances the argument that the lived experiences of oppression and humiliation of the subordinate racial groups are significant contributors to violence. In developing this argument, the paper considers the crimes of the humiliator and the crimes of the humiliated as different sides of the story of racism in Australia today.**

## Introduction

This paper examines the social structures and individual processes that link anger, humiliation, power and violence in racist societies, such as ours in Australia. All too often racism is depicted through social media, and consequenced by imbalances of power. The social structures of power within which we live are not merely situational settings, but also serve to constrain and free us (Foucault, 1980). Individuals internalise values and attitudes during, in and through the socialisation

process and oppression and humiliation of the least powerful members of society becomes the norm into which most of us have been unconsciously conditioned (Freire, 1972). Similarly, when social structures are humiliating they do not merely constitute humiliating situations but are internalised as memories that inform our identity; as humiliator or humiliated. What characterises these social structures and personal experiences of humiliation is that they are always dualistic in nature. In other words, such characterisations can be dichotomously represented as the bipolar opposites of the *oppressor* and the *oppressed* (Freire, 1972), the *powerful* and the *powerless* (Ryan, 1971), the *haves* and the *have-nots* (Alinsky, 1971), the *humiliators* and the *humiliated*, the *proactive* aggressors and the *reactive* aggressors (Dodge & Coie 1987), and the *racists* and the *non-racists*. In essence, the paper considers the crimes of the humiliator and the crimes of the humiliated as different sides of the story of racism in Australia.

Braithwaite's (1991) philosophical republican analysis of the social structure of humiliation is particularly useful for making sense of the complex connections between racism and violence. This is because it permits an explanation of the micro-processes (such as emotion, and reason), the micro-interactions (such as insult and assault) and the macro-structures (such as racial inequality and gender inequality) that simultaneously shape, enable and constrain each other. Following Braithwaite (1991), and to a lesser extent Katz (1988) and Scheff and Retzinger (1991), this work advances that the lived experiences of oppression and humiliation are significant contributors to violence in the *concentric cycle of racism* in Australia (Demosthenous, 2012). I am using the term *concentric* to suggest that there is a common centre and process in episodes involving racism in and across the micro and the macro levels. The *concentric cycle of racism* takes as its starting point domination and ends in domination. In effect this cycle follows processes of domination – insult to self worth – humiliation – moral impotence – self-righteousness – rage and domination. The dominated escapes enraged humiliation by taking the *last moral stand* and becoming the dominator, as diagrammatically represented in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. My interpretation of the social structures and individual processes that transform humiliation into enraged violence in racist societies.**

In racist societies, 'where the superordinate group humiliates the subordinate group, and where the subordinate group feels daily humiliation' (Braithwaite, 1991, p. 47), only the reaction of the humiliated is targeted, criminalised and punished. Who gets to be in the superordinate group and the subordinate group or groups is linked up with majority-minority colour, and can change situationally. In any event, the proactive violence of the humiliator is institutionalised and legitimised behind serving the needs of society (police brutality). This happens not because all humiliators are intrinsically bad people but because social structures force individuals into roles and relationships where some are expected to dominate and others are expected to submit. This begs the question; why do we concern ourselves with reactive violence (crimes of the humiliated racial group) and not proactive violence (crimes of the humiliator)? Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that proactive aggressors determine the 'rules of the game' (Freire, 1972). In contrast, the hostile

reactive violence of the disempowered goes against the rules, rendering them 'deviants' and 'evildoers' (Braithwaite, 1991; Rappaport, 1987). Just as the oppressed and humiliated have internalised the identity of being worth/less the oppressors and humiliators have internalised the identity of being worth *more*. Because this process is unconscious, the dominated racial groups seldom fight to free themselves of the social structures that imprison them. Instead, they remain immersed in a state of 'learned helplessness' and often react against others who, like themselves, have little access to wealth and power (Seligman, 1975)

The paper now turns to an analysis of the individual processes that transform humiliation into enraged violence in racist societies. Following this, the ways in which racist (and other) structures of humiliation manifest violence are discussed and the recursiveness among the levels of explanation made clear.

## **Individual Processes and Social Structures of Humiliation**

### **The micro level**

Katz's (1988) criminological analysis found that enraged violent attacks begin with dominance that is humiliating. When a person's self-worth is challenged, for example, through racist insult at work or on the streets, the insulted person may endure the humiliation this causes by imagining that they will soon be free of it. However, when people cannot endure or escape humiliation serious problems arise. Violent attacks occur when a person can no longer deflect insults with a false air of indifference. It is only when the person suddenly drops this act that they become aware of having been *morally* dominated and seek vengeance in a last moral stand through enraged *physical* domination.

A self-righteous attitude is the stepping-stone from humiliation to rage. Rage simultaneously recalls and transforms humiliation so quickly that the individual experiences forces beyond his or her control of identity and it is said that the person is rendered 'morally impotent' (Katz, 1988, p. 24). This reveals that it is not by chance that racist violent assault among intimates so often relates to cutting remarks about sexual inadequacies and declarations of sexual infidelity. In fact, the rage that propels an assailant into a violent attack is essentially a self-righteous stand in defence of one's self-worth - and an overwhelming awareness of not being able to take it any more. Just as this acknowledgement threatens to morally destroy the person rage promises dominance over the situation. In this way righteous violence transcends humiliation in killings by turning the tables on the dominator and recasting the humiliated in the role of humiliator through physical domination.

### **Socialised emotions**

Humiliation is a socialised emotion. It reveals an unquestionable relationship between the insults of an other and the humiliated person's experience of *discomfort*. Because of intolerable bodily *discomfort* and the external hostility that provokes it, humiliation is closer to rage than is shame.

Both shame and humiliation are social and moral emotions in the sense that the person feels isolated from the larger community. Yet it is only in shame that the person acknowledges failings or moral inadequacy. As Katz puts it, 'I may "become ashamed of myself" but I do not become humiliated of myself'. Instead, others – who morally assault me by challenging my self-worth and putting me down – humiliate me (1988, p. 26-27)

Katz's (1988) conclusions converge with those of psychodynamic scholars. Kohut (1972) identified 'narcissistic rage' as a compound of shame and rage, and Lewis (1971) showed that *unacknowledged* shame and anger causes a feeling trap that builds into *humiliated fury*. Retzinger (1995) found that cues to *unacknowledged* shame (acting indifferent) invariably preceded indications of anger (hard direct glaring). Note, Scheff and Retzinger (1991) proposed that *unacknowledged* shame is a necessary pre-condition for the type of destructive conflict found in racist encounters, yet it is generally so disguised and transmuted that it is almost invisible to those in conflict. Another factor of importance is the individual's reaction to insult, namely, the experience of shame or anger. Humiliated people are said to alternate between these two emotions, giving rise to the shame-rage spiral (Scheff, 1987), that is the 'senseless feeling bad, being mad' and 'getting charged up' that Atkinson (1988) speaks of. These findings serve to demonstrate the intrinsically complex interplay of micro-processes and micro-interactions in anger, humiliation and enraged violence.

## The interface of the micro and the macro levels

While acknowledging the importance of Katz's (1988) analysis of humiliation and violence, this paper supports Braithwaite's (1991) contention that material circumstances play a part in humiliation and rage in racist societies; a point Katz disputes. The following builds on the way in which Braithwaite relates Katz's analysis of the interface between emotions and reasoning in the micro-encounter to inequalities embedded in socially humiliating racist macro-structures. Guided by the philosophy of republican normative theory that posits to fully enjoy liberty, you must have equality of liberty prospects with other (Braithwaite & Pettit 1990), it is argued that when inequality is structurally humiliating for the subordinate racial groups the foundations are laid for a society rife with violence and crime. In developing this argument, the particular focus of the paper remains on the mutual recursiveness among the micro and the macro in racist societies such as ours in Australia.

## Racist Societies

Racist societies are characterised by conflict between different racial and ethnic groups. Underpinned by socio-biological racism, these are societies where one racial group is more highly valued than the other because they share certain characteristics or abilities specific to that particular racial group. These are societies 'where the superordinate group humiliates the subordinate group, and where the subordinate group feels daily humiliation' (Braithwaite 1991, p. 47). Racist societies are thereby dominating and humiliating for those that are viewed as worth/less and subsequently potentially criminogenic.

## Crimes of the superordinate race

It may be argued that the *crimes of the superordinate* race found justification under the scientific (but false) knowledges of eugenics. A contemporary view would contend that the legitimacy and advancement of the Australian nation has been made at the cost of human rights and the decimation of cultures (Bulbeck 1993). Prior to the 1967 Referendum, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were denied Australian citizenship, access to its institutions, and structurally humiliated in their classification as flora and fauna with government policy toward Indigenous people oscillating between their 'extermination, their integration into the European way of life, and racial segregation' (Dobson, 1996; Schneider 1991, p. 294). Aboriginal activist, Dodson (1996, p. 4) argues that 'Australia has been built on illegal and immoral foundations'. These arguments form the basis for conceptualising how proactive violence is structurally and personally humiliating for the *inferior* group, and leads one to conclude that the 'economic and social conditions under which Aboriginal people [and Torres Strait Islander] people have been forced to live as a result of dispossession and marginalisation are themselves conditions which are criminogenic' (Cunneen & McDonald, 1996, p. 54)

Criminal statistics show that the Indigenous imprisonment rate (for men, women and children) is disproportionately high across Australia; and increasing (Cunneen & McDonald, 1996). The rate is so high that while constituting around two and a half per cent of the Australian population Indigenous peoples make up almost thirty percent of the prison population (Fuller, 2011). In exploring the institutionalised violence of over-representation The Commission links Aboriginal violence to the identity crisis young men experience and the anger associated with their 'loss of a status-sustaining role' (Johnston, 1991, p. 102). Although little was then made of the over-representation of Aboriginal women and children, the self-defined focus of the Report is to eliminate disadvantage and to empower Aboriginal peoples by ending their domination and humiliation.

## Crimes of the subordinate race

In spite of the honourable vision of a contemporary egalitarian Australia that acknowledges *past* wrongs, *crimes of the subordinate racial groups* continue to be disproportionately targeted, criminalised and punished. Consequently, we have a growing self-righteous culture of resistance to white authority. In the words of Torres Strait Islander activist, the late Edward (Koiki) Mabo,

My family has occupied the land here for hundreds of years before Captain Cook was born. They are now trying to say I cannot own it. The present Queensland Government is a friendly enemy of the black people as they like to give you the bible and take away your land. We should stop calling them boss. We must be proud to live in our own palm leaf houses like our fathers before us. (Mabo Case, 1994-2009)

It has been asserted that there is a danger of romanticising resistance culture and thereby losing sight of the social and physical costs that are overwhelmingly borne by the 'resisters' and their families, not the oppressive and humiliating structures that they resist (Hollingsworth, 1992, p.

149). However, as an understanding of the processes that govern episodes of enraged violence makes clear, such cool headed insights are not possible once an individual is immersed in the lived experiences of structural and moral domination. As previously discussed when self-righteous awareness transforms humiliation into rage one is invariably compelled to physical dominance and blind to the consequences (see Figure 1).

It is arguable that when offences committed by Indigenous people specifically aim at non-Indigenous people, they are targeted and sensationalised by mainstream media, which seeks to organise our moral and political understanding. Such arguments potentially reflect well publicised policing and surveillance by the superordinate race and moral majority (Gale, Bailey-Harris & Wundersitz, 1990). Contrary to media interest, however, much of the enraged reactive violence committed by Indigenous people is aimed at other oppressed, powerless, have nots who also experience humiliation and are likely to react in kind. Sadly, '[t]he oppressed have become the oppressors while continuing in their own oppression' (Atkinson, 1990, p. 22). Statistics show that the 'number of homicides and assaults involving bodily harm in Indigenous communities is 10 times and 5 times above the Australian average, respectively' and primarily directed against other Indigenous people, though no figures tell the whole story (Willis, 2011)

Whether in remote or rural Indigenous communities or in urban mainstream society, Indigenous violence is unduly targeted criminalised and punished by a white criminal justice system with an *out of sight, out of mind* attitude and whose institutional violence remains invisible and unaccountable. Indubitably, the notion of one's *worth* is of significance here. It goes without saying that the anger and reactive violence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a manifestation of oppression and humiliation fuelled by the false knowledges of eugenics. And *lest we should forget* or doubt that such emotions are stirred by the internalised memories that inform our identity, as only a black person can set straight:

When I look at you I can choose to see a sister, I can choose to see another feminist, or another worker or parent, but what I cannot choose is the fact that I will *always* see your fucking White face, and in it the generations of genocide (Lucashneko, 1994, p. 224).

In further developing the argument that when inequality is structurally humiliating for the subordinate racial groups the foundations are laid for a society rife with violence and crime, the paper's focus on the mutual recursiveness among the micro and the macro shifts somewhat to considerations of the particular circumstances of women in racist societies, such as ours in Australia.

## Racist societies are patriarchal

Racist societies are patriarchal societies that are characterised by a division of the sexes in which women have limited dominion; and are dominated by men. It is common for women to unconsciously internalise societal values that lead them to identify their own interests with those of their husbands/partners and to avoid humiliation, with subordination 'regarded as something natural rather than something to resent' (Braithwaite, 1991, p. 47; Scheff, 1990). Patriarchy is structurally humiliating and oppressive for women because it gives men power over them. Foucault (1980)

explains that power should be understood as a force that says 'no', and as a force that traverses through the whole social body.

Although patriarchy does not necessarily engender humiliation and rage by women, Braithwaite (1991, p. 50) remarks that 'humiliation both motivates violence among those humiliated and fuels violence among those who humiliate'. Hence, the domination and degradation of women by men fuels rape and violence against women. Men who rape women need not look far a field for *mainstream* messages that advance the belief that women provoke or are responsible for rape. In addition to common *mainstream* stereotypes, the fields of criminology and psychiatry have traditionally justified rape. For instance, in Scully and Marolla (1984, p. 107) Hollander argues,

Considering the amount of illicit intercourse, rape of women is very rare indeed'. Flirtation and provocative conduct, i.e. tacit (if not actual) consent is generally the prelude to intercourse.

And Abrahamsen (1960, p. 61) states:

The conscious or unconscious biological or psychological attraction between man and woman does not exist only on the part of the offender toward the woman but, also, on her part toward him, which in many instances may to some extent, be the impetus for his sexual attack. Often a women [sic] unconsciously wishes to be taken by force.

Moreover, empirical work on violent domestic homicides by men against women confirms that such acts reflect the man's attempt to exercise power and control over *their* wife/partner (Braithwaite, 1991; Katz, 1988; Polk & Ransom, 1991). When compared with other women in Australia, Indigenous women are 10 times more likely to be the victims of homicide, and 30 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault (Cunneen, 2010), but the figures fail to indicate how many of the crimes are committed by white men. It goes without saying that these and other exploitative by-products of patriarchy (such as, the comodification of women's bodies) insult the self worth of women, to say the least.

Although patriarchy does not necessarily engender humiliation and rage by women, *crimes by women against men* lend support to the claim that a substantial portion of the oppressed group is always humiliated by their domination (Braithwaite, 1991). Katz (1988) found that homicides by women occur, when women seem to place their self worth so exclusively on their relations with men that only their men or occasionally a female rival can press them to a *last moral stand*. Like other *women who kill* their men (Polk, n.d.), Indigenous women who kill their men tend to do so because of a direct threat to their own lives and the lives of their children, but they are in double jeopardy in terms of being over policed, criminalised and severely punished because of their double statuses as women of colour.

The plight of women who kill highlights the importance of examining the structures of patriarchy that socialise women into believing that their subordination is something natural rather than something to resent, and that unconsciously process their humiliation. This is ever more evident

when we remember that it is the *unacknowledged* shame and anger that entraps feelings of humiliated fury and consequences violence.

Republican normative theory contends that acts ought only to [be] criminalised when they threaten the dominion of citizens, and when there is no less intrusive way of protecting that dominion than criminalisation (Braithwaite, 1991, p. 41)

If we consider the republican philosophy an honourable one, and one that that may be more likely to reduce crime than retributive practice, then we may also wish to consider the message of *justice*, that we endorse in criminalising and penalising the reactive violence of women who *only* after years of sadistic punishment perpetuated against them and/or their children – kill their husbands and, in all likelihood, will never kill again. Not to mention the unintended consequences of sentencing on the children and grandmother caregivers of incarcerated women (Barnhill, 1996), in and across the generations, as is pervasive in Indigenous families (Robertson, Demosthenous & Demosthenous 2010)

## Racist societies are retributive

Racist societies are retributive societies where the *reactive* violence of the humiliated subordinate race is over policed, criminalised and severely punished, while the *proactive* violence of humiliators is rewarded with material success and medals of valour (Braithwaite 1991). In retributive societies, *violence breeds violence*. As Braithwaite (1991, p. 51) argues, '[t]hese are societies where evildoers are viewed as unworthy of respect, as enjoying no right to have their dominion protected, as worthy of humiliation'. As such, retributive societies are structurally empowering for the superordinate race of well to do's and humiliating for the subordinate race and the poor.

Retributive societies encourage over policing and grant the police the *legitimacy* to use 'whatever means necessary to do their job. And 'the job' refers to managing the blacks and the poor, that is those people who are 'visible reminders of the failures of capitalism to deliver the goods to everyone' (White, 1997, p. 113). Paradoxically, the very act of enabling the police to use force in *dishing up just deserts* initiates the need to use force more frequently (Braithwaite & Pettit, 1990).

Ironically, even though democratically elected governments may favour using retributive practices themselves they are able to discern the retributive practices of others. Indeed, they may often critic totalitarian societies, which, by definition, 'trample on the dominion of individual citizens to serve the interests of the ruling party' (Braithwaite, 1991, p. 51). However, for reasons that we need not elaborate upon, democratically elected state officials in Australia seem to ignore the fact that a *totalitarian* and *retributive kick in the guts* is 'psychobiologically' the same thing (Rossi, 1993). The problem here is that they are constantly trying to capture criminology as an additional tool for running the state (Christie, 1997)

In contemporary Australia most police value retributive practices; and have a preoccupation with policing the community. Because the police are able to intervene in the lives of ordinary citizens, and to use violence with social justification, they tend to target and humiliate the most oppressed

and vulnerable members of society. This can consequence unjustified and heavy-handed actions, as recently documented in the video recording of a police arrest on Palm Island in Queensland, Australia.

In examining the violent arrest of a young Aboriginal man, Doomadgee, we find evidence of the *recursiveness* among the micro and the macro. Specifically, we find evidence for the processes of legitimised violence in the actions of the police (brutal punching of the victim directly in the face before dragging him into the cell and leaving him to die from internal bleeding). Despite the coroner accusing the police of failing to investigate the death properly and finding that the victim should *not* have been arrested in the first place, Hurley was not convicted or disciplined over the incident and was eventually acquitted of manslaughter. We also find evidence for the way in which proactive violence is structurally *enabled* in the Police union president's interpretation of the incident. Wilkinson said,

'there is trouble on Palm Island, there always has been, and at the moment, the leaders on Palm Island are probably upset at the verdict, but generally with all the Indigenous communities, the police have an excellent relationship with the communities'.

Moreover, we find evidence for the way proactive violence is structurally *constrained* in the (recently retired) Police Commissioner's statement (Atkinson said, 'I have always acknowledged the initial investigation into the death of [first name] Doomadgee could have been handled better'). Many Australians would agree that,

[r]ather than forging respect and moral authority by engaging in peacekeeping activity and intelligent use of discretion, many such officers are treating the general public as 'the enemy', subject to continual suspicion and constant surveillance (White 1994, p. 116)

Suffice it to say, the proverbial danger in retributive societies is that there will always be those who do not suffer domination gladly; and a segment of those who retaliate with *whatever means necessary* to put an end to their to humiliation! In turning to examine Doomadgee's side of the story, we find an individual who was trapped in the *concentric cycle of racism*. This young Aboriginal man was denied dominion over his own person. He suffered domination, insult, humiliation and moral impotence, *with* an expressed awareness of shame and/or anger over being falsely arrested and beaten. In following the argument made thus far, the fact that Doomadgee's shame and anger was acknowledged should highlight that he would fight for his freedom. Indeed, Doomadgee's story is reminiscent of the histories of sensationalist killers; of mass murderers and terrorists, who suffer society's personal and social rejection until *payback time* - except for one difference they are all non-Indigenous. Why is that? Perhaps, because as Mick Dodson puts it, 'violence is not blackfella way' (relayed by Jackie Huggins). On a final retributive note, this incident serves to exemplify that it is the reactive violence of the humiliated that is targeted, criminalised and punished while the proactive violence of the humiliator is institutionalised and legitimised behind serving the needs of the community.

Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate further upon the inequities in Australia, it will be clear that racist societies like ours are inegalitarian societies that are characterised by an unequal distribution and access to the nation's wealth and power, and thereby structurally dominating and humiliating for the have-nots, and consequently criminogenic (Braithwaite, 1991)

## Implications

Braithwaite's (1991) philosophical republican analysis of the social structure of humiliation was particularly useful for examining the social and individual processes that link anger, humiliation, power and violence in racist societies like ours in Australia. It permitted an explanation of the micro-processes, the micro-interactions and the macro-structures, which were seen to simultaneously shape, enable and constrain each other. The works of Katz (1988) and psychodynamic scholars like Scheff and Retzinger (1991) lent support to the contention that the lived experiences of shame, anger and humiliation are significant contributors to racist violence. From these works, I developed my model of the *concentric cycle of racism* and graphically illustrated the process of domination – insult to self-worth – humiliation – moral impotence – self-righteousness – rage – and domination. My arguments have supported the view that the crimes of the humiliator and the crimes of the humiliated are simply different sides of the story of racism in Australia.

In concluding, while it is suggested that socially democratic practices may *even out* the inequalities of wealth and power between the racial groups here (and elsewhere), I am not suggesting that a more equitable distribution of material fortunes is the *be all and end all* panacea to peace and liberty; but it may go a long way towards it.

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# The Post Modernist Effort for the Eradication of Racism in Colombia<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** Racism, Colombia, conflict resolution, post-modernism, sociopsychological infrastructure, Political Constitution 1991, constitutional reform, cultural diversity, collective memory, ethos of conflict, collective emotional orientation.

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**Racism is a protracted conflict and an act of social violence that has both visible and invisible expressions. Due to its protracted nature, racism becomes embedded into the sociopsychological infrastructure of societies, making it very difficult to eradicate. The post-modernist approach for conflict resolution is a fundamental tool for understanding racism within a society. Moreover, it elucidates the mechanisms by which racism perpetuates itself and provides guidelines for its eradication. Colombia has been fighting for the eradication of racism since the creation of its new Political Constitution in 1991. From the conflict resolution perspective, the Political Constitution of 1991 of Colombia is a peace agreement; and all the subsequent efforts are a part of a long lasting reconciliation process among those who represent the cultural diversity of the country, the institution of the Estate and the rest of the civil society. The Ministry of Culture, and particularly its Populations Office, have systematically used the post-modernist approach in their endeavour against racism. The experience of Colombia can be of use for other geographies that in racist contexts struggle for social justice.**

## Introduction

Racism is one of the many causes that are slowly suffocating cultural diversity into extinction. Even though there is awareness of its dangers, the efforts against it arrive, more often than not, only after the situation has escalated into dramatic social crisis expressed in gruesome violence. Racism, including the invisible day to day version of it, needs to be conceptualized as the extreme danger it

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is the resumed version of the original. To access the original paper, please contact the author by email at rinaudofacundo@gmail.com.

Special thanks are due to: the Ministry of Culture of Colombia for assisting in the procurement of information; and AusAID without whom this would have not been possible.

The ideas and statements are sole responsibility of the Author and neither the Ministry of Culture of Colombia nor AusAID are accountable for them.

is, and the menace it represents for cultural diversity, the Ethnosphere and humanity. The present paper conceptualizes racism as an intractable conflict, and using the post-modernist approach for conflict resolution, analyses the mechanisms through which it is institutionalized and perpetuated. The case of Colombia and its struggle against racism is used to illustrate how this approach can be translated into actions for its eradication.

## The conflict of racism

Conflict is defined as "a confrontation between one or more parties towards incompatible or competitive means or ends" (University of Peace 2005. Pp 22) or, in a more general way, as "the experience of incompatible activities (goals, claims, beliefs, values, wishes, actions, feelings, etc.)... [that] prevents, obstructs, interferes, injures" (Coleman, 2003). On the other hand, Essed (1991, 1992, in Wodak & Reisigl 1999, p. 179) understands racism as "ideology, structure and process in which inequalities inherent in the wider social structure are related, in a deterministic way, to biological and cultural factors attributed to those who are seen as a different 'race' or 'ethnic group'". From a conflict resolution perspective; and drawing from Jeong's (2008) analysis of the role of human needs in conflicts; racism can be understood as the confrontation resulting from the incompatible experiences of one party's procurement of its basic human needs (identity, recognition and security), and its obstruction by another's party legitimization of privileges and exclusionary practices.

Racism is an act of social violence in the sense that "a society commits violence against its members when it forcibly stunts their development and undermines their well-being" (Barash & Webel 2009, pp. 8); or when it tries to do so. Violence can have three forms: direct, structural, and cultural. Direct violence is when "there is a sender, an actor who intends these consequences of violence" (Galtung 1996, pp. 2). Some examples on racist *direct violence* are racist comments and jokes; denying access to a good or service by reason of ethnic affiliation; and ethnocides. Violence that is indirect because it comes from the structure itself is *structural violence* (Galtung 2004). A legal system that does not recognize the rights of a particular group of citizens because of their ethnic affiliation; forbidding cultural practices, collective tenure of traditionally owned lands, or the autonomy of exercising traditional law; are some examples of structural violence in contexts of racism. Finally, cultural violence relates to "all of it symbolic, in religion and ideology, in language and art, in science and law, in media and education" (Galtung 1996, pp. 2). Racism through cultural violence is expressed in racist stereotypes, the invisibilization of an ethnic group in the media, the neglect to make education pertinent to the reality of an ethnic group, and aesthetics paradigms that associate certain ethnic physical traits with pejorative connotations, among others.

While racist direct violence -because it is usually tangible and undeniable- tends to obtain fast and strong political and societal opposition (at least in its more dramatic expressions), racist structural and cultural violence is, more often than not, left unattended to allow the pursuit of more "immediate" and "pressing" needs and problems. This allows its perpetuation and reproduction throughout generations and sometimes results in its escalation into social or violent crises.

Due to its protracted and deep-rooted nature, racism is, as called in conflict resolution studies, an intractable conflict. Intractable conflicts are characterized for being “recalcitrant, intense, deadlocked and difficult to resolve” (Coleman 2003 pp. 5). They are usually represented by “struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation” (Azar 1991 in Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall 2011, pp. 99); the same type of issues faced in the eradication of racism.

Not surprisingly, intractable conflict most times emerges from a “history of colonialism, ethnocentrism... or human rights abuses in the relations between the disputants” (Azar 1986 in Coleman 2003, pp. 11). After colonialism and through settlement processes, the ideologies used to detach moral and ethical constraints from the cruelty of dominance through violent means, and the narratives created to justify it, become institutionalized in the social, political and cultural structures. The institutionalization of racism assures the self perpetuation of hierarchical relations via unilateral constructions in which the dominant party defines “the criteria for what is to be considered good, just, fair and normal” (Coleman 2003, pp. 11). As Bar-Tal (2007) points out, a conflict that has endured for more than one generation entails that all subsequent generations have not known another reality but that of the conflict. This is where the post-modernist approach comes into play.

## **Sociopsychological infrastructure of racism**

Cultural diversity, throughout the wide variety of ways in which human beings make sense of their reality and interact with it, teaches us that reality itself is but a construction, not a determination. Post-modernism, in turn, emphasizes the importance of “consciousness, communication, and social interaction in the construction of meaning” (Coleman 2004, pp. 218) and states that the sense of reality (i.e. constructed meaning) of parties at conflict plays a key part, not only in how the conflict is engaged, but also in assuring its perpetuation and intractable nature.

A society that has coexisted with a protracted conflict adapts its sociopsychological infrastructure in order to cope with that conflict. The mechanisms responsible in shaping that infrastructure present particular dynamics according to each conflict’s characteristics. These mechanisms are explained in the scenario of racist conflict.

## **Collective memory**

According to Bar-Tal (2007) the collective memory creates a bridge between past and present, and has the double function of integrating new members into the society’s perception of the conflict, while at the same time providing an explanation of the present estate of the society in relationship with the *otherness*. Bar-Tal carries on explaining that the narrative constructed around the conflict is a black and white, biased depiction that fits the present society’s needs.

In a society where racism happens against part of its own population, the collective memory is narrated from the perspective of the hegemonic group as the official history. It is generally characterized by one or a mixture of the following scenarios: a) the *other* does not exist in

society's history, or its existence is so insignificant that is regarded as irrelevant, b) the actions and behaviours of the *other* in the past accounts for its present disadvantaged circumstances, or c) the *other* is responsible for society's present problems.

## **Ethos of conflict**

The ethos of conflict is a society's understanding of what the conflict is about and what its root causes are. It has the moral function to justify cultural, structural and even direct violence towards the *other*. The ethos of conflict materializes in stereotypes, as they provide explanations of why and how the *other* is "lesser".

Not surprisingly from hierarchical relations, stereotypes not only denigrate the *other*, but also praise -by sometimes explicit but generally tacit comparison- the stereotype user; thus their enticing nature as a reinforcers of positive in-group identity. Jeong (2008, pp. 75), explaining through attribution theory how stereotypes work, states that with them "the causes of behavior are relegated either to an actor's basic disposition or external circumstances". In this dualistic manner, all negative behaviors or perceived negative characteristics of the discriminated *other* are explained by reason of its basic disposition ("its nature"); while any virtuous behavior "is seen more in terms of situational causes than the actor's inner qualities or good intentions, thus taking away credit" (Ibid.). Similarly, any negative behavior by an individual or group of individuals is extrapolated as intrinsic characteristics of the entire group. As a result the *other's* "undesirable behavior is often over-attributed to group characteristics, but is under-attributed to difficulties in the environment" (Ibid.). The exact opposite is applied to in-group members.

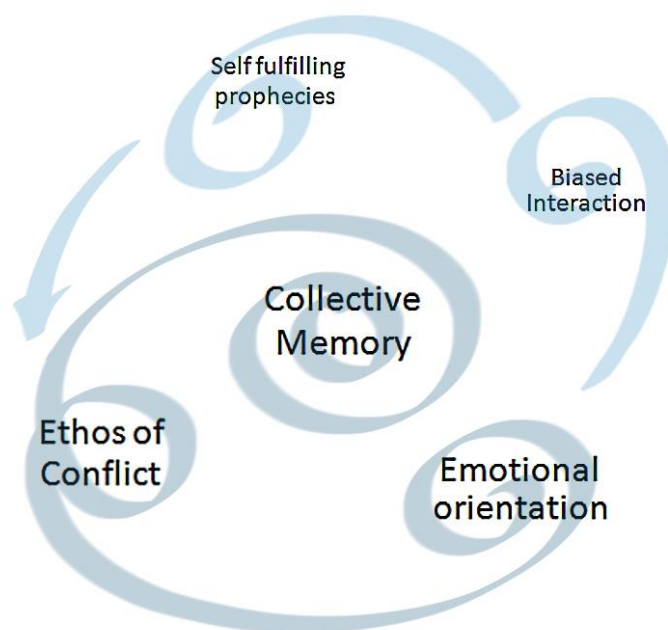
The latter relates to how in-group wrongdoings of the past are perceived in the collective memory, for they are usually explained as related to or consequences of external factors outside the group's control. Taking away the hegemonic group's responsibility of past wrongdoings deters future scenarios of reconciliation, because accepting responsibility is necessary for genuine regret, and regret is a building block of reconciliation (Mellor, Bretherton & Firth 2007)

## **Collective emotional orientations**

The collective emotional orientations are part of the cultural framework of a group, and consist of shared emotional experiences toward the *other*. Very commonly, cultural violence in a context of racism is associated with feelings of fear or hatred towards that *other*. Allport (1954 in Bar-Tal 2007, pp. 12) explains that hate has behavioural implications as it is an "enduring organization of aggressive impulses toward a person or class of persons. Since it is composed of habitual bitter feelings and accusatory thoughts, it constitutes a stubborn structure in the mental-emotional life of the individual". Jeong (2008) develops the idea and explains that the feeling of hatred affects social identity, engenders hostile behaviour by ethical legitimization of violent acts and promotes the display of superiority and demeaning behaviour towards the *other*; ultimately distorting the reception of reality and thus cognitive functioning in the bearers of hate (Jeong 2008). The receiver of hate, in turn, usually responds with more hate, fear and/or anger.

## **Institutionalization and perpetuation of racism**

The three elements of the sociopsychological infrastructure are interdependent to each other in a causality chain that reinforces itself as a conflict spiral. The tendency in relationships of racism is that the parties (both victim and perpetrator) frame any interaction in the preconceived schema of what is expected, which leads to self fulfilling prophecies (Jeong 2008, pp. 160). The general processes can be appreciated in the following graph.



## **The post-modernist response for the eradication of racism: the Case of Colombia**

One of the key aspects in resolving a conflict is the transformation of the relationships between the disputing parties (Lederach 2005; Kelman 2010). The post-modernist approach focuses on the de-institutionalization of racist structures (Gray, Coleman & Putman 2007) and the disruption of mechanisms that perpetuate racism.

The use of a post-modernist approach has been evident in Colombia since the National Constitution was changed in 1991. The creation of the new Constitution was the result of a long history of social struggle for the reclamation of rights in which many sectors of the society, including ethnic groups, participated. The post-modernist nature of its repercussions in the eradication of racism was most likely more the result of perceived needs than a theoretical effort. Nevertheless, in more recent years the Ministry of Culture of Colombia, particularly the Populations Office, has used the approach in a more systematic manner.

It is very important to stress that the progress made in Colombia in this regard is mainly the product of 500 years of cultural resistance and social struggle from those who represent the diversity of the

country. Lorenzo Muelas<sup>2</sup>, indigenous from the *Pueblo Misak*, in reference to indigenous participation in the creation of the new constitution stated:

*"... our achievements in the Constituyente were not a gift from the Government; it was the harvest of what we planted with pain, tears, jail and the death of many of our leaders"*

In Sanches and Molina, 2010, pp. 327

Due to the scope of this investigation, the history that has lead to the present state of affairs will not be included<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, a brief description on the nature and extent of cultural diversity in Colombia will be developed as a general context.

## **Cultural diversity in Colombia**

Colombia is a multicultural a pluriethnic Estate. Its rich cultural diversity is the result of historical and cultural processes that began with the arrival of its first inhabitants, the indigenous peoples, and their long lasting process of cultural adaptation to the differentiated territorial contexts of the country. That original diversity was enriched by colonization processes from Europe and the arrival of Romani (gypsy) populations that accompanied them. Furthermore, the African Diaspora resulted in the arrival of different ethnic groups, mainly from the west coast of Africa. The historical nation building process, and the interaction of the ethnic and non-ethnic population of the country, shaped the diverse cultural cartography that characterizes Colombia today.

Colombia contains 93 indigenous groups (DANE<sup>4</sup> Census 2005), three differentiated afro-descendant groups (Afros, Palenqueros and Raizales) and a culturally strong community of Romanies which live in urban areas. They are the exponents of 68 native languages (and one foreign language, the Romany) and an amalgam of cosmologies, uses and customs that manifests themselves in countless expressions of tangible and intangible culture. The ethnic distribution of the Colombian population can be observed in the following graph.

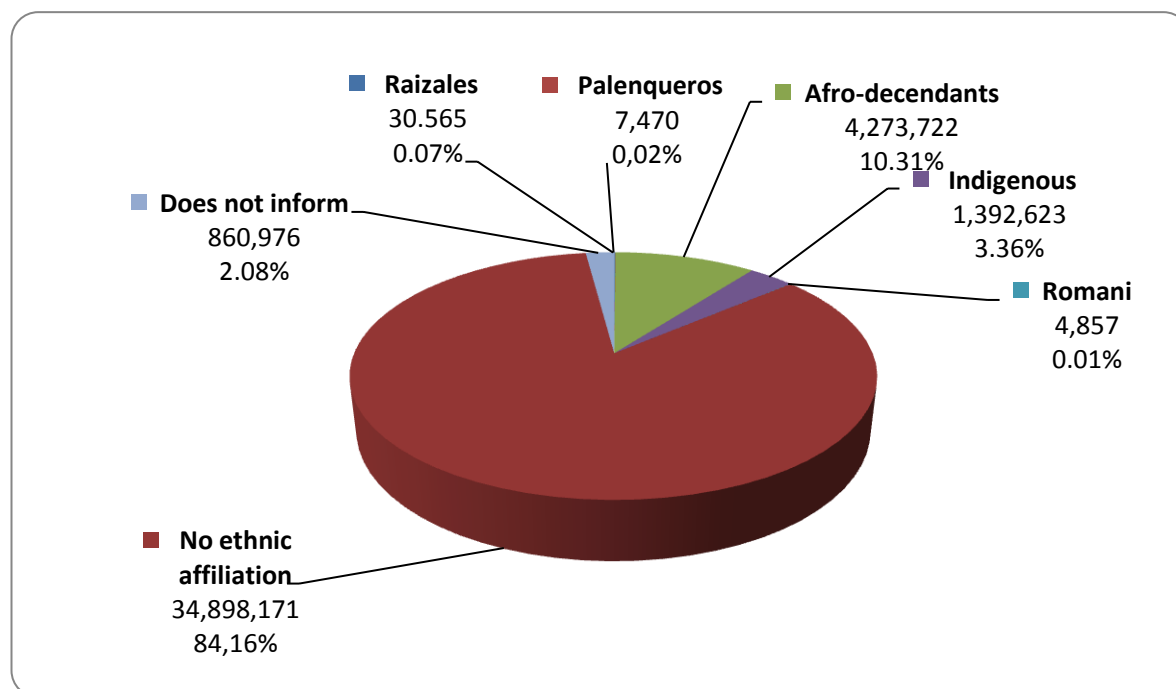
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<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado was a key member in the creation of the new constitution. The people who were involved in the effort are known as *Constituyentes*. He was also one of the first indigenous person to be a senator of the republic and has been elected in different occasions as Governor of his *Cabildo*.

<sup>3</sup> More information in Sanches and Molina, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Departamento Nacional de Estadística – DANE: National Office of Statistics

## Ethnic distribution of the population



Source: DANE Census 2005

## The National Constitution of 1991: a peace agreement

*"The National Constitution, ruler of rules, mother of all laws, finally and for the first time in the history of the country, recognizes our rights by proclaiming Colombia as a diverse nation, multiethnic, pluri-cultural".*

Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado – *Pueblo Misak*

*"The most transcendental event in contemporary indigenous history is, without a doubt, the creation of the Carta Política [National Constitution] of 1991, in which for the first time the indigenous peoples participated".*

Sanchez and Molina, 2010, pp. 295

Although not officially recognized as such, the National Constitution of 1991 acted as a peace agreement between ethnic groups<sup>5</sup> and the Estate. A peace agreement not solutions in content "but proposed negotiated processes, which if followed, will change the expression of the conflict and provide avenues for redefining relationships" (Lederach 2005, Loc<sup>6</sup>. 979). In this sense, a peace agreement represents the guidelines through which the conflict will be resolved. It is a point of departure, not an end in itself (Lederach 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Unlike indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants and Romanies were not fully represented in the creation of the New Constitution. The recognition of Afro-Colombians rights as ethnic group was another hard and long struggle that gave fruits in the Law 70 of 1993. For the Romanies was the Decree 2957 of 2010. Although the Constitution did not fully recognize all their rights, these latter legal developments were based on it. For more information of Afro-Colombians reclamation of rights see Arocha 1998.

<sup>6</sup> E-book. Instead of "pages", it has "locations".

The Constitution was a breakthrough in relation to recognition and protection of collectively own territories, recognition of traditional law and authorities, autonomy and self-governance, among others. In relation to the conflict of racism the following two articles are central:

**Article 7:** The Estate recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Colombian Nation.

**Article 13:** All people are born free and equal in the eyes of the law, and will receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and will be entitled to the same rights, liberties and opportunities with no discrimination of gender or race... The Estate will promote the condition for the realization of an equalitarian society.

By means of declaring the nation as pluri-ethnic and multicultural, the new constitution created a unifying mythos, a national supra identity that was not based on the denial of its cultural diversity – as before- but on the embracement of it. It created a mythos of “unity through the preservation of ethnic diversity” (Arocha 1998, pp. 71). Following Global tendencies related to the conceptualization of diversity, there was a fundamental shift “between regarding difference as a problem, a threat, a nuisance, or an insurmountable barrier, and viewing difference –any difference- as a opportunity” (Burbles & Rice 1991, pp. 1991)

Moving from the legal discussion, the *Constituyente* Lorenzo Muelas gave the following reasons for the need to incorporate the proposals from the indigenous populations into the new Constitution.

- To allow indigenous peoples, once freed from moorings and oppression that constrains us, to initiate with endeavor the path of development that was truncated to us.
- To reconcile the different pueblos and cultures of Colombia after 500 years of confrontation, and hence plant the foundations of solidarity and mutual collaboration.
- Because they [the rights] can become the fraternal link between Abya-Yala<sup>7</sup> and the world.
- To guarantee by our existence and future progress, the continuity of our contributions to Colombia and humanity...

*Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado, 1991. (In Sánchez and Molina 2010, pp. 299)*

The New Constitution of 1991, opened the path for reconciliation by creating the guidelines for the *incorporation of pluralism in the collective memory* and the *transformation of polarized collective identities*. Additionally, by proclaiming the protection of the cultural diversity as the responsibility of the Estate, it was possible to elicit appropriate responses through the development of specialized public policy. This is how in 2008 the Population Office of the Ministry of Culture was born. Following, is a brief description of how, from a post-modernist perspective, the Population Office has developed those guidelines traced by the Constitution.

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<sup>7</sup> The American Continent.

## **Incorporation of pluralism in the collective memory**

The incorporation of pluralism in the collective memory is part of what, in reconciliation processes, is called “understanding the patterns of the present” (Lederach 2005) or “coming to terms with the past” (Wessells & Bretherton 2000). Particularly, from the post-modernist approach and in relation with racism, these processes aim to fill the gaps of history, to replace biased and linear narratives for multidimensional ones where “many things are true at once” (Wilmot & Hocker 2007). The aim is for a true understanding of the processes of the past and how they are reflected in the present conditions of those discriminated against. This, of course, implies recognition of wrongdoings and acceptance of responsibility.

With this aim, the Populations Office developed a program called *Reescritura de la Historia* (Rewriting History) under the following premise: “Only by recognizing each other as a collective project, we can build a common future for us all” (Ministry of Culture 2012a). The program, whose objective was “positioning in the country the topic of diversity and pluralism from the voice of history” (Ibid.), included the compilation of historical documents, development of historical research and academic activities, and revitalization of local memory with an emphasis on women histories. The program was materialized in four main projects and two supporting activities.

The program gave birth to the book *Rutas de Libertad: 500 Años de Travesía* (Liberty Routes: a 500 Year Journey) which was the product of a colossal, joint effort where thirty historians participated under the coordination of consecrated academics and a poet. The book brings to light the hidden history of Afro-Colombians, their social struggles, and never ending cultural resistance; their heroism of the fight for liberation and the processes through which they have contributed to the construction of the Colombian Nation. The promotional text of the book -in which it is evident the effort for reconciling the Nation under a unifying mythos- states: “to know the book today is an indispensable duty for the promotion of connivance and the national sentiment; and, to make possible the ideal of democracy” (Ministry of Culture 2012b). The book was distributed through all public libraries of Colombia, Universities, Research Centers and schools. The book was also the spinal column of the theater play called *Esta Negrura Mia* (This Blackness of Mine). Aimed for a less academic, wider audience, the play used the dramatic arts to elaborate on the principles of the book.

The Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Library was a reconstruction of history from the literary arts. Released on the commemoration of the 200 years of Independence from Spain, it included 18 essays, letters, and literary writings from outstanding indigenous and Afro-Colombian writers of the last 200 years (Ministry of Culture 2012c). This collection was distributed among all public libraries of the country.

Other complementary projects are the *Slave Route* and the *Afro-Colombian Documentation Centre*.

## Transforming polarized collective identities

These initiatives aim to create a perception of the *other* based in the understanding of its characteristics, values, interests and motivation for action. In a context of racism and multiculturalism, the aim is to shift preconceived images of the *other*, avoid recurrence of self-fulfilling prophecies, and transform the relationship itself by making parties acknowledge that their perception of reality is fundamentally different. This understanding and acceptance of the existence and simultaneity of differentiated cultural schemas –i.e. realities, is in fact a task of creating a new filter of interaction. A filter not based on stereotypes and preconceived images of the *other*, but on the concept of cultural relativism where moral and ethical codes, as well as the aesthetic values, and communication styles, are intrinsically valid in the cultural system in which they arise. Thus, the objective is not that of replacing negative stereotypes for positive ones. The objective is to bring a higher degree of objectivity into the perceived reality of the *other*.

Since the core of the transformation of polarized identities is the culture, the institutional mission of the Ministry of Culture is the perfect niche for the development of activities in this line of action. This is how the Populations Office created the program *Vizibilization of Ethnic Groups*, whose objective is to counteract the reproduction of stereotypes by providing opportunities of interaction with a richer and more objective depiction of the cultural reality of Colombia and the peoples that represent it (Ministry of Culture 2012e). The logo used for the promotion of these activities was built on the notion that there are many Colombias within Colombia, and that that diversity fills the Nation with richness (see logo below). The activities include the production of accurate information, facilitating access to that information and creating spaces for direct interaction between ethnic groups and the rest of the civil society.

### Logo Colombia, Colombias



Some of the projects associated to this initiative are: *Especial Expositions*, which uses the work of internationally renowned photographers for the production of expositions that itinerate through the main plazas of Colombia (Ministry of Culture 2012f); *Cartography of Diversity* involves the official recreation of the perceived territory through maps based on the cultural diversity of the nation (Ministry of Culture 2012g); and *Forgotten Commemorations*, which rescues the iconographic dates associated to national and international cultural diversity, and creates spaces for their celebration where all the society of Colombia collide.

## Eliciting contextually appropriate responses

Based on the premise that every conflict is unique and each is associated with a very particular sociopsychological infrastructure, the post-modernist approach places privileged importance on valuing knowledge and strategies developed by those that coexist within a conflict. By using participatory and empowering techniques, post-modernist approach builds, from local capabilities, strategies that are capable of responding to each set of particular needs, dynamics and characteristics.

The Population Office, in order to imbed its national policies with the flexibility and adaptability required to respond properly to the rich diversity that characterizes the Colombian territory, has incorporated two approaches into its endeavor. On the one hand it works with the public officers in charge of the attention to ethnic groups in each of the 32 *departamentos* (territories) of Colombia (Ministry of Colombia 2012i), to use public institutions against structural racist violence and to break the cycle of racist perpetuation. On the other hand, the Population Office works with grass roots organizations by supporting and strengthening activities associated to increasing representation and recognition through cultural processes.

## Conclusions

Colombia is currently living a tension between new and old sociopsychological infrastructures and relationships. Although the process of eradicating racism is slow, simply beginning the process is great leap. The fact that racism is neither conceptualized by the Colombian Estate as a conflict nor its eradication as a reconciliation process hampers effectiveness in the efforts. This limits the reach of the peace agreement, the Constitution of 1991, which in some ways has remained an ideal written on paper, but it has not materialized into a reality of social justice.

However the progress Colombia has made since 1991 is not a small one. The new Constitution and the effort to eradicate racial structural and cultural violence have produced other legal developments in tune with the new multicultural and pluri-ethnic official narrative. A anti racism law was passed mid 2012 in which racist acts can be punished by jail and/or in economic penalties. The Native Languages Law –which was also developed in recent years- protects the right of ethnic group for the use of their languages and bestows responsibility on the Estate for their protection. Additionally, International laws of indigenous peoples have been systematically ratified, the most important ones being the Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Declaration of the United Nations for the Rights of the Indigenous peoples.

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# From Covert to Overt: The Role of Crisis in Transforming Racism

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**Keywords:** covert racism, crisis, Infeartainment, fear, fear management.

Narayan Gopalkrishnan is an internationally recognized academic with extensive experience in Australia and overseas, working in universities, NGOs and the private sector over the last 30 years. He lectures at James Cook University in the areas of community work, working with diverse communities, and mental health. Narayan was formerly the Founding Director of the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development, an academic research center of the University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia, which focused on research and development relating to multiculturalism and community development. Narayan's teaching and research interests relate to Community Development, Community and Ecological Sustainability, Cultural Diversity and Multiculturalism, Social Determinants of Health and Well Being, Integrated Medicine and Complementary Therapies, and he has published widely in these areas.

**Over the last few decades community awareness and social pressure have ensured that overt racism and racist actions have become relatively less in number in many countries across the world. The majority of racism that impacts adversely on individuals and communities today, especially in countries like Australia, is far more subtle, every day and covert, making it very difficult to identify or to challenge. However, this can change dramatically in times of *crisis*.**

**Crisis in society can be caused by a number of social, political, environmental and economic factors including dramatic and immediate ones like 9/11, or longer term ones like the Global Financial Crisis. They all have significant effects in terms of intense distress within individuals and communities and adverse impacts on people's abilities to cope with life. They also bring out the best and the worst in human responses. On the one hand, environmental disasters like the Brisbane Floods of 2011 were followed by widespread scenes of community solidarity and mutual support. On the other hand, crisis situations like 9/11 were followed by a rapid transformation of covert racism into overt racism and expressed in actions that impacted very adversely on minority groups in society. This paper examines the nature and causes of this transformation and excavates some of its impacts on the community. It further looks at implications of this in terms of developing effective responses to racism in crisis situations.**

## Introduction

The aspect of racism that gets the most attention in society and the media is most often the direct and overt aspect of it, especially that which involves physical violence or open discrimination that can be easily identified. This overt aspect of racism was certainly very dominant in the past, as in the case of the official use of the White Australia Policy and in the treatment of Indigenous

Australians (Hollinsworth, 2006; Scott Poynting & Mason, 2007). In the last few decades, however, there has been a transformation based on social pressure, where overt racism and easily identifiable racist actions have become relatively few. Holdaway and O'Neill (2007) point to this in their research with the UK constabulary to argue that open expressions of racism have largely disappeared, to be replaced by covert forms of racism and hidden institutional forms of racism. They also discuss the ways in which private spaces within organisations, as well as the discretionary use of rules, can form avenues of the expression of covert racism.

The majority of racism that impacts adversely on individuals and communities today is far more subtle and covert, making it very difficult to identify (Coates, 2008). Even the language of racism has changed, with overt expressions of bias against particular groups replaced by selective ascribing of negative behaviours to the same groups and denigration based on this (H Babacan, 2008). Covert racism is also very difficult to challenge through formal channels due to its hidden nature and difficulty of identification. The everyday and hidden form of covert racism, when taken together with the fact that it is relatively safe for the perpetrator to commit acts of covert racism, leads to this form of racism being a major part of the racism experienced today (Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007). However, this balance between overt and covert racism can change dramatically in times of crisis as these can provide a moral setting for racism to be expressed openly and without fear of retribution covert racism can easily turn into overt racism.

## **Crisis**

Crisis in society can happen in many ways and can be caused by a number of social, political, environmental and economic factors. These can include factors that impact in immediate and direct ways as with the 9/11 attacks in New York and with the 2011 Tsunami in Japan, or they may impact over an extended period of time as with the Global Financial Crisis or Climate Change. They all share in common their effects, as for example in the effects of natural disasters, in terms of intense distress within individuals and communities and adverse impacts on people's abilities to cope with life (Bassilios, Reifels, & Pirkis, 2012).

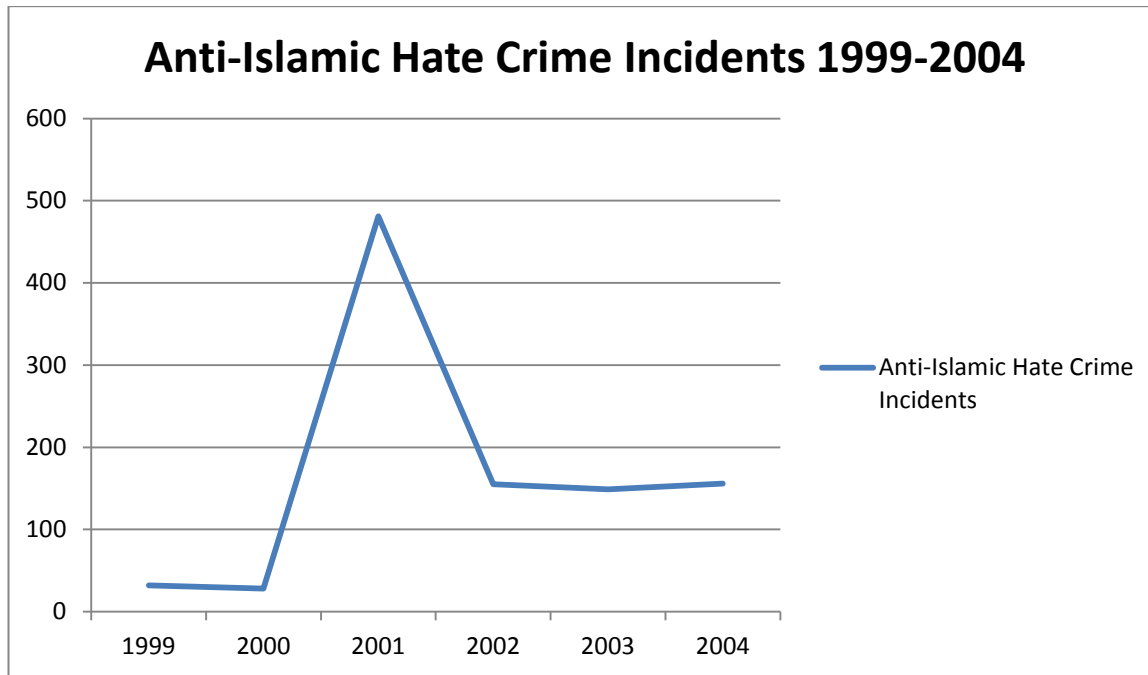
The idea of crisis goes back to classical Greece in which the term was used in the sense of reaching a crucial point that would tip the scales and, as noted by Koselleck and Richter (2006, p. 361), the concept of crisis was applied to 'life-deciding alternatives meant to answer questions about what is just or unjust, what contributes to salvation or damnation, what furthers health or brings death. It could express long-term changes as well as occasional outbursts, apocalyptic expectations as well as sceptical fears'. Chun (2011) contends that crisis is a condensation of time that demands a decision and is intertwined often with political events and catastrophe which are linked with immediate subject-less events about death and the failure of technology. Moreover, Kosseleck and Richter (2006) argue that, based on the frequency of the use of crisis as indicating actuality, the modern period can be considered the age of crises. As they argue, crisis is no longer a certain event but is malleable, not posing unavoidable, harsh and non-negotiable alternatives but has been transformed to fit the uncertainties of whatever might be favoured at a given moment.

Beck (2009) discusses contemporary societies as risk societies. However risks cannot be reduced to objective facts and/or probabilities but rather are politically, socially and historically determined (Haines, Sutton, & Platania-Phung, 2008). The functioning of nation states in the globalised 21st century brings with it a challenges for democracy and an increasingly non-committed disillusioned constituency where neo-liberal ideologies and transnational capital has free reign without adherence to human rights frameworks (Wallerstein, 2005). At the centre of attention today are "manufactured uncertainties" which:

... are distinguished by the fact that they are dependent on human decisions, created by society itself, immanent to society and thus externalizable, collectively imposed and thus individually unavoidable; their perceptions break with the past, break with experienced risks and institutionalized routines; they are incalculable, uncontrollable and in the final analysis no longer (privately) insurable (climate change, for example). Threat, risk and manufactured uncertainty are put in relation to the past by narrative means (sagas, historical events, biographies, etc.), perspectivized through stories (myths); threats are "humanized," "played out," made "conceivable" and thereby socially meaningful (Beck, 2009:293).

Crisis has a disempowering and crippling effect on individuals, families and communities (Bassilios, Reifels, & Pirkis, 2012). It can lead to the feeling of a need for a stable supportive power to enable survival. As Chun (2011) maintains, crisis does not lead to the experience of responsibility, rather it induces moments of fear and terror, as the term 'panic button' illustrates, from which we want to be rescued by others, whether it be by governments, corporations or technology. This normalises states of exception as more common and these call for extraordinary measures for moments of undecideability. It creates a sense of 'urgency' with security being presented as being 'essential' for 'self-defence' (Humphrey, 2013). Chun (2011) further argues that crises are not accidental to a culture focused on safety, they are its *raison d'être*. She claims that exceptional crises justify states of exception that undo the traditional democratic separation of executive and legislative branches. Citizens are willing to endure more intervention as result of anxieties created by crisis, so much so that they are willing to trade-off civil liberties and more coercive measures in return for security and safety (McCulloch, 2006).

Crises are times when the good and the bad sides of human nature can emerge. As an example, an environmental disaster like the Brisbane Floods of 2011 was followed by widespread scenes of community solidarity and mutual support. These were portrayed by the media as heroic efforts of rescue and warm feelings of community (Moore, 2011). On the other hand, crisis in society is a time when people are intensely stressed and fearful and easily swayed into the idea of finding a suitable scapegoat to blame for their distress. It is a time when the dark side of human society can emerge in the form of overt and often violent incidents of racism. For example, crisis situations like 9/11 were followed by a rapid transformation of covert racism into overt racism and expressed in actions that impacted very adversely on minority groups in society. The sudden increase in the anti-Islamic hate crime incidents in the United States of America following 9/11 is presented in the following table as an example of this form of response to crisis.



Source: US Federal Bureau of Investigation Hate Crime Statistics Annual Reports 1999-2004

As is clearly visible, the sharp spike in the level of hate crimes in 2001 is followed by a reduction that however stabilized at a level far higher than that prior to 2001. Further, it is very likely that the overall figures of hate crimes across many countries are far more as there is manifest and huge underreporting of such occurrences to official authorities (Scott Poynting & Mason, 2007). An Australian report based on a study conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission on the discriminatory practices towards Arab and Muslim Australians has also highlighted that hostile acts of verbal abuse and physical violence towards Arabs and Muslims dramatically increased after 9/11 (HREOC, 2004). In a survey of Australians of Arab and Muslim background in 2003 for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, Poynting and Noble (2004) found that two thirds of their respondents had personally experienced an increase in 'racism, abuse or violence' since 9/11: one third responded 'a bit more'; one third 'a lot more'. Only about one fifth of respondents reported no increase in personal experiences of racism, abuse or violence since around 2001. Some 93% of survey respondents believed there had been an increase in racism, abuse and violence directed against their ethnic or religious community; with 64% reporting 'a lot more' (S. Poynting & Noble, 2004). The literature clearly points to the major issues of fear and hatred that are centred around crises and impact particularly on minority groups in society.

## Infertainment, Racism and Hatred

Crisis is a time when the fear that people feel can be used by powerful individuals in society to further gather power to themselves by turning people against each other (Escobar, 2009). Leaders from the formal or informal political systems can use fear as a tool to strengthen their power bases and draw in-groups together. Robert Menzies, former Prime Minister of Australia spoke about this in 1942 as:

*Fear has not only been a large and deadly element in international relations. It has also been a recognized and potent instrument of domestic policy. Indeed, a powerful case might be made out for the view that the emotion of fear is the most significant of all emotions on the field of politics* (Menzies R. G. cited in Lawrence, 2006, p. 18).

While fear is a powerful force in itself, it has become an even more significant force in the last few decades with the rapid spread of the reach of the media and its sophisticated ability to spread messages quickly and effectively through the use of technology (Doane, 1990). Fear in this context has become both a way of channelling people's stress and anxiety as well as a way of entertaining them in the process. I have developed the concept of *Infeartainment* as a term that brings together many of these elements of the use of fear.

Infeartainment represents the use of fear by the powerful to contain the population while also providing them with entertainment as a form of distraction. It involves a set of processes set within a narrative framework and ensures compliance while also identifying visible targets to focus fear on. Infeartainment relies on misdirection as a tool to be used on behalf of the powerful in society and provides the moral framework within which the use of political and social controls as well as violence can be justified. Infeartainment depends significantly on the power of the media to operate through, and uses carefully constructed language towards its ends (N Gopalkrishnan, 2007)

Infeartainment represents the use of fear, often in racist ways, by the powerful to consolidate their power bases while also providing them with entertainment as a form of distraction, something that is easily related to the use of the Roman Circuses during the decline of the Roman Empire. The narratives incorporated into Infeartainment help to create a moral climate in which overt acts of racism can take place with impunity, as exemplified by the experience of people of Islamic background post 9/11 (Gopalkrishnan 2007). Furedi (2011), in the context of what he calls competitive scaremongering, asserts that the success of these narratives has little to do with the actual intensity of the alleged threat and more to do with the ability of the scaremonger to resonate with contemporary cultural values, representing fear utilized as a cultural resource. He argues that there has been a massive increase in campaigns and crusades built on fear over the past quarter of a century.

Infeartainment can be used effectively to produce the emotion of hatred (Escobar, 2009). In contrast to the previously cited quote by Robert Menzies' focussing on fear as the most significant emotion, hatred according to Adolf Hitler is the only stable emotion binds together a multitude of human beings and turns them into an obedient collective (1926 speech cited in Kershaw, 1998, p. 287). Escobar outlines the mechanisms of fear turning into hatred:

Through the stories of the press, and the images of the television, the difficulties, contradictions, and conflicts of social and political life are subjected to a "virtual" process of simplification. They are recounted and interpreted in terms of a schema, a commonplace perception that turns them into a scapegoating mechanism. For readers and viewers, their

own problems, great or small, appear as the results of a conspiracy whose perpetrators belong in the pre-eminent categories of the guilty: migrants, Islamicists, "ethnic criminals," the destitute (Escobar, 2009, p. 305).

Lawrence (2006:2) argues that fear continues to fuel cycles of worry in Australia at a time when the country has never been safer, with increased life expectancy, reduced child mortality, lessened civil strife and moderate murder levels. Discourses of the nation and patriotism are used in the context of fear and racism, where notions of cultural diversity are seen as a threat to patriotism and the nation and racism is almost normalised (Al-Natour, 2010). Resort to fear politics has facilitated and promoted new racisms in Australia (H. Babacan, Gopalkrishnan, & Babacan, 2009). Racism is powerful in its capacity to generate fear of 'others', a phenomenon that is widely understood as being a powerful tool for governments and corporations by which to shape public discourse and behaviours (N Gopalkrishnan, 2005). The worst form of this has been seen in the past in the form of the rise of the Nazis on the basis of race hatred but elements of it can be identified in much of the language used by the powerful even today. As the anthropologist Desmond Morris expressed it, 'Nothing ties the in-group bonds than an out-group threat', a process that really becomes a problem for the out-group used as the common enemy (Morris, 1969, p. 33).

Whether a Sikh cabdriver in Cairns or a Muslim woman wearing a hijab in Sydney, this use of Infertainment has significant impacts on minority communities in society that are visibly different, as they are often the easiest to be identified in the public spaces and also the ones who are often chosen as the scapegoats to blame. In multicultural Australia, the use of Infertainment is a major threat to social cohesion and the stability of the country. It is particularly a source of threat in times of crisis, when individual and group stress can be turned towards the politics of hate, picking on the visibly different groups as a target (Gopalkrishnan 2007).

Infertainment plays out also in the use of language about the target population. Steuter and Wills (2010) identify that the public can disregard the processes of the law based on war-like, fear driven, and inappropriate language. They argue that the language used often in this context comprises a set of metaphors which represent the enemy as animals, particularly noxious, verminous, or pestilential animals, or as diseases, especially spreading and metastatic diseases like cancers or viruses, all of which allows for the establishment of the state of 'exception'. They suggest that the dehumanization involved in this use of language has fuelled the kind of prisoner abuse documented at Abu Ghraib. In times of crises, standards for what is socially acceptable and not-acceptable become altered. Mulinari and Neergaard (2012) suggest that violent acts are carried out more frequently in times when there is an opportunity structure that symbolically acknowledges, legitimizes, and supports the world-view at the core of these actions. That is, normalization of societal discourses opens the door for, and legitimizes the ideas behind acts of violence.

There are numerous examples of racialized and hatred based use of fear in recent times. The rise in hate crimes in the United States is one example that has already been presented. In its study of bias against Arabs and Muslims in the Australian media since 9/11, the Anti-Discrimination Board of New

South Wales (ADB) found that over the previous 18 months, debates in the media about September 11, the international 'war on terror', the prospect of US-led attacks on Iraq, the Tampa dispute, Australia's policies regarding asylum seekers, and the ongoing debates about law and order in Sydney, had the cumulative effect of generating a 'moral panic' in Australia (ADBNSW 2003 cited in Poynting & Perry, 2007). The Federal elections in 2001 are a specific example of the use of Infertainment towards political ends where asylum-seekers were a primary target of the language of fear in the media and in the words used by political leaders and this has been delineated at some length in a prior publication (Gopalkrishnan, 2006)

Hate-motivated vilification and violence can only flourish in an enabling environment that includes the use of Infertainment and targeting of minority groups by powerful people in society. It becomes extremely urgent at such times for effective responses to be implemented that present a counter-narrative and defuse the potential for violence. Some of these responses are discussed in the next section.

## Responses

Diverse stakeholder groups are responsible for developing effective responses to racism in crisis situations. Crisis can be viewed as an opportunity or a threat and some examples of the differing reactions in communities have been discussed earlier. Leadership at Community, State and National levels can play a key role in terms of determining this response. If they turn to Infertainment the chances of violence in the community will be dramatically increased. Leaders have to avoid the use of Infertainment at all costs even if there is the possibility of political gain. Further, determined and immediate responses have to be made if overt incidents of racism are detected during or after a crisis, responses that deal with the problem at many levels and engage with as many people as possible. If we do not respond appropriately in times of crisis, the fabric of multicultural Australia can be badly damaged. However, if we respond appropriately, these times of crisis are those that will bring the nation together and enable us to build a better society.

While a significant amount is expected of the nation-state, it is in paradoxical roles as manager of community relations on the one hand and perpetrator of the racialised policy on the other. National identity is based on selective memory and often accompanied by the use of fear to unify disparate communities and Bulmer and Solomos alert us that:

These fears can result in the defense of a cultural identity slipping into nationalism or racism: the nationalist affirmation of one group over another ...it is a matter of the relative power of different groups to define their own identities, and the ability to mobilise these definitions through the control of cultural institutions (Bulmer & Solomos, 1998, pp. 827-828).

In the post-9/11 era, there is a greater emphasis by nation states to achieve cohesiveness in the face of perceived threats to nationhood. Globally, there is strong new dynamics of securitization, coupled with the changing politics of national belonging. These are part of rhetoric of global governance measures, interconnected to fear, insecurity and control (Babacan & Babacan, 2008). However, using blame and fear as a political tool undermines the fabric of a cohesive society as well

as denies the key role that pluralism and social inclusiveness play in building collective belonging (Crowley & Hickman, 2008).

Moreover, Coppola (2009) alerts us that in times of crises the most important thing to manage is fear itself. He asserts that controlling public fear is a public safety responsibility but fear management must be supported by the Federal government to be effective and that capabilities in this regard must be developed. Coppola also touches on the role of the media and the drive for different information which may or may not be beneficial to manage crises. He argues that the media needs to be assisted to act responsibly and to ensure that during crisis public safety information reaches a wide audience. Similarly Newman (2007) identifies that the media sets the terms for the public debate and can provide the stories and material to justify prejudices, presenting them as accurate and independent. The author suggests that developing a well-informed and educational public relations message may assist in more positive media reporting. Steuter (2010) argues for a more emancipatory media framing as this can help formulate solutions to what seem like intractable conflicts rather than framing conflicts as inevitable because they emerge from fundamental and essential difference. A critical and self-aware media can also help reduce the dominance of rumour, misinformation, and propaganda and moderating conflict.

Poynting and Perry (2007) caution that the *failure* to engage in public discourse can also leave groups vulnerable during times of crisis. Silence, as well as speech, can effectively render victimised groups impotent; excluding them from protections afforded others. Both acts of commission and omission raise questions about the particular groups' legitimacy and place in society; in some cases, they explicitly define their 'outsider' status. Strong systems which enable active citizen participation in public debates and inclusion in democratic process for communities that are affected become critical in times of crises. Kenny (2011b) argues that the state is a site of struggle and a contested terrain. In this respect, the state is a site for social struggle and factors such as ethnicity, class and gender become important in securing legitimacy, resources and support. It is also a site for struggle to ensure appropriate responses in the face of social crises. This means that ensuring that the government representatives with whom the public frequently comes into contact at the time of crisis are well informed and trained to respond to fears and concerns constructively, including training in the use of appropriate language as this sets the frame for public discourse (Newman, 2007).

And finally, as Newman (2007) points out, small-scale local activity can aid considerably in challenging messages of fear, using trusted public professionals such as doctors or teachers. Newman argues that these trusted groups often come into contact with the public on an individual basis, and ensuring that they have accurate information about key issues such as immigration and asylum can play a strong role in influencing people and act as a positive communication strategy. Empowering approaches can build resilience of communities and individuals in the face of crises and community development approaches need to be adopted in these situations (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Kenny, 2011a).

## Conclusion

This paper examined the impacts of crisis on societies. Crisis results in fear which can be portrayed as a risk to society. If this fear is harnessed in racialised terms then it focus on hatred and result in targeting of particular groups in very overt ways. Under conditions of fear, covert expressions of racism can metamorphose into overt racism and can be expressed in acts of violence that can have devastating consequences for the broader society. Often respect for diversity is diminished and there is a change in what is acceptable behaviour and treatment.

While a range of strategies may be adopted to address particular events, there needs to be a specific focus on fear, particularly fear of difference. How well a society copes in times of crisis is strongly related to the strength of democracy and pluralism. Therefore, in the long term there needs to be an emphasis on the leadership, focus on the messages being disseminated in the media and also through the public faces of the public institutions, civil society agencies and other agencies to strongly uphold democratic traditions and respect for diversity and difference. History has demonstrated that each crisis can set society back and have detrimental impacts for everyone.

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# Local Community Involvement in Reconciliation

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**Keywords:** reconciliation, local communities.

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**Over the twenty year history of the Australian reconciliation movement, one of the critical elements of this movement has been the involvement of local communities in the reconciliation movement. This paper illustrates the importance of local community involvement in the reconciliation movement through analysing the Gippsland region in south-eastern Australia. The paper firstly illustrates the level of ignorance and racism towards Indigenous peoples and issues that exists among the wider Gippsland community. The paper secondly discusses a number of examples of local community involvement in reconciliation that illustrates the efforts being made by many Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Gippsland to combat the ignorance and racism that exists in the wider community. These examples address key components of reconciliation, including recognising Indigenous rights, acknowledging history, addressing socio-economic disadvantage and educating the wider community.**

## Introduction

The Australian reconciliation movement has been in existence for over twenty years. This movement has been very influential in improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, recognising Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories, encouraging community involvement in reconciliation, addressing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage in areas such as health and education, educating the community on Indigenous issues, promoting Indigenous governance and advocating constitutional reform and Indigenous rights, including self-determination, land rights and sovereignty (Gunstone 2009)

One of the key outcomes of the reconciliation movement has been the significant involvement of local communities in reconciliation. This involvement was initiated by the 'Call to the Nation' speech by Patrick Dodson, the Chairperson of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, at the 1997 Australian Reconciliation Convention:

Reconciliation and the renewal of the nation can be achieved only through a people's movement which obtains the commitment of Australians in all their diversity to make

reconciliation a living reality in their communities, workplaces, institutions, organisations and in all expressions of our common citizenship (Dodson 1997)

Following this speech, local communities became very involved in the reconciliation movement. Hundreds of reconciliation groups formed throughout Australia that initiated local reconciliation activities. Thousands of Australians participated in community education activities, such as the Study Circles program, and signed Sorry Books acknowledging their support for the Stolen Generations. Hundreds of thousands marched in numerous community reconciliation walks, showing their support for Indigenous peoples and reconciliation.

In this paper, I look at the involvement of local communities in the reconciliation movement by analysing a specific Australian rural region of Gippsland in south-east Victoria. The selection of this region was made because of several reasons including the broad range of activities being undertaken regarding reconciliation in Gippsland and that it would be interesting to examine a rural region.

Gippsland is a large region, stretching from the outer-eastern Melbourne metropolitan area to the eastern and southern edges of Victoria. The total land area of Gippsland is 42,671 square kilometres, which constitutes almost 20% of the total land area of Victoria (ABS 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). The population of Gippsland, on the other hand, is quite small in comparison to its land area. In 2010, the total population of Gippsland was 266,718, which is just under 5% of the total population of Victoria (ABS 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). The Indigenous population is 1% of the total population of west Gippsland and 2.1% of the total population of east Gippsland, in comparison with Indigenous peoples constituting just 0.7% of the total Victorian population (ABS 2011a, 2011b, 2011c). Gippsland has six local government areas – Baw Baw, Bass Coast, East Gippsland, Latrobe City, South Gippsland and Wellington – and several major towns – Bairnsdale, Morwell, Sale, Traralgon and Warragul.

The history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships in Gippsland is similar to that seen throughout Australia. The region was invaded by non-Indigenous peoples in the 1840s and subsequent policies, laws and practices over the following decades have resulted in the stealing of Indigenous land, children and wages, the massacring of Indigenous peoples and communities, the enforcement of draconian government controls over all aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives and a continuing devastating impact upon Indigenous peoples and communities (Broome 2005; Elder 2003; Gardner 1983, 1990; Gunstone and Heckenberg 2009)

There are two sections in this paper. In the first section, I analyse the results of two social surveys conducted in 2005 and 2010 among people living in Gippsland regarding their attitudes to reconciliation. I have previously written about these surveys (Gunstone 2007; Gunstone 2011). I illustrate the level of ignorance and racism existing in the wider Gippsland community towards Indigenous peoples and reconciliation. In the second section, I discuss several local community reconciliation activities being undertaken in the Gippsland region. These activities illustrate the

substantial efforts being undertaken to address the level of racism and ignorance that exists in Gippsland and to promote a broad reconciliation movement in the region.

## **Attitudes to reconciliation**

In both 2005 and 2010, I commissioned social survey companies to conduct telephone interviews with people living in east Gippsland concerning their attitudes towards reconciliation. Both surveys were almost identical. They explored three areas: the concept of reconciliation; Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage; and a range of statements concerning reconciliation. Both surveys asked the same open-ended questions and used identical themes to categorise responses. The results from both surveys clearly demonstrate that respondents were generally more positive towards equality, education and to some extent, socio-economic disadvantage, and more negative and ignorant towards Indigenous rights and racism. Both surveys had very low numbers of Indigenous respondents, with seven Indigenous respondents out of 300 in 2005 and five out of 250 in 2010, so no meaningful comparisons can be made regarding different opinions held by Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents.

### **The concept of reconciliation**

The first section of both surveys focussed on the concept of reconciliation and included questions regarding awareness, meanings, support and importance.

Both surveys showed the respondents had a good awareness of reconciliation, with 87% in 2005 and 85% in 2010 stating they had heard of reconciliation. This question was worded slightly differently in the two surveys. In 2005, the question referred to the recently concluded 1991-2000 reconciliation process. In 2010, the question referred to a broad reconciliation process. The 2005 survey also asked those respondents who were aware of reconciliation if they believed the process had succeeded. Of the 240 responses to this question, 57% stated reconciliation had not succeeded, 29% stated it had partially succeeded and less than 1% stated it had fully succeeded. The most common reasons given for why reconciliation had failed were 'nothing much has changed' (25%) and 'still more to be done/rectified' (11%). The most common reasons given for why reconciliation had been partially successful were 'more to be resolved' (8%) and 'there is still division/lack of support' (5%). Finally, just one response referred to Indigenous rights (land rights) and none mentioned institutional racism. This question was not asked in 2010 as the awareness question in this survey did not refer to a specific period of reconciliation.

Both surveys also had very similar responses in regard to being asked about the meanings of reconciliation. As the question allowed for multiple responses, there were 351 responses in 2005 and 294 responses in 2010. These responses were organised into the same eight broad categories. Both surveys recorded their highest responses in the same four categories. These categories were: 'successful integration of Aboriginals/unity' (2005-34%, 2010-40%); 'equal rights/working together' (2005-27%, 2010-31%); 'recognition and acceptance of the past/awareness' (2005-23%, 2010-27%); and 'saying sorry/apology' (2005-21%, 2010-14%). The total of these four categories was

80% of all responses in both surveys. Further, only 2% of responses in 2005 and 4% of responses in 2010 referred to Indigenous rights (land rights).

In regard to the level of support that respondents had towards reconciliation, both surveys again had very similar findings. The percentage of respondents that fully supported reconciliation was 53% in 2005 and 54% in 2010. The percentage of respondents that partially supported reconciliation was 31% in 2005 and 28% in 2010. The percentage of respondents that did not support reconciliation was 9% in 2005 and 11% in 2010. Both surveys had 7% of respondents who were unsure.

The surveys also asked respondents about the importance of reconciliation. Their opinions were sought through the use of a five point scale, varying from 'not at all important' to 'very important'. The mean response for both surveys was 'quite important', being 4.0 in 2005 and 3.9 in 2010 (both out of 5.0). Further, 69% of respondents in 2005 and 71% of respondents in 2010 believed reconciliation was either 'quite important' or 'very important'. However, the respondents that felt reconciliation was 'not at all important' or 'not very important' increased by almost two-thirds from 11% in 2005 to 18% in 2010.

Respondents were also asked if they would like to make any further comments on reconciliation. They could have multiple responses. The results in both surveys were very similar. Of the 188 comments made in 2005 and the 314 comments made in 2010, the highest number of responses in both surveys was in the category 'equality/equal rights for all Australians' (18% in 2005, 28% in 2010). Two other categories in the top four for both surveys were 'negative about Aboriginals/preferential treatment' (17% in 2005, 25% in 2010) and 'reconciliation process important/still more to be done' (17% in 2005, 12% in 2010). Also, just two responses in 2005 and none in 2010 referred to Indigenous rights (negative mentions of sovereignty) and only two responses in 2005 and none in 2010 mentioned racism (negative towards Indigenous peoples).

## Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage

The second section of both surveys examined the attitudes of respondents regarding Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage. There were two questions in this section.

The first question asked the respondents if they believed that Indigenous peoples, as a group, were disadvantaged in comparison to other groups. There was a marked difference between the responses from the two surveys. The 2005 survey revealed that, in relation to other groups, 47% of the respondents believed Indigenous people were disadvantaged, 31% believed Indigenous people were not disadvantaged and 22% thought Indigenous people were neither disadvantaged nor advantaged. The 2010 survey showed that, in relation to other groups, 57% of respondents thought Indigenous people were disadvantaged (about one-fifth increase from 2005), 35% believed Indigenous people were not disadvantaged (about one-eighth increase) and 8% felt Indigenous people were neither disadvantaged nor advantaged (about two-third decrease). This difference between the surveys illustrates the wider community is now more polarised concerning Indigenous disadvantage. There was though one similarity between the two surveys; in both surveys, around

one-third of the respondents felt that Indigenous people were not disadvantaged in relation to other groups.

The second question in this section asked the respondents, in considering several socio-economic areas – education, employment and health – whether, in their opinion, Indigenous people were better off, worse off or about the same as other Australians. The respondents used a five point scale, varying from 'a lot worse off' to 'a lot better off'. For this question, the results from the two surveys were very similar. Those respondents that felt that Indigenous people were worse off than other Australians (incorporating 'a lot worse off' and 'a little worse off') was 55% in 2005 and 59% in 2010. Those that believed that Indigenous people were better off than other Australians (incorporating 'a lot better off' and 'a little better off') was 17% in 2005 and 14% in 2010. Those that felt Indigenous people were around the same socio-economically as other Australians was 28% in 2005 and 27% in 2010.

## Statements on reconciliation

The third section of both surveys contained ten statements regarding several reconciliation issues, including equal rights, Indigenous rights, an apology and history.

Nine of the statements were the same for both surveys. The one exception concerned the statement on an apology. The 2005 statement referred to whether the Federal Government should apologise and the 2010 statement asked whether the Federal Government should have apologised; the difference reflects the 2008 Rudd Government apology to the stolen generations. In answering each statement, the respondents had a five point scale to choose their response, varying from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). The statements varied in being negatively framed and positively framed to minimise respondents just answering the same number to all the statements.

The response to these statements was very similar across the two surveys, with the exception of the statement on an apology. The statements with the highest total 'disagree' responses ('strongly disagree' and 'tend to disagree') in both surveys were those that related to Indigenous rights and history, such as 'Aboriginal people should have sovereignty over Australia', 'Australians today are responsible for what happened to Aboriginal people in the past' and 'Aboriginal people should be entitled to special rights, such as reserved seats in Parliament i.e. being guaranteed a certain number of seats in parliament'. The statements with the highest total 'agree' responses ('strongly agree' and 'tend to agree') were those that related to equal rights and Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage, such as 'as far as possible, all Australians should have equal rights and opportunities' and 'there is a need for Government programs to help reduce disadvantage among Aboriginal people'.

The responses to the statements on an apology though were significantly different across the surveys. The 2005 survey, conducted prior to the 2008 Rudd Government apology, had 34% of respondents disagreeing and 52% agreeing with the statement 'The Federal Government should NOT have to apologise to Aboriginal people for what has happened in the past'. The 2010 survey,

conducted after the 2008 Rudd Government apology, had 64% of respondents disagreeing and 21% agreeing with the statement 'The Federal Government should NOT have apologised to Aboriginal people for what has happened in the past'. The substantial rise from 2005 to 2010 in the percentage of respondents supporting an apology illustrates the role that government leadership, in this case in apologising to the stolen generations, can have on influencing public opinion.

## **Local community activities**

There are a range of successful and inspirational local community activities regarding reconciliation being undertaken by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, communities and organisations in Gippsland. These community activities are attempting to address the substantial level of racism and ignorance among the Gippsland wider community towards Indigenous peoples and reconciliation, which was detailed in the previous section. In this section, I discuss five of these community activities. Each of the activities has been selected to illustrate a particular key component – addressing history, educating the wider community, local community involvement, addressing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage, and recognising Indigenous rights – that many have argued are critical to develop a substantial reconciliation movement (Agius *et al.*, 1999; Behrendt 2003; Clark 2000; Djerrkura 1999; Dodson 2000; Foley 1999; Gunstone 2009; Pratt, Elder and Ellis 2001; Saulwick and Muller 2000)

### **Addressing history**

Joan and Alan McColl are dairy farmers in Gippsland. Until the last decade, they have spent the majority of their lives, as have most in the wider community, in not having much involvement with Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories. Then in 2003, they, along with other McColl family members, were invited to a reconciliation healing ceremony in Darwin. An initiative of the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, this ceremony was an attempt to reconcile the Yolngu people and the McColl family. Some seventy years earlier, in 1933, Alan's uncle Albert McColl, a policeman, was allegedly killed by a Yolngu man, Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda. Dhakiyarr was subsequently arrested, tried and convicted, then following his acquittal on appeal in 1934, disappeared, possibly by foul play. Following the emotional reconciliation ceremony, the McColls and the Yolngu have embraced each other, exchanging gifts, becoming part of each other's families, spending time in each other's communities through a number of visits, working together in community development projects and working tirelessly to publicise this remarkable story of addressing history and family and community reconciliation (Egan 1996; McColl 2012; National Archives of Australia 2011; National Film and Sound Archive of Australia 2004)

### **Educating the wider community**

The Gippsland campus of Monash University runs an Indigenous Studies major in their undergraduate arts degree as well as conducting honours and PhD programs in Indigenous Studies. The vast majority of students who undertake these studies are non-Indigenous students. The undergraduate program is jointly run by an Indigenous lecturer and a non-Indigenous lecturer, who

endeavour to educate their students about Indigenous cultures, the histories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships and various issues currently impacting upon Indigenous peoples. There are a diverse range of subjects, such as politics and activism, human rights, education, literature, art and design, women, health and global indigenous issues, as well as an introductory first-year subject. The students in these subjects are studying a variety of courses, including community and social welfare, counselling, education, criminal justice, journalism, public relations and sciences. The subject material is often challenging, particularly as the significant majority of students have never previously studied Indigenous Studies, either at school or at university. The majority of students genuinely engage with these studies and their challenging nature and as a consequence they, along with their future professions, benefit greatly from their learning Indigenous Studies (Gunstone and Heckenberg 2013; Heckenberg 2009, 2012a)

## Community involvement

There are two active local community reconciliation groups in Gippsland, one in Inverloch (southern Gippsland) and the other in Mallacoota (eastern Gippsland), with a third long-standing group based in Bairnsdale (central Gippsland) recently folding. These groups have undertaken significant community activities designed to increase awareness of and support for the reconciliation movement, particularly in the areas of symbolic reconciliation, educating the wider community and addressing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage. Some of the many activities conducted by these groups over the past several years include: working with local government councils to commemorate Indigenous peoples, such as flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags; working with councils, schools and other organisations to educate the wider community on Indigenous issues; holding public forums on reconciliation and Indigenous issues; working with service providers to improve services for Indigenous peoples; and hosting reconciliation events such as concerts. These groups are geographically isolated from each other and from state and national reconciliation organisations, and often work in communities that are apathetic, racist and hostile towards reconciliation and Indigenous peoples, yet they are inspirational in their commitment and work on promoting and developing community reconciliation (ANTaR 2012; Gunstone and McGinn 2012; Reconciliation Australia 2012; Reconciliation Victoria 2012)

## Addressing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage

There are a wide range of activities in Gippsland, relating to business, community welfare and education, that are attempting to reduce Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage. These activities also substantially contribute to improving relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. One example is that a number of Indigenous peoples are developing and successfully running their own businesses, particularly in the areas of hospitality, culture and tourism. This level of entrepreneurship significantly assists both the social and economic outcomes for many Indigenous peoples, families and communities (Business Victoria 2012; Foley 2012). Another example is the Gippsland CommUNITY Walk against Family Violence campaign, which saw Indigenous peoples, communities and organisations initiate walks in a number of Gippsland towns advocating against

family violence. It was fully supported by the wider community, including individuals, welfare agencies and the police (Crinall and Laming 2012; Laming *et al.*, 2011). Another example is the Koori Footprints to Higher Education program at Monash University, Gippsland. This program assists and encourages Indigenous peoples to enrol at university and then actively supports them in their studies. It has significantly increased the numbers of Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students at Monash University (Heckenberg 2012b; Zizys 2010)

## Recognising Indigenous rights

In October 2010, the Federal Court of Australia recognised the Gunai/Kurnai peoples in Gippsland as the native title holders of their land. The successful native title settlement involves approximately 13,000 square kilometres, roughly from Warragul in the west, to the Alps in the north, to Orbost in the east and down to the coast in the south. This was the culmination of a thirteen-year long struggle by the Gunai/Kurnai for acknowledgement of their native title, which involved lengthy discussions and negotiations among the Gunai/Kurnai themselves and also with the state of Victoria. As part of the settlement process, the Gunai/Kurnai also entered into an Indigenous Land Use Agreement and other agreements, which acknowledged native title rights and agreed on several issues, including employment opportunities, co-management provisions, delivery of funding and cultural issues. The struggles, negotiations and eventual success of the Gunai/Kurnai have significantly assisted the reconciliation movement in Gippsland, such as improving dialogue between the Gunai/Kurnai and state and local governments and their agencies, enabling the Gunai/Kurnai, through the provision of related funding, to establish an office to liaise with governments and the wider community, and critically, recognising the native title of the Gunai/Kurnai (Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project 2012; National Native Title Tribunal 2012; O'Bryan 2012)

## Conclusion

In this paper, I examined the local community involvement in reconciliation in the Gippsland region of south-east Victoria. I first explored the similar results of two surveys conducted in 2005 and 2010 on attitudes of east Gippslanders to reconciliation. I argued these results illustrate the wider community have a very restricted understanding of reconciliation, predominantly viewing it as relating to equality, education and, to some extent, Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage, but not however to Indigenous rights and racism. These two issues were rarely identified in the open-ended questions and were viewed much more negatively when responding to survey questions. This negative approach towards Indigenous rights ignores the identification by many commentators, as discussed earlier, of the importance of Indigenous rights in reconciliation. Also, the surveys reveal a substantial section of the wider community is extraordinarily ignorant of Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage, notwithstanding the numerous reports on this disadvantage (Altman, Biddle and Hunter 2009; Altman and Hunter 2003; ABS 2003; AMA 2002; Close the Gap 2010; Johnston 1991)

I secondly examined a number of local community reconciliation activities that have been developed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, communities and organisations that have made a

significant contribution to the broad reconciliation movement in Gippsland. In selecting which specific activities to analyse, I chose several that could each illustrate a particular key factor in the reconciliation movement. These factors have long-been identified by the literature as being critical for a substantial reconciliation movement and include addressing history, educating the wider community, community involvement in reconciliation, addressing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage in areas such as health and education, and recognising Indigenous rights, including self-determination and land rights. These reconciliation activities illustrate that, despite the level of ignorance and racism in the wider community identified by the 2005 and 2010 survey results, there are still considerable and remarkable local community efforts being expended to address this ignorance and racism and to work towards achieving reconciliation in Gippsland.

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# Hidden Racism and Systemic Racism: Is it contributing to the decreased health and well-being of Aboriginal Homeless Persons in the inner city of Cairns?

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**Keywords:** hidden racism, systemic racism, homelessness, rough sleepers, primary homelessness.

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**The presence of chronic rough sleeping Aboriginal persons in the Cairns inner city has been an ongoing issue for decades. Differing approaches have been taken to address this issue, including the 'hard approach' (zero tolerance) and the 'soft approach' (self-determination). However neither of these approaches has succeeded and have only served to perpetuate and escalate the problem. The complexity of the issue of long-term rough sleepers is further exacerbated by hidden racism and systemic racism which is underpinned by issues such as culture and the polemic divides that separate the service approaches to addressing this issue. Ultimately, the health and well-being of Aboriginal rough sleepers in Cairns is worsening and their quality of life is declining due to this unseen and incalculable racism. Of critical importance to their decreasing health and well-being is how their basic human needs are not being met due to the underlying racism that**

**confounds it. This paper seeks to identify the issues of hidden racism and systemic racism among the Cairns inner city Aboriginal rough sleepers and explanations of hidden and systemic racism are offered and how this contributes to the decline in their health and well-being.**

## **Introduction**

Aboriginal peoples' primary homelessness and public space drinkers are two separate issues and an ongoing concern to the crime prevention network in the inner city of Cairns in Far North Queensland. Public space drinkers are not necessarily homeless, but frequent the inner city parks and public spaces and utilise these areas for social gatherings and the public consumption of alcohol, which is prohibited under Cairns Regional Council model laws. However, these issues are further compounded when temporary, illegal squatter camps are set up around the city by the Aboriginal homeless peoples and these camps increase in size and in numbers when a 'zero-tolerance' approach is taken by the police to rough sleepers and public space drinkers in the inner city (Coolican, Apr 2013). Because Cairns is an international tourist destination, perceptions of civil order and personal safety are at the forefront of businesses in the inner city. Concerns over rough sleepers frequenting the inner city hit the headlines in Cairns again in May of this year with business trader's calling for a 'zero-tolerance' approach to anti-social behaviours of the Aboriginal homeless peoples and public space drinkers (The Cairns Post, Feb 15, 2013)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' homelessness has been an ongoing issue, not only in Cairns, but in many urban, regional and remote areas of Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' account for 9.2% of the total Queensland population, with 3.6% residing in Cairns. Indicators denote that on any given night, 1,300 people are sleeping rough in Cairns, which is approximately 113 people per 10,000 of the population (Office of Economic and Statistical Research 2012). The 2011 Census has indicated that this is double the homeless rates of Brisbane and the Gold Coast signifying that "Cairns has one of the highest rates of homelessness of Queensland cities and an over representation of homeless Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" (Community Services Committee Cairns 2012, p. 8)

This paper came about because of the author's continued frustration at watching the same cohort of homeless Aboriginal people's cycle between the Central Business District (CBD) and fringe squatter camps, despite the continual efforts of government and non-government services to break this cycle. There are significant gaps in the policies and systems that surround homelessness in Australia that are not being addressed by current research and we are hoping that by bringing these issues to the forefront, together we may be able to begin addressing some of these concerns through policy changes and rethinking the systems and structures that surround Aboriginal people's homelessness in Australia. The current systems, frameworks and policies are a self-perpetuating cycle of ineffectiveness that has been repeated over and over for decades and we believe that it is time for change. The specific focus of this paper is the chronic rough sleeping Aboriginal population in Cairns, Far North Queensland in regards to their standard of living, their personal safety and security, and their attainment of adequate standards of physical and mental health.

# Definitions

## Racism

For the purposes of the paper, 'racism' is defined as the determination of actions, attitudes or policies by beliefs about racial characteristics. 'Institutional' or 'Systemic racism' involves the unintended consequences of a system of racial inequality (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1994, p. 342). 'New racism' is defined as the

"... processes of racialisation work through narratives of 'our way of life' that are designed to specifically exclude particular Others from a particular space. The argument of 'genuine fears' and the protection of the nation's 'way of life' are used to justify the processes of racism" (Al-Natour 2010, p. 4)

However, in terms of health and health outcomes, the Sociology of Mental Health in combination with Critical Race Theory (Brown 2003), proposed a more nuanced version of 'racism'. The discipline of Sociology involves looking at indirect relationships between institutions and individuals and to propose how these institutions impact on an individual's health and well-being. Critical Race Theory proposes that racial stratification is central to the operational use of the term 'race' and how it is constructed and manipulated by social and political forces (Brown 2003). Therefore, what we are proposing is a Sociological Health approach to the health and well being of Aboriginal people's homelessness under a Critical Race Theory lens, in order to discern aspects of hidden and systemic racism within the policies, models and frameworks of approaches to Aboriginal rough sleepers/street drinkers/camp dwellers. This paper will address the issue of long-term or chronic homelessness or people who are commonly called rough sleepers, as well as public space drinkers and illegal camp dwellers.

## Homelessness

The most commonly accepted definition of homelessness was proposed by Chamberlain and Mackenzie (1992) who offered three types of homelessness.

"*Primary homelessness* refers to people without conventional accommodation ... *Secondary homelessness* covers people staying in various forms of temporary accommodation ... [and] ... *Tertiary homelessness* refers to people who live in boarding houses on a longer-term basis, operationally defined as 13 weeks or more. People in boarding houses are homeless because their accommodation falls below widely accepted community standards" (Chamberlain 2012, emphasis added).

This paper focuses on primary homelessness as well as public space drinkers and transient camp dwellers. One of the most critical elements of dealing with Aboriginal peoples' homelessness is argued to be the inclusion and consideration of culture.

## Culture

Culture has been defined as individual and socially constructed beliefs, values and norms based on the subjective experiences of signs, symbols, rituals and behaviours (Chao & Moon 2005, p. 11). This definition stresses the importance of the individual, the inclusion of the social world, the subjective experience of the individual and the active construction of perceptions of signs, symbols and rituals that produce culturally defined behaviours. The importance of the external influence of culture in the construction of subjective experiences and overt behaviours is paramount in understanding social phenomena (Hayes-Jonkers 2009), as 'culture' is a clandestine concept that is thrown around with little regard of its actual meaning and social influence.

## Cultural Competence

'Cultural Competence' is a further terminology that has been bandied around over many decades with little regard for its factual outcomes. That is, how does one show that a person or person's is 'culturally competent'? Cultural competency has been defined as

"... the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes" (Centre for Cultural Competence Australia, 2012)

The defining features of this statement are 'policies', 'practices' and 'attitudes'. An Australian study (Johnstone and Kanitsaki, 2008) proposed that negative population attitudes were strongly influenced by 'skin colour' and language differences and it was further argued that negative attitudes to Aboriginal Australians was exceptionally difficult to change (Pedersen *et al.*, 2005). Given that racially negative attitudes are currently more covert than overt (Pedersen *et al.*, 2005), it could be argued that policies and practices around cultural competence are therefore influenced by these underlying attitudes. ). Notwithstanding this factor, the current climate to reduce homelessness is overwhelmingly housing (Johnson *et al.*, 2011)

## Housing First Model of Homelessness

The propensity of researchers and policy makers to focus on housing or shelter to define homelessness has been criticised as being remarkable short-sighted, given that the notion of 'home' should encompass the "... physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual ..." aspects of the subjective experience of 'home' (City of Sydney website 2012). It has further been argued that "[T]he provision of a stable place of tenure may not necessarily be an architectural solution" (Kolka 2008, p. 38) and Egginton (2008, p. 4) echoed this sentiment, claiming that the problem of homelessness "... cannot be fixed by just providing services ... and housing". Amore, Baker and Howden-Chapman (2011) concluded that the 'domains of home' should include the

“...physical (physical adequacy), legal (exclusive possession, security of occupation, and legal title), and social (privacy and ability to enjoy social relations) consistent with a rights-based approach” (p. 25).

Nevertheless, housing is only one solution to a complex problem and this need for housing is tenuously based on the human rights of those who are homeless.

## Aboriginal Homelessness and Human Rights

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (2012) and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2008) proposed that homelessness is not just about housing. They decreed that a person who is homeless may be facing violations of the right to an adequate standard of living; the right to education; the right to liberty and security of the person; the right to privacy; the right to social security; the right to freedom; the right to life, physical and mental integrity without discrimination; to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health ... and many more. We propose that this violation of basic human needs is impacting in a negative and progressively detrimental way on the health and well-being of the Cairns Aboriginal homeless population.

## Aboriginal Homelessness and Health

Physical and mental health concerns of the long term Aboriginal rough sleepers in Cairns specifically include the following. Suffers of schizophrenia and bipolar disorders, nihilistic perceptions of life, learned helplessness with fatalist thinking, acquired brain injuries, chronic and severe alcoholism, diabetes, heart conditions, wounds that will not heal, and unattended open wounds and broken bones. These are further perpetuated by individuals' refusing to access formal medical help for acute conditions and their hesitation about attending the Cairns Base Hospital or what the Cairns Aboriginal homeless peoples' call the 'deadfella place'. The place where people go to die.

## The Zero-Tolerance or 'Hard' Approach

Zero-tolerance or the 'hard' approach to rough sleepers was subsequently implemented in Cairns in July of this year, due to the ongoing calls by business owners in the CBD. This approach has resulted in the successful removal of Aboriginal rough sleepers from the inner city ... again. However, as has occurred many times before, this has resulted in rough sleepers being displaced to make-shift camps on the fringes of the city. There have been anecdotal reports of high levels of physical and sexual violence, substance and alcohol abuse and extortion in the camps with unsanitary living conditions creating an unhealthy and unsafe living environment. Police are enforcers of the law and as such are obligated to do their duty. Nonetheless, the police in Cairns support the Return to Country<sup>1</sup> program and are proactive in returning people to their communities and/or delivering them to homeless services for assistance and support. This is what is called the 'soft' approach. This

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<sup>1</sup> This is a program developed through partnerships with Centrelink and a local flight company to return people home to their communities for a minimal cost.

approach diverts the rough sleepers away from the justice system. The 'soft' approach does appear to deliver a more humanistic response to Aboriginal peoples' homelessness.

**Figure 1**

### **The effect of 'zero tolerance' to homelessness in Cairns**

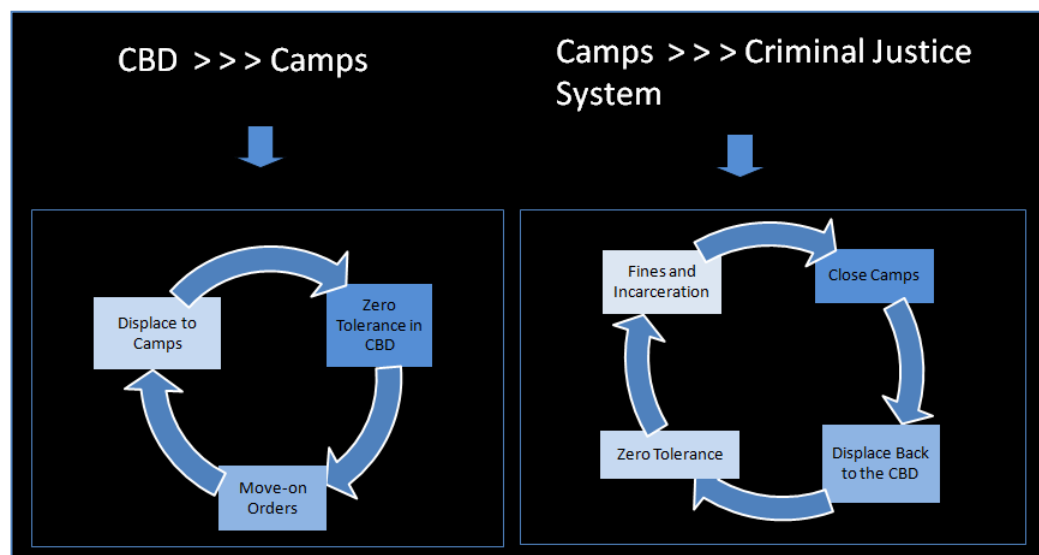


Figure 1 demonstrates what has occurred in Cairns in the past under the 'zero-tolerance' approach to rough sleepers and the homeless, and it will inevitably happen again. The 'hard' approach displaces the rough sleepers out of the inner city and into make-shift, unauthorised squatter camps. This subsequently creates issues for residents living in those areas; complaints are made to Council and the camps are eventually closed down. The rough sleepers are then forced back into the inner city and into the arms of the police and the Criminal Justice System. This is the reality of the effects of the 'hard' approach as it does not deal with the underlying issues of Aboriginal homeless peoples.

Cairns has a large contingent of agencies who provide services to homeless people in the inner city and in squatter camps, and who address the needs of individual rough sleepers, assist with physical and mental health issues, financial concerns and assisting them to acquire accommodation. Cairns also has both a Diversionary centre and Crisis Accommodation centres which are perpetually at maximum capacity. However, Cairns also has a significant shortage of suitable detoxification and rehabilitation facilities for alcohol and substance misusers.

## **'Hidden Racism' of Aboriginal Peoples' Homelessness: What Lies Beneath**

Service providers working with rough sleepers would never consider themselves to be racist. In fact, they would be offended at the suggestion. However, this very desire to be politically correct and culturally appropriate can lead to the reinforcing of negative stereotypes and 'otherising' of Aboriginal peoples (Johnson & Kanitsaki 2009). The 'cultural competence' model is utilised in most states in Australia and this model was an important development in recognising that culture dictates a person's understanding of their experiences and that it is necessary to work with people in a way

that recognises their cultural underpinnings (Centre for Cultural Competence Australia 2012). The danger of this model is that respect for the 'culturally appropriate' can morph into mistaking disadvantage for 'Aboriginal culture'. The desire to respect culture may lead to an idealised view of an unchanged, nomadic, outdoor tradition to which it is possible or that Aboriginal peoples desire to return to, and conflates this with the lifestyle of the rough sleeper/squatter camp dwellers. We see this in the tacit acceptance of squatter camps around Cairns in which Aboriginal peoples live without sanitation; clean, running water; rubbish disposal mechanisms; cooking facilities and live in squalid, inhuman conditions. Nevertheless, we would argue that mistaking homelessness for culturally appropriate lifestyle choices 'blames the victim' and relieves us of the responsibility for our failure to 'close the gap'.

Critical Race Theory proponents suggest that this normalising dysfunction of the 'other' acts to maintain the status quo; reinforcing the 'white' position of privilege (Abrams & Moio 2009). By accepting rough sleeping as 'culturally appropriate', we are not only neglecting to address the causes of homelessness, we are reinforcing racist stereotypes that this kind of 'lifestyle' is not only acceptable from Aboriginal people, but is to be expected. Hidden racism generates a feedback loop where lower outcomes reinforce lower expectations which correspondingly reinforce these lower outcomes. To produce better outcomes, it is imperative not to lower expectations of people in poor circumstances, but to hold them to higher standards; to challenge racist assumptions about the competence and worthiness of Aboriginal peoples. Abrams and Moio (2009, p. 257) proposed that the 'cultural competence' model is basically unsuccessful and that its "... tendency to equalize oppressions under a "multicultural umbrella" ... [and] unintentionally promotes a colour-blind mentality that conceals the significance of institutionalized racism", to which we now turn.

## **Systemic Racism within Aboriginal Peoples' Homelessness: What Lies Within**

The *Aboriginal Self-Determination Policy*, introduced by the Whitlam Government in 1972, has dominated Aboriginal peoples' service provision for decades. It began as a push for community empowerment, Aboriginal control of Aboriginal peoples' lives, and recognition of the validity of 'cultural difference'. This policy defined 'self-determination' as "... the ability of Aboriginal *communities* to identify their own needs, and the making of decisions that affect their lives" (Gray, Stearne, Wilson & Doyle 2010, p. 32, our emphasis).

A split in the ideology emerged over whether life on the dole could ever be an indication of legitimate choice; a determination to remain culturally separate over the benefits of mainstream participation. This contention has morphed even further from the 'rights' of a *community*, to a focus on the 'responsibility' of the individual. It has become the idea that Aboriginal rough sleepers living in camps and on the streets are 'self-determining' or that they 'choose', and have a 'right' to choose, substance abuse, violence and inhumane living conditions. This 'self-determination' policy may cause confusion between outcomes which are forced upon people by a racially structured society and outcomes which people reap from their choices as autonomous individuals (Smith 1991). True 'self-determination' cannot exist when Aboriginal peoples are systemically excluded from meaningful

participation in education, the workforce and the economy, and therefore from the power to be actually 'self-determining'.

The models of service delivery in the homelessness sector reinforce this neglect of structural causes for high numbers of homeless Aboriginal peoples in Cairns (Hunter 2008). Output based funding models force agencies to focus on changing individuals, not systems, and competition and compartmentalisation of service delivery curtails holistic vision and reinforces a Western Medical Model, where homelessness and substance abuse are the symptoms of a 'sick' person, and the individual rough sleepers are the problem to be solved, not the structural factors of overcrowding or inter-generational impacts of colonisation and dispossession. Hunter (2008) stated by medicalising complex social problems and thereby rationalizing 'solutions' that are simple, but ultimately destined to failure, can only impede rather than support social change. The medicalised approach leads to victim blaming and criminalisation of the structurally marginalised. When we tell ourselves 'It is not about race; it is about drinking in the street', we ignore the effects of racial stratification and treat the symptoms of race-based disadvantage as criminal behaviour. When structural causal factors are hidden, Aboriginality itself becomes the cause. The focus is always on Aboriginal peoples' homelessness, as though the challenge was a problem of Aboriginality, not a lack of affordable housing plus structurally created disadvantage.

## **Hidden Racism: How can it be otherwise?**

Hidden racism is a much less obvious form of racism than the outward manifestation of discrimination based on racial prejudice. Hidden racism expresses itself through subjective evaluations resulting in patterns of negative assessments and assumptions aimed at the demonic 'others' (Pederson *et al.*, 2005b). The acceptance of Aboriginal peoples' urban camp dwelling, with its poor health outcomes, substance addiction and violence, has become an article of faith for many. This opinion appears to be underpinned by a belief that camp dwellers and other homeless Aboriginal peoples are demonstrating 'culturally appropriate' behaviour systems, and that existing on the margins of mainstream society is culturally normalised behaviour. Is this a racist response? We would argue that it is.

Through a perpetuation of the 'myth of culture', the policy response to these individuals in regard to their need for services and access to health, rehabilitation or social care differs from the response to others from non-Indigenous backgrounds and heritage. If someone chooses a lifestyle, then the implication is that they do not want help or assistance, and the consequences of those choices are theirs to bear. Rather than actively seeking them out or actively engaging with them, the general policy response is to wait for these individuals to ask for assistance. This is the fundamental framework of individual self-determination. Consigning destructive and self-harming behaviour to the 'cultural' bin allows service providers and policy developers to both blame the victim and to avoid developing appropriate policies for terms of engagement and intervention.

We are also so constrained by our understanding and acceptance of 'culture' that we fail to see and deal with genuine (*basic*) human needs. The notion of Aboriginal peoples' right to 'self-determination' implies

*"... the freedom for indigenous peoples to live well, to live according to their own values and beliefs, and to be respected by their non-indigenous neighbours... [and] ... achieving the freedom to live well and humanly"* (Daes 2000, p. 58, *their emphasis*).

Under this definition, this would imply that rough sleepers in the inner city of Cairns should have access to secure housing, clean water, sanitation, power, education, employment, privacy, social networks and health services. However, this is far from the case as is evidenced by the persistent declining health of the chronic inner city rough sleepers and the abominable conditions in which they live in the fringe camps.

Where does this construction of culture come from that seemingly paralyses us from seeing our policies as intrinsically racist? It is almost as if our fear of appearing racist actually superimposes racist behaviours upon us. We are ensnared in a system where service providers are very aware of the history of Aboriginal Australians post colonisation, and who are obligated to prove their own credentials as non-racist, inclusive and educated practitioners. However, it is these same practitioners who espouse theories and frameworks of 'cultural competence'. Herein lays the difficulty. Developing 'cultural competence' should result in the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across differing cultures (Centre for Cultural Competence Australia, 2012). Being 'culturally competent' refers to the ability to interrelate successfully with people of different cultures; it does not mean supporting disorder, addiction, psychosis and despair in the name of 'culture'. In the vast majority of cases, people who are habitual homeless/street drinkers have lost the vestiges of self-worth and self-enablement. Promoting camp life as a 'lifestyle choice' or as 'culturally appropriate' is not a manifestation of cultural competence; it is a pusillanimous acceptance of an ineffective system that is preventing the acknowledgment of human suffering and is preventing an examination of the structural barriers to improving Aboriginal peoples' homeless outcomes.

## **Systemic Racism: How can it be otherwise?**

Systemic racism is distinguished from racial prejudices by the existence of systemic policies and practices which place non-white groups at a disadvantage in relation to institution or systems of the dominant white elites (Hunter 2008). Macpherson (1999) argued that systemic racism is "... the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin". However, we would argue that systemic or institutional racism is grounded more in apathy than in intent. A self-determinism framework uses aspects of a health education model to support itself in dealing with street drinkers, rough sleepers and/or camp dwellers. It is widely promulgated that once knowledgeable about health, hygiene, and service parameters, these people need only exercise 'self-determination' to avail themselves of the opportunity to engage with the preferred or required service provider.

Within this model, little or nothing is made of the need to affect changes to the environment, to policy, and to the inequality of opportunity. Without wider political change, choices made at an individual level are difficult to see through to a productive or successful outcome. In other words, the rigidity of the framework used to service homeless client needs, which is overlaid with systemic racist approaches, is failing to deliver adequate outcomes and this is evidenced through the health inequalities of the Cairns Aboriginal peoples' homeless population.

A health education message may promote the point that more than X units of alcohol are harmful and that one should aim to keep one's consumption below this level for health reasons, but without policy or environment changes, someone with an alcohol addiction may find this difficult to put into practice. Any kind of addiction is a hard task master, and without supportive changes to their environment, a top-down approach to service delivery allows little to be actually achieved in relation to client outcomes. A methodology that overcomes the self-determinist top-down approach, may bridge the gap. Actively seeking out clients, making services available to them immediately or taking them to a service is a ground based bottom-up approach, where each client is individualised rather than institutionalised or compartmentalised and may be one of the policy changes needed to support better outcomes for Aboriginal rough sleepers and camp dwellers. Future research around Aboriginal homelessness requires 'out of the box' thinking and more inventive ways of approaching this ongoing issues as current approaches are not resolving or even contributing to resolving this issue.

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# Challenging racism through new media: Talking Difference at Museum Victoria

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**Keywords:** Museum Victoria, Immigration Museum, racism, dialogue, intercultural, new media, touring installation, user-generated content, refugee, migrant, arts, community.

David is an educator and community programs worker at Museum Victoria. Based at Immigration Museum in Melbourne, his work focuses on developing intercultural understanding, facilitating dialogue between participants and fostering creative engagement with challenging themes. Recent projects have involved developing new media and online programs, planning cultural festivals at Immigration Museum as part of the Museum's community engagement program, and developing and delivering Education programs.

**Museum Victoria's Talking Difference project uses multimedia to foster dialogue as a means of challenging race-based discrimination. Now in its third year, the project works from the basis of VicHealth research identifying positive directions to address race-based discrimination and is supported by VicHealth's Arts About Us program.**

**A key component of the project is the Portable Studio, a touring installation affording visitors to libraries and community centres in a diverse range of communities an opportunity to create digital content. The felt-covered installation creates a safe and welcoming space in which visitors engage with one another's ideas by responding to questions about cultural diversity and racism using a touch screen and high definition camera.**

**Each of the Studio's residencies is coupled with local community engagement through which diverse participants create seed questions for the studio and are encouraged to become champions both for the project and for the goal of challenging racism in their community.**

**This paper discusses and explores foundational research, implementation processes, and outcomes from the first phase of the Talking Difference project as a means of furthering collective understanding of arts and community-based practice as a mechanism for visualising alternatives to racism.**

## Introduction

Recently, I was facilitating a video-making workshop with Museum Victoria's Talking Difference Portable Studio at a library in regional Victoria. During the workshop a shy, tall man from Sudan entered the space, bowing his head as he passed through the thick felt curtains into the installation. He told me his name and listened as an Afghani participant shared his experiences of racism in Australia. In his turn he responded to the ideas of the other participant and said that since he had

arrived here, he had struggled to connect with the local community and to feel as though he belonged. He contributed a video to the installation in the form of a question for other visitors about the challenges new migrants face while settling in Australia.

Afterwards, a community worker attending the session told me she had worked with this man over many months and had never seen him communicate with such confidence and eloquence. It seemed that the installation had created a space in which this man was able to express something he had not expressed publicly before. This experience is exemplary of the potential of the Talking Difference project to facilitate dialogue about racism and intercultural understanding in Australia.

This paper identifies Museum Victoria's Talking Difference Portable Studio as a leading example of arts practice through which participants are brought into dialogue with one another on topics related to race-based discrimination and cultural diversity. Talking Difference is based at Immigration Museum, a campus of Museum Victoria, and managed by Museum Victoria Community Engagement Manager, Tatiana Mauri. While it makes reference to a variety of relevant studies, this paper is not intended to represent a formal or conclusive evaluation of the Talking Difference project. Rather, it explores the programming background that led to the Talking Difference Project, identifies the project's key processes and activities, and suggests a number of outcomes of the project so far as an invitation for further engagement.

## Background

The Talking Difference project emerges as a continuation of the participatory community engagement demonstrated by Museum Victoria, and as a response to racism in Australian society. Despite improvements across a number of indicators, recent attitudinal studies suggest racist attitudes and race-based discrimination are persistent in Australian society (Andrew Markus, 2012; Dunn *et. al.*, 2011; Paradies *et. al.*, 2009, 29). For example, the *Building on Our Strengths* report, which informed the VicHealth funding program for Talking Difference in 2009, indicated that one in ten Victorians believe it is not a good idea for people of different races to marry one another, one in ten Victorians believe some races are superior to others, and one in three Victorians believe there are groups that do not fit in Australia (Paradies *et. al.*, 2009, 29).

Amongst the strategies identified and implemented to challenge such discrimination, there is a strong theoretical and empirical basis supporting participatory dialogue processes (VicHealth, 2007: 50; Dessel and Rogge, 2008: 199; Michael, 2012; Wayne, 2008; Paradies *et. al.*, 2009; Aldana, 2012). As Michális Michael has argued, 'a dialogue-centred approach is premised on deeper levels of individual and collective self-examination, and a willingness to abandon, or at least, suspend impulses, judgments, and presuppositions that often underpin the caricature of the "other"' (2012: 15).

Evaluation of intergroup dialogue projects using qualitative and quantitative methodologies has demonstrated a correlation between dialogic projects and a number of positive indicators related to intercultural understanding. These include: increased learning about the perspectives of people from

other social groups, development of analytical problem solving skills, valuing new viewpoints, understanding the impact of social group membership on identity, gaining increased awareness of social inequalities, and raised awareness of racial identity (Dessel and Rogge, 2008: 224). As a project that aims to facilitate dialogue about cultural diversity and racism using a variety of media, Talking Difference not only speaks to this strong tradition of dialogic practice in research, but also to emergent approaches within museum practice.

In museum studies, dialogic practice has emerged as a means by which museums invite audiences to engage in the collaborative co-creation of meaning, often as a way of responding to contemporary social issues (Mason, 2005; Heumann-Gurian, 1995; Simon, 2008). As Elaine Heumann-Gurian has argued, these processes create potential for the museum to act as a 'safe place for unsafe ideas' (Heumann-Gurian, 1995). Much contemporary dialogic practice both within the museum and beyond can be seen to be grounded in critical approaches to pedagogy and phenomenology in which knowledge and understanding are seen to be co-created through the collaborative and respectful exchange of ideas, rather than the monologic delivery of a singular preconceived truth (Freire, 1970; Bohm, 1995; Michael, 2012). In the context of museum practice, such an approach to the creation of meaning is applied not only through formal, facilitated group sessions, but also through informal participatory programs and exhibitions in which visitors may engage in dialogue face-to-face with one another, through participatory activities, or in the form of interactive digital engagement (Simon, 2008).

Now entering its second phase, Museum Victoria's Talking Difference project represents a significant example of such engagement, especially in relation to the process of challenging race-based discrimination. The project emerges as a result of both the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation's (VicHealth) Arts About Us program and Museum Victoria's strong record of community engagement.

## **Arts About Us Program**

VicHealth's Arts About Us program, which supports the Talking Difference project, is dedicated to engaging arts organisations as a means of encouraging, amongst other objectives, 'dialogue about the benefits of cultural diversity and the harm caused by race-based discrimination' (VicHealth, 2012). Central to the logic of the Arts About Us program is the established link between race-based discrimination and mental health concerns (VicHealth, 2007). Citing a variety of empirical studies, VicHealth's *More than tolerance: Embracing diversity for health* report indicated that exposure to race-based discrimination increases the chances of experiencing depression anxiety and stress (2007: 8). Along with existing empirical work into dialogue and race-based discrimination, VicHealth research indicated a number of promising directions for combating discrimination including, promoting dialogue, emphasising commonality and diversity, and building empathy (VicHealth, 2007, 50).

A key basis for undertaking arts-based practice as a means of pursuing these positive directions emerges in the evaluation of VicHealth's Community Arts Development Scheme, which indicated that arts-practice provides a particularly strong opportunity for community members to engage with

issues that may otherwise be 'too hard' to face, amongst them racism and discrimination (Keleher *et. al.*, 2009: 10). The evaluation joins a number of studies into the impact of arts practice on racism identified by Kaitlin Lauridsen in an evaluation of the formative stages of the Talking Difference project (Lauridsen, 2011: 13; Roberts *et. al.*, 2008; Connolly *et. al.*, 2006). While these studies each identify the challenges inherent in evaluating the social impact of arts-based practice, a consistent theme lies in the potential for such practice to facilitate engagement with challenging social problems such as racism. The Arts About Us project is directed towards such engagement.

As a means of applying these approaches, the Arts About Us program funds projects working across a range of platforms including music, theatre, dance, and comedy. Recipients of Arts About Us funding have included major cultural organisations such as Museum Victoria and the National Gallery of Victoria, as well as smaller community-based organisations such as the Anti-Racism Action Band and Footscray Community Arts Centre. In this context, the Talking Difference project applies creative practice towards the goal of challenging race-based discrimination.

## **Museum Victoria Community Engagement**

Along with the research background of Arts About Us, Talking Difference builds on Immigration Museum's strong history of community engagement, which includes the development of collaborative cultural festivals, community exhibitions and public events. Each of these initiatives provides an opportunity for the Museum to welcome diverse communities into its spaces and to collaborate on programs for the general public.

For over twelve years, Immigration Museum has utilised a participatory model in its community engagement by encouraging community groups and individuals to take an active role in planning and development as well as by creating opportunities for participation in the delivery of programs and exhibitions. The Museum has worked with over 50 representatives across a broad swathe of Victoria's culturally diverse communities (Sebastian, 2007).

Alongside such ethno-specific programming, the Immigration Museum's community engagement program includes approaches that are founded on intercultural participation. In this model participants are encouraged to make connections and collaborate with community members beyond their traditional or primary cultural group. For example the *Sweets: tastes and traditions from many cultures* project, which included a festival and exhibition in 2012-2013, took a theme-based approach drawing together five diverse cultural groups to collaborate in its planning and execution.

The Talking Difference project builds on the Immigration Museum's strong record of community engagement by offering a further opportunity for participants to collaborate across cultural boundaries.

## **Talking Difference**

Talking Difference works across a number of platforms using new media to facilitate dialogue, challenge race-based discrimination, and promote cultural diversity. In its first phase, the project

was funded for three years from 2009-2012 and delivered programming across three main areas of activity by providing:

- fellowships for emerging artists,
- residencies of the Talking Difference Portable Studio, and
- online experiences building on these initiatives.

Each of these areas of activity is dedicated to developing new media content, but also to making or strengthening connections with a range of community members, especially young people. This paper focusses on the Portable Studio, a key component of the project, which has had enduring success over a series of residencies.

## Portable Studio

The Portable Studio is a touring installation affording visitors to libraries and community centres in a diverse range of communities an opportunity to create digital content. While the project currently manifests in a new form touring schools, this paper focusses on the first iteration of the studio developed in 2010-2012. The Portable Studio drew a degree of inspiration from participatory museum projects using multimedia from around the world including the successful Story Tent from the Museum of the Person in Brazil and the USA, which invites users to record oral histories in a portable recording space (see <http://www.museumoftheperson.org>). Where the Talking Difference Portable Studio differs from previous projects is in its ability to allow community members to record and respond to questions related specifically to contemporary experiences and understandings of race-based discrimination and cultural diversity. In this way, the studio is intended to act as an evolving contemporary experience rather than a repository for information.

The felt-covered installation creates a safe and welcoming space in which visitors engage with one another's ideas about racism and cultural diversity by creating and responding to questions using a touch screen and high definition camera. Participants take part in a virtual dialogue by viewing questions and responses created by community members. They also create their own responses in the form of text, audio, video or drawing. Participants' responses are hosted in the studio and a selection is made available online and as part of the *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition at Immigration Museum in Melbourne.

The studio's felt curtains, which run not quite all the way to the floor, give the user a sense of being both inside and outside. Perhaps partly because of this, what could be quite a confronting experience of being asked about your skin colour, your culture, your ideas about racism, is made more intimate. On viewing the content created in the studio, it becomes evident that participants are prepared to share quite personal experiences in the space.

## Process

The initial seed questions for the Studio were developed through a series of workshops in the second part of 2011 with young people from diverse backgrounds. The young people were selected from the

City of Brimbank, in the western suburbs of Melbourne, because Brimbank offered the first host venues for the studio and is one of the most culturally diverse local government areas in Victoria (City of Brimbank, 2012). The workshops were organised in collaboration with the libraries, the local council, and various youth services, and the young people involved were invited to become champions for the project.

The workshops focussed not only on content production but also on developing the skills of the young people to advocate for the idea of anti-racism. This included role playing, skill sharing, and public speaking skills development, which all combined to make the seed questions stronger and build the capacity of the champions to make links between the project and the broader community. In this way, the project provided an opportunity for participants to make anti-racism part of their everyday lives. The video questions they produced ranged from the very specific such as 'what do you think of your skin colour?' to broader questions such as 'what has your culture taught you?'

These questions were then fed into the studio for its tour of Brimbank Libraries in 2011. Following on from this, Talking Difference was invited to be part of the Arts About Us Roadshow, which toured successful Arts About Us projects around Regional Victoria in 2012. Museum Victoria brought the studio to regional libraries in Shepparton, Cobram, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Horsham and Mildura, producing some very positive content.

In each location the Museum worked closely with community organisations on the ground to launch the Studio and to gather participants for video-making workshops on the first day of each residency. The Museum worked with a diverse range of groups in this process including Shire Councils, Aboriginal Cooperatives, Ethnic and Migrant support services, TAFEs, schools, and the libraries themselves.

These workshops and launches provided an opportunity to draw out those aspects of the project that were most relevant to people in the local community. This varied in each place from Indigenous participants creating questions related to Indigenous identity and politics in Lakes Entrance, the Country Women's Association sharing a lunch with a local migrant support network in Horsham, to recently arrived residents in Mildura creating questions related to resettling in Australia after arriving by boat.

The importance of community engagement alongside the delivery of the interactive cannot be underestimated. The collaboration with libraries and community organisations provided a key link with communities, particularly because of the active role libraries take as public resources and strong spaces for conversation and engagement.

## **Outcomes**

It is important to note that the Talking Difference project is just now entering its second phase, which builds on the work done so far by bringing a new version of the studio into schools. Museum Victoria staff are still in the process of analysing over a thousand responses in the Portable Studio.

Because of this, it is too early in the project's evaluation to draw conclusions about community impact and outcomes. There are, however, some themes that can be seen to emerge.

Firstly, the Studio has been a fantastic success in terms of numbers, over 1,000 people created responses over the course of the two tours, representing a broad range of cultural backgrounds, age groups and a balance of genders. The age profile of participants represents a trend towards participation by younger people which is a key target audience for the project.

From initial analysis, it is clear that the Studio elicited a diverse range of responses of exceptionally high quality. Some participants present views that have clearly been considered before using the studio, others are evidently speaking 'off the cuff', almost changing their minds as they speak. This is especially effective when there is more than one user. For example, in response to a question regarding skin colour one speaker says, "We're super happy to be white" and her friend interjects "hey, I'm not white." A discussion ensues engaging with skin colour and its connection to identity. This sort of public challenge and dialogue is representative of the core goals of the project.

Another emergent theme is that the overwhelming majority of participants share positive experiences of cultural diversity. Even in circumstances where participants are sharing more challenging material, such as experiences of discrimination, participants are respectful of each other's views, and generally make constructive comment about intercultural exchange, cultural diversity or race-based discrimination in Australia. For example, one participant says "I was proud of my colour as long as I was in my place of birth ... but then when I came (to) Australia in 2010, my daily experiences in the community have compelled me to think that, well, there is something wrong with this colour." This variety of responses creates a strong platform for further dialogue between participants both offsite as part of the studio's residencies, onsite at Immigration Museum, and online.

Finally, a significant impact of the project is that its originality attracts interest beyond the individuals and groups using the studio. For example, by taking up residency in public places, the unusual nature of the installation attracts strong media coverage and presents the key messages of anti-racism, encouraging dialogue, and promoting cultural diversity beyond the Studio's direct user group. This process is supported by the high profile of VicHealth and Museum Victoria. From each of its residencies so far, it is clear that the Portable Studio provides a strong impetus for engagement with race-based discrimination and cultural diversity.

## **Conclusion**

Museum Victoria's Talking Difference Portable Studio takes an inclusive and participatory approach to challenging race-based discrimination through arts practice. As noted, this paper cannot draw conclusions as to outcomes at this early stage in the projects' evaluation, but it appears that the project's strong support from VicHealth's Arts About Us program and foundation in Immigration Museum's community engagement practice have strengthened its connection with and impact in communities. As part of the suite of programming making up the Talking Difference project, the installation provides a safe space in which dialogue about cultural diversity and race-based

discrimination can be facilitated. In this way, through the Talking Difference Portable Studio, Museum Victoria offers a new mode by which participants can work together to visualise anti-racist futures.

## Links

<http://www.museumvictoria.com.au/talkingdifference>

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/about-us/community-engagement/>

<http://www.artsaboutus.com.au/>

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# Racism – Racing to the Top, Pushing to the Bottom?

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**Keywords** Racism, mode of production, rights, the other, constructivism, Social Quality, the Social.

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**Human rights are taken at least in their definition and universal character for granted. However, taken seriously the title of the central document marks a problem with the concept. It reads “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” but – taking pedantically – as such it does not claim to be a “Declaration of Universal Human Rights”. Commonly we find a debate of this topic when it comes to juxtaposing UN-Declaration (1948) and Cairo-Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990). Another necessary debate, however, is not taken up: universalism is limited to the universe of global capitalism.**

**This is in particular in the context of racism a fundamental issue as from a narrow interpretation of Human Rights we see “the other” easily under a multiple pressure:**

- **pressure arising from socio-economic disadvantage (SEC),**
- **pressure arising from discrimination as consequence of the loss of socio-cultural references (SC),**
- **pressure arising from exclusion (SI),**
- **and importantly pressure arising from the loss of a genuine own economic identity (SE).**

**The presentation will highlight “production” – as complex matter of shaping society rather than a concept of economic security – as meaningful in determining HR, striving for the need to redefine these rights by reference to socio-economic security, cohesion, inclusion and empowerment as dimensions of Social Quality**

**Seeing this as a critical intervention, it should not be misunderstood as repudiating human rights. On the contrary, it urges to take the issue more seriously, pleading**

**for a more radical concept going beyond the limitation of basic protection.**

## **Introduction**

*I would like to pay my respects to the traditional, present and future owners, custodians and ancestors of this land and acknowledge the spiritual relationship of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people with their country and their cultural values and beliefs.*

This is the statement – though in slightly different forms – used often in Australia on the occasion of opening ceremonies. And it is also in some form used on the occasion of the conference Racisms in the New World Order on the occasion of which I visit Australia. Jackie Huggins who addressed the participants on the occasion of the opening reception. And importantly she emphasizes the meaning of the future.

## **Dynamising Perspectives on Racism**

Racism – as socio-political expression and as “concept” – starts very much from a static proposition. Using the term racism accepts by and large both, race/ethnicity and society as given. These references can and should then not be questioned as such. This orientation takes also time and space as given. In recent times we find increasingly the slogan ‘We inherited the planet, Mother Earth, only from our children’ – and this may give us some idea of an ongoing change as it allows approaching history not as matter of the past but more importantly as matter of taking responsibility for the future.

What had been said before about the mainstream orientation on time and space applies equally to the understanding of social and human rights: though lacking a decisive definition, they are suggest to be “known”, and seen as externally and eternally defined. This is even true if we look at the consideration put forward by Karel Vasak, suggesting three stages of the development of HR, namely ‘negative rights’, ‘positive rights’ and ‘rights of solidarity’ (see Vasak, 1977: 29). And it is also true when we respect an increasing awareness in political and academic debates that we are talking in all these cases about social constructs. Moreover, even fundamentally critical approaches, referring for instance to Foucault’s “theory of power” are falling short in questioning the fundamental “givenness” of societal structures. We may also refer to the open dispute for instance between UN-Declaration (1948) and Cairo-Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990). Both are conceptualised as basically unquestionable. Although social constructivism accepts some form of dynamics and although Foucault emphasises practice within complex structures of power relations, the foundation of both remains untouched and the critical dimension is in all these cases usually limited to rebalancing different elements of the given structures rather than searching for a fundamentally new approach that refers to the social being itself. And as such, a temporary stasis is the fundamental consensus – even if the point of reference may be different.

# Questionability of the Nation State

Race/ethnicity and rights are seen as given, based in the antecedent assumption of society as given. Consequently, change of society can only be imagined as the change of distributing resources within the given framework. – The fundamental line is, of course, unquestionable; relations may be changed, but relationality is not part of the equation.

The contributions to a book Hurriyet Babacan and myself emphasised in the conclusions that modern statehood is defined by

*(1) securing **freedom** from feudal oppression or despotism, (2) legislating for **equality** among citizens, (3) focusing on **inclusion** to incorporate the previously excluded into the system and (4), of the utmost importance, establishing the principle of **individualism** as a primary goal.*

*(Babacan/Herrmann, 2013: 169)*

And we contended with reference to the other authors

*an issue that we usually take so much for granted that we easily forget its importance: that the construction of nationhood is a strongly hegemonic process – not so much by way of defining external borders but more as a matter of 'inner colonialisation'.*

*(ibid.)*

The limitation is principally given by a limitation of thinking citizenship in the lines of a formal and institutional frame of reference. At some stage this surely allowed social progress. However, later such constellation developed into fetters. Racism is obviously not emerging from "the other", but from the side of the hegemon. This seems to be a trivial statement – and as much it actually is trivial, it nevertheless needs to be made as long as concepts of assimilation, naturalisation etc. are swirling around in academic and political debates. – Only a gentle reminder may do suffice: when Frederick Engels looked in 1884 at the historical development, he highlighted the links between the *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. And as little as the modern family is "natural" as being the only and true way of gathering, as little is the modern state "natural" in such an understanding. In other words: the modern nation state is a reflection of a very specific historical constellation. And as such it is about a very specific way of establishing inclusiveness under the condition of exclusion. Although in political debates we are, of course, only hearing about the inclusion – and possibly the need to apply it to groups that are hitherto excluded – we should not allow raising illusions. In the light of the foregoing it may be questioned if racism can actually be overcome within the current politico-economic framework of capitalist societies or if such formation only allows shifting mechanisms of exclusion between different groups: 'race', gender, sexual orientations, religion ... – as said: and open question. Putting this question forward is not about denying the increasing inclusiveness of our societies: if we look at the antidiscrimination laws, at the actual measures to "support" for instance indigenous groups we can surely see important and positive changes. However, the very same fact: the need for special legislation and special support

mechanisms shows that there are structural flaws that stand in the way of any kind of natural equilibrium. Furthermore, if we look at the increasing poverty amongst the elderly, the ongoing child labour, but also the precarity in the so-called rich countries and the in many cases violent requirement to accept a capitalist mode of production: the exploitation of the natural resources in regions as PNG, going hand in hand with a sharp increase of inequality is just one marked expression of a process that denies people to control the resources of their land but also the right to determine the way in which they want to (re-)produce their own life.

## Developing Processuality of Power as Alternative Framework for Analysis

Four pillars are suggested as reference for an alternative vision – however, saying vision, does not mean that the presented understanding is based on an idealist approach. On the contrary, it is about putting a fundamentally materialist approach forward in the area of rights.

Before presenting these four points – relationality, processuality, power and appropriateness – some brief remarks are necessary to clarify the ontological perspective.

- Human beings are inherently social beings. This goes much beyond the Aristotelian understanding which is more about moral sentiments rather than about the constitutive element of social practice.
- Although the satisfaction of needs is an essential condition of existence, another reference is underlying the needs: It is the presupposition that

*[t]he materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insights into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch.*

*Engels, 1880:306* This is surely needs-related, but it is not needs-based – even if we take, as suggested by Hartley Dean in a forthcoming publication – thick needs as point of reference.

Only after thoroughly considering these two points, the four moments can come fully to the fore.

The first is about **relationality** – rather than relations. With this step we are able to overcome the formalist approach that presumes a fixed framework (city, state ...) for defining citizenship – this point is also highlighted by Dean, demanding rightly a post-Marshallian approach to defining rights.

This means to look at the four constitutive dimensions of

- auto- or self-relation,

- general relation to the other, being concerned with any other people
- specific relation to the other, being concerned with other people that are specifically defined by social constructs<sup>1</sup> as class, gender, race and
- the relation to what we commonly call “environment”.

All these relationships are mutually constitutive. For instance, self-relation happens only in the overall context and is thus defined by the relations to others etc. – and vice versa.

Second, we are fundamentally concerned with **processuality**. Even – or perhaps even more – if we are concerned with seemingly static conditions, they can only be understood as part of a hegemonic system which depends on permanent practice and “relational negotiations”.

Third, from here the fundamentally important point is that relationality is characterised by **power** which has to be understood in a twofold sense, namely

- as matter of abilities
- as matter of control.

Although both meanings are “social”, we can say that the first stands very much in the light of the (re-)production of daily life whereas the second is closer to the (re-)production of the institutional framework. In any case it is then difficult to imagine that these negotiations can be established according to “rational” rules in a neutral sense. In fact, any neutrality emerges as instrumental from the way in which the two dimensions are interwoven.

Fourth, we are subsequently concerned with **appropriateness**. “Power-games” as matter of social relationality and processuality are taking place in complex fields that depend on permanent practices that secure stabilisation. Again we are dealing with a twofold structure. On the one hand it is about building up property, making something somebody’s own – to be clear, this is not a matter of establishing private property. On the other hand it is about the appropriateness of this process and the resulting relations. In other words, what is (seen as) appropriate is again related to

- auto- or self-relation,
- relation to the general other,
- relation to the specific other,
- relations to the so-called “environment”.

We have to see that we stand on a complex ground – a foundation that is inherently “diffuse”.

At the same time this diffuse character is clearly structured – and in today’s societies it means it is structured by hierarchical and equally “centripetal” patterns. Changes are possible as slight movements within a closed area – changes are limited and leaving all talk of and strive for excellence aside, mediocrity is typical. In this way productivity is limited to some form of circularity:

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<sup>1</sup> Talking of social constructs does not mean to deny an objective character.

the permanent production of the same. In terms of social relations, it is not least producing permanently the same: conservative, closed and unable to change!

## Understanding the Social

Is a way out even thinkable? Supposedly Einstein said something like *A really good idea can be seen by the fact that it seemed to be impossible in the beginning*. Thus this analytical complexity is necessary in order to fully understand racism in a new way. Without being able to completely developing this, at least some clues can be presented – the Social Quality Approach will be used as frame of reference.

The broad framework is outlined as follows:

1. The social – mind: as noun – is understood as

*outcome of the interaction between people (constituted as actors) and their constructed and natural environment. Its subject matter refers to people's interrelated productive and reproductive relationships. In other words, the constitutive interdependency between processes of self-realisation and processes governing the formation of collective identities is a condition for the social and its progress or decline.*

*(van der Maesen/Walker, 2012: 260)*

2. This translates into the following three sets of dimensions:

Constitutional	Conditional	Normative
(processes)	(opportunities contingencies)	(orientation)
personal (human) security	socio-economic security	social justice (equity)
social recognition	social cohesion	solidarity
social responsiveness	social inclusion	equal valuation
personal (human) capacity	social empowerment	human dignity

*(Beck/van der Maesen/Walker, 2012: 66)*

3. Importantly, these are analytical tools, and at the very same time we are dealing with arrays for dispute. The dispute is not about distribution of resources (although they play of course a role too). However, more important is the concern with "spaces for action", for soci(et)al practice. In this way we open a perspective to include a qualitative dimension of products but also about the quality of production. The latter means especially control over the why and how what is produced. This goes much beyond the control of working conditions. We may emphasise again that we are not least dealing with the *production of social spaces*.
4. Looking at the three dimensions, an important point is concerned with the interconnection and interaction of the dimensions. Only in this way the qualitative analysis can fully flourish.

## Racism as Fearfully Closed Identity

Now we can come to the conclusions on racism. "The other" is not simply under multiple pressure but his/her "collective identity" is defined by the multiple interlocking positioning in the four areas and a specific pressure on the rights:

- pressure arising from socio-economic disadvantage (SEC),
- pressure arising from discrimination as consequence of the loss of socio-cultural references (SC),
- pressure arising from exclusion (SI),
- and importantly pressure arising from the loss of a genuine own economic identity, the empowerment in terms of political-economic control (SE).

Thus, it is suggested that racism is not primarily about the "racist in us" – and some would see that as racist in everybody. At the core is, instead, the racist society. Modern capitalist societies are geared towards extending processes of appropriation in a competitive mode: this is about a mode of "socio-technical competition". Extension of value – defined by the extension of exchange value – is designed in quantitative terms. And it is defined under the condition of finality of resources. We are then nearly necessarily speaking of a process of exclusion. This can be a matter of simple stratification. But it can also be a more fundamental process of establishing the other. Fearing the other is subsequently very much a matter of acknowledging that a different way and outcome of producing the social is possible – but accepting the borders which prohibit doing so. Racism is then in other words the process of excluding other options, excluding those who practice other modes of production, who live other values and who practice other ways of social relations.

This is a complex process, of course, and only the two most important dimensions can be presented:

The one is about the other as threat on available resources – a very common issue in social analysis and debates. The discrepancy between analysis and debate is of course striking: So many data show that there is in actual fact no "real" competition": the resources are usually not effected by migration ... – the differences are of a different kind.

But at the very same time the political debate is frequently oriented in a negative way on the cost-factor "non-naturalised" people allegedly pose – and it is remarkable that in this context a term as naturalisation is used: It reflects that a given way of (re-)production [is considered as "natural" and thus the only possible. This translates easily – if not equally "naturally" – into establishing and accepting vertical ramparts, denying the dominance of the horizontal walls.

The second is the celebration of the other – very much in the way Georg Simmel outlined: the stranger that has something to offer that we are drawn to but that we do not dare to take fully into account for our own social life.

Looking at this in the perspective of political-economy, we are dealing with the shift within the process of (re-)production. In a nutshell this can be characterised by two matters, namely the

increasing separation of use value and exchange value and the increasing dissolution of mediating performances. In other words, the actual production is shifting towards the background of daily life – and this means as well that the (re-)production of social life is subsequently increasingly separated from real activities of daily life. Life is not anymore a stage; life is a film, importantly produced by applying a black box.

## **The Right to Live in Self-Defined Modesty rather than Imposed Poverty**

With this we are close to the question that is asked in the beginning, looking at RACISM in the light of RACING TO THE TOP, PUSHING TO THE BOTTOM? Without denying psychological factors, and without denying a social constructivist perspective, there is with all this an inherent double-blemish: On the one hand, both perspectives are founded in a static and structuralist perspective, however they tend to disrespect the meaning of societal structures to the extent to which they leave it to individual action to overcome them.

On the other hand, those mainstream approaches are de-meaning practice as complex socio-economic interaction that is concerned with the production of socio-economic spaces. This goes far beyond the mechanical interaction and it goes also far beyond granting distributional rights. So the challenge is to allow the establishment of productive spaces where people interact not by distributing resources but by producing daily life. We can then turn it around: rather than seeing a major push of equal distribution as core of anti-racist strategies we have to ask for a push towards the right – and obligation – towards taking production – of goods and spaces and relationships seriously.

It may sound trivial and it surely is to some extent a simplification. However, it may be brought down to a formulation like: holidays for all – and at all times. Surprised about this formulation? Be more surprised about behaviour during holidays where we act and play together, where we shape common grounds – and where the stranger is different but equal. Fearing the other is about the projection to admit that we could do different ourselves if we would oppose the oppressors. Race is not about racing – it is about the play of a really enlightened society. And this means not least to accept that another mode of production is possible – perhaps in some respect not as advanced as the capitalist hyper-production of commodities – in this way a matter of remaining at the bottom; but more advanced in allowing the retention of real and genuine economic growth as matter of use value and social spaces. This is not least an important matter as many of the promises that are given with the outlook on wealth of nations and people actually is actually a push towards increased inequality which translates for many into a near to total exclusion: racism as hegemony of capitalist despondency.

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# Refugees in Australia - employment outcomes remain problematic

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**Keywords:** settlement, assimilation, multiculturalism, migration, migrant/s, refugee/s, employment opportunity, ethnicity, Muslim, Australia, discrimination, English language, workforce, labour.

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**Captain Cook arrived in Botany Bay on 28 April 1770 and declared Australia as 'terra nullius', a Latin phrase meaning 'a land of no one'. This ignored the rights of Indigenous Australians and set the scene for the theme of racism which mars the history of Australia through to the present day. This paper considers the difficulties refugees face in the Australian workplace, exploring interrelationships between their religion, ethnicity, employment and equity. These difficulties are due to a variety of factors including their visible difference in accent and appearance; their lack of Australian qualifications and experience; and the failure of federal English language programs to provide adequate employment skills or continuity in training for some immigrant groups. Even where refugees do find employment, this is typically in low status occupations or in workplace contexts where they often face structural barriers and discrimination. All these factors limit the employment opportunities of refugees in the supposedly egalitarian society of Australia which gives everyone a 'fair go'.**

## Introduction

The aging of post-World War II communities and new migrants is taking place within the culturally and linguistically diverse population of Australia. European communities now display reduced migration in contrast to an increase in non-European communities including Asian, Middle Eastern and most recently black African.

Australia remains a strong Anglo-centric country despite its population shift since the end of World War II. The Australian government faces a challenge to accommodate the increasing range of

cultural and linguistic changes brought about by the increased diversity of migrants to Australia. Previously Australia could be considered as an 'isolated island' of mainly British culture in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. However, the increasing numbers and diversity of migrants to Australia has meant the Australian government has had to modify its immigration policies to meet the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the Australian community. Early policies favoured assimilation of migrants into the mainstream Australian community with potential loss of their language and culture. This has now changed to a policy of multiculturalism that seeks to meet the wish of migrant communities to maintain the cultures and languages of Australian immigrants as part of the rich tapestry of peoples that now make up the Australian community. The present government appears to be moving towards a policy of 'integration' (Jakubowicz 2009, p.29)

Migration has become the main driver of Australia's current population growth. Migrants have arrived in Australia under a range of conditions – as migrant families with preferred work skills, some sponsored by business and employer groups, some migrating independently; others have arrived as refugees admitted to Australia on humanitarian grounds. Irrespective of their reason for entry, a larger proportion of these migrants have been of non-English speaking background. Within the publication 'Population flows: Immigration aspects 2009-10' (DIAC, 2011a), it is estimated that the 168,700 migrants arriving between 2010 and 2011 speak over 174 languages and dialects other than English.

## **Australia's policy on migration and settlement**

### **The Land of no one**

According to the National Archives of Australia (2011), when Captain Cook arrived in Botany Bay on 28 April 1770, he declared Australia as *terra nullius*, a Latin phrase translated as 'land of no one'. This was despite the fact that Cook knew there was an Australian Indigenous population from observations made on his voyage around the coast of Australia. Griffith (1998) notes that *terra nullius* refers to a doctrine established among colonising European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which recognized their right to take possession of lands regarded as being unoccupied – with no recognisable sovereign power and in which lived 'uncivilised inhabitants in a primitive state of society'. Robertson, Demosthenous & Demosthenous (2005) comment strongly on the lack of validity of this doctrine of *terra nullius* based on the fact of Aboriginal systems of law and social heritage.

More than 500 linguistically, culturally, and spiritually diverse Aboriginal groups had lived on the continent for approximately 60,000 years, with political, legal, economic, and social infrastructure in place. But, then, the colonisers came, armed with the most oppressive of ways. Guided and motivated by imperialist (ir)rationality for the acquisition of land to expand *mother* England, the colonisers reported that the continent was unoccupied; an expanse of territory without settled inhabitants or settled law. And, in

colonising mode, they declared the country *no man's land* (original author emphasis; p. 38).

As Ardill (2009) notes, the notion of Australia as being unoccupied was the basis for the continued denial of justice to Indigenous Australians until the Mabo decision in 1992, when the concept of *terra nullius* was effectively overturned by the High Court of Australia and Indigenous land rights were recognised. The inequitable treatment of the Australian Indigenous peoples over the two centuries since British settlement has been extensively documented elsewhere and will not be further considered here. However, the facts concerning *terra nullius* are of interest to the present study in that they not only shaped much of Australian government policy towards Aboriginal peoples in the twentieth century, but also provide a context for the subsequent racist immigration policies of Australian governments in the early and mid-twentieth century leading up to the more enlightened policies of the present day.

## The land of someone (preferably white)

In 1788, the first British penal colony was established at Botany Bay. The next century saw six independent colonies established (New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania). Thompson (2007) notes that before 1900, there was in fact no country called 'Australia', only the six colonies. However, by the 1890s, there was a growing sense of Australian nationalism. This was driven by a range of factors, most noticeably the need for a national defence force and a common immigration policy. In the area of defence, Germany, France and Russia were expanding into the Pacific. Each of the six colonies maintained their own defence force, and it was realised that a single army and navy could better defend Australia.

Immigration was also a growing issue of concern. As Liebig (2007) notes, Australia has been the target of immigrants since the settlement of Botany Bay in 1788. In the early years of Australia, these immigrants were predominantly from Britain and Ireland. However, as Bryoni (2011) notes, the gold rush of the 1850s saw the influx of increasing numbers of Asian immigrants into Australia, particularly from China. There were also large numbers of South Pacific Islanders who worked on Australian cane plantations. Thompson (2007) maintains that the economic success of these immigrant groups led to jealousy and worry over jobs among the predominantly white population, and this led to a desire to restrict economic competition from Asian migrants.

The unification of the six colonies was not easily achieved because, as Thompson (2007) notes, there were many fights and walkouts among the delegates of the various colonies. However, in 1901, the Australian Federal Constitution was established, and the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed. It was against this backdrop that the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 was passed. The rationale for the Act is captured by Thomson (2007).

In 1901, 98% of people in Australia were white. Australia wanted to remain a country of white people who lived by British customs. Trade unions were keen to prevent labour competition from Chinese and Pacific Islander migrants who they feared would undercut wages. One of the first pieces of legislation passed in the new Federal Parliament was the

Immigration Restriction Act. Now known as the infamous White Australia Policy it made it very difficult for Asians and Pacific Islanders to migrate to Australia (para. 5).

This Act, as Thompson (2007) notes, allowed immigration officers to administer a literacy test, actually a 50-word Dictation Test, in any European language of their choice to any potential migrant to Australia. If that person was unable to successfully write out that dictation (in a language with which they were not familiar), then they could be excluded from entry into Australia. In fact, this was one of three Acts passed in 1901 that were aimed at ensuring immigration of predominantly European migrants. The other two items of legislation were the *Pacific Islander Labourers Act* that allowed for the deportation of Pacific Island workers from Australia; and the *1901 Post and Telegraph Act (Section 15)* which stated that ships carrying Australian mail should use only white labour. In addition, according to Curthoys and Lake (2005), over the next few decades further items of legislation were passed strengthening the White Australia policy – this 'further legislation relating to suffrage, naturalisation, old age and invalid pensions and the maternity allowance all specified racial grounds for discrimination in the name of White Australia' (p. 228).

The White Australia Policy was to persist until World War II, after which the policy was gradually liberalised. This was predominantly in response to Australia's great post-war need for an increased population required for reconstruction and industrialisation. Initially, as Bryoni (2011) notes, the preference was still for white European migrants – as evidenced in the 'populate or perish' scare campaign of the late 1940s which argued that Australia was vulnerable to Asian invasion (remembering that Australia had been on the brink of invasion by Japan in 1942). However, as Tavan (2005) points out, Australia was also under increasing domestic and international pressures to change its discriminatory immigration policies. Despite this, it was not until 1973 that the White Australia policy was formally renounced by the federal government. It was around this time the integration policy of the Australian government also shifted from assimilation to one of multiculturalism.

## Effects of assimilation

Krupinski (1984) presents a review of several articles on the health and wellbeing of refugees and migrants arriving in Australia over the period from 1947 to 1980. While most were British, other migrant and refugee groups of significance in this period were Eastern European refugees in the 1940s; Western Europeans (Dutch, German, Italian) in the 1950s; and then Greeks and Yugoslavs in the 1970s, as well as increasing numbers of Asians. These groups of NESB migrants and refugees are the main focus of Krupinski's (1984) paper. General trends are discussed below with particular reference to European migrants as the main groups affected by the federal government's policy of assimilation.

NESB migrants in this period were found to suffer from an increased incidence of mental health disorders (e.g. schizophrenia and depression). This was posited by Krupinski (1984) as due to pre-migration trauma where it had occurred, and culture shock related to arrival in a new country and culture. Interestingly, the peak incidence of such disorders was generally 7-15 years after arrival in

Australia. This was especially true in southern European females (e.g. from Greece and Italy), a fact that the author put down to a lesser degree of assimilation relative to their husband and children. His reasoning was that husbands were better assimilated into Australian society and language through work, and children through school; these women, on the other hand, remained at home, without a great deal of exposure to Australian language and culture. As the family aged, their role as mother and wife diminished leading to frustration and a greater likelihood of mental disorder.

Adolescent European migrants in this period did not suffer from any greater risk of mental health disorders than their Australian counterparts. However, as Krupinski (1984) notes, there were intergenerational conflicts relating to differences in morals and values, with younger people favouring the more liberal Australian norms, and rebelling against the conservative views of their migrant parents. This is thought to account for the greater incidence of behavioural problems seen in these young people caught between two cultures. Interestingly, and contrary to Krupinski's (1984) expectations, the incidence of psychiatric disorders was lower in migrants who arrived in Australia at an older age. This is posited as perhaps due to the fact that such elderly migrants were not expected to work or to play a full role in family life; nor were they assimilated into Australian society, rather remaining within the protective cocoon of their extended family. Thus they were not exposed to the full stresses of migration and assimilation.

Finally, Krupinski (1984) concludes that there were a number of contributing factors that affected the health and wellbeing of migrants and refugees. These include pre-migration trauma, prior social and cultural background, and the relative degree of culture shock experienced. The individual effects of each of these factors are hard to quantify. However, it might be reasonably suggested that the policy of cultural assimilation demanded by the federal Australian government of the time would not have assisted NESB migrants in their settlement into Australia.

## Effects of multiculturalism

In respect to workplace discrimination, Colic-Peisker (2011) presents research that concerns multiculturalism, noting that "multiculturalism as ideology and policy has been criticised for over-focusing on cultural identities and differences and [for] a lack of focus on the structural inequality of ethnocultural groups" (p. 637). In support of this, she provides the results of recent research. This research used a quantitative methodology to compare the employment outcomes of eight NESB immigrant groups among themselves and also with Anglophone reference groups (from the UK and Australia). The research hypothesis being tested was that: "employment outcomes of NESB immigrants with post-school qualifications (either vocational or tertiary) will be worse than those of the Australia-born. The major ESB group, the UK-born, is included as a control group, and their employment outcomes are expected to be comparable to the Australia-born." (p. 641). Data collection was made from the most recent (2006) Australian census to identify "how the primary human capital factors – qualifications and language proficiency – translate, or otherwise, into appropriate jobs following migration to Australia" (p. 641).

NESB participants for Colic-Peisker's (2011) study were selected from a cross-section of immigrants – older established, mainly economic immigrants (Germany, Croatia, Russia); the current largest source groups (UK, China, India, Philippines); and those who are typically humanitarian refugees (Chile, Somalia), often with the lowest employment outcomes and, for Somalis, with the additional aggravating factor of being visibly different in colour and religion (mostly Muslim). In order to control for English proficiency and length of residence (two other major factors impacting on employment success), participants were selected only where self-assessed English proficiency was 'very good' and where residence in Australia was at least ten years. The main findings of Colic-Peisker's (2011) research confirm the research hypothesis – that, overall, NESB immigrants have worse employment outcomes than people from English speaking background (born in Australia or the UK). However, some NESB groups match the success of the Anglophone groups in vocational sector employment (Russia, Germany, China), and also in the tertiary-educated sector (Germany, Russia). Somalis are towards the bottom of both rankings (vocational and tertiary educated) for successful employment outcomes – that is, they have significantly worse employment outcomes relative to their skill and educational levels. Research by DIAC (2011) has found that humanitarian refugees have the highest levels of unemployment among migrant groups, even after five years. As Colic-Peisker (2011) notes – "refugee-ness tends to trigger mainstream prejudices against groups originating from underdeveloped and violence-ridden countries" (p. 648).

The findings above were also reported by Johnstone (2011) who reviewed the plight of professionally-qualified black African skilled migrants living in Melbourne. Many were Somalis and had been in Australia for many years. Despite this, they had found it very difficult to obtain professional jobs, and generally had to 'downskill' themselves (hide their true qualifications) and accept low status, unskilled work where available. According to Colic-Peisker's (2011), this is due to the fact that they are both visibly different and also predominantly Muslim, thus they are regarded as more culturally distant than other migrant groups. The following quote from Johnstone (2011) captures the hopelessness felt by members of this group.

... bring them to Australia, and the courage and commitment of people like this slowly but surely die: eroded by year after year of rejection, discouragement and official silence. It's little wonder the older professionals here – many once proud captains of their industries – wind up sliding into an uneasy retirement, "fitting in" as interpreters or drivers, and trying not to look back at what might have been, had they not given up their old lives for their children (final paragraph).

These findings on multiculturalism inform the present study in that they make explicit the fact that – despite the lip service paid to cultural respect; despite the legislation on equity and equal opportunity; despite the rhetoric of diversity management – discrimination against migrants, mainly the visibly different, remains both at an institutional/structural and interpersonal level in Australian society. Colic-Peisker (2011) makes clear in her paper that the effect of gender has not been studied in respect to Australian labour market outcomes and first culture qualifications.

# **Migrant employment in Australia**

## **Employment outcomes for the skilled migration program**

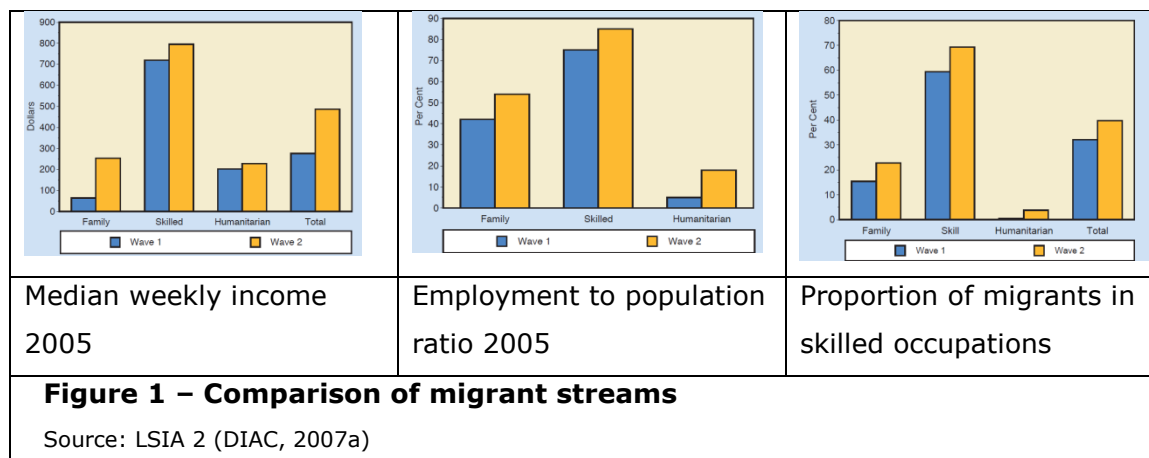
Migrants in the skilled stream of the Migration Program are selected according to skills and qualities that will both benefit the Australian workforce and assist them in finding employment in Australia – this includes a demand for high English proficiency as demonstrated by IELTS scores of 6.0 or higher. To put things in perspective – an overall IELTS band score of 6.5 is the minimum required for entry of international students to most university bachelor degrees, with IELTS 7.0 the minimum required for entry to postgraduate courses and some professional courses (e.g. nursing, medicine) (University of Queensland, 2012).

Research conducted by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) demonstrates that improved employment rates are the result of these demands for high English proficiency. For instance, the 'Continuous Survey of Australia's Migrants' commenced in 2009 and will be updated every six months (DIAC, 2010a, 2010b). The most recent results for migrants arriving in 2009-2010 shows that after six months residence, skilled migrants have a workforce participation rate of 95 per cent with only 5 per cent unemployment; furthermore, 75 per cent of those employed were in a skilled job, and over 83 per cent were employed full time. An interesting contrast here is the fact that only about 65 per cent of Australians of working age (over 15) participate in the workforce, with around 49 per cent in a skilled job, and 70 per cent employed full time.

Another longer-term research project was the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) (DIAC 2007a, 2007b, 2009). This looked at longer-term outcomes for Australia's migrants in employment and other areas by surveying three cohorts of arrivals in the periods 1993-1995 (LSIA 1), 1999-2000 (LSIA 2) and 2004-2005 (LSIA 3). These cohorts were interviewed at six months and 18 months after arrival; and in the case of LSIA 1 also at 42 months after arrival. The general trends of relatively high employment levels for settlers within the Migration Program are again evident in the LSIA's (see figure within next section).

## **Employment outcomes for the humanitarian program**

Data for refugees on the Humanitarian Program was included in LSIA 1 and LSIA 2, but not LSIA 3 as there is now a separate study available on Humanitarian refugee outcomes (DIAC, 2007b). There is also a longitudinal survey of refugees due to commence in 2012 and run to 2017 (DIAC, 2011). Data from the LSIA 2 for the Migration and Humanitarian Programs is presented in Figure 1. As can be seen, settlers from the Humanitarian and Refugee Program generally have wages around two-thirds less than skilled migrants; lower rates of employment relative to skilled migrants at around 2 per cent at six months and 15% at 18 months after arrival (wave 1 and 2 questionnaires); and finally minimal numbers working in skilled occupations on arrival, with only a 2-3 per cent increase by 18 months later (DIAC, 2007a).



Hugo (2011) provided a report to DIAC on the economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants to Australia. This author maintains that there is a prevailing stereotype among many in the Australian mainstream population that humanitarian refugees often do not enter the workforce, and are thus heavily dependent on social welfare payments. Initial viewing of the LSIA 2 data above might seem to support this, as would other trends identified within the LSIA. The labour force participation of humanitarian refugees as surveyed within the LSIA was low eighteen months after arrival (above 50 per cent), and even after three years in Australia there was still an unemployment rate of around 33 per cent. However, the LSIA is limited in that humanitarian refugee migrants were only followed for eighteen months after their arrival in Australia.

To counter this, Hugo (2011) reported data from the 2006 Census which allows a longer-term picture to emerge for refugee migrants. Some major trends identified include the following. First generation refugee migrants continued to have lower levels of workforce participation than Australian-born population, especially among recently-arrived groups from Africa (Sudan, Congo, Liberia, Burundi and Somalia), Afghanistan and Iraq (40-40%). However, it was noticeable that as their length of residency in Australia increased and into the second generation, the average unemployment rate of NESB refugee migrants gradually fell towards single figure percentage, though generally still above the Australian average (5%). There is further comment on this so-called 'refugee gap' phenomenon in the next section on research.

For Humanitarian refugees in general, Hugo (2011) found that there were noticeable differences in their profile relative to other migrants in respect to English language proficiency, education and qualification levels, all of which impact on final employment opportunities. Based on their self-assessed English language proficiency from the 2006 Census, Hugo (2011) provides the following summary for Humanitarian refugees:

It is a striking finding that more than a third of humanitarian migrants reported that they either could not speak English at all or not speak it well. This creates a very significant barrier to their entry to the labour market ... in 2006 almost three quarters (74 per cent) of humanitarian migrants who did not speak English well or not at all were 'not in the

labour force' and only 16 per cent were employed. Of those who spoke English very well, 40 per cent were employed (p. 128).

Pre-migration education and qualification levels of Humanitarian migrants are another factor important in employment success in their host country. Combining data from the 2006 Census and DIAC/ABS database, the Australian Bureau of Statistics noted (ABS, 2010, cited in Hugo, 2011):

... the proportion of Humanitarian Program migrants who had completed year 12 or equivalent (47 per cent) was lower than the proportion in the general migrant population (75 per cent) ... There was a higher proportion of Humanitarian Program migrants (13 per cent) with an educational level of year 8 or below when compared to the general population of all migrants (3 per cent). The rate of persons who never attended school was higher for Humanitarian Program migrants (7 per cent) than it was for the total migrant group (2 per cent). (p. 136).

In addition, the qualifications for Humanitarian refugees are also lower than other groups. This can be seen by reference to table 1 below collating statistical data from DIAC and the ABS. It can be seen that Humanitarian refugees have much higher percentages of people with no post-school qualifications (70.7 per cent) as compared to other visa categories.

**Visa Type of Settler Arrivals, 2001-06 by Post-School Qualification in 2006:  
Proportion (Percent) of All Migrants Aged Over 15 Years**

Source: ABS/DIAC Data Linkage Project

	Family	Humanitarian	Skilled	Other	Total
Postgraduate degree	7.6	1.1	18.4	0.0	12.4
Bachelor degree	24.2	6.2	35.4	16.1	28.3
Advanced diploma/diploma/grad dip	13.0	9.6	13.3	16.6	12.9
Certificate	11.4	12.4	9.8	12.6	10.7
No Qualification	43.9	70.7	23.0	54.7	35.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 1 – Post school qualifications of Australian migrants**

(Source: Hugo, 2011)

The picture emerging for Humanitarian refugees in Australia is thus one of relatively less achievement for English language, education and qualification levels relative to other migrant groups. As will be appreciated from research presented in the next sector, these factors impact considerably on their employment outcomes.

## Employment outcomes for the skilled migration program

According to Jones and McAllister (1991) in their work on migrant unemployment, research has consistently shown that there are four determinants of employment outcomes for Australian migrants and refugees – English proficiency; length of residence in Australia; educational qualifications; and visa type. More recent research funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2009) presents analysis of survey data predominantly obtained from the Longitudinal

Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA), the most recent being the LSIA3 in 2005. This confirms the earlier findings of Jones and McAllister (1991) in identifying four factors that affect the employment outcomes of migrants – skill and education level; English language proficiency; age on arrival in Australia; and length of residence in Australia. Generally, higher work skill levels, better English language proficiency, younger age (adults) and greater time in Australia results in better work outcomes for these new Australians (DIAC, 2009).

Similar findings from other countries confirm the importance of these four factors in labour market performance of recent migrants. Liebig and Lemaitre (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) present an extensive analysis of labour market integration of immigrants within Australia, and also the more economically-developed countries of Europe (Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Norway and Switzerland). That review also echoes the importance of the general themes already noted (human capital, L2 language proficiency, length of residence and discrimination) in the labour success or otherwise of immigrants. Clark & Drinkwater (2008) studied migrants in the United Kingdom and identified human capital (skill and educational levels), English proficiency, length of stay, and discrimination as important factors in work outcomes for migrants. Moran & Petsod (2003) identified similar themes in relation to immigrants in the United States; as did Hiebert (2006), and Hum and Simpson (2004) in relation to the Canadian workplace. Chiswick and Miller (1995, 2010) also identify similar factors in relation to employment outcomes in Australia, Canada, Israel and the United States.

While all the factors noted above influence employment outcomes for migrants and refugees, proficiency in the language of their new country remains a particularly important determinant of their successful employment. Thus Hugo (2011) found in Australian refugees that:

... there is a consistent relationship between ability to speak English and level of labour force participation. Those who are able to speak English very well have a 70.2 per cent labour force participation rate compared with only 12.1 per cent for those who cannot speak English at all and 36.3 per cent for those who cannot speak the language well ... Similar striking patterns are apparent for the unemployment rate, with 7.7 per cent of those who speak English well being unemployed compared with almost a third (31.5 per cent) among those who cannot speak English at all (p. 132-133).

As Liebig (2007) notes in his extensive study of Australian and European immigrant employment outcomes – “language proficiency is arguably the most important element of human capital with respect to [labour market] integration ... [but] low language proficiency does not seem to be an obstacle to the filling of lower skilled jobs” (p. 44). These are also the findings of Chiswick and Miller (2010) in respect to migrants to the United States, namely that a good command of English results in higher earnings, but immigrants with lower level English skills still find employment in lower status, lower paid jobs where English proficiency is not as important. Chiswick and Miller (1995) also present research that indicates proficiency in the language of the country of settlement has a

significant effect on earnings potential, and this was identified in relation to Australia, Canada, Israel and the United States.

If length of residence and human capital (English proficiency, qualifications, work skills) were the only factors influencing labour market success, then it would be expected that, over time, all NESB migrant groups would tend towards similar labour market success as English-speaking Australians. However, as found in most of the research papers mentioned in this section, this is not the case, especially for visibly different migrants. There are other intangible factors that negatively affect the labour market outcomes of some groups of new settlers to Australia and other Western nations.

Colic-Peisker (2011) comments on these intangibles in relation to the Australian workplace. In respect to human capital, she notes that overseas qualifications do not have the same worth as Australian qualifications. Longer time of residence allows for accumulation of work experience and qualifications, and the learning of 'soft skills' such as the culturally-specific rules of social interaction in the workplace. Establishing social capital is also important – this reflects not just one's personal social network, but also the acceptance of one's ethnic group by the host society (here Australian ESB people). Lack of any one these intangibles can impact on employment success or failure, as well as integration into the host society. Discrimination against some NESB groups appears to be a definite factor influencing employment outcomes. This is suggested as likely for the findings in relation to the Somali group in Colic-Peisker (2011). Discrimination (structural and interpersonal) is also a theme identified in several of the research papers as mentioned above across most countries in the Western world.

Refugees are a particularly problematic group in relation to migration. Connor (2010) reports similar findings in the United States to those in Australia (as in previous section) using refugee data from the first wave of the US New Immigrant Survey in 2003. He notes several factors that impact on the earnings and occupational differences of refugees – "Refugees, on average, have less English language ability, less educational experience, different forms of family support, poorer mental and physical health, and generally reside in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods than other immigrants" (p. 377). However, even controlling for all these factors, there remains a constant and persistent disparity in earnings and occupational attainment within refugee groups relative to other immigrants and the mainstream population.

For Australian Humanitarian refugees, Hugo (2011) provides the information below (Table 2) illustrating data from the 2006 Census comparing their workforce participation and unemployment rates with the Australian-born. It can be seen that higher level qualifications improve workforce participation in all groups. First generation refugees have higher unemployment and lower workforce participation than the Australia-born regardless of their qualification level. In the second generation, workforce participation levels actually rise above the Australian-born for all educational levels. However, unemployment rates of the second generation remain slightly but persistently higher than the Australian-born for all educational levels. This is ascribed to the refugee gap phenomenon.

## Australia: First and Second Generation Refugee-Humanitarian Birthplace Groups and Australia-Born Unemployment Rate and Labour Force Participation Rate by Level of Education, 2006

Source: ABS, 2006 Census

Level of Education	Australia Born		First Generation		Second Generation	
	Unemployment	Participation	Unemployment	Participation	Unemployment	Participation
	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
Degree or Higher	1.8	85.3	5.7	80.9	2.3	89.6
Diploma Certificate	3.6	79.1	7.9	68.9	4.8	84.8
No Qualification	7.0	58.6	14.0	44.7	9.6	61.2
Total	4.9	68.7	10.3	56.3	6.2	73.9

**Table 2 – Refugee gap phenomenon**

(Source: Hugo, 2011, p. 138)

Another aspect to this refugee gap phenomenon, as Hugo (2011) notes, is that many refugees have to accept lower income occupations regardless of their past qualifications or work experience. They make a great contribution to the Australian economy through such employment. However, they often remain trapped in this situation, never rising above lower paid, lower status jobs despite the passage of time and improvement in English proficiency and qualifications. Note has already been made of this in Colic-Peisker (2011) and Johnstone (2011) discussed previously.

According to Hugo (2011), these findings of a refugee gap in occupation, employment and earnings have been identified in all Western nations receiving refugees. It has been clearly shown in Australian research that humanitarian refugees face greater difficulties to integration – economically, socially and culturally. This may be in part accounted for by reasons identified by Richmond (1988), namely that refugees did not migrate voluntarily, but rather were displaced by war, famine, politics, religion or other reason. They have also often experienced physical and mental trauma. Nevertheless, as Hugo (2011) notes, when all the reasons for refugee disadvantage are controlled for, there still remains this refugee gap, and it is important to understand the reasons for it.

An understanding of this is a major gap in our knowledge of migrant adjustment, not only in Australia but elsewhere as well. This is of importance not only to maximise the economic benefits which humanitarian settlers deliver to the country but also to give those settlers the same opportunities that other Australians enjoy (p. 172).

## Conclusion

This paper identifies that there is a complex interplay between human capital factors and intangible human factors influencing employment outcomes for NESB migrants in Australia. English proficiency is pivotal to employment success but reasonable proficiency is sometimes offset by workplace discrimination and other influences. The reasons for the refugee gap phenomenon need further elucidation.

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# Surveying the State of Community Relations in Public Schools

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**Keywords:** multicultural education, multiculturalism, racism, anti-racism, online surveying.

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**An understanding of teacher experiences, attitudes and knowledge is critical for developing multicultural education programs and policy. This paper draws upon the findings of the online Multicultural Education Survey of all public school teachers in New South Wales (May–June 2011). The survey showed an encouraging teacher disposition toward diversity, suggesting a widely held openness to cultural difference. It also found that teachers are supportive of multicultural education and strongly support anti-racism in schools. Teachers were, however, less likely than the general population to acknowledge racism as a problem in Australian society, and only half agreed that racism was a problem in schools. One interpretation of these data is that schools could be sites of less racism, less intercultural tension, or more effective anti-racism than elsewhere in society. This positivity towards diversity and anti-racism is a resource from which to leverage multicultural education. Broadly, schools are crucibles for improving community relations and civility. The dispositions of NSW public sector teachers, as revealed in our survey, are packed with potential for enhancing society.**

## Introduction

Schools play an important role in developing positive community relations among their student cohorts and implementing anti-racism strategies and behaviours. Government departments and schools, particularly in Australia, are actively implementing strategies and training with which to achieve these outcomes. What is less well known, however, is the extent to which training and literature has been transferred to teachers and whether this is having a positive impact upon the state of community relations within schools. As such, there was a need for empirical research that can determine this information and use that to support the development of new multicultural education programs.

This paper looks at findings from a state-wide online survey of New South Wales (NSW) public school teachers that was conducted in 2011 as a phase of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project titled 'Rethinking Multiculturalism, Reassessing Multicultural Education' (RMRME). In comparing these data to findings from a national survey of the Australian public carried out as part of the Challenging Racism Project (2001–2008), the paper discusses the current state of community relations within the NSW schools system, relative to society more broadly. The paper makes suggestions as to the broader implications of these findings and possible directions for future research.

## The RMRME Project

RMRME is a three year Australian Research Council Linkage Project (2011–2013) conducted between the University of Western Sydney (UWS), the Multicultural Programs Unit of the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) and the NSW Institute of Teachers. The project aimed to examine understandings of multiculturalism and how these link to notions of Australian identity, multicultural education and culturally inclusive curriculum and intercultural understanding.<sup>1</sup> The project consists of three stages: an analysis of relevant policy discourse; a state-wide survey of all public schools teachers; and action research involving focus groups with teachers and parents in 14 case-study schools (7 primary schools and 7 high schools representing student bodies from a wide-range of socio-economic and language backgrounds, and a diversity of geographic regions). This paper draws upon data from the state-wide multicultural education survey of NSW public school teachers.

## The Multicultural Education Survey

The survey of NSW public school teachers was conducted from May to June, 2011. An email with a link to an online survey was sent to all permanent and temporary staff, including non-teaching executive staff members and teachers within the NSW Technical and Further Education Commission (TAFE NSW). It was also promoted on the department's intranet and within its newsletter. While the department cannot confirm an exact figure on those who may have been eligible to complete the survey, they have estimated it to be around 55,000. As such, approximately 10 per cent of public

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.multiculturaleducation.edu.au](http://www.multiculturaleducation.edu.au)

school teachers in NSW (n=5,128) completed the survey. Participation in the survey was anonymous and UWS systems were used to host the survey, and manage data collection and analysis, to ensure confidentiality. The survey was comprised of 40 questions divided into several groupings covering teachers': background and training, professional learning experiences, perspectives toward multicultural education in schools and opinions on diversity and cultural relations.

## **Schools, Racism and Anti-Racism**

Relations among youth of different ethnic backgrounds has long been a focus of public commentary. In the post second world war migration era, there have been infrequent controversies, political and moral panics about migrant youth and supposed tensions with non-immigrant or other immigrant youth (Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW 1986; (*Hazzard Report*) Strike Force Neil 2006; Poynting & Morgan 2007). But, the Australian scholarship on tensions between youth of different ethnic backgrounds is quite limited. There is, however, an emerging set of scholarship, often from a social psychology orientation, on bullying among youth, and especially around schooling environments (Chessor 2005; Cross *et al.*, 2009; Newey & Magson 2010).

There are two very important bodies of work on schools and ethnic relations. One set of studies reveal the systematically uneven educational outcomes for ethnic minorities. This mostly USA based work points to institutionalised racism and to other forms of disadvantage as drivers of uneven academic achievement (Byrd & Chavous 2009; Cogburn *et al.*, 2011; Fisher *et al.*, 2000). Some of the aforementioned bullying scholarship in the USA has taken up ethnicity as an important axis across which such (racist) persecution occurs (Aboud & Joong 2008). This literature has also analysed the scope for anti-racism initiatives within case-study schools. This has included specialised research projects that focus on arming students with anti-racism tools, including verbal retorts for the school yard, such as Guerin's work in New Zealand (Guerin 2003; Guerin & Guerin 2007). A second set of work is focussed on improving ethnic relations within Schools. The most recent forms of this scholarship are critical of vicarious modes of multicultural education that have dominated within schools (Artiles *et al.*, 2011; Watkins & Noble 2008). The vicarious mode is focussed on privileged students who are provided with information about minorities, and who are asked to be tolerant of those who are ethnically or racially 'different'. Our project is firmly anchored within a perspective that is critical of such vicarious and often stereotypical information.

But before we felt able to embark upon a 'Reassessing of Multicultural Education' we believed it was important to gather some data on the nature of ethnic relations within schools. To our knowledge there has been no comprehensive empirical examination of the state of community relations within schools in NSW. The national Challenging Racism Project (2011) surveys (n=12,512)<sup>2</sup> found that 16.6 per cent of Australians had experienced racism in an educational setting. But the experience of racism within Schools has rarely been empirically examined, with the exception of Fethi Mansouri's work principally in Victoria (Mansouri & Wood 2008; Mansouri & Trembath 2005). Mansouri's survey

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school\\_of\\_social\\_sciences\\_and\\_psychology/research/challenging\\_racism](http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school_of_social_sciences_and_psychology/research/challenging_racism).

of school students in four states (NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Northern Territory, n=689) found that 70 per cent of Australian school students have experienced racism, and that 75 per cent have experienced or witnessed racism (Mansouri *et al.*, 2009). The most common setting for this experience was the school (pp. 40, 63-73, 101). NSW student rates of exposure to racism (69.8 per cent) (based on a sub-sample of n=275) were about the same as for other states. Mansouri *et al.*, (2009, p. 98) found that 38 per cent of students had experienced being called an offensive slang name for their cultural group, whereas the rates for the entire community in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth the exposure was only about 14.5 per cent (Dunn *et al.*, 2009, p. 6)

The (uneven) educational outcomes of students of different ethnic backgrounds has also received too little scholarly attention in Australia (Mansouri & Wood 2008), making it difficult to comment definitively on the extent of institutionalised racism within Schools. Considine and Zappalà's (2002) earlier data showed that Australian students of a Middle Eastern background were less likely to do well. These outcomes would be a traditional test of the extent of institutional racism. We know something about Indigenous educational disadvantage (Hunter & Schwab 2003; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2011, pp. 15–17), but the data more broadly, on ethnicity and outcomes within schooling, is largely unavailable. Nonetheless, our survey has examined teacher perceptions of diversity, racism, multicultural education and programs. These data provide some solid insight into the nature of community relations in schools. The gathering of the data aligns with one of the overall missions of the Challenging Racism Project which is to collect data that facilitates public acknowledgement of the scourge of racism and which can be a stimuli for anti-racism policy and action.

There are reasons to be hopeful about the state of ethnic relations in Australian schools. The Challenging Racism Project surveys across the states and territories of Australia have consistently found a very strong positive correlation between age and intolerance. Older Australians are less well disposed towards diversity, on average. Whereas younger Australians are more embracing of diversity, less influenced by socio-biological racism (as shown in Table 1), and less antipathetic to 'minorities' (Dunn *et al.*, 2004). Dunn and others point to the different eras in which younger, middle-aged and older Australians have lived. It should come as no surprise that Australians raised during the White Australia period will have substantially different views, on average, than those raised during an era in which Australia was officially defined as multicultural.

**Table 1: National belief in racial hierarchy, racial separation, and racialism, by age and education**

Demographic Characteristics		Do not believe in racial equality*		Belief in sexual separation**		Belief in Races***	
Age	18 to 34	8.7%	P=<.000	6.4%	P=<.000	73.7%	P=<.000
	35 to 64	10.3%		10.5%		78.0%	
	65+	15.9%		21.3%		83.4%	
	All	10.8% (n=12,514)		11.2% (n=12,512)		77.7% (n=12,514)	
Education	Tertiary	3.1%	P=<.000	2.9%	P=<.000	27.2%	P=<.000
	Non-tertiary	7.7%		8.2%		50.5%	
	All	10.8% (n=12,439)		11.1% (n=12,439)		77.7% (n=12,440)	

Source: The Challenging Racism Surveys, NSW/QLD, Oct-Dec 2001; Victoria, Aug-Oct. 2006, SA/ACT September-October 2007, NT/TAS/Perth, July-August 2008.

\* Question wording: All races of people are equal?

\*\* It is not a good idea for people of different races to marry one another?

\*\*\* Humankind is made of separate races?

Another notable aspect of Table 1 is the strong negative relation between higher education and belief in socio-biological racisms like racial supremacy. Given that almost all teachers have higher education qualifications, we would expect teachers to be a more pro-diversity and anti-racist segment of the population than the average. This is discussed below in relation to data from the survey.

Finally, there have been many curricula and extra-curricular anti-racism initiatives within School settings in Australia. These include values and civics education within state curriculum, as well as the cross curriculum priorities being hatched at national levels (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures; Australia's engagement with Asia). Extra-curricular initiatives include resources and messaging such as the Racism No Way program in NSW.<sup>3</sup> These initiatives are also likely to have a bearing on community relations in the school setting. There are also school-level consequences from the structural settings described earlier (White Australia through to multiculturalism), which have certainly influenced what might otherwise be a more racist and fraught environment. These assumptions for hopefulness are tested using the empirical data presented in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.racismnoway.com.au](http://www.racismnoway.com.au).

# **The Survey's Findings on Attitudes to Diversity, The State of Community Relations and Multicultural Education**

The findings reported in this paper are derived predominantly from survey statements with a consistent five part Likert response option scale from 'Strongly Agree' through to 'Strongly Disagree'. Participants were required to indicate their attitudes toward diversity, the state of community relations within schools and multicultural education. The results of these questions were collated in SPSS and cross-tabulated against each respondents: school position, years of teaching, school type, school region, school's percentage of students with a language background other than English (LBOTE), and school's score on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA). The data relevant to the themes of this paper are used below.

## **The Sample**

Before commencing an analysis of the survey's findings, it is important to comment on the survey sample. Due to the self-selecting nature of participation, there is a likelihood that the sample may be more 'pro-diversity' than teachers in general. A general limitation of on-line surveys is that samples tend to have higher proportions of those who have strong views on a given topic, in this instance either pro- multiculturalism or anti-multiculturalism (Dunn 2010, pp. 131–132; McGuirk & O'Neill 2010, pp. 208–209). In an attempt to check this, the results were compared against data collected from 14 case-study schools who conducted the online survey in a later stage of the project (November 2011). While approximately 10 per cent of teachers participated in the state-wide survey, it was completed by 75 per cent of teachers within the case-study schools, making for a more statistically reliable sample. Importantly, the trends of the data presented within this paper did not vary significantly. The answers where there was significant variation (e.g. having read relevant policies) is acknowledged where relevant in this paper.

In regard to demographic representation, while 76.1 per cent of those surveyed were female, this closely reflects the gender ratio of public school teachers in NSW where, in 2010, 72.2 per cent of full-time equivalent teachers were female (data provided directly from NSW DEC's Human Resources team, 2012). As Table 2 shows, the survey included participants with a broad range of teaching experience. The sample was, on average, five years older (average=20.4 years) than the general NSW teaching population (average=15.4 years). Despite this variation, few differences were observed across the age groupings. Any variations related to the data used in this paper are observed below. The cultural representativeness of the sample closely reflects that of the NSW population, with 78.2 per cent of participants born in Australia and 20.8 per cent from outside of Australia. In addition, as shown in Table 3, participation came from a range of schools with of a variety of language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE).

**Table 2: Survey Participants' Years of Teaching (2011) vs. NSW Public School Teachers' Years of Teaching (2011)**

	<b>Survey Participants</b>		<b>NSW Teachers</b>
<b>Years</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<6 years	608	11.9%	24.9%
6 – <15 years	1,221	20.2%	29.2%
15 – <25 years	1,315	24.0%	23.4%
≥25 years	1,851	41.2%	22.5%
Non-response	133	2.7%	N/A
Total	5,128	100%	100%
Average	20.4 years		15.4 years

Source: The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June 2011

**Table 3: Survey Participants by Language Background Other than English Percentage of Students**

<b>LBOTE %</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
>70%	1073	20.9%
40–69.9%	696	13.6%
20–39.9%	732	14.3%
5–19.9%	1030	20.1%
<5%	1193	23.3%
Non-response/ Indeterminable	404	7.9%
Totals	5,128	100%

Source: The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June 2011

## Attitudes to Diversity

As shown in Table 4, when participants were asked whether 'it is a good thing for schools to have students from different cultures', 93.3 per cent agreed, with only 0.8 per cent disagreeing. Three-quarters disagreed that 'society is weakened when people of different ethnic origins maintain their cultural traditions', with only 9.5 per cent agreeing with this sentiment. When respondents were asked whether 'racism is a problem in Australian society', 69.3 per cent agreed with 9.6 per cent disagreeing, and a significant 19.9 per cent remaining neutral. In comparison, Mansouri and Wood (2008, p. 112–113) found that 72 per cent of Year 9 and 10 students in three north-western Melbourne schools thought that racism was a problem in Australia. This indicates that public school teachers in NSW, or at least those who took part in the survey, are pro-diversity, non-assimilatory and the vast majority acknowledge racism.

**Table 4: Attitudes toward Diversity – NSW Public School Teachers (2011)**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>% Agree</b>	<b>% Disagree</b>	<b>% Neutral</b>
It is a good thing for schools to have students from different cultures.	5,063	<b>93.3%</b>	0.8%	4.6%
Society is weakened when people of different ethnic origins maintain their cultural traditions.	5,068	9.5%	<b>74.0%</b>	15.4%
Racism is a problem in Australian society.	5,069	<b>69.3%</b>	9.6%	19.9%

Source: The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June 2011

These data, however, become particularly interesting when compared to the findings of the Challenging Racism Surveys, conducted nationwide as telephone interviews between 2001 and 2008 (Table 5). When Australians were asked whether 'it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures', 86.8 per cent agreed with 6.5 per cent disagreeing (compared to only 0.8% of school teachers disagreeing that 'it is a good thing for schools to have students from different cultures'). Forty-one per cent of Australians agreed that 'Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their old ways (compared to only 9.5 per cent of surveyed teachers who agreed that 'society is weakened when people of different ethnic origins maintain their cultures'). While the variation in the wording of the latter question must be acknowledged, these varied responses indicate that teacher attitudes are more strongly pro-diversity than the Australia-wide population, and that teachers are much less likely to hold assimilatory views than the Australia-wide population. Finally, 84.4 per cent of participants in the national survey agreed that 'there is racial prejudice in Australia (compared to 69.3 per cent of teachers who indicated that 'racism is a problem in Australian society). While the variation in wording in these questions must again be acknowledged, the results indicate that teachers are less likely to acknowledge racism in Australia, although the level of denial is similar. The high neutral / don't know value (19.9 per cent) indicates that ambivalence is greater among teachers than across the general population.

**Table 5: Comparison of Attitudes toward Diversity between NSW Public School Teachers (2011) and the General Australian Population (2001–2008)**

Sample	Statements	Total Responses	% Agree	% Disagree
Teachers <sup>1</sup>	It is a good thing for schools to have students from different cultures.	5,063	<b>93.3%</b>	0.8%
Australia <sup>2</sup>	It is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures.	12,512	86.8%	6.5%
Teachers <sup>1</sup>	Society is weakened when people of different ethnic origins maintain their cultural traditions.	5,068	9.5%	<b>74.0%</b>
Australia <sup>2</sup>	Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their <i>old ways</i> *.	12,512	41.2%	<b>42.1%</b>
Teachers <sup>1</sup>	Racism is a <i>problem</i> * in Australian society.	5,069	<b>69.3%</b>	9.6%
Australia <sup>2</sup>	There is racial prejudice in Australia.	12,512	<b>84.4%</b>	8.0%

Source: <sup>1</sup> The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June, 2011. <sup>2</sup> The Challenging Racism Surveys, NSW/QLD, Oct–Dec 2001; Victoria, Aug–Oct. 2006, SA/ACT September–October 2007, NT/TAS/Perth, July–August 2008.

\* Note: Alternate phrasings

## Attitudes on the State of Community Relations

When teachers were asked if ‘racism is a problem in schools’, 52.5 per cent agreed that it is, 15.6 per cent disagreed, and almost a third (29.9 per cent) remained neutral. This indicates that teachers see community relations within schools as not being as problematic as ‘the world outside of school’; although the high neutral result may suggest a high degree of denial and/or defence of place and school. Nelson (2012) has found that protection of the image of place or an organisation can be a powerful driver of denial of racism. When these data are cross-tabulated by years of teaching (see Table 6) there is a noticeable trend. Years of service has a negative association with positive views on diversity, multicultural education, and acknowledging of racism. As suggested when interpreting Table 1, this trend may be age related, and the data may indicate a general shift in teacher attitudes as a new generation of teachers enter the workforce. For the other attitude questions not listed in Table 6 there was only a single percentage point variation between those with less than 6 years of teaching experience and those with over 25 years or more of teaching experience, including attitudes toward multicultural education.

**Table 6: Attitudes toward Diversity vs. Years of Teaching – NSW Public School Teachers (2011)**

Statements	% Agree				
	<6 years	6 – <15 years	15 – <25 years	≥25 years	All
Society is weakened when people of different ethnic origins maintain their cultural traditions.	5.7%	9.7%	10.3%	11.4%	9.5%
Racism is a problem in Australian society.	74.9%	71.3%	69.0%	67.4%	69.2%
Racism is a problem in schools.	58.2%	55.5%	53.8%	48.5%	52.5%

Source: The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June 2011

## Attitudes toward Multicultural Education

As shown in Table 7, when participants were asked whether 'multicultural education should be a focus for all schools including those with few students from language backgrounds other than English', 83.2 per cent agreed that it should be, with only 4.9 per cent disagreeing and 11 per cent remaining neutral. When asked whether 'it is the responsibility of schools to cater for the needs of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds' a significant 89.9 per cent agreed, with only 3.5 per cent disagreeing, and 6.2 per cent unable to agree or disagree. The majority of participants (93.7 per cent) disagreed with the statement that 'it is not the responsibility of schools to address racism or discrimination in their schools', with only 2.3 per cent agreeing and 2.4 per cent remaining neutral. These results suggest that teachers are strongly pro-multicultural education and that they strongly support anti-racism in schools. The data also suggest a link between positive dispositions towards diversity and towards anti-racism.

**Table 7: Attitudes toward Multicultural Education – NSW Public School Teachers (2011)**

Statements	n	% Agree	% Disagree	% Neutral
Multicultural education should be a focus for all schools including those with few students from language backgrounds other than English.	5,080	83.2%	4.9%	11.0%
It is the responsibility of schools to cater for the needs of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.	5,061	88.9%	3.5%	6.2%
It is <u>not</u> the responsibility of schools to address racism or discrimination in their schools.	5,078	2.9%	93.7%	2.4%

Source: The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June 2011

## The Role of Training

The results of the survey raise questions about the possible reasons NSW public school teachers are more open to diversity and more positive about anti-racism than the general population. Is this the

result of a predisposition of those who wish to become teachers, or is it related to policy and training measures? The survey data do suggest that training may play a significant role in the difference in attitudes seen between public school teachers and the Australia-wide population. Indeed, professional development and training in anti-racism were core recommendations from the Foundation for Young Australians study into racism experienced by young Australians (Mansouri *et al.*, 2009, p. 7). They also found that students attending Catholic Schools were statistically less likely to experience racism, suggesting that school practice and culture could dramatically impact local community relations (pp. 43-44, 53). A significant 92.0 per cent of respondents had received some form of pre-service, postgraduate and/or professional training in teaching students with language backgrounds other than English or other aspects of multicultural education. Confounding this assertion on the role of training, would be the acknowledgment that the sample of respondents are more likely to be teachers who had been trained in multicultural education. However, the reported levels of training among the case-study school teachers (where there was 75.0 per cent participation), was only 5 percentage points lower at 87.0 per cent. This shows that all teachers have a particularly high level of training in multicultural and diversity issues, and supports the hypothesis that this may be a strong reason for their positive stance on multiculturalism, diversity and anti-racism. We may also therefore assume that teachers provide a valuable pool of skills and knowledge for multicultural education both within schools and the broader community.

The survey also assessed teachers' familiarity with policies concerning multicultural relations and anti-racism. As Table 8 shows, 52.9 per cent of respondents had read the 'Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy', and 80.2 per cent had read the 'anti-racism policy'. These rates of familiarity were lower for the case-study schools (40.6 per cent had read the 'Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy', and 68.7 per cent had read the anti-racism policy). However, this policy literacy across both groupings of respondents was significantly high, suggesting a high level of familiarity by public school teachers in NSW. In addition, knowledge of implementation of these policies across schools was high, indicating that the efforts of the Multicultural Programs Unit of the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities have borne fruit.

**Table: 8: Familiarity with Relevant Policies – NSW Public School Teachers (2011)**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>Read?</b>			
Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy	52.9%	46.0%	*
Anti-Racism Policy	80.2%	17.6%	*
<b>Implemented in School?</b>			
Cultural Diversity and Community Relations Policy	46.7%	8.3%	43.4%
Anti-Racism Policy	76.0%	3.0%	19.2%

Source: The Multicultural Education Survey, May–June 2011

\*Not asked

## Conclusion

The intention of this paper was to report on empirical data from a state-wide survey of NSW primary school teachers to determine teacher attitudes toward multicultural education, diversity, racism and multicultural education. Just over half of the NSW teachers stated that racism was a problem within schools. But, teachers were much more likely to see racism as a problem outside of school, in society generally (69.3 per cent). This indicates that at least one-fifth of teachers perceive schools to be places where racism is somewhat assuaged. Teachers are a pro-diversity segment of the population. That may be linked to their higher than average levels of education. But they also report high levels of multicultural literacy, in the form of training. They also strongly support anti-racism and multicultural education within the school setting. It may also be that the 10 per cent of teachers who responded to our state-wide survey were more well-disposed to diversity than the teachers who did not respond. However, the surveys conducted within case-study schools, where the samples were even more robust, showed similar trends.

Questions that remain unanswered from these data include the extent to which students perceive racism within their schools. There is also the big issue of how educational outcomes vary, and how they might be uneven across ethnic groups. These variations have not been sufficiently studied in recent years. A next question, and one for the qualitative stages of this project, is whether the teacher training in multicultural education has an effect where it is needed. Mansouri's interviews with 58 students in two Victorian schools found that 52 per cent of Arab speaking students felt that teachers treated them differently because of their cultural background, whereas that figure was only 27 per cent among the non-Arabic speaking respondents (Mansouri 2007). Can training affect teacher behaviour and the treatment of students, or does it simply raise awareness and change attitudes as observable within our survey? If not, what changes are required? Half of the teachers in the NSW survey saw racism as a problem within schools, so there are still many issues to be dealt with. But we need robust evaluative empirics to properly analyse the impact of policy and programs. Nonetheless, we know that changing hearts and minds does make a difference to community relations, and intervention within educational environments is likely to be highly effective (Pedersen *et al.*, 2005; Mansouri & Wood 2008, p. 130). Racism is learnt behaviour, and it can be unlearned

(Pedersen *et al.*, 2005, pp. 22–23). Racism can also be proscribed through regulation, and confronted through peer influence. This behaviour modification can have attitudinal effects as norms are altered (Nelson *et al.*, 2012). As such, schools are justifiably a central focus of the nation-wide anti-racism effort; they are an important resource for place based anti-racism strategies. Broadly, schools are crucibles for improving community relations and civility. The dispositions of NSW public sector teachers, as revealed in our survey, are packed with potential for enhancing society.

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# Healing the wounds of racism: What does it mean?

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**Keywords:** the racism experience, healing the wounds of racism, self-recovery, the transformation phase.

Danielle Masson is a PhD Candidate in the discipline of anthropology at the University of Western Australia. Her research focuses on the lived experience of racism, and more specifically on the processes of wounding and healing. Her research includes studies of racism-related emotions, the media's influence on the internalization of racism and the desire for whiteness, the turning point between the wounding phase and the transformation phase, self-recovery and the healing of racism's wounds.

**Based in inter-disciplinary research indicating the detrimental effects of racism on recipients' health and wellbeing, this paper progresses into the largely unexplored domain of self-recovery and healing of racism. Reflecting the processes of continuity and change in life story study, the biographies of ten recipients of racism revealed two phases in the lived experience of racism. The wounding phase and the transformation phase, which are separated by a major turning point that people used in their narratives to compare their past and present sense of self, responses to racism and achieved wellbeing. This paper focuses on the transformation phase characterized by a process of personal-development and inner changes that may lead to self-recovery and healing.**

**Csordas' (2002) anthropological approach to healing as the transformation of an individual is useful for understanding the transformation phase, which is characterized by an experience of significant inner changes reverberating into various realms, both individual and social. Suggesting a healing process, in this paper two questions are explored: What does it mean to heal the wounds of racism? How can healing of racism be evaluated in anthropological study? I suggest that adapted to address the racism experience, Csordas' (2002) model of therapeutic efficacy used in religious healing is useful to understand the significance of the inner changes reported by participants, and to evaluate if healing is taking place in recipients of racism.**

Healing at its most human is not an escape into irreality and mystification, but an intensification of the encounter between suffering and hope at the moment in which it finds a voice, where the anguished clash of bare life and raw existence emerges from muteness into articulation (Csordas, 2002:11)

## Introduction

This paper is based on the biographies of ten recipients of racism, six women and four men of various backgrounds (Aboriginal, Italian, Mauritian, Indonesian, Sri-Lankan, Indian, and Anglo-Indian). All were professionals ranging from thirty-five to sixty-four years of age, and residing in the state of Western Australia. As anticipated, their stories provide evidence of emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual stress and suffering that each participant expressed in their own way. For example,

At the end of the day it's self-esteem! ... Low self-esteem, and this incredible feeling of being inferior to another race, it's like another burden on your shoulders, which makes it even harder. It just kills your soul, really... After ten years of this [racism since arrived in Australia] you feel very unhappy and miserable. And there were other issues you know, of being passive, of not standing up for myself. And I could see how it was destroying my life (Monique).

That pain [of racism] has many layers, you know. It became an emotional pain, individual and through families. And it became a physical pain. I was smashing my bones and basically left to hospital to fix hands that you use to have fights... You get racism and you learn to stand up, you learn to fight, you learn to assess situations, and you learn to fight your way out of difficult situations. You become aggressive... It's a hard life (Hayden)!

However, these experiences are also contrasted with reports of significant inner change with repercussions outwards, in people's relationship with the world. The biographies exposed a wounding phase and a transformation phase separated by turning point remembered as the beginning of inner changes. In some cases the ensuing changes reported were well beyond what individuals imagined achievable, and they were surprised and elated about the magnitude of their transformation. Racism no longer held the same power. The growing empirical evidence in the social sciences of the adverse effects of racism on recipients (Carter, 2007; Bryant-Davis, 2007; Krieger, 2003; Paradies, 2006; Harrell, 2000; Wilkinson, 1999; Essed, 1991; Siegriest and Marmot, 2004), and the finding of a wounding phase in the sample studied, have encouraged me to use Csordas' (2002) model of efficacy for evaluating the possibility that the significant changes participants reported were signifying a healing of racism's process. This paper focuses on the transformation phase, and the largely unexplored domain of healing the wounds of racism.

To seek relief from ailments causing mental, physical, and emotional discomfort, anguish, or pain is considered a normal approach to health in our society. However, while the wounds of racism include multiple forms of such suffering, my experience illustrates that the idea of healing is met with scepticism and doubt concerning its meaning and value for an anthropological study of racism. When I presented my thesis to the anthropology department I realised that I was mistaken to assume that everybody knew what healing the wounds of racism meant, or would think such study to be possible. The word 'healing' startled many colleagues and to my surprise took over the whole question period. What does it mean? How are you going to observe it or assess it? Do you mean coping or healing? Can you study it? These questions are explored in this paper that draws more

particularly on anthropologist Csordas' (2002) approach to healing as the transformation of a person. I argue that adapted to address the racism experience, Csordas' (2002:27) model of therapeutic efficacy is useful to assess if healing of racism is taking place in recipients of racism reporting significant inner change.

## **Personal healing of racism: What it does *not* mean**

The idea that individual healing of racism may be achievable presents a risk. How will that proposition be understood and used? Will it advance understanding of the racism experience to the benefit of coloured Australians, or will it shift the responsibility of the effects of racism onto them to 'get over it', and thus, be used against them? The notion of individual healing must not be understood to mean that racism in the system is a problem that recipients must solve. Racism should be fought from all fronts, and in all its forms, the personal and the institutional, the overt, and the invisible. Governments, their agencies, and organisations in the private sector must continuously address systemic racism, and work toward promoting safe, egalitarian and inclusive environments for all Australians. The Australian majority must be educated about the effects of racism on recipients, and about the invisible forms of racism they perpetuate through ignorance and insensitivities.

While this study focuses on the experiences of professional individuals, it does not mean that the big picture, the much more widespread effects of racism in Australia are ignored. As an Aboriginal participant in this research voiced, 'there is a lot of healing that has to take place, which non-Aboriginal people don't seem to appreciate'. For many members of Aboriginal communities, healing the wounds of racism also includes curing the physical sicknesses and ailments that are recognised to be consequences of inequality resultant from discriminatory legislations and practices since colonisation.

Contemplating the idea that the adverse effects of racism may be healed does not imply a separation between recipients and their socio-cultural environment. Clearly, they need to draw on its resources. Healing of racism can only be considered in interaction with the environment since 'the processes of personal and social change are inter-connected – they form a continuous circle' (Leah, 1995). Accordingly, some socio-cultural contexts and historical times would be more favourable to healing than others.

## **The healing of racism's wounds: Different from other healing processes?**

In anthropology healing is an important topic of analysis of societies' cosmologies, religious beliefs, and rituals surrounding ill health (Csordas, 1994; Csordas, 2002). It is mostly associated with the biomedical recovery of physical and mental sicknesses and illnesses (Kleinman, 1988; Hahn, 1995), and religious healing rituals and healers (Csordas, 2002). Csordas and Kleinman (1996) argue that healing involves three main processes: *Therapeutic procedure*, which refers to the actions taken; *therapeutic outcome*, which provides information about the success or failure of the results

obtained; and *therapeutic processes* that refer to 'the meaningful activity that mediates procedure and outcome' (p.8). Referring to the experience of people receiving the healing, the processes may include encounters with divine powers, insights, changing attitude, emotions, meaning, and behaviour.

Three similar processes to the development of healing explained by Csordas and Kleinman (1996) are identifiable in participants' process of change. Csordas and Kleinman (1996:4) assert that in order to go beyond the issue of sickness and disease's definitions and diagnosis in various cultural settings, 'it must be recognised that what counts as therapy depends first upon what is defined as a problem'. Likewise, according to Egnew (2005:255), 'healing is an intensely personal, subjective experience involving a reconciliation of the meaning an individual ascribes to distressing events with his or her own perception of wholeness as a person', thus, what is judged to prevent wholeness will also determine the meaning an individual gives to healing.

Participants' accounts support the view that what requires healing in the context of the racism experience varies according to what individuals consider a racism-related wound, discomfort, or an issue that restricts their wellbeing and sense of wholeness. Race-related stress, for example, potentially affects recipients at several levels such as the cognitive, affective, behavioural, spiritual, somatic, and relational (Carter, 2007; Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). Depending on the area of greatest difficulty, healing of racism then, may mean different things to different people and may be sought through various means. Chosen according to individuals' beliefs of what is needed to produce the changes they want, participants' remedial/therapeutic strategies vary according to their personal needs and circumstances. Their choice is influenced by which layer of the wound is the focus of recovery at any particular time, the resources available in the environment, social trends, recommendations of influential people in one's life, personal values and beliefs, particular interests, inner resources and abilities, and also inevitably by financial resources.

Monique reported feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem and passivity when confronted to perpetrators. Her therapeutic procedure included regular counselling sessions for some time. Later, she read self-development books, and then joined a spiritual group, in which her major transformation occurred ten years later. Hayden participated in two series of workshops, one about anger management, and the other on self-esteem for, he explains, 'I found there was a need for myself, as an individual to understand why I react the way I react, and to deal with it' (Hayden). He reported that the workshops helped him understand who he was, and to find outlets for his anger, other than rage and violence. He used sport to vent his anger and went fishing to find relief from his depressed states. Leigh also played sport and went fishing to relax, but he did not consult a therapist or attended any workshop. He just gathered his courage to break out of his usual fear of being ridiculed, and of his quietness. Cutting through passivity he spoke up one day, and has not stopped since,

It was like great relief felt [to speak up]. It was like it's all right! You can do it! You can stand up! ... So, I figured out that I'd do that. I don't care now whether it's the Premier of the State

or whoever, because I have met past Premiers of the State and said something to them publicly. It's just there. I just feel now I am not going into that position where I say nothing. It is so debilitating holding back, you know.

Marika practiced the concepts she read in a self-help book about assertiveness. Over time, she became more assertive, learnt to say no, and to express her views. Several participants used mindfulness and/or positive thinking. Fiona decided to break trans-generational socialisation's habits, and to stop transmitting denial of racism. Participants in this research clearly relied on multiple therapeutic approaches to relieve stress and increase wellbeing. Several of them drew upon the skills of health practitioners, and/or spiritual teachers, while others relied essentially on their own inner resources.

However, these inner practices were often skills that participants seeking help from health and/or spiritual facilitators were also using. For instance, positive thinking was useful for retraining the mind to a more optimistic and confident state. Awareness was used to track negative thoughts and feelings. Some found the courage to express feelings and denounce injustice. Recreational and sporting activities were used with awareness of their benefit when relief from racism-related stress was needed. In this study, procedure can be a self-monitored process during which individuals feel free to experiment with therapeutic forms, mix and match according to what they expect will produce the results they want, with or without involving a health practitioner, therapist or facilitator.

The therapeutic process is what participants interchangeably named self-exploration, personal or self-development, 'Self-development helps me deal with my emotions' Monique said. It is a process of self-recovery (hooks, 2008). Participants' stories suggest that working towards wellness and creating new ways of being and living is a process that requires continuous awareness, and persistence. Comments such as 'the healing of my racist past continues' from Monique, and 'it took a while' (Leigh, speaking about his change) convey the idea that personal recovery from racism-related wounds is an ongoing process. It is a process that takes times, a view echoing other scholars (Watts-Jones, 2002; McGlone, 1990; Csordas & Kleinman, 1996)

## **How to evaluate healing of racism?**

The credibility of the assessment of the outcome of non-biomedical healing procedures is often challenged, and I expect it to be so in the study of healing of racism. My colleagues' uneasiness surrounding the word 'healing' can be explained by anthropologists Csordas and Kleinman's (1996:5) observations that to study the benefits of procedures considered nonmedical appears non-scientific, and are thus criticised as non-empirical reporting. In response to these critiques, Csordas and Kleinman (1996:5) make the point that several studies have demonstrated that, 'non medical healing is empirical in the sense that it is often based on systematic observation and interpretation of symptoms, suffering, cause, effects, and responses to treatment.'

Cultural anthropology studies of healing generally focus on procedures, (healing rituals and healers' interviews) rather than on the participants' transformative process (Csordas, 2002:13). To address this lack, Csordas (2002:13) studied the transformative process of Charismatic healing in the

Catholic Pentecostalism movement. He assessed the usefulness of his framework in a comparative study of Pentecostal and Navajo religious healing. Csordas (2002:13) then realised that, 'the object of healing is not elimination of a thing (an illness, a problem, a symptom, a disorder) but a transformation of a person, a self that is a bodily being' (Csordas, 2002:2), a view also expressed by Glaister (2000) and McGlone (1990). Approaching healing as inner transformation reinforces the view that whether or not people still experience racism, the significant inner changes they report may be signs of recovery from one or more racism-related issues. This also means that recipients of racism need not wait for the death of racism to seek relief from its wounds.

Participants' evaluation of recovery is established in relation to their assessment of how significantly the outcome of remedial processes, fulfils their hope for change. Are the changes and transformations reported by participants sufficient to infer that healing of racism is taking place? The answer to that question is necessarily based on self-reports collected through in-depth interviews, stories of racism, and diaries, and possibly, added questionnaires attempting to address specific questions that particularly matter to the researcher. However, I believe that when transformation is apparent in a story, the model of efficacy used by Csordas (2002:5) in religious healing is useful for providing an academically satisfying evaluation.

The model (p.27) includes three components: predisposition, empowerment, and transformation,

1. Predisposition - within the context of the primary community of reference, the supplicant must be persuaded that healing is possible, that the group's claims in this respect are coherent and legitimate.
2. Empowerment - the supplicant must be persuaded that the therapy is efficacious – that he is experiencing the healing effects of spiritual power.
3. Transformation – the supplicant must be persuaded to change – that is, he must accept the cognitive/affective, behavioral transformation that constitutes healing within the religious system.

Although the specifics of these categories will vary according to the form and context of healing, Csordas suggests that the framework can be used to determine healing in any context. 'Together these amount to a model of therapeutic process that could be applied to any form of healing to determine its efficacy; if all three components were convincingly enacted or fulfilled, healing could be said to have taken place' (Csordas, 2002:5). Thus, it is in no way unreasonable to contemplate its usefulness for evaluating healing of racism-related wounds. That is, if the meaning of the three components of healing Csordas proposes are adapted to address the racism experience.

In the people studied, the predisposition for healing is the turning point. It includes factors such as the recognition of wounding, seizing an opportunity to change presented by a particular situation, and a commitment to a course of action with therapeutic value. Monique's comments illustrate this,

I needed to change because obviously it wasn't working these ways of thinking that I'm inferior, or my skin colour isn't good enough, or I'm not worthy... It just caused me more pain, and I couldn't live like that anymore... I was just searching and searching. I had lots of counselling... I got into meditation and I started reading my first spiritual book, '*You can heal your life*'.

In the context of racism-related recovery, predisposition is not limited to the ways and claims of a particular group as in religious healing. However, the belief that healing is possible, and trust in a particular remedial process, are both necessary to engage in a process of recovery. Participants' stories suggest that predisposition, for them, involves recognition of suffering, the hope for change, acting on this hope with the intent and determination to do the work needed to increase or restore wellbeing, and lastly, the belief that the desired changes can be achieved through the chosen remedial/therapeutic actions.

According to hooks (1999:19), the first step into the process of self-recovery is a commitment to telling the truth about pain and suffering. This idea of telling the truth has parallels with Bryant-Davis' (2007) argument that healing of race-related traumatic stress first requires recognition of trauma. It also echoes Csordas and Kleinman's (1996:4) point that, 'naming a problem offers the sufferer and his or her family a degree of control through certainty that must itself be considered therapeutic'. Participants in this research were able to name their problem, or at least the most urgent ones to address. However, identifying the layers of pain can sometimes be difficult in the wounding phase. Shame and fear may still forbid people opening up. Thus, it might take some time between admitting suffering to self and being able to talk about racism with others, to a counselor for example. Although racism was a great source of distress in Monique's life, and her skin was chocolate brown, her therapist never addressed the topic. Monique never mentioned racism either.

Participants' readiness to change is also a factor in predisposition. McGlone's (1990:82) statement, 'the rate of healing is consistent with the person's own readiness and need to grow and change' is relevant to the context of this study. I made a similar point in relation to the turning point at which significant on-going positive changes begin. I found that the only reliable timing of the turning point is participants' readiness to change. This also has parallels with hooks' (1999:13) observation of the healing dynamics in the *Sisters of the yam support groups*, which focused on women's self-recovery from all forms of discrimination,

The power of the group to transform one another's lives seemed to be determined by the intensity of each individual's desire to recover, to find a space within and without, where she could sustain the will to be well and create affirming habits of being.

Intent and determination are also important. In her study of Aboriginal women in Alberta, Leah (1995:26) found that her participants actively resisted oppression, collectively fought racist practices, and turned to various forms of healing, including healing circles,

The Aboriginal women involved in this study have expressed their own hopes for personal healing and social change. While they have acknowledged the damaging impact of racism on their lives, they also expressed the determination to make changes in their lives.

The turning point, a readiness to recognise and address a particular area of difficulty within, a planned course of action, and in some cases the support of caring others, intent, determination, self-motivation, are all factors involved in predisposition. Goals of contributing something that can help the suffering of others, and also the dominant socio-political view about racism and difference at a particular time are also factors in predisposition.

In the transformation phase of the racism experience, empowerment becomes self-empowerment. To take control of one's life, to increase wellbeing, empowers people. Participants' stories reveal that during their process of change individuals must believe that they have the power to change aspects of self that racism injured, and trust the remedial process they chose. In taking control of their inner healing, they are taking control of their lives. The process of self-recovery itself is empowering. Consequently, once significant change has occurred, participants speak about its repercussions in ways suggesting that to resolve issues and to experience the relief of pain increases their confidence, hence is empowering. For example, to suddenly understand that racism is not personal is empowering because the blame for the racist behaviour is no longer placed on self, and shame loses ground. When they are able to interact with the majority without feeling as though they are lesser people, participants feel stronger. For Marika, it is empowering to be more assertive and able to speak her mind. Monique feels stronger now that her self-esteem is higher. Equally, Leigh now feels confident enough to confront Premiers of States, a big change from the shy young man he was who could not respond to racist abuse. To no longer be in denial of racism also empowers Fiona to educate her son about difference. It is empowering for Hayden to be capable of managing his anger, to work in heritage to support Aboriginal people. As recipients of racism often felt powerless to change anything, any small action an individual takes that results in increased confidence is empowering. As such, self-empowerment is an integral part of the changes and transformations reported.

Considering how much participants changed cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally, their stories provide evidence that to seek relief from racism-related wounds produces successful outcomes. New understandings and meanings of racism, an increasingly positive sense of self and of achievement, increased assertiveness and self-esteem, less negative emotions, distancing from other peoples' view of them, knowing self, not being scared of taking a stand and having a voice, being able to stand up for self, and a sense of contentment and pride are all constituents of participant's transformations. Sometimes, there is also admission that one has not got quite right there, but that the changes that have already occurred are really significant and life changing. Some of the reported changes are listed below.

Hayden, an Aboriginal participant, still feels anger, but not rage. He is directing the energy of his anger into his work. He said he has overcome depression and now understands who he is,

To actually be sitting here in front of you is testimony of overcoming depression. Right now if I said I wanted to do something, I'd go and do it. I have the confidence and the support from my own knowledge to do things.

I could have become an airline pilot, but I enjoy working on heritage. I find it difficult to see myself as a role model, but I suppose I am. I've been influenced by both, my culture and Australian society. It's a quite happy medium having both. That gives me a well-balanced approach to life. I am successful because I have an understanding of who I am.

Leigh, of Anglo-Indian origins, is no longer the shy young man he used to be. He became confident. No longer scared of being ridiculed he says,

Being more confident in myself I've been able to reject people's racism towards me, and stand proud, and say, 'that's your attitude, your opinion'... I'm no longer scared of difference. I'm no longer scared of racism.... And you know the population's attitudes don't change overnight. Because I am a little bit older now, I know how to stand up for myself. I know what to say to get out of situations. I don't have to hang out anymore. I don't have to be uncomfortable.

Anita, an Australian born participant of Italian background, knows that racism has the potential to destroy lives if you let it. Her process of self-development led her to understand that racism is in the minds of racists, and has nothing to do with who she is. Her transformation amazes her,

I've realised that whatever is happening isn't really to do with me, but more to do where those people are at. And I do not have to engage in it as much, or being affected. I've changed! Sometimes, I think I'm a miracle! How my life is now compared to how I thought it was going to be when I was 22. I think I'm very successful in that way!

Fiona who was raised in denial of racism and to believe that thinking of a hostile interaction in terms of racism denoted a weakness of character, always worked as hard as she could to prove her worth and equality. She still strives to excel at whatever she does, but no longer lives in denial of racism. She has raised her son to be aware of, and to understand racism. She is happy about her recent ability to speak about racism with family members, and to react assertively when confronted by racism. Overall, she says she feels quite content about the life she has,

I am at the level where I want to be at this stage of my life anyway. I've got a beautiful house, a wonderful husband and a son, and at the end of the day I come home to a very peaceful place, and not many people have that. And I've come to value that far more than anything else. In the end, if you don't have that, that's really hard. So, I guess I feel that those things [racist encounters] don't annoy me as much... but I guess that in some ways I think, a lot also got to do with where you are, where you feel your sense of place is in the world at that time...

When I first moved here, because I was already feeling low, those things [racist encounters] really got to me a lot. But today, because I feel I have moved along through my own hard work, I can actually accept those things more than I could when I first came. Racism is there,

and we might as well let people know that it's there. And so, let's not pretend that it's not happening.

Marika who is from Indonesian background still struggles with feelings of inferiority, and also displacement from the discomfort of living in-between white and Aboriginal people. She says she does not feel whole yet. However, Marika reported a break through. She no longer thinks that all white people are 'genius' (her word). She can say 'no' to their demands, and finds it easier to express her views to white Australians. She says she is no longer voiceless, 'now it's easy for me to voice myself'.

Monique reported several layers of transformation. She no longer takes racism personally, and is no longer passive or wishing for white skin. Confident, very happy about the person she is, she feels like a different person,

The healing from my racist past continues. The acceptance of my skin colour, and the 'OK as I am' are getting stronger. When I look back then, now is completely different, like another lifetime. And now I just feel so proud! Incredible pride I feel to have this skin colour!

Ramon, an Australian born participant of Sri Lankan background is happy with himself as he is, and with his life in Australia. The process of transformation started during his travels overseas as young man, and he says that he does not carry much tension at all about difference. Patting the dark brown skin of his strong arm and hand he says with a big smile on his face, 'I became very proud of my skin colour'. Mindfulness being his major tool to actualise change, he learnt from experience that recovery comes from within,

It's all an inside job! If you are really in your centre, and you're proud of who you are and where you stand in life, people sense that too, because what is inside of you reflects on the outside world.

Accounts of these transformations emerged spontaneously. They were not elicited by questions. I had asked participants to talk about their experiences of racism without mentioning any particular topic of interest. It is generally through their comparison of past and present experiences, and explanation of their new responses to it that they reported how they had significantly changed from the turning point and beyond. They often used their participation in this study to support how much they had changed. Comments such as 'ten years ago I couldn't have talked about this' or 'now I can speak about these things' were common. Their process of change may have occurred at different rate, in different domains, and various depths, but all transformed their life.

The ultimate challenge and most important goal to realise for coloured people are to accept the self as is. Several participants reporting significant changes mentioned feeling proud about their skin colour, and most were very surprised, pleased, or even proud of having changed. That pride should present itself in this phase of transformation confirms that participants' ego identity is enhanced and that they take credit for this achievement (see Lazarus, 1999:250)

The stories of racism collected also suggest that transformation often includes individuals' motivation to become agents for social change, and each in their own way, to be advocates for the healing of racism, or more generally for the healing of suffering. Mature age education, a new career, volunteering activities may also be part of a process of recovery from racism-related wounds, leading people to positions where they can make a difference. This is particularly important to the healing process for, 'no level of individual self-actualization alone can sustain the marginalised and oppressed. We must be linked to collective struggle... that moves us outward, into the world' (hooks, 2008:123)

Participants' biographies illustrate that wounding and healing are inseparable categories. Applying Csordas' (2002) framework for analysing the changes reported by participants we see varying degrees and qualities of healing in individuals. The model is therefore useful for studying the healing of racism-related wounds. Furthermore, the focus on healing of racism is in itself promoting healing. It raises awareness of the presence of racism and simultaneously encourages reflection, and identification of what needs healing in self, and also in society. Healing of racism may be complex, and its study controversial, but it is the next step towards deeper understanding of racism-related wounds and recovery.

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# Literary Legacy: Unconscious bias

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**Keywords:** Negative literary representation, Aboriginal people, ficto-historical genre, post-millennial Australian literature.

Noela McNamara completed a Masters of Indigenous Studies by research at James Cook University, Cairns and is now undertaking a PhD. Her research field is literature and its potential to impact on cross-cultural relations at the interface of Australian society. Current research focuses on revival of a colonial discourse in ficto-historical narratives and negative representation of Indigenous people. A poetic memoir *Echoes of the Past* was published in 2011, poetry and short stories appear in several Tropical Writer Anthologies, and book reviews appear in literary journals *LINQ*, and *Otherland* (Australia's Chinese Literary Journal).

**Prior to white settlement, literary representations of Australia were that of a primitive place where a *barbarous race* roamed aimlessly. Such images were the birth place of an unconscious bias foundational to the historical inequality that divides Australian society. Aboriginal women's autobiography opened an avenue of cultural awareness in the 1970s through stories of personal journeys which highlighted the consequences of forced family separation and confinement to State/Church missions as part of the Stolen Generations. Non-Indigenous writers have since produced a plethora of reconciliatory historical fiction which re-engages with the settlement era. I argue that despite claims of cultural awareness within literary discourses, an unconscious bias remains inherent in literary representation of Aboriginal characters in post-millennial historical fiction. Despite authors' claims of good intention through narratives which expose unpunished violence and notions of guilt, an unconscious bias is revived within a colonial discourse that continues to foster an indirect and covert form of *new racism* through repeated degrading and dehumanizing representations of Aboriginal people. This paper will elucidate *new racist* perspectives through a deconstructive reading of a selection of contemporary Australian novels including Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2005) and Alex Miller's *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002).**

## Introduction

Literary theories and critical discourses today eschew racism in all its forms, and are indeed concerned with exposing racist discourses. Readers of contemporary Australian literature expect to find a sympathetic, empathetic or even reparative attitude in relation to the effect of events of the colonising era on Indigenous people. Australian novelists have always found historical aspects of how Europeans and Indigenous people in Australia related to each other throughout the colonial era of interest and a rich source of inspiration (Bird 2002). Post-millennial historical fiction, by virtue of its growing popularity with the reading public, and extensive inclusion in literary discourses, had an

opportunity to encourage a broader/deeper cultural awareness with potential for social change. However, this genre further conflicts the social consciousness of readers.

Literary images occur in present time and place, but continue to revive stereotypical degraded images of Aboriginal people as part of a subliminal colonial discourse which was the method of foundational beliefs, laws, and in turn, realities (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin 1998). From a reader's perspective, these lasting shadows of ingrained negative perceptions, assumptions, and attitudes block the possibility of *reading without unconscious bias*. Readers who have never had contact with Aboriginal people, other than through words on a page or images on a television/movie screen, are easily temporally and spatially distanced from literary colonial images. This in turn voids any reason to relate such novels (and literature generally) to current displacement, discrimination, and injustice suffered by Aboriginal people. Without personal contact, new novels which engage with negative colonial stereotypical representations retain the potential to re-activate fear of Aboriginal people thus reinforcing unconscious bias.

The growing popularity of ficto-historical novels using a colonial discourse informs contemporary readers about the physical displacement of Aboriginal people and in consequence, I argue, creates subliminal mental displacement. Even though the narratives foreground the violence and injustice of displacement, these crimes are embedded in narratives as the settlers' fight for survival and part of a natural and inevitable step in the historical march of progress. Material prosperity, while it is the end result, is not projected as part of the motive for crimes against Aboriginal people. This narrative device acts seamlessly within texts to subliminally justify the physical displacement of Aboriginal people, and from a reader's perspective – the mental displacement.

## **Negative representation of Indigenous people**

Initial negative stereotypical representations which were embedded in literature resulted in an unconscious bias which was foundational in establishing an intricate system of human classification that condoned racist discourses. Prior to white settlement, literary representations of Australia were that of a primitive place where *savage natives* roamed aimlessly. In 1623, Carstensz the Dutch captain of the *Pera*, recorded that "The men are in general barbarous...they are indigent and miserable men" (Foss 1988, pp. 3-4). By the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's concept of evolution through natural selection, known as Social Darwinism, and his prediction that "the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world", was a key factor in a belief that Aboriginal people would simply *die out* (Kohn 1996, cited in Beresford & Omaji 1998, p. 33). Throughout the twentieth century, this doomed race theory, together with the White Australia policy (unofficial, but operative from 1901 to 1973), was pivotal in establishing a cultural unconsciousness in respect of the fate of Indigenous Australians. Watego (1988, p. 19) asserts that the White Australia policy "helped to create a senseless prejudice against us making us social outcasts in the land of our ancestors!" The extent of this *senseless prejudice* which continues today through generation, dissemination, and perpetuation of negative representation includes Indigenous people as treacherous, lazy, drunken, childish, cunning, dirty,

ignoble, noble, primitive, backward, unscrupulous, untrustworthy, and savage (Moreton-Robinson 2004, p. 76). This negativity has enabled oppression and domination to be enforced through white western systems of knowledge-based power (McGregor 1997; Tascon, in Schech and Wadham, 2004). The unconscious bias inherent in both writer and reader continues to classify the traits of literary Indigenous characters as negative, and consequently divide Australian society.

## Speaking into the silence

During the twentieth century, dedicated work by social activists, advocates and writers sought to bring awareness of the hardship and discrimination faced by Aboriginal people to the dominant white society through literature. *David Unaipon* was the first Aboriginal author to commit *Native Legends* to the written word. In 1929, he produced an incomplete collection for the purpose of "going around the country [to] awaken interest in the Aboriginal problem by selling some literature... I wrote up some legends for this purpose" (Unaipon, cited in Nelson 1988, p. 15)

Several years later in *The Foundations of Culture in Australia*, PR Stevenson (1935, cited in Barnes, 1969, pp. 205) stated that "Culture in Australia, if it ever develops indigenously, begins not from the Aboriginal, who has been suppressed and exterminated". Furthermore, Stephenson (p. 208) stated "Australia is the only continent on the earth inhabited by one race, under one government, speaking one language." His statements witness unconscious bias through the complete dismissal of Aboriginal people and demonstrate the false premise upon which cultural supremacy was established. This led to a cultural unconsciousness to the manifestation of distortions and negative stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people and culture in Australian literature.

In 1964, *Oodgeroo Noonuccal* (also known as Kath Walker) became the first Aboriginal Australian to publish a book of poetry. Her verse brought a *voice of Aboriginal Australia* to life for many white Australians for the first time. The following lines from Walker's poem "The Past" express the longevity of Aboriginal belonging and her commitment to achieving recognition and equality for Aboriginal people:

But a thousand camp fires in the forest

Are in my blood.

Let none tell me the past is wholly gone.

Now is so small a part of time, so small a part

Of all the race years that have moulded me. (Walker 1981, p.93)

Oodgeroo was awarded an MBE in 1970, but returned it in 1987 to protest Australian Bicentenary celebrations, and to make a political statement at the discrimination against Aboriginal people.

Also in the 1960s, renowned anthropologist WEH Stanner challenged the way white Australians thought about themselves, about the history of white settlement, and about the way they thought about this land and this country. Stanner's essays and lectures, notably *After the Dreaming* (1968,

in Hinkson & Beckett 2008, pp. 233), highlighted the richness of Aboriginal culture and the practice of white Australians to silence the past in a “cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale” following European settlement.

Since the 1980s, Aboriginal Women’s autobiography has revealed personal journeys of discrimination and alienation, including many from the Stolen Generations. Books like: Sally Morgan’s *My Place* (1987), Alice Nannup’s *When the Pelican Laughed* (1992), Ruby Langford’s *Don’t take your love to town* (1988), and Jackie Huggins’ *Auntie Rita* (1994) and *Sister Girl* (1998) opened the hearts and minds of Australian readers to many social and cultural consequences of policies of the past that continue to impact on generations of Aboriginal Australians. The cultural reckoning that occurred in consequence of this literature, together with government awareness of the need for a national move towards reconciliation, inspired a renewed interest in exploring Australian history through historical fiction that re-engages with the settlement era. These texts generally highlight ‘historical secrets’ and at the same time, as stated by authors, attempt to somehow reconcile with the past (Grenville, cited in Koval 2005, p. 4; Miller, cited in Sullivan 2006, p.13).

I argue that despite notions of achieving cultural awareness within contemporary literary discourses, post-millennial ficto-historical novels revive a subliminal unconscious bias established in the colonising era. Furthermore, revived colonial imagery fosters an indirect and covert *new racism* through repeated degrading and dehumanising negative stereotypical representations of Aboriginal characters. Although these negative perceptions are activated subliminally through literary images, nevertheless, this return of colonial discourse invites revival of a colonial consciousness with potential to impact negatively on Aboriginal people by reinforcing negative attitudes. Francis Rings (in Purcell 2002, p. 86) confirms that:

There are prejudiced people out there in this big free country of ours, it might not be plainly in your face, and sometimes it depends on the colouring of that face as to how much they show you, but it is there. It’s about attitude – what they have been taught and the ignorance and fear of something unknown.

## Colonial ideology in contemporary fiction

Use of colonial imagery and tropes in the ficto-historical genre demonstrates how a racist ideology of the past is still embedded in literary discourses. While perpetuation of distorted and degraded colonial imagery of Aboriginal people and culture which projects them as starkly opposed to perceived ‘norm’ of Australian society remains prominent in literature, the result will be a polarised reading at an unconscious level of white society where constructed values of society and humanity remain well established (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998, p. 3). Regardless of redemptive intention, this genre continues to affect a displacement of Indigenous people through dominance at the discourse level of an unconscious but hegemonic white perspective. This dominant white *narrative focalisation* in purportedly *reconciliation* novels highlights the continued subordination of Aboriginal characters and demonstrates an indirect and covert form of *new racism* as the following examples reveal.

*Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) by Alex Miller is a romance which hinges on events in the settlement era. Miller's attempted reconciliation between Annabelle, a grazier's daughter, and Bo, an Aboriginal ringer raises questions about memories of the past, cultural differences, and notions of identity. Miller links collective cultural fissures by drawing together a witness of conflict and massacre of Aboriginal people and a grand-daughter of the perpetrator. The novel ends with the white female protagonist, Annabelle, planning to sell off her assets, principally bounty of her grandfather's pioneering success, to purchase property formerly owned by the family of Aboriginal protagonist, Bo. Annabelle's intentions, however, while they may be interpreted as reconciling former family misdeeds, only serve to ease her guilt while magnifying Bo's dispossession and subordination.

Andrew McGahan's novel *The White Earth* (2004) is set on Queensland's Darling Downs in the early 1990s at the time of the Mabo legislation and a time of growing alienation and resentment of rural white Australia, but extends back to the late 1800s. This novel explores the question of white ownership of land including unpunished murders of Aboriginal men by white land owners. John McIvor's greed and obsession for Kuran Downs destroys his family. In turn his daughter, Ruth, is determined to destroy him and return the property to its Traditional Owners – the Kuran people. Accordingly, this novel can be seen as an attempt at reconciliation. At the end, however, the white child protagonist, William, is set to become heir to Kuran Downs with bones of the murdered Kuran men, which would have proved cultural provenance in the event of a Native Title claim, having been destroyed:

Ruth could dispute William's claim, if she wanted, and inherit the property herself. And perhaps she should really do it. But the thought roused no feelings in her... She remembered the women from Cherbourg...as she talked eagerly of leases and land and rights... It was fifteen thousand acres of prime grazing country. In this world, something like that wasn't just given back... It had to be fought for... Was he [William] her responsibility now?... She glanced once more at the rain against the windows. A memory came. The smell of earth, and of wheat, and the feeling of a familiar hand upon her head, rough with calluses, and so strong... Ruth fought the tears... Then she returned to the chair, and the long vigil of the night (McGahan 2004, p. 376)

Ruth's memories enlivened through a sense of place signal her reconnection with childhood memories and with the land (McGahan 2004, p. 376). Furthermore, her return to the chair to watch over William signals her intention to fight for ownership of Kuran Downs either for herself or on William's behalf (McGahan 2004, p. 375) indicating she has discounted any accountability for continued displacement of Traditional Owners.

*The Secret River* (2005) by Kate Grenville is set during initial white settlement when the cultural frontier was raw, there was an insatiable greed for land, and Aboriginal people were believed to be violent aggressors. Related to and complicating the novel is Grenville's memoir *Searching for the Secret River* (2006) which recounts her journey of personal enlightenment while researching and writing her novel. In this, Grenville (2006, p. 12) states that inspiration for her novel came from

sharing a “pulse of connectedness” with an Aboriginal woman on her walk for reconciliation over Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2000. This momentary glance led her to fictionalise her ancestor Solomon Wiseman as protagonist William Thornhill, together with fictional characterisations of the ancestors of Traditional Owners of the Hawkesbury River area.

Grenville’s literary characters share a space which recounts a story of miscommunication and violence based on historical information deliberately adapted with the free hand of fiction. Grenville (in Koval, 2005) stated that she often used historical details of the era out of context in an attempt to introduce a new way of understanding history. Despite intentions of reconciliation through historical awareness, an unconscious bias can be witnessed in the enduring reflection of white progress evident in Thornhill’s success and status as the most important settler on the Hawkesbury River. Thornhill was an unrepentant and convicted thief who, although he was conflicted by witnessing extreme acts of violence and injustice against Aboriginal people, refused to accept any moral accountability for his own actions. He not only took part in the massacre of Aboriginal people, but without his boat, this particular massacre could not have occurred. His crime, which went unpunished, was purely for the sake of personal gain, and driven by impure & prejudicial motives.

The increasing choice of the ficto-historical genre in post-millennial Australian literature by “novelists...increasingly preoccupied with exploring history” (Sullivan 2006, p. 12) indicates that Australian writers perceive literature as a vehicle for reconciling with the past. Grenville (cited in Koval 2005, p. 4) stated that her desire as a writer was to focus on the “fact that Australian history does have a series of secrets in it”. Miller (cited in Sullivan, 2006, p. 13) suggested that history and fiction “are enriching, not conflicting ways of viewing the past”. Their statements, in conjunction with historical nuances in *The Secret River* and *Journey to the Stone Country*, indicate that the texts were contemplated as reconciliation narratives. This theme is complicated and problematic, however, for both writer and reader by the evocation of a colonial subject-matter that contains embedded and unconscious ideologies. Bird (2002, p. 6) asserts that “The colonial projection of fear of the Other is located in the Aboriginal people, and added to this is the evidence of a profound and generally unacknowledged guilt. And with the guilt goes denial”.

Grenville’s novels, interviews and publicity contain a modicum of guilt and reconciliation. However, unconscious bias (which includes denial) is demonstrated through negative colonial representation of Aboriginal people together with an ending which promotes an overwhelming reflection of the progress and privileges of whiteness. This negativity and subordination feeds a deficit discourse in relation to Aboriginal people. Similarly, Miller’s text highlights injustices of the present and past, particularly in a powerful accusatory speech made by Panya, the Jangga Elder, to Annabelle, the white protagonist. When Annabelle learns about the violent actions of her grandfather, however, she measures them in the context of a battlefield where soldiers of equal strength met, as opposed to a massacre of innocent women and children. Finally, Annabelle’s proposed purchase of Verbena Station for Bo as the ending to this romantic tale gives her dominant status and promotes an enduring and overwhelming reflection of the privileges of whiteness which can hardly be seen as any form of reconciliation, redemption or reparation for Indigenous people.

As can be seen, a continued focus on colonial images through the white lens of ficto-historical narrative reinforces the roots of contemporary racism and its inequitable power base. Narrative may be deeply embedded in historical processes which affect Aboriginal people in literature and in life. Eagleton (1996, p. 183) asserts that:

Discourses, sign-systems, and signifying practices of all kinds, from film and television to fiction and the languages of natural science, produce effects, shape forms of consciousness and unconsciousness, which are closely related to the maintenance and transformation of our existing systems of power.

In earlier literature, many Australian texts by non-Indigenous authors, informed by non-Indigenous historians, explorers' journals, anthropologists, and officials of Aboriginal policy, have negatively depicted acts by Aboriginal people as representations of the brutality of Aboriginal culture (Dodson 2003; Goldie 1989; Foss 1988; Adams 1962). Within the literary field, fictionalised brutal acts appear in memorable texts which appear in school and university curricula. In consequence, negative literary images of Aboriginal people and culture remain deeply entrenched in literary discourses, where they enter the sub-conscious minds of readers and, without a cultural reckoning, incubate a negative attitude towards Aboriginal people.

*A Fringe of Leaves* (1976, pp. 256-271) by Patrick White (Nobel Prize winning author for literature) portrays cannibal feasts as a ritualistic tradition of Aboriginal people of Fraser Island. However, when the white captive Eliza Fraser devours human flesh, it is portrayed as merely a desperate act of survival. Aboriginal oral stories recount how local Aborigines rescued the Frasers, but the captain died. When Eliza Fraser was eventually rescued and returned to England, however, she benefited by making a living through embellished and lurid renditions of her experiences amongst those she called *savages* (Quaill 2000). Thomas Keneally in *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* (1972, pp. 100-102) (Miles Franklin Award winning novel and constant inclusion on literary and film courses) portrays the brutal killing of a woman, her baby and husband by an Aboriginal man in response to what he considered injustice. Elizabeth O'Conner (Miles Franklin Award winning writer) in *The Spirit Man* (1980, p. 6) gives a gruesome account of one Aboriginal man stealing and eating another Aboriginal man's kidney fat in the belief that it would give him strength to overcome his illness.

Although fictional, these repetitive unquestioned portrayals of brutal acts performed by Aboriginal characters within literature can shape enduring connotations of Aboriginal people and cultures as barbaric and savage in the consciousness of readers and have done so for over two centuries. Richard Altick (1967, p. 11) suggests that humans are:

[I]ntimately associated with an emotional response to words and often directly responsible for it, are the images that many words inspire in our minds. The commonest type of image is the visual: that is a given word habitually calls forth a certain picture on the screen of our inner consciousness.

The picture created on the screen of white Australian consciousness was that of Aborigines as fearsome, savage and uncivilised people with spears and boomerangs. Supported by literature,

media, and tourist representations this original colonial image remains alive in the consciousness of Australian society. Larissa Behrendt (2006, pp. 1-2) points out that "images of Aboriginal people or symbols from Aboriginal art and artifacts... the incorporation of a boomerang as part of the official Olympic motif" become part of the "unconsidered appropriation of Aboriginal imagery for marketing purposes" and are reproduced constantly, especially when Australia hosts overseas visitors.

## The obscurity of negativity

On re-reading early texts with a more informed historical knowledge and awareness of cultural differences, polarisation of cultural behaviours still presents a stark difference between representations of *civilised* and *uncivilised*. Bird (2002, p. 20) claims that uninformed perceptions may "later be subverted by some adults, but generally, with the majority of unreflective readers, it can be expected to go deep into the consciousness and to perpetuate itself". Without personal engagement with Aboriginal people, there is little reason for readers to *reflect* on negative representation and, therefore, the racism inherent in literary representation is obscured. The prominence of ficto-historical texts on literary courses today without the benefit of an Aboriginal viewpoint or critique has a potential to preserve unquestioned negative images in the consciousness of contemporary readers. This possibility gives credence to the claims of Patricia Grace (cited in Smith, 2003, p. 35) that "Books are Dangerous". The unobstructed pathway of unquestioned acceptance of such biased theories is, Smith (2003, pp. 1-2) suggests, because:

the collective memory of imperialism has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, back to those who have been colonized.

One of the foremost ways of dissemination of this *collective memory of imperialism* in Australian academia has been the history discourses. Accordingly, because the ficto-historical genre of non-Indigenous Australian literature finds its source material in historical accounts of Australia's European history, it is intricately entwined in this process of dissemination. As Kate Grenville (2006, p. 191) states:

I was shameless in rifling through research for anything I could use, wrenching it out of its place and adapting it for my own purposes... But I was trying to be faithful to the shape of the historical record, and the meaning of all those events that historians had written about. What I was writing wasn't real, but it was as true as I could make it.

It is not surprising in view of the dominating white influence within history and literary discourses that reproduce negative stereotypical colonial images, that Indigenous people have remained little more than subaltern though feared shadows in the contemporary literary imagination.

In *Journey to the Stone Country* (2002) through the voice of his characters and the narrator, Miller recognises different ontological perspectives, but these often condemn Aboriginal world views rather than invite understanding or acceptance. Susan, for whom Annabelle agrees to work conducting a cultural survey, suggests that "The Murris don't work to whitefella schedules" (Miller 2002, p. 15).

Dodson (2003, pp. 26-27) expresses how Aboriginal people recall penalties imposed for this cultural difference: "They said to us 'You have no work ethic so you shall work for nothing' and they indentured us and brought us back in chains when we ran away from their cruelty". In *When the Pelican Laughed*, Alice Nannup (1992, p. 24) explains how white refusal to contemplate Aboriginal world views and enforcement of white laws has resulted in mistrust over generations:

Every morning there used to be these prisoners, Aborigines from Roebourne gaol... all chained together by the neck... There would be about sixteen of them, eight on each side and they'd all be walking in a line carrying a pick, shovel and water-bag... a policeman at the front, and one at the back, and those chains around their necks... treated that way just because they'd killed a bullock or something like that... put in this gaol and fed on something they couldn't survive on, and brought out to work on a chain-gang... It was so cruel...and it's a story I've told my own kids time and time again.

Miller intentionally and dramatically contrasts the difference between Aboriginal and white lifestyles with a juxtaposition of pace. On one hand, Susan's need for speed on the road represents the fast pace of life in the white world. On the other hand, the text presents the lackadaisical approach of Aboriginal communities in extended and political negotiations for mining as incompatible with and negative to the economic realities of the modern business world: "if the Japanese are still buying coal by the time everyone's approved it, the company will get down there and dig out its little seam of black gold" (Miller 2002, p. 15)

## Unconscious bias

This paper has demonstrated how within post-millennial Australian literature, the transposition from a physical to a mental displacement of Indigenous people has, over time, manifested in a *cultural unconsciousness* whereby negative representation and perception of Aboriginal people continues through unconscious bias without question or contradiction. Langton (2002, p. 87) asserts that "Our fate will always be entwined with Australians who are historically and intellectually blind to difference". Furthermore, Langton (1996) earlier suggested this blindness to difference was a "national psychosis...the psychotic persecution of Aboriginal people". Behrendt (2006, p. 2) terms it a "psychological terra nullius" created by an "invisibility of the real because of a focus on the imagined". Constant expressions by Aboriginal writers, poets and critics of violence and discrimination are a timely reminder that inequality and injustice remain an active force within Australian literature and society. Lorraine McGee-Sippel (cited in Reed-Gilbert 2000, p. 35) confirms this in her short poem *Stereotype Images*:

The portrayal of Kooris

Nearly always the same

Stereotypical negative images

We shoulder the blame

The texts examined demonstrated that there is a perpetuation of negative literary representations of Aboriginal people in post-millennial reconciliation literature of the ficto-historical genre through revival of a colonial discourse. The literary consequence of white dominance of this genre is the continued displacement of Aboriginal characters. Literary mental displacement follows in order to overcome anxieties of the past. This embodies what Attwood (2005, p. 243) describes as a: "form of forgetting – a disremembering". This ability to disremember and mentally displace Aboriginal people is evidenced in the three major novels discussed through a character that represents the social conscience of the dominant culture.

In *Journey to the Stone Country* when Annabelle learns about the brutal actions of her grandfather, her comparison to that of a *battlefield* exposes her *cultural unconsciousness* and indemnifies her against white guilt. In *The White Earth*, having uncovered hidden secrets of the murder of Traditional Owners at the ruthless hands of her grandfather, Ruth's cultural unconsciousness is evidenced in her rejection of any moral accountability or notion of Aboriginal rights to possession in her decision to claim ownership of the property either for herself or her nephew instead of assisting the Kuran people with a Native Title claim. In *The Secret River*, although Sal is aware of Will's involvement in the massacre of Aboriginal people that allowed them uninterrupted prosperity, her cultural unconsciousness is visible in her ability to *dis-remember* so she could revel in the wealthy status the Thornhills enjoyed as "something of a king... and queen" of the Hawkesbury River area. (Grenville 2005, p. 314)

In the comfort and complacency of the dominant culture, many contemporary readers, like the literary characters Annabelle, Ruth and Sal, are easily able to disconnect and forget literary violence of the past and continue to bask in the illusion of terra nullius ignoring the impact of legacies of past practices and policies for Indigenous people. As Colin Tatz (2000, p. 77) noted, however, these are not merely literary representations for many, but a living reality:

For the vast majority of Aborigines and Islanders, the past is not a foreign country. What governments concede Aborigines may have endured in the past, they are still enduring – namely, wholesale imprisonments, removal of children to institutions of various kinds, gross ill-health, appalling environmental conditions, unemployability, increasing illiteracy, family breakdown, internal violence, and almost unbelievable levels of youth suicide.

At the end of each text (as in life), most white characters remain firmly entrenched either in a privileged position of ownership, or in a position to claim ownership. The literary perpetrators of past injustices received no legal punishment and accepted no moral accountability for the displacement of Aboriginal people.

## Conclusion

For many readers, negative perceptions and attitudes towards Aboriginal people have been developed through a generational failure to question the literary/artistic imagination. The gratuitous violence and negative representations throughout the texts discussed, whether historically based or

the fictional flow of a writer's pen, serve only the narrative creation of the white author and/or white audience. Alice Nannup (1992, p. 192) suggests: "if that's where it starts from, it stands to reason that's where it has to stop". Most readers, although they believe the land was *taken* from Indigenous people *in the past*, like characters in the novels, accept no moral accountability or obligation for *that past in their present*. As portrayed in poetry, however, there are worrying consequences to only serving a white centre:

The moving finger writes:

And, having writ,

Moves on: nor all your piety nor wit

Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,

Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it. (Fitzgerald n.d., p. *li*)

While it is not easy to contemplate the impact of more than two centuries of unconscious bias or *wash out words of the past*, reconciling the unresolved social anxiety that drives a burgeoning literary interest in the tragedies of the colonial past requires engagement with Indigenous people. Historical memory has become a popular theme in Indigenous literature in an attempt to overcome historical and cultural antagonism. Indigenous writers Alexis Wright in *Carpentaria* (2006) and Kim Scott in *That Deadman Dance* (2010) (both winners of the Miles Franklin Award) challenge ingrained negative assumptions and racist myths that have obscurely wound their way through the consciousness of generations of readers and hold a key to changing outdated preconceived negative attitudes towards Indigenous people. These voices intricately link settler violence and the displacement of Aboriginal people to a failure of the dominant culture to imagine possibilities outside the boundaries of a colonised white lens.

With a collective understanding and acceptance of the past within the present, respectful and culturally aware literary representation of the strengths and weaknesses of all members of Australian society would enable all readers to explore who they are and what has gone before. Moving from the past, through the present and into the future through the reading of Australian literature should be an experience we can all enjoy and one which promotes cultural respect and social cohesion. If Australian literature is to achieve a truly exemplary cross-cultural space, it is paramount that writers and readers accept and respect cultural differences – in life as well as in literature. Literature has the power to bring stories of the past to life and invite new opportunities and optimism for the future.

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# **Racism within Lateral Violence and Lateral Violence within Racism – An Aboriginal Australian Perspective under the theme Manifestations and Impacts of Racism**

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**Keywords:** Racism, lateral violence, Aboriginal Terms of Reference, First Nations' Peoples, post-colonialism, colonisation, Aboriginal, invasion of 1788, expressions of lateral violence, survival skills.

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**Colonisations' aftermath resulted in the need for First Nations peoples to learn survival, adaptations, and change process skills. Oppressed peoples need these skills to maintain their own sense of culture, identity, and social existence. Practiced over more than two centuries these skills contribute to some degree in the development of a form of violence against First Nations peoples.**

**Lateral violence, in the context of this paper is an Aboriginal identified form of violence that has had over two hundred years of evolution in Australia. It has its genesis within the processes of colonisation. This violence is a form of racism and is entrenched within the colonisation processes of the conqueror for the purposes of conquering a victimised people. Lateral violence begins to embed itself in the psych of a group of people who are oppressed by systems of social customs, politics, laws, cultures, social and spiritual**

**practices, economics, and social communication systems imposed upon them by their oppressors.**

## Introduction

*First, you push on your territories, where you have no business to be, and where you had promised not to go; secondly, your intrusion provokes resentment, and resentment means resistance. Thirdly, you instantly cry out that the people are rebellious and their act is rebellion.... Fourthly, you send out a force to stamp out rebellion; and fifthly, having spread bloodshed, confusion, and anarchy, you declare with your hands uplifted to the heavens that moral reasons forced you to stay: for if you were to leave, this territory would be left in a condition which no civilized power could contemplate with equanimity or with composure."* (Viscount John Morley cited in C.F. Andrews: 1937)

First nation's peoples have lived and continue to live through eras of historical and contemporary colonisation. However, so much in contemporary Australia has been written about 'post-colonialism' as if 'colonisation' has finally ended somehow. This notion of 'post-colonialism' is in fact a racist notion and also vindicates the perpetration of lateral violence in society under many guises. It also suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have somehow made the shift within themselves to follow the 'post-colonialism' doctrines (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997; Jayaweera, 1999; Rajan & Mohanram, 1995; Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). However, Trees (1993. In Heiss:2003; pp.264-265) states;

*"Does post-colonial suggest colonialism has passed? For whom is it 'post'? Surely not for Australian Aboriginal people at least, when land rights, social justice, respect and equal opportunity for most does not exist because of the internalised racism of many Australians. In countries such as Australia where Aboriginal sovereignty, in forms appropriate to Aboriginal people, is not legally recognised, post-colonialism is not merely a fiction, but a linguistic manoeuvre on the part of some 'white' theorists who find this a comfortable zone that precludes the necessity for political action. Post-colonialism is a 'white' concept that has come to the fore in literary theory in the last five years as Western nations attempt to define and represent themselves in non-imperialist terms".*

Lisa Bellear is straightforward in her reaction to the term, saying,

*"I know that if you are widely read and well-travelled then you would see the total inappropriateness of using that word [post-colonial] and the more that you try to justify using that word in a sense that you offer the definitions and framework, theoretical constructs, the more full-of-shit you are... How can people use it when you know what's going on in this country" (Heiss:2003).*

A legacy of colonisation and colonial imperialism is racism. Racism is deeply entrenched within Australian society yet it remains hidden by either rhetorical invisibility or social silence. Politics, legalities, social communication systems, and social institutions perpetuate it. Individuals perpetuate racism through their beliefs, values, mores and understandings, views and opinions about peoples

who are not of Anglo/Celtic origin. Aboriginal Australians perpetuate racism within and without their own society in a similar manner. However the difference is that they are descendants of a conquered people and the significant factor is that racism within Aboriginal society has at its core what has come to be known as 'Lateral violence'.

*"Lateral violence is the power and control used by a dominating authority and individuals, to disconnect and decimate a people's or person's nationhood birthrights, to their spiritual and cultural heritage, self and cultural identity and 'sense of being'. This is done by means of colonisation processes that 'normalise' institutionalised systems of violent intimidation, manipulation and deception politically, environmentally, religiously, legitimately, governmentally and socially."* (Yavu-Kama-Harathunian 2010-2012)

Aboriginal Australians are made up of many Nation groups. However, governments, legislators, and social engineers continue to impose the foreign construct of 'Aboriginal' to describe, interpret, justify, research, analyse, and politicise First Nations peoples as a single culture.

A culturally critical result of racism is lateral violence expressed in the disempowerment/disintegration of conquered peoples. What was thought to be domestic violence, spousal violence, family violence and community violence written about by non-Aboriginal researchers was only responding to what was seen, what was evident on the surface. Research did not articulate what was simmering away underneath Aboriginal peoples psyche, a deeply held fear of not only their own people but of non-Aboriginal people. *"In considering the black history of Australia since colonisation, Aboriginal people were nothing more than vermin or at best, consigned under The Fisheries Act of 1909 (Haebich) to be classed, not as human beings, but under the native plant and animal life. The colonial and early post-colonial history written in the latter part of the 20th century tells of the many massacres committed against Aboriginal people by white people."* (Van den Berg R 2011: pp.54). These violent expressions were only a reflection or a symptom of deeply held racism that disempowered people. It was expressed toward First Nations people by people who had lost their own connection to their own country. In turn this kind of violence began to be expressed by Aboriginal people toward each other. To understand the deeply hidden currents of racism and lateral violence underlying this historical form of racism and lateral violence, Dudgeon, Wright, Paradies, Garvey and Walker (2010 ; pp. 25) advise that *"a historical and cultural background is essential"*.

Lateral violence within racism is buried so deeply between the gaps in the broken Songlines and the displacement experiences of peoples who attempt to live up to the political image of 'who' First Nations people who identify as an Aboriginal person is supposed to be. Being 'Aboriginal' is supposed to be according to the Anglo-Celtic imposed system of identity, culture and heritage identification. Racism within lateral violence and lateral violence within racism is becoming more evident as identity, culture, fragmentised Aboriginal Law and Aboriginal Spirituality becomes blurred. They are overlaid with colonial descendants' writings and interpretations of that which was/is the cultural protocols and practices of First Nations people. As Grande (2004: 243) reminds us, *"sovereignty, or nationhood, must be at the centre of decolonisation."* For Aboriginal people whose sovereignty and nationhood

was taken away, the colonists built an 'Aboriginal' image of First Nations peoples. The name was part of the spoils of the conquest. First Nations Australians did not have any part in the new naming of who they are. To cope with the current experience, Aboriginal people attempt to adapt millennia-old culturally appropriate survival techniques to 21<sup>st</sup> Century conditions that even cause distress to the white man. A result of colonised interpretations, of Indigenous culture is the ongoing misrepresentations of the actual.

## **An Aboriginal Perspective On Racism**

*Racism against First Nations peoples since settlement, continues to exist as part of the 'white supremacy' 'white privilege' notions in Australian society. Aboriginal people were defined, by the first settlers, as less than human because of differences in skin colour, language, culture, customs and characteristics that were not similar to those of the settler peoples."* (Yavu-Kama-Harathunian 2012)

Racism is a manifestation of Lateral violence. It is reinforced through the legitimatisation of the history of Australia that was manipulated to suite a dominate authorities values and beliefs. History says that Australia was 'settled'. It was not. Australia was invaded. History says that Australia was discovered by Europeans. However,

*"The history of Indigenous Australians is thought to have spanned 40,000 to 45,000 years, although some estimates ...up to 80 000 years before European settlement and as low as 10,000 years. ....the Indigenous Australians lived as nomads and as hunter-gatherers with a strong dependence on the land and their agriculture for survival. The path of Australian Aboriginal history changed radically after the 18th- and 19th-century settlement of the British: Indigenous people were displaced from their ways of life, were forced to submit to European rule, and were later encouraged to assimilate into Western culture...."* (Crystal E 1995-2012)

How can something be discovered that has and was already found by the people who lived here for eons of time? Did the interpretation of Captain Cook's 'discovery' of Australia, mean there were no human beings inhabiting the land? Was this the beginning of the historical lie? What European explorers found was a vast country. They found that it was already inhabited by a people who were very different to their own understanding and knowledge about their world, about human-ness, and social arrangements.

Western powers continue to use racist processes to subtly yet violently intimidate their own and colonised peoples. They believe that 'other' people who do not look, speak, act, or value differently to the dominating authority, are a deficient "species" of human kind, perhaps even savages; less than human (*Van den Berg R 2011: pp. 54*). This view is necessary to justify prejudice, and bigotry, and even war. For Aboriginal Australia the dominating authority has perpetuated the false belief that 'dark skinned' people were all part of one homogeneous society. Yet Aboriginal oral history emphasises there are many different nations, diverse cultures, and societies. Some were warring nations others peaceful. Aboriginal history is diverse and complex. (Australian Government: 2012)

No human being is born with the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another. No human being is born with bigotry or prejudice against another human being, thing, or place. We all are taught by our own subjective cultures. The tragedy is that culturally taught racism is what perpetuates lateral violence amongst Aboriginal people themselves thus promoting the lateral violence of a dominating authority.

An important feature of racism toward Aboriginal people is that equal rights as citizens in Australia still eludes them in spite of the many government legislations since the Constitution Act of 1900 was enacted. This first legislation gave room for government policies to be based upon racist views, policies that will often see Aboriginal people as merely some 'other', subhuman, a people that must be protected, looked after, cared for by others who have their best interests at the core of the reasons to do good toward them. First Nations peoples had policies drafted on their behalf by consecutive Australian governments; 1967 Referendum; 1975 Racial Discrimination Act (CTH); 1993 Native Title Act (CTH); 1999 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (CTH) These Acts often refer back to the sentiment expressed in the Constitution Act of 1900. However, in regard to citizenship rights, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not enjoy the same standards of freedom and equality as other Australians. (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation:2000)

*"The history of racial categorizations is intertwined with the history of racism. Science sought to justify a priore` racist assumptions and consequently rationalised and greatly expanded the arsenal of racist ideology. .. racist beliefs have been built upon scientific racial categorizations and the linking of social and cultural traits to supposed genetic racial differences.....Today. as in the past, racism weaves together notions of biology and culture and culture is assumed to be determined by some racial essence." (Ferber: 1999)*

A simple yet insidious example of racism within lateral violence is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have to still obtain a 'Confirmation of Aboriginality' from an Aboriginal organisation when applying for employment or government benefits. (AIATSIS: 2012). There has to be written 'proof' and without this piece of paper, an Aboriginal person does not have proof of their birth or their rights as to who they espouse to be. Yet, no immigrant Australian, someone who immigrated to Australia has to 'confirm' their nationality, as it is accepted the day they receive Australian Citizenship.

The lens through which so called superior people focus their altruistic endeavours upon Aboriginal people stems from a notion that, First Nations' peoples are somehow inferior, morally degraded, ethically unsound and lacking any ability to move from the place into which racist attitudes by the dominant society, continues to place them. *"The legal historian, John McCorquodale, has reported that since the time of white settlement, governments have used no less than 67 classifications, descriptions or definitions to determine who is an Aboriginal person"* (Australian Law Reform Commission). The imposing of 'altruistic endeavours' therefore, place Aboriginal people in a position

of victims, so authority 'over' them by others, continues to influence and impact upon their everyday lives.

*"We've recently seen the passage of the racist Stronger Futures legislation, which condemns Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and beyond to another 10 years of intervention"* (Graham, C: 2012) Aboriginal people are/have been labelled inferior to the 'white man', victims of colonisation, victims of societal progress; a people who will never really fit into what Australia has become. That is, there was/is this belief that was espoused by scientists and social scientists that certain races, especially 'black races' were subject to inborn shortcomings (Ferber:1999). So Aboriginal 'inferiority', a belief based upon a false understanding of race, continues to validate the lateral violence perpetuated even at personal and social levels. The 'inferiority' that many Aboriginal people feel...*"positions them in... powerlessness, covertly or overtly directing their dissatisfaction inward toward each other, themselves, and toward those less powerful than themselves.*(Creative Spirits:2012)

In the second half of the 19th century, the growing crime rates in England created the need to look elsewhere to solve the problems of overcrowding in prisons, and immigration populations from the country to the cities. Penal Servitude was one punishment that relieved the pressures on prisons. Criminals were sentenced to England's colonies, *".... included transportation where criminals were sent to Britain's colonies, such as Australia. In theory, this was for a limited period, but few ever returned home"*, (Shropshire Line: 2012). The first boat people arrived on Australia's shore in 1788. Military and criminals and free settlers arrived and took possession of the country for England. The Aboriginal ancestors were ignored, killed, or made slaves.

European and, to a lesser degree, American scientists and philosophers devised a false racial "science" to "prove" the supremacy of whites. Ferber (1999) further suggests that *"whites fail to recognise the ways in which their own lives are shaped by race....the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it..."* Coming to Australia and as a result the British penal servitude policies of the colonial past, colonists, saw First Nations peoples as part of the 'background', part of the flora and fauna and not human. Tatz (1999) says,

*Racism has to be defined in this specific context: that beliefs (rather than "sentiments"), however ill-founded, about "biologically determined" physical and social characteristics, real or imagined, justify the taking of action about, or against, a defined group because they are that group. We need to spend less time on white Australian "sentiments", "unease" or "contempt", and much more on the beliefs that justified legal, extra-legal, administrative and institutional action about Aborigines because they were Aborigines (pp. 13-14).*

Out of these discourses flowed the expressions of global lateral violence in the form of wars where in Europe a group of peoples were gassed, atomic bombs were used, economies were threatened, ethnic cleansings took place, countries far removed from the Western world were invaded for their natural resources and men and women from all different races and cultures fought for their countries yet lost to the invader.

In the 1940's – 1960's Australians were being educated about the yellow hordes to our north, the black savages from Africa, the cunning and merciless Asians and Middle Easterners all part of the racist and protectionist 'White' Australian Policies better known as the Immigration Restriction Act (1901). *"The Australian External Affairs Minister Richard Casey justified this act of forward defence ...in the Australian Parliament on 27 October 1954: "If the whole of Indo-China fell to the Communists, Thailand would be gravely exposed. If Thailand were to fall, the road would be open to Malaya and Singapore. From the Malay Peninsula the Communists could dominate the northern approaches to Australia and even cut our life-lines with Europe. These grave eventualities may seem long-range - but it is not impossible that they could happen within a reasonably short period of time."* (Bell:1993, pp, 1)

Degrading racist adjectives were used, that reinforced the racial privilege of 'whiteness' and racial difference so that the settlers of Australia could maintain the status quo of white supremacy. *" In Australia the greater part of the mass murder and genocide of Indigenous peoples occurred in the 150 years prior to the advent of Hitler's rise to power in Germany, and that the most destructive phase of the Australian concentration camps occurred from the 1930s through to the 1960s."* (Foley: 1997, pp, 2)

In 1941, Prime Minister Curtin reinforced the philosophy of the 'White Australia' policy, saying *' this country shall remain forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race'*. (NSW Department of Education & Training: 2010). No recognition was made to the fact that the First Nations peoples of Australia were not 'white' the nations of people were 'black' people, or that the country was invaded, not peacefully settled.

Culturally, racist concepts that focused upon the victims of oppression and which ignored the way race shaped the lives of the settlers almost seemed as if the settlers were 'white and raceless' and therefore the 'norm for humankind.' (Ferber: 1999) Entrenched racism in the form of government instrumentalities of Australian nationhood building were and continue to be legitimised by religion, law, education and the other four pillars of Australian society. Because lateral violence is at the core of racial prejudice, attitudinal values and beliefs about Australia's whiteness continues to ignore the knowledge that Australia's history was and is one of black nation hood.

In their own country, Aboriginal Australians were pushed into the background and lateral violence underpinned the form of policies, which were key elements in a prejudiced governments rhetoric that saw Aboriginal Australians becoming refugees, displaced persons and welfare victims gratefully receiving 'handouts' from a racially prejudiced yet considered to be altruistic, democratic government.

## **Expressions Of Lateral Violence**

For over two centuries Aboriginal Australia has survived the invasion of 1788. This invasion has never been politically, governmentally or legitimately acknowledged. As a result Aboriginal Australia

has had to learn survival techniques that maintained and supported the lie that Australia was settled, a lie that is legitimised by being taught in the educational system of this country. That is the power of racism within lateral violence.

*My dictionary contains a clear definition of invasion, it is: 'the act of invading as an enemy; entrance as if to take possession or overrun'. So what do we know of the landing in 1788? Historians agree that of the nine British ships that made up the first fleet, two were warships. These warships carried 18 cannons on deck. They were backed up by 245 marines armed to the teeth. A further 306 ship's crews were on standby. It was a small army backed up by a powerful part of Britain's navy. When they landed at Port Jackson in 1788, the 1,373 newcomers intended to establish a colony on the shores of the lands of Aboriginal people. Just in case, a further six cannon were ready to be taken ashore to protect the colony against any opposition. Their intention was clear: one way or another, consent of the natives was never a consideration.*

*If that landing could be described as a peaceful settlement, then so too could the US-led wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Vietnam. Like the western invasion of the countries mentioned above, the British stayed here, created government, an economy and imposed their own legal systems with force". (Tracker: 2011)*

Since the time of settlement, government policy relating to Aboriginal people has been in the hands of non-Aboriginal people. To a certain degree it is also the case today. The common justification for most policies for Aboriginal people was and is that the policies were/are *"for their own good"* (Haebich: 1988). Policies of protection, assimilation, self-determination and reconciliation continue to be motivated from a racist perspective, camouflaged in altruistic rhetoric that maintains the racial dominance of Australia's First Nations peoples.

If one were to say that lateral violence does not exist in Australia, then why is it that the survival skills that Aboriginal people educated themselves into using, are still being taught to them by the descendants of a racially dominant settler society? Racism within 'white supremacist ideology' is the social and legitimate way political and governmental instrumentalities teach people the means by which every day survival, and the 'state of being' Australian, is possible. Lateral violence has always been evidenced in the policies of the past and in the policies that govern Aboriginal Australia today. In this manner it is suggested that lateral violence continues to dominate Aboriginal Australian lives because power and control of their lives is still in the hands of the dominating authority.

One of the first acts of lateral violence was embedded in the Constitution of 1900. Section 127 which stated before it was amended in 1967 that although heads of cattle were counted, *"In reckoning the numbers of people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted."* Aboriginal Australians by the stroke of a pen, were therefore disenfranchised, made non-citizens, excluded, and ignored, throughout the nation building of Australia. The 1904 Act went so far as to place 'aborigines' in an Act for Fisheries, Flora, Fauna and Aborigines. If one actually looked beneath the motivation that drove the policies, it can be seen that they were made by the use of lateral violence because the Acts ensured that power and control

over Aboriginal people always remained in the hands of the conqueror. Tatz (1999) asks the question,

*"How does one categorise Australia's race relations?" He then goes on to say, "Much of that inter-racial history I call 'genocide'. In the current climate of heat in Aboriginal affairs.....almost all historians of the Aboriginal experience – black and white – avoid it. They write about pacifying, killing, cleansing, excluding, exterminating, starving, poisoning, shooting, beheading, sterilising, exiling, removing – but avoid genocide. Are they ignorant of genocide theory and practice? Or simply reluctant to taint "the land of the fair go", the "lucky country", with so heinous and disgracing a label?"*

Some 220 years ago, the English novelist Anthony Trollope visited Australia. He wrote, "There has been some rough work",: We have taken away their land, have destroyed their food, made them subject to our laws, which are antagonistic to their habits and traditions, have endeavoured to make them subject to our tastes, which they hate, have massacred them when they defended themselves and their possessions after their own fashion, and have taught them by hard warfare to acknowledge us to be their master." (cited in Glendinning: 1992). Aboriginal ancestors learned to survive these acts of lateral violence, based upon what they were learning from the role modelling of settlers who were progressing the development of Australia into 'their' nation.

Many white Australian settlers believed that the Aborigines were a dying race. It was the Constitution where another reference was made in Section 51 (Part 26). That articulated this Section so as to give power over Aborigines to the States rather than to the Federal Government. In both NSW and Queensland the Department of Flora, Fauna and Fisheries was also the Department that defined who Aboriginal people were. Australia was legitimately made terra nullius, and historical writings validated to the world that we were considered the closest thing to stone-age man.

*"British colonisation policies and subsequent land laws were framed in the belief that the colony was being acquired by occupation (or settlement) of a terra nullius (land without owners). The colonisers acknowledged the presence of Indigenous people but justified their land acquisition policies by saying the Aborigines were too primitive to be actual owners and sovereigns and that they had no readily identifiable hierarchy or political order which the British Government could recognise or negotiate with."(Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 2000)*

This was the situation until the Referendum of 1967 when an overwhelming majority of non-Aboriginal Australians voted to include 'Aborigines' in the census of their own country and in which they were now the minority. To have to be subjected to the process of a Referendum to say that Aboriginal peoples were Australian citizens was an act of Lateral Violence against First Nations people. From an Aboriginal perspective it politically and legitimately said to all Australians that although the reality of Aboriginal Australians had been that they had inhabited this country prior to settlement, their own knowledge about themselves was not legitimate; that they had been here since time immemorial was/is debatable; and that this was the country that had owned them for

thousands of years cannot be true because the land was 'terra nullius'; and Aboriginal Australians only began to exist in Australia from 1967.

## **Continued Expressions Of Lateral Violence And The Legitimisation Of Racism**

The term 'Aboriginal', is a Western political construct developed by and for the first settlers to identify the legitimate First Nations people. It was constructed to explain, to the settlers who the 'black peoples' of the new country were. It gave a category to the settlers and their descendants', one that they could understand and then describe for themselves a people who were far removed from their own world view. (Ivison, Patton, Sanders: 2000) Being called and legitimately being identified as 'aboriginal' was an act of lateral violence against hundreds of nations of peoples. It took away Aboriginal peoples identity, that which they had identified as their natural birthright. These are the political deceptions that further encouraged an image of 'poor black fulla' welfare mentality, amongst Aboriginal Australians because they were not made aware of the underlying lateral violence the politics adhered to. Further, it has strengthened an 'us and them' non-Aboriginal Australian national rhetoric which Aboriginal people have responded to. Voices like Julie Tommy and Michael Anderson who say, "*Without our voices, Aboriginality will continue to be a creation for privileged opportunists and will always be about us rather than by us.*"—(Julie Tommy Walker, Innawonga woman and Aboriginal leader) (Creative Spirit:2011)

*"We, as First Nations peoples are not Australians. We are who we are. If individual Aboriginal people choose to be assimilated and seek to be part of the invader society, then good on them! But they must not pretend to talk for those of us who seek to be known by our own national identity of belonging to an Aboriginal nation state."*—Michael Anderson, Aboriginal rights activist and leader of the Euahlayi tribe. (Creative Spirit:2011)

In reality, Australia had been settled by over seven hundred nations. As Kakkib li'Dthia Warrawee'a a Doctor of Ya-idt'midtung Medicine and Spiritual Teacher/Philosopher says, "*Aboriginal people generally moved around in small family or community groups of between a dozen and twenty or so people....coalescing into larger groups from time to time....a body of loosely associated peoples that were dialectically the same....and a number of the dialectic groups made up a nation....sometimes termed tribes....The nations formed into confederations .....there were about two hundred and sixty-odd languages in Australia: about seven hundred nations.*" (cited: The Art of Healing:2012)

Colonisation processes not only scarred the ancient land for three centuries, the processes also violently scarred the First Nations people intergenerationally, because the processes were initiated, based upon false premises; that the people were not human; that the land was empty; that nobody lived here before the British settlers came; and the settler peoples had every right to declare the land as 'terra nullius'.

Some of the first Acts enacted by the colonial governments ensured that the perception of the settlers remained intact. The Act which acknowledged Aboriginal people was part of the Fisheries, Flora and Fauna of Australia Act set in motion a continuation of lateral violence within colonial racist

notions. It continued to allow the development of racist attitudes about Aboriginal people. This one Act expressed the false idea that we were dying out, were hopeless and helpless, were spiritually deficit, did not have a language system, and governments needed to help us to become more human in the Anglo/Celtic form.

Through assimilation and Welfare policies, First Nations peoples were ripped from their culture, sacred lands, Dreaming, social, family and kinship networks thus creating displaced peoples, disenfranchised peoples, and dis-spirited peoples. Today, those who were/are impacted on continue to ask, "Who am I?" "Where do I come from?" In fact the policies that allowed children to be taken away from their families from the 1940's- 1970's have survivors grieving through the journey of re-connection with family because of the lateral violence imposed upon parents that many will never come to find or know.

In essence Aboriginal people became refugees in their own country and to survive, they learned to become dependent upon government hand-outs. The adaptations for survival were based upon what Aboriginal ancestors saw the military, the convicts and the settlers do to survive. These survival skills were learned throughout traumatic times, times where loss of land, language and culture (Orygen Youth Health Research Centre: 2008), was the imposed 'norm'. It was then handed down in the oral histories, and experiential learning modes, passing down what worked to generation after generation. (Appendix 1)

For role models of how to be 'white', ancestors watched, first settlement peoples, show them how to live in the world that was changing around them. Therefore, to protect their mental, physical, social, environmental, and psychological sense of self, and their sense of being their own interpretation of being human, they learned to abuse alcohol; learned to abuse each other; learned violence; learned to disregard sacred boundaries; learned that it was best to forget their law; learned to protect themselves by learning to speak English and forget their own languages; learned to treat their women as goods and chattels; and learned to try to become a white man in a 'black' skin. In doing so they learned to hate their culture and their heritage forget their connection to country and take on the identity of 'Aboriginal'.

## **Conclusion**

In developing survival skills ancestors became ashamed imitators of who they were, what their heritage meant, what and how their culture defined their identity and their connectedness to life and to nature. Their spiritual connection to country, to each other, to the environment and the universe was eroding, and fragmenting as the colony progressed across Australia. The ancestors, driven from their lands or killed by unfamiliar diseases, zealous settlers, or massacres, had to adapt from their nomadic hunter-gatherer way of life, because colonization' processes of lateral violence within racism, prevented them from roaming freely over their lands. Many were forced into slavery, and entire tribes died out completely and their numbers dropped dramatically throughout the colonial period. Because of this form of lateral violence, much of Aboriginal culture and history has been lost.

Aboriginal people continue to refine their survival skills according to the behavioural responses their parents hand down to them as each racist policy designed for their protection was/is rolled out. Continuing to practice the survival skills of their parents and grandparents, those skills pertaining to what the settlers did socially, spiritually and culturally continues to impact upon each surviving individual on a daily basis. The ways of doing and being 'Aboriginal' was/is based upon how they had to learn to cope with the hidden lateral violence in the racist policies perpetuated from colonisation to this present day.

Government policies developed about Aboriginal Australians continues to support racism and lateral violence because of the 'protectionist' theories post-colonialism espouses in their design and development. How Aboriginal people survive is often filtered through the intergenerational trauma of displacement and the learning that was acquired from what was or was not passed down.

## Appendix 1

### Expressions of Lateral Violence within Aboriginal Society

#### HISTORICAL

1. Family – decimated.
2. Religion – told we were animists.
3. Business/Economy – told we did not have any.
4. Arts and entertainment – ridiculed.
5. Education – savages do not have such a system.
6. Media – cave, sand, body, rock paintings misinterpreted.
7. Government - savages or sub-humans do not have such a system.

#### CONTEMPORARY

1. Families and children removed to missions, reserves and jails.
2. Spirituality was not recognised.
3. Barter and economic systems not recognised.
4. Stone age man art, corroboree and other ceremonies not acknowledged.
5. Walkabout dismantled through settlement.
6. Bull roarers, boundary markers, smoke signals and landscape traces misunderstood.
7. False belief about and rejection of the mainstay of Aboriginal ways of government and their practice and adherence to Aboriginal Law through Elders, Men's and Women's business and initiation ceremonies, and the practice of Aboriginal Spirituality principles

Yavu-Kama-Harathunian 2010-2012©

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## Practice Papers

The papers presented in this section have not been peer reviewed

# How do we fare on the “fair go”? Developing anti-racism at the local level: the Darebin City Council Racism Inquiry and Anti-Racism Strategy

## City of Darebin

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**Keywords:** Racism, race-based discrimination, anti-racism, local government, public policy, community relations, Aboriginal, CALD, newly-arrived, interculturalism.

The 53 square kilometres that make up the City of Darebin stretch from Melbourne’s inner northern suburbs of Northcote and Fairfield out to the traditional middle ring suburbs of Reservoir and Bundoora, through Thornbury and Preston. With an estimated resident population of 143,057 in 2011, the City of Darebin is culturally, linguistically and religiously, a diverse community. Over 50% of its population is from a non-English-speaking background, including second generation and newly arrived communities. Darebin has the second largest Aboriginal community within the Melbourne metropolitan area.

**Early in 2011, Darebin City Council was alerted to national research findings which suggested that the levels of racism in the municipality were higher than the State average, while paradoxically, residents’ support of multiculturalism was also higher than average. It responded by launching a local Racism Inquiry to understand and unpack these findings, investigate race-based discrimination in Darebin and hear from the community about their experiences of racism, its impact on them, and their ideas to tackle it. The aim was to document experiences at the local level and gather evidence from citizens through extensive consultation (surveys, focus groups, etc.), with a view to building a response. The results of the Inquiry are presented in the Darebin City Council Racism Inquiry Report 2012. It contains positive findings such as the Darebin community’s very strong support for cultural diversity. But it also points to elements of concern, notably that too many individuals and communities in Darebin still experience prejudice, discrimination and racism in employment, education or when walking down the street. The Darebin Racism Inquiry gives Council an in-depth understanding of areas where efforts should be increased, such as the settings where work is most needed and some of the groups that are most affected. It validates Council’s investment in community relations. It also identifies emerging issues. Building on the knowledge acquired through the Inquiry, Council has decided to take preventive measures and developed a local response to address race-based discrimination and strengthen community relations: the Darebin City Council Anti-Racism Strategy.**

## Introduction

In February 2011, the federal government announced a new National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy. At the same time, national research into racism (*Challenging Racism Project*) showed that, while they held more positive views of multiculturalism than average, the residents within the suburbs of Moreland, Banyule and Darebin combined also experienced higher incidents of racism than the state and national average.

In light of these two elements, Darebin City Council took a proactive approach and decided on 18 April 2011 to conduct a locally based racism inquiry, notably to understand and unpack the seemingly paradoxical findings from the *Challenging Racism Project*. The Inquiry investigated race-based discrimination and sought a community-grounded view of experiences of racism in the City of Darebin, as well as ideas on possible solutions, from those who live, work, study or recreate in Darebin. The aim was to document experiences in Darebin and gather evidence, with a view to building a response and address racism at the local level.

## The research phase: the Darebin Racism Inquiry

### Methodology

The Inquiry was conducted under the guidance of a steering committee comprising of community representatives (from Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee, Darebin Ethnic Communities Council, Darebin Interfaith Council and Darebin Women's Advisory Committee) and agencies (Spectrum Migrants Resource Centre, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – VEOHRC and Victorian Health Promotion Foundation – VicHealth), as well as Darebin Councillors and Council officers. The data-gathering phase took place in September and October 2011, with analysis of the data over the following months. It included a phone survey of 300 residents, representative of the Darebin community in terms of gender, age, geography and cultural diversity; an online survey; 15 focus groups including participants from diverse backgrounds, notably the most vulnerable, and ages; a public forum and a number of other data-gathering methods. Overall, about 500 citizens participated in the Inquiry.

The Inquiry focused on race-based discrimination (whether direct or indirect, interpersonal or institutional) i.e. "those behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion", with a view of racism as "these behaviours and practices, along with the beliefs and prejudices that underlie them" (VicHealth 2009). This broad definition, inclusive of religion and distinct from a legal definition, was thought to be more reflective of people's understanding and experiences.

### Attitudes to diversity

On the whole, respondents to the Darebin Racism Inquiry phone survey seem to hold very positive views and be very supportive of diversity and multiculturalism. It could be argued that, because

Darebin is a very diverse community, its members' attitudes to diversity and multiculturalism are generally positive.

Well over eight in ten agreed that it is a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different races, cultures or religions (89%) and that it is important to them that Darebin remains a culturally diverse community (85%). As far as overtly racist attitudes are concerned, only 7% of respondents in Darebin were prepared to agree that they are to some extent personally prejudiced towards certain races, cultures or religions.

There were, however, less positive findings with 13% of respondents opposed to inter-racial, -cultural or -religious marriages and a relatively high level of denial of racism in Darebin. Similarly, some results suggest that while there is a very strong commitment to diversity in principle among respondents, there is more uncertainty and more ambiguity in practice.

In addition to this, there are some elements of concern: 40% of Darebin residents suggested there are some racial, cultural or religious groups that do not fit into Australian society. While there are multiple and complex layers of meaning and interpretation around this, it is in part an indirect indication of prejudice and covert and subtle feelings of racism.

## Community views of racism

In the focus groups and public forum, racism was described as verbal abuse, physical abuse, stereotypes, prejudice, unequal access to services, different groups not interacting, avoidance strategies, intolerance, institutional racism and, notably by Aboriginal participants, imposition of a culture.

Participants' views of racism pointed to its fluid nature and how difficult it is to define and recognise. The commonalities between, and compounding effect of, the multiple layers of discrimination (ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status...) were emphasised.

Racism was seen as stemming mostly, at an individual level, from ignorance, unfamiliarity, lack of education and fear, and at a collective level, from politicians and the media. Racism was also linked to history and international politics. The ideas of "opportunistic racism", i.e. that racism could be a by-product of conflict or other behaviours, and "inadvertent" or "unintentional" racism were also put forward. The "novelty" of the concept of race, hence racism, for some groups is worth noting.

Specifically Australian dimensions of racism identified were the legacy of the White Australia policy and the specificity of Australia's treatment of its Indigenous community.

On the whole, participants to the Inquiry seemed to hold mixed views of Australia as a country with a lot of tolerance and goodwill, but also a lot of racism. There was the sense of an evolution of racism in Australian society, now less explicit and direct, but pervading through society as a whole, which echoes ideas in the literature of new forms of racism.

## Experiences of racism

Almost four in ten respondents (39%) to the phone survey said that they, a friend or family member had witnessed a race-based incident in Darebin in the past five years. The most common type of incident witnessed was verbal abuse (26% of phone respondents), then tensions between groups (23%) and cases of race-based discrimination (22%), and finally physical violence or destruction of property (7%). Comparison with previous surveys indicates there seems to have been an increase in race-based tensions and cases of discrimination in Darebin between 2005 and 2011. However, further elements to corroborate this potentially increasing trend are needed.

With regards to personal experiences, the vast majority of Darebin residents (eight in ten or more phone respondents) had not personally been victims of racism within the last five years.

However, there were quite high levels of experience of direct, overt racism (name-calling – 20% of phone respondents; racist jokes or teasing – 17%); more intermediate levels of experience of physical confrontations (9%); and much lower levels of institutional or formal racism (between 2% and 5%). This might be a sign that institutional racism is decreasing or emphasise the difficulty of identifying it. The most common experience of racism was being faced with racist material in the media (46% of phone respondents and most focus group participants). Cyber-racism was not reported as so widespread, but findings warrant keeping an eye on the development of racist material on the internet. It should be noted that these findings are for the general population, so for some sub-groups, the proportion experiencing racist incidents was much higher.

Participants in the focus groups provided many examples of race-based incidents and discrimination, ranging from subtle forms of exclusion and prejudice to experiences of interpersonal racism or blatant instances of discrimination. Institutional racism was also experienced, with service providers and in employment, whether by Council or outside.

## Settings

Consistent with eight in ten phone survey respondents saying they had not experienced racism, more than nine in ten had not experienced racism in the last five years in any setting (employment, education, housing, public venues or events, with police or service providers).

The most common settings where race-based discrimination occurred were the workplace (over 9%) and educational settings (8%). Then came the public space (7% of phone respondents experienced racism in a shop or restaurant, and 7% at a sporting or public event), and at lower levels, dealings with agencies or government service providers (4%), with police (2%) or in the housing market (2%).

In keeping with the statistical findings of the survey, the workplace and employment were identified by focus group participants as a major setting for race-based discrimination. All groups, to differing degrees, mentioned issues with employment. Participants from newly-arrived and Aboriginal communities were particularly exposed to not finding employment because of their background. This

shows that addressing employment issues will be a key element to combat race-based discrimination in Darebin.

Schools were also mentioned by focus group participants as a major setting for racism, as well as the public realm (public transport, notably buses, streets and parks, sporting venues, local shops). Accommodation came across as an issue for some of the most vulnerable or disadvantaged ones, and hospitals for CALD elderly.

## Affected groups

Findings from the phone survey showed that the most likely to be victims of race-based discrimination in Darebin were those from a “minority” religious background, those from non-English speaking backgrounds (whether speaking a language other than English at home or born in a non-native English speaking country), younger people and in some cases, women. It should be noted that the experience of racism for the Aboriginal community did not come out in the phone survey. This is unsurprising given the fact that this was a general population survey. With about 1% of the Darebin population being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander according to the census data, the numbers of respondents in the Inquiry survey were too small for any statistically significant findings. However, the very frequent and commonplace experience of race-based discrimination by Indigenous Australians and the entrenched nature of racism towards them are well-established by a number of studies and were brought to light by the qualitative data provided by the Darebin Inquiry’s focus groups.

In the focus groups and public forum, there was a general agreement that anyone may be a victim of racism and that racism might be coming from any group. Most victims of racism in Darebin underlined how racism was coming from a small proportion of people and also underlined that racism was not a constant thing.

This, however, was not the case for two groups for which the experience of racism seemed constant and relentless. Data from the focus groups depicts a pervasive, all-encompassing experience of racism for Aboriginal people in Darebin - exemplified by widespread stereotyping and linked to their collective history of dispossession and mistreatment, which still weighs on the individual today - and, to a slightly lesser extent, for newly-arrived communities, notably from Africa, who “discovered ‘being black’” upon coming to Australia. For both these groups, racism was described as an integral part of everyday life, with a lot of informal racism, notably in shops or venues, and mistrust from (and in return towards) institutions. Police particularly were often felt to be discriminatory by the African and Aboriginal communities.

While Aboriginal residents and newly-arrived communities seem to have the most pervasive experience of racism in Darebin, other groups were also affected. Among these groups, Muslims experienced high levels of discrimination, with the specific dimension of a strong anti-Muslim sentiment from a part of the community, fuelled by media coverage. This was linked to 11 September 2001, seen as a watershed moment. There also seems to have been a gendered

experience of racism in the Muslim community, with ambivalent experiences by women regarding the headscarf.

Visible difference (skin colour, headwear for Muslim women or Sikh men...) appeared as a trigger in race-based incidents. There was a feeling that people tend to be more exposed to racism when they display "otherness" or look different. This was also true of distinctive accents, different-sounding names (hence the need felt by some to change their names) and language issues. It seems that how 'foreign' a person looks or sounds has an impact on the type and degree of race-based discrimination they experience.

## The impact of racism

Phone survey respondents reported that witnessing race-based incidents left them feeling sad (41%), outraged (38%), shocked (32%), but also wanting to intervene (32%). This latter figure shows potential for bystander action against racism. There appeared to be no notable difference between genders in terms of feelings experienced when witnessing racism. The only measurable difference was that men were more likely to be outraged.

The main reactions to personal experiences of racism were anger (47%) and feelings of sadness (41%). There were notable differences in feelings across the genders, with men more likely to report being angry or unaffected and women more likely to feel stressed or like they didn't belong.

Numerous focus group participants indicated how racism had scared them, especially Muslim women, but also left them embarrassed or angry. Racism was depicted as preventing people from fully participating in community life through feelings of shame, sadness, isolation and humiliation that made victims feel like they did not belong or that they were not recognised as valuable members contributing positively to Darebin. This led to hopelessness, powerlessness and, ultimately, disengagement.

Most of the feelings expressed by Darebin respondents can translate into negative health outcomes, in keeping with the now strong evidence of a link between race-based discrimination and ill-health, notably poor mental health (VicHealth 20??).

Racism also affected people's social life and made them behave differently. In the phone survey, three in ten residents (29%) who had experienced racism said that they had changed their behaviour as a result. Key behaviour changes included avoiding people (12%), breaking up a friendship (10%) and avoiding a location (9%). This is concerning, especially as younger respondents appeared to be the most affected.

Similarly, data from the focus groups shows that women, particularly of Muslim faith, were becoming isolated as a consequence of racist incidents, being afraid to go out and staying home. Other groups also reported changing their habits as a result of racism, notably avoiding locations or people.

## Responses to incidents

In the phone survey, just under half (45%) of those who experienced (whether personally or as a bystander) a racist incident said they did not take action in response. Confronting the perpetrator in a non-violent way was the second-most common course of action (34%). All other types of actions were less common (10% reported the incident, 9% sought help). Only 4% of phone respondents reported confronting the perpetrator in a violent way or using force. Focus group participants reported a wide range of responses, from taking no action, fleeing, ignoring racism or seeking help (quite often from police, despite little faith in their capacity to do anything about it), to responding to racism, using it or reclaiming one's culture.

In the phone survey, there were clear gender differences in regards to responses when witnessing or experiencing a situation of racism or discrimination. Women were more likely not to take action or to seek help; men were much more likely to confront the perpetrator in non-violent or violent ways (no woman reported responding in a violent way or using force). This raises queries as to how women can be empowered to respond to racism.

The powerlessness felt by many respondents, regardless of their gender, pleads for capacity building programs or actions to support assertive responses (including from bystanders) to race-based discrimination.

## Suggestions and recommendations from the community

When asked what Darebin City Council can do to address racism, most phone survey respondents were unsure (28%). The most common suggestions were public education about cultural sensitivity (19%) and celebration of multiculturalism (15%). Working with both the established community to be more welcoming (8%) and new arrivals to assist with integration (8%) was also recommended.

However, a sizeable minority (16%) refuted the need for Darebin Council to do anything further, stating that Council is already doing enough. This was echoed in some focus groups and might reflect the feeling that tackling discrimination is not Council's business. It is something to be taken into account when devising policies to address racism.

Numerous recommendations emerged from the focus groups and public forum.

Education and awareness-raising around racism and cultural diversity were seen as paramount. This was particularly the case in schools, with education about cultural diversity, training for teachers and development of an educational "combat racism" toolkit. There were also calls for education with CALD communities, within institutions and in the wider community - by disseminating the outcome of the Racism Inquiry widely and by putting together an education campaign that would emulate the VicHealth-funded LEAD (Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity) "See beyond race" campaign.

Community celebration and community building were also recommended to address racism, particularly through social activities such as events and festivals, with strong support for existing Darebin festivals such as the Festival of Light and Friendship and the Darebin Community and Kite

Festival. Development of interculturalism, notably through the Darebin Intercultural Centre, facilitation of interactions through sports and culture and action on the public space were also called for.

Improving Council community engagement and developing partnerships was also suggested to tackle racism. Participants called for the development of community engagement in all Council policies and projects, and notably in regard to the Racism Inquiry itself, around the key ideas of accountability and commitment and the need to work in partnership with the community to address racism.

Participants wanted to see Council act as a role model and take leadership, notably by having anti-racism as part of its vision and declaring Darebin a "racism-free municipality", acknowledging the First Peoples of Australia and celebrating all of Darebin's diverse communities. This extended to employment, with calls for Council to be more reflective of the community in employment, provide training to staff and work with businesses to improve job opportunities for Aboriginal and CALD Australians. Being a role model in service provision and delivering inclusive services were also recommended. Council was also called upon to lead through innovation, notably by using its funding as a tool to address racism, through support for projects fostering inclusion and promoting diversity, or as a tool to redress race-based discrimination, with the idea that Council should "pay the rent".

Council was also seen to have an important role in advocating against racism to the State and Federal levels; to other institutions such as police, transport (notably bus) companies, education institutions and hospitals; to businesses about the benefits to be gained from a changed approach to minority groups; on behalf of victims of racism, with the idea of an ombudsperson for that role; and to the media.

In addition to actions aimed at preventing the occurrence of racism, participants wished to improve support for victims of racism, with more information about anti-discrimination law and the relevant agencies (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission - VEOHRC, Australian Human Rights Commission - AHRC) and their powers and the idea that all services (Council, police, agencies...) should work in cooperation at the local level to tackle racism.

All those suggestions and recommendations showed the wide array of ideas from the Darebin community to address racism and underlined the expectation to see Council commit to doing something about it.

The Racism Inquiry helped Darebin City Council identify issues and key areas of difficulty in terms of race relations and tensions, but also good practices and ideas for solutions. It was then used to feed into and inform a City of Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy aimed at addressing all forms of racial discrimination.

# The response: Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy

The Racism Inquiry provided Council with important research on racism in Darebin: where it is happening and how it affects the community. This information helped Council develop strategies to tackle these issues. Drawing on citizens' suggestions and building on the National Anti-Racism Strategy launched on 24 August 2012 by the Race Discrimination Commissioner, Dr Helen Szoke, a local Anti-Racism Strategy has been developed to address race-based discrimination, strengthen community relations and continue to foster harmony and dialogue in Darebin over the next three years.

## Process

The Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015 is a locally-grounded succinct and high-level document, drawing on citizens' recommendations as mapped out in the Inquiry report, but also informed by best practices and evidence from VicHealth and the Challenging Racism Project. In addition, the mandate of the steering committee established to oversee the completion of the Racism Inquiry was extended, and representation broadened, to continue to give guidance on the development of the Strategy, ensuring continued expert and community input.

## Vision and principles – towards a “racism-free Darebin”

The Strategy proposes a vision for Darebin as a “racism-free municipality”: we will work towards becoming a municipality free of racism, where our community's diversity is valued, celebrated, respected, embraced and leveraged.

It also states a number of supporting principles, informed by Darebin citizens' views in the Racism Inquiry and reflecting their expectations:

- Take a stand against racism and as a Council, promote zero tolerance towards racism.
- Acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land and respect and recognise Aboriginal communities' values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and their right to self-determination.
- Celebrate all of Darebin's diverse cultures; value diversity at all levels of the community and institutions and promote dialogue between different cultures through interculturalism.
- Work from a human rights perspective.
- Work in partnership with the community to address racism, with the idea that Council should be accountable to the community and committed to tackling racism and that anti-racism initiatives should be developed ideally within a collaborative approach (as defined in Council's Community Engagement Framework).
- Base all activities and initiatives on evidence and best practice, which implies keeping up-to-date with research and the growing evidence-base and reviewing actions in that light.
- Contribute to empowering the community and building its capacity to respond to racism.
- Recognise that “integration is a two-way street” and work with both established communities to be more welcoming and new arrivals to assist with integration.

- Build a Council reflective of its community diversity.

## Objectives and strategic areas for actions

The Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy contains three objectives, aligned with the Darebin Equity and Inclusion Policy 2012-2015 goals:

- inclusive and reflective Council: to build an organisation that promotes freedom from racism and race-based discrimination and harnesses its staff's diversity;
- inclusive, responsive and accessible services: to deliver services and programs that are free from racism and race-based discrimination and accessible and appropriate to all;
- inclusive and empowered community: to contribute to a community where racism and race-based discrimination are not accepted and where there is a shared vision that citizens should be free from racism and race-based discrimination.

To achieve these goals and high-level objectives, strategic areas of work, which were identified through the Racism Inquiry as areas of concern but also of opportunities, are delineated.

To build a Council inclusive and reflective of its community, these areas include:

- Employment, with recruitment, retention, career development and flexible work arrangements;
- Training;
- - Communication internally, externally, reflective of diversity and informative about race-based discrimination, its impact, the law and potential responses;
- Data-collection and research;
- Consistent application of Council's Equity and Inclusion Planning and Audit Tool (EIPAT) to assess the impact of policies and practices on race-based discrimination and cultural diversity, audit Council practices and policies and evaluate outcomes of services and programs;
- Leadership, through joining the Coalition of Cities against Discrimination in Asia and the Pacific, taking a stand against racism, working on symbolism, images, reputation, branding, marketing as well as welcoming physical environment, rewarding staff efforts in addressing racism and promoting internal best practices;
- Council advocacy to State and federal levels, other institutions (police, transport companies, education institutions, hospitals), businesses (including real estate), media and on behalf of affected citizens.

To deliver **inclusive, responsive and accessible services and programs**, the strategic areas include:

- Accessible and welcoming services and programs;
- Culturally-appropriate services and programs;
- Targeted and tailored services and programs;

- Inclusive services and programs through the application of EIPAT for service planning, development and implementation;
- Community engagement (consistent with Council's Community Engagement Framework) in development of services and programs;
- Audit of services through the application of EIPAT;
- Explore resource distribution to address race-based discrimination (use of funding, notably community grants, as a tool to address and redress race-based discrimination);
- Include a social inclusion clause when tendering out services.

And to contribute to an inclusive and empowered community, the strategic areas for action include:

- Acknowledge and celebrate the traditional owners of the land;
- Community celebration and community building through events and festivals, arts and culture and sports;
- Interculturalism;
- Empower the community to respond to racism, and especially empower women, bystanders and youth;
- Education – work with schools on issues of race-based discrimination;
- Public education and awareness-raising about racism and race-based discrimination;
- Partnerships with relevant agencies and community organisations across the municipality, as well as regionally and at the state level;
- Work on race-based discrimination in the public space, notably on safety issues and in venues;
- Reward projects and community efforts that address racism and race-based discrimination.

## Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The Anti-Racism Strategy is to be implemented through multiple actions plans: Aboriginal Action Plan, Multicultural Action Plan and Human Rights Action Plan; as well as Community Safety Strategy, Community Engagement Framework and the forthcoming Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (to be developed).

The actions in each of these plans will reflect the community's expectations expressed in the Racism Inquiry and draw on Darebin's citizens suggestions and recommendations. They will also rely and build on the following themes, identified in VicHealth's framework for action:

- increasing empathy;
- raising awareness;
- providing accurate information;
- breaking down barriers between groups;
- increasing personal and organisational accountability;
- promoting positive social norms.

They will also draw on some of the Challenging Racism Project “practical anti-racism initiatives and strategies that local governments and individuals can access and use to address cultural prejudices in their own backyards” that cut across the areas of work and principles defined for Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy:

- celebrate cultural diversity;
- engage local residents in conversations and consultations;
- identify positive commonalities and diversities;
- promote cross-cultural contacts, develop experiences of positive cross-cultural contact and work on religious beliefs;
- respect and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land;
- use social marketing and media;
- provide accurate information to dispel ‘false beliefs’;
- address racism structurally and institutionally;
- promote everyday anti-racism;
- take gender into account;
- take the local social and cultural context into account and tailor actions to the needs of the locality.

In regards to evaluation and monitoring, it is worth remembering that the impacts of anti-racism initiatives must be conceived of in a broad way. To assess the success of its Anti-Racism Strategy, Council will monitor and assess whether we are making progress. In that regard, quantitative data might not be the best measure and it will be important to rely on qualitative data, notably collected through monitoring and evaluation of the action plans implementing the Strategy, as well as close links with other agencies and organisations, allowing for second-hand feedback.

In any case, evaluation and monitoring of the Strategy will be undertaken through the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms included in each action plan, including an annual review of actions and priorities.

## Conclusion

Launched on 21 September 2012, the Darebin Anti-Racism Strategy 2012-2015, informed by the robust process of the Racism Inquiry, will be implemented through multiple action plans currently in development. Through this Strategy, Darebin City Council intends to stand up against racism and encourage people to speak out and say racism is unacceptable in Darebin. To that end, Council is counting on everyone interested and committed to building an inclusive and respectful community where all feel valued as a citizen regardless of their race, ethnicity, faith, skin colour or accent.

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# “The Spiritual and Ethical Dimensions of Racism”

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## ONE RACE

*"Regarding the solution of the racial problem; the believers should of course realise that the principle of the oneness of mankind which is the cornerstone of the message of Bahá'u'lláh is wholly incompatible with all forms of racial prejudice. Loyalty to this foundation principle of the Faith is the paramount duty of every believer and should be therefore wholehearted and unqualified. For a Bahá'í, racial prejudice, in all its forms, is simply a negation of faith, an attitude wholly incompatible with the very spirit and actual teachings of the Cause."*  
(Shoghi Effendi, 1936)<sup>1</sup>

Keywords: **racism, prejudice, spiritual, ethical, moral, religion, education, oneness, unity, diversity, equality, Baha'i**

<sup>1</sup> Lights of Guidance (Baha'i Publishing Trust, India, 2001), p 534.

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**This paper looks at the roots of racism and its place in the contemporary multiracial, interdependent world, the global village. It approaches the subject from spiritual and ethical/moral perspectives, looking briefly at the contributions of the various great religions, up to and including the teachings of the Baha'i Faith. The argument advanced will be that racism is one of the most important issues facing the global community and that the combating of racism and racial prejudices and the cultivation of a consciousness of the oneness of humanity are essential to the future of the planet in creating a peaceful, harmonious, united and sustainable global society. Racism is seen as a major barrier to world peace and the establishment of a new world order free of such prejudices. Further it is argued that while the faculty of reason, secular education, international human rights principles and the application of legal sanctions all have their place and value, the abolition of racism and racial prejudices can only be effectively achieved by applying appropriate spiritual and ethical principles and beliefs at the grass roots. This involves bringing the diverse peoples of the world together as one race in unity, while still preserving their diversity of culture, etc. The experience of the world-wide Baha'i community, comprised of some 6-7 million from virtually every race and ethnic group on the planet, is offered for examination in the quest to abolish such prejudice.**

## Introduction

This paper takes a somewhat different approach to the topic of racism than perhaps most of the speakers. It is presented in the context of *Theme no 4, developing anti-racist futures – visualising alternatives for the future*, and hence is looking to the future. It is an approach that views this topic from predominantly spiritual and ethical/moral<sup>2</sup> perspectives, arguing that the real and lasting solution to the great problems of racism in the contemporary world primarily lie in the spiritual and ethical/moral sphere. This is in contrast to the more normal secular approach, which seeks to find solutions in politics, debate, secular education and the secular law and its enforcement. Religion and morality may occasionally receive some official but brief mention in this context<sup>3</sup>, but not more than that.

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<sup>2</sup> The view taken here is that spirituality and ethics or morality are directly linked. I do not wish to get into a debate as to whether ethics and morality are necessarily dependent upon religion and religious teachings, nor as to the distinction between ethics and morality. But I think it clear that religion and spirituality have at least a major and legitimate role to play in the establishment of ethics/morality.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in the Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, Durban, 31 August - 8 September 2001, General Issues, Items 5, 6 and 7 on moral issue, one human family, and no separate races, and Item 8 on the value of religion, spirituality and belief on the eradication of racism. *It is recognised that racial discrimination is morally condemnable – see wording of the sixth recital to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. For the text of the Convention see the Schedule to the Australian Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

My approach does not seek to minimise the seriousness of this issue; on the contrary, it argues that racism is one of the greatest problems facing humanity and is a barrier to the transition to a more peaceful and just global society. Nor does it discount the importance of other methods to combat racism such as the use of the faculty of reason and logic, appropriate secular education, the promotion of international human rights principles and legal sanctions. These methodologies are still necessary. But it does view racism as a major barrier to world peace and the establishment of a new world order free of racial prejudice. It argues that until the solutions are sought in a deeply spiritual and ethical/moral approach then progress to this end will continue to be limited.

Speaking of this approach, it has been submitted (Australian Baha'i Community, 2011):

*"The Australian Bahá'í Community believes the essence of any successful program of social change, including those which aim to end discrimination on the basis of race, is the understanding that the individual has a spiritual or moral dimension which shapes their life's purpose and their responsibilities towards their family, their community and the world. The development of individuals' moral and spiritual capabilities is an essential element in the quest to prevent and eliminate racism, as it will empower bystanders to identify and speak out against racism when and where it occurs.*

*We appreciate that promoting specific morals or values may be controversial, as such efforts have often been associated with repressive practices and narrowly defined visions of the common good. But moral capabilities, when articulated in a manner consistent with the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and aimed at fostering the spiritual, social and intellectual development of all persons, represent a key element of the kind of transformation required for a society in which there is true equality to take shape. Such capabilities must be anchored in the central social and spiritual principle of our time, namely the interdependence and interconnectedness of humanity as a whole. These capabilities can and should be taught in schools, but also need to take root in the family and the community.<sup>4</sup>*

Writing in a similar vein, it was said (National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Australia, 1995):

### ***"The Power of Spiritual Principles***

*"Baha'is have found that the significance and personal application of spiritual principles which provide the surest route to community development and the maintenance of human dignity and honour. Spiritual principles, also, can be the only lasting foundation for the improvement of relationships between different cultures and racial groups."<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Submission by the Australian Baha'i Community on the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, (May 2011), [www.humanrights.gov.au/antiracism/submissions/Sub073](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/antiracism/submissions/Sub073).

<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal Reconciliation, (1995, Baha'i Publications Australia).

What is required is said to be a transformative agenda, an agenda that seeks a basic change in the perceptions and values about all human beings as spiritual beings and which creates an appreciation of the organic oneness of the human family (Sanaei, 1997)<sup>6</sup>. In the Baha'i view this is a spiritual approach.

I appreciate that any approach to the topic of racism is likely to be clouded by the fact that there is confusion not only over the meaning and causes of racism, but also over the required solutions designed to ameliorate and even abolish it. As I have stated, this paper sets out my view, and I think also that of the Baha'i community although I can only speak for myself, on the primary importance on a spiritual and ethical/moral approach to the issue, not only in defining racism and its causes, but also in devising the necessary solutions to its abolition. The main purpose of this paper is to introduce participants to the Baha'i view on this topic and how it approaches the elimination of racial prejudice by placing the emphasis on these spiritual and ethical/moral aspects.

In Baha'i terms it sees racism as a form of discrimination in both attitudes and actions drawn from perceived differences between peoples that are attributed to a so-called "race" factor, based on what the Baha'i teachings would say is an erroneous view as to the essential nature of the human being and of humanity as a whole. It is a view that takes a purposive approach to human civilisation and to the ongoing history and direction of humanity. The view that some "races" are inferior to others is clearly a divisive factor in human affairs, whereas the emphasis in the Baha'i writings is on unity at all levels. In the Baha'i view there is only one race, the human race<sup>7</sup>. It is more than a matter of equality - it is a matter that goes to the unity and oneness of the whole human race. All discrimination based on so-called "race" is prohibited in the Baha'i writings.

But more than that, the approach taken is a pro-active one; that is, Baha'is are encouraged to associate in love and friendship with all peoples on the basis of their mutual equality and dignity, respecting their rights, cultures, languages etc., but otherwise without any distinction or separation. Interracial marriage is, for example, encouraged. This is complemented by an ongoing, learning centred and reflective approach within the Baha'i community seeking to better put these principles into practice on a global basis. The idea of some opponents of racism that there is a right to a separate, segregated form of development based on so-called "race" finds no support in the Baha'i writings, except perhaps to the extent that it may be necessary to prevent one predominant group overwhelming a minority group to its disadvantage. In other words, a form of "special measure" in terms of the relevant international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination<sup>8</sup>. Any use of anti racist ideologies as a form of power politics against others in a derogatory or divisive way is not supported by the Faith's teachings, whereas concepts of

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<sup>6</sup> Farin Sanaei, *"The Elimination of Racism; An Essential Prerequisite for the Progress of Humanity"*, in K Puri (Ed.), *Indigenous Peoples in the Wake of Mabo*, (1997, Baha'i Publications Australia).

<sup>7</sup> Discussed in more detail below.

<sup>8</sup> Convention, Part 1, Article 1.4. On one view, special measures are a form of positive discrimination, on another view they are not a form of discrimination at all.

reconciliation, equal opportunity, mutual respect, ongoing education for unity in diversity and just treatment for all humanity are strongly supported.

To many this may seem to be an idealistic but impractical approach to race relations. They may find more comfort in an approach based on "*separate but equal*", where each distinct "*race*" group largely operates and finds its comfort zone in the associations formed within that group and not so much outside of it, and where the individuals in that group derive their identity and meaning from that group. This, it may be said, is not the Baha'i approach, although the value of such associations are not discounted. While particular customs and traditions are, in the Baha'i view, to be recognised and respected as being of great importance, to be preserved and cherished except in so far as they impede a greater overall unity, the overriding Baha'i aim is to create and enhance a form of unity in diversity that binds all the peoples of the world together as one. It is in support of this approach that the application of spiritual and ethical/moral principles are so important. Without that support, this approach is indeed beyond reach.

In my humble opinion, the solution to racism is neither assimilation nor of separate development and confrontation. These, to my mind, are definitely not unity in diversity in the Baha'i sense. Under Baha'i thinking, there can be no one predominant race or society over others. All social groupings must be respected and enhanced, as part of the wider unity of the whole.

In the Baha'i view, it is a matter of creating a consciousness in all peoples of one humanity on one earth under one supreme God, to which all peoples have primary allegiance, whilst still maintaining their secondary allegiances to their own culture, ethnicity, etc. It is definitely not a continuance of a white society as the dominant society that is envisaged in the Baha'i view, but a quite new global society in which all peoples are a part as equals in a totally new world order. Unity in diversity is the key. The Baha'i Faith calls for a total recasting of the world order and the global system based on spiritual and moral principles that are universal and all-inclusive. Global justice and universal human rights must be central pillars of that new order.

In addressing this issue, the existing grievances of indigenous peoples must be taken into account in a global context. But in the Baha'i view it is futile to solely pursue secular legal, political and economic solutions as the road to social change. It is the underlying spiritual, philosophical and attitudinal matters and their origins that must be addressed. The rest will follow. In particular a coherent set of spiritual and moral principles underlying the change will give the process legitimacy and permanency and lead to healing and unity in diversity.

These principles include the development of a mutual regard for the essential humanity and dignity of all peoples, indigenous and otherwise, without any prejudice in any direction, the importance of universal participation and partnerships across all levels, the development of fellowship and love and respect within all and for all, the development and implementation of common goals for all and in particular in health, education and equal opportunity. It is an approach that says we should learn from the lessons of the past but that we must not be constrained by the divisions that that history has caused. Race is to be seen as a fallacious human construct. Separate racial agendas are not part

of this process as they inevitably lead to resentment, anger, division, confrontation, domination, marginalisation and social and cultural impoverishment. This Baha'i approach calls for a radical recasting, not only of the debate as seen from the perspective of those in dominant societies, but also from the perspective of those aggrieved and in subservient societies or simply those that have strong feelings of past and present racial injustices. A new global and much more spiritual and moral perspective is called for from both.

In so far as the problem is one of perceptions of white superiority over coloured peoples, then this approach is said in the Baha'i writings to require a particular and challenging attitude to be adopted by each party. It is said that whites should make a supreme effort in their resolve to contribute their share to the solution of this problem, to abandon once for all their usually inherent and at times subconscious sense of superiority, to correct their tendency towards revealing a patronizing attitude towards the members of the other group, to persuade them through their intimate, spontaneous and informal association with them of the genuineness of their friendship and the sincerity of their intentions, and to master their impatience of any lack of responsiveness on the part of a people who have received, for so long a period, such grievous and slow-healing wounds.

At the same time it is said that coloured persons should, through a corresponding effort on their part, show by every means in their power the warmth of their response, their readiness to forget the past, and their ability to wipe out every trace of suspicion that may still linger in their hearts and minds.

Neither can leave the resolution of this issue to the other side. Both have a responsibility. It is said that neither should think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken, and the favourable circumstances created, by agencies that stand outside the orbit of their group. Neither should they think that anything short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort, can succeed in blotting out the stain which this patent evil has left on the fair name of their common country. Rather they should both believe, and be firmly convinced, that on their mutual understanding, their amity, and sustained cooperation, must depend, more than on any other force or organization operating outside the circle of their group, the deflection of that dangerous course which racist ideas inevitably lead to (Shoghi Effendi, 1939)<sup>9</sup>

The views expressed in this paper are my own, but as will now be obvious, they are drawn largely from my own beliefs as a member of the Baha'i Faith. This Faith has maintained from its inception an unequivocal opposition to racism in all its forms, as part of its teachings that humanity is one race and one people under one Divine source. This teaching, originating in the Middle East in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Jaros, 2011)<sup>10</sup>, has in purely physical terms now been largely confirmed by modern science, the predominant view of which is that all humans (or at least those outside of Africa) are descended from one small group that came out of Africa about 70,000 – 100,000 years ago and

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<sup>9</sup> The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 40.

<sup>10</sup> Although no doubt having ancient antecedents.

then dispersed around the globe. In the process, they gradually acquired the differences of appearance, speech, cultures and beliefs that now go to make up the variegated peoples of the world. But the idea that humans are one race with one origin has been known to the great religions for much, much longer than it has by modern science.

It is proposed to have a very brief look in this paper at the teachings of some of the great religions, but only in relation to our common origins as one race and to make the point that the original teachings of the great religions generally did not in my view advocate any form of racism. I immediately disclaim any great expertise in relation to my knowledge of the great religions, noting that there may be members of the audience with much more knowledge on this than myself. I do not wish to be drawn into a long debate on the relative merits of these great religions nor on the correct interpretation of their scriptures on other points, as this will detract from the main purpose of this paper.

I argue that in the present era of world history, as the global society draws ever closer together, under the influence of “globalisation” in the broadest sense<sup>11</sup>, that the establishment of this teaching of the oneness of humanity now assumes the highest priority. The physical differences among peoples, superficial as they may seem to many of us, are, along with other associated differences of ethnicity, colour, culture, language, nationality, religion, etc., a major source of prejudice and division and major contributors to contention and conflict in the world. The task of combating the view that some “*races*” are inherently superior to others such that they are entitled to preferential treatment is in my view becoming more and more urgent. In my view, the planet can no longer safely accommodate this view. The planet is simply too small and its peoples too many. It is in my view a matter that goes to long term human survival as a sustainable and reasonably prosperous global community on the surface of this one small and fragile planet. More than that, it is a matter that, unless corrected, imposes an almost insuperable burden on the future hopes and aspirations of all human beings to a peaceful, civilised and useful life. Racism, in my view, runs counter to the essential spiritual nature of every human being.

## The Great Religions

It is not possible in the space of this paper to go into any detail on the approach of the great religions to the topic of racism. But a few very brief comments will suffice to make my point that the original teachings of those religions did not generally countenance the view that humans should be the subject of discrimination on the basis that humanity was divided into different races of unequal value and status. Even the concept, said to be derived from the Old Testament, of the Jews as a “*chosen race*” or “*chosen people*” or “*holy people*”<sup>12</sup> does not, in my humble opinion, refute this

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<sup>11</sup> Horizon Institute for Health Promotion and Global Learning, Tasmania, Australia “*One Human Race-Universal Human Identity and Global Citizenship As Foundations for Social Cooperation and Progress*”, paper prepared for Conference ‘Knowledge and Value in a Globalising World: Disentangling Dichotomies, Querying Unities, UWA, 2011, [www.anthropologywa.org/uaes\\_aas\\_asaanz.../0070.html](http://www.anthropologywa.org/uaes_aas_asaanz.../0070.html)

<sup>12</sup> Book of Exodus Chapter 19:6, Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 14:2.

proposition<sup>13</sup>. In fact the Adam and Eve story in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament itself supports the view that humanity was originally one race, one origin<sup>14</sup>. The Jewish people may be seen as having had a special role to play in the evolution of the Divine plan, but in my view that plan ultimately embraces all humanity. Modern scholarship has called for a deeper and more honest engagement with the Biblical text, and not to get bogged down in so called myths such as the “*curse of Ham*”<sup>15</sup>. Of course, many religions have claimed a “*chosen*” status, but this can be interpreted as a claim to a form of ethnocentrism<sup>16</sup>, without scriptural basis.

The New Testament similarly can be interpreted as strongly supporting the view that the new religion of Christianity is for the whole world and all humanity, gentiles included, and not just for the Jews<sup>17</sup>. No race is given any preferential status<sup>18</sup>. The teaching of love thy neighbour<sup>19</sup> is clearly not qualified by restricting it to a certain race or races. In fact the story of the Good Samaritan<sup>20</sup> is perhaps the most outstanding pro-active story ever of how one should act towards people usually perceived as being different. There was much antipathy between Jews and Samaritans at the time indicated in that story. And yet the story teaches that love of thy neighbour should reach across all such divisions in a non-prejudiced, pro-active and selfless way. It was only later that the idea of divisions among humankind were developed by some Christians, not as part of the original teachings of Christ, and these divisions may well have been in part due to racist beliefs.

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<sup>13</sup> This can be taken, properly interpreted, as a teaching that from the Judaic patriarchs would descend one or more “Manifestations of God”, Prophets, Messiahs or however called, such as Jesus Christ and Muhammad, the founders of the great religions. It does not indicate any Divine plan of future favoured treatment of the Jews alone, who have suffered greatly through history.

<sup>14</sup> The story need not be taken literally but it is still capable of having a deep spiritual meaning. The Book of Genesis Chapter 11:1 states that originally the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. The Tower of Babel story in that Book can be interpreted as the scattering of that one people around the globe, with different languages etc., being formed over time.

<sup>15</sup> More properly called the curse of Canaan, based on an interpretation of the Book of Genesis, Chapter 9:20-27. This later became regarded as a curse on people of black skin, and in particular on black slaves, said to be descendants of Ham. But see now Cain Hope Fielder, *Race, Racism and the Biblical Narratives* (2002, Fortress Press). While the idea of a curse has little contemporary support, it may account for part of the reason why the Mormon Writings originally discriminated against dark skinned people on the stated basis that they were cursed.

<sup>16</sup> A view supported by anthropology.

<sup>17</sup> See, eg: Gospels of St Matthew, Chapter 28:19, St Mark Chapter 16:15, St Luke, Chapter 24:47, although see other references to the lost sheep of Israel. See also Acts Chapter 10:34-35, Romans, Chapter 1:16, Chapter 9:24,1 Corinthians Chapter 12:13, Galatians, Chapter 3:28, Colossians Chapter 3:11. For a criticism of racism in USA churches and the distortion of the meaning of Galatians Chapter 3:28, see A Campolo, *The Church Enslaved: A Spirituality of Racial Discrimination* (2005, Augsburg Foundation).

<sup>18</sup> A view espoused by Archbishop D Tutu, see his WCC Commission on Faith & Order address in 1993, where he expressed the view that apartheid could not have developed without divisions in the Christian Church –discussed in Jeffery Gross, “*Eradicating Racism: A Central Agenda for the Faith and Order Movement*”, 47 Ecumenical Review No 1.

<sup>19</sup> Gospel of St Matthew, Chapters 19:19, 22:39; Gospel of St Luke, Chapter 10:29.

<sup>20</sup> Gospel of St Luke, Chapter 10: 29:37.

In the Quran, the original holy book of the Muslims, there is no expression of racial prejudice<sup>21</sup>. All Muslims, of whatever background, are to be regarded as a single brotherhood<sup>22</sup>. Further, it teaches that mankind was originally one family<sup>23</sup> which was later sundered into separate nations<sup>24</sup> as a result of man-made differences<sup>25</sup>. The practice of slavery, which had been going on for hundreds if not thousands of years, was not abolished by Muhammad, but he did encourage manumission<sup>26</sup> by his own example, and also believers were encouraged to treat their slaves like brothers<sup>27</sup>. Islamic philosophers well after Muhammad did develop racist ideas, often in association with the practice of slavery. Many of the slaves were dark skinned, thus assisting the association between slavery and race based on skin colour. But it was not, in my view, a part of the original Islamic teachings.

So let it be clear as to what I am postulating here. I am not saying that racism did not ever exist among some of the followers of the great religions. As the different parts of the world came into closer contact with one another, views no doubt developed that held that it was ok to prefer one group, usually your own group, by way of discriminating against one or more other groups. This is only to describe the tendency of one side of human nature, the self-interested side that acts on personal prejudices. On the other hand I am saying that in my view the original sacred scriptures of the great religions, properly interpreted, generally did not endorse racism or racist ideas. There is a real difference here, particularly in view of the Baha'i teaching to the effect that all the great religions were originally founded by a person who was also a Divine manifestation<sup>28</sup>, an intermediary between the Divine and humans, in effect the founder of a new Divine religion. The original teachings of each Manifestation therefore represented, on the Baha'i view, the Divine Will for that age. But followers of those religions usually exercised a degree of free choice in interpreting and applying them, sometimes to their own advantage, or at least to the advantage of the ruling clergy. Whether they in fact understood and fully accepted those original teachings, and whether they then applied them in practice, was and still is an open question. Given human nature, various differing interpretations, divergences and additions tended to follow after the mission of a Manifestation ended, as the followers argued and split into various sects and denominations. This no doubt included, in some cases at least, the adoption of racist ideas.

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<sup>21</sup> In fact it is commonly thought that Islam taught the idea of the brotherhood of mankind.

<sup>22</sup> Quran, Surah 49:10.

<sup>23</sup> Quran, Surah 2:213, 10:19.

<sup>24</sup> Quran, Surah 7:168.

<sup>25</sup> Quran, Surah 11:118, 23:53.

<sup>26</sup> Quran, Surah 2:177.

<sup>27</sup> Bukhari, Hadith, Vol 1.

<sup>28</sup> Sometimes called a Messenger of God, a Prophet, a Messiah, etc.

# Outline of Further Development of Racist Ideas

Again here I disclaim any expertise as a historian on these matters. I can only make some very brief, general comments from my own reading.

It is widely thought that the growth of the slave trade, sourced mainly from black Africa, but extending also to other races both eastern and western, was a major factor in the development of notions that some "*races*" were inherently superior to others<sup>29</sup>. However racial differentiations may have had even more complicated origins going back to antiquity, including in the Greek and Roman civilisations (Isaac, 2006)<sup>30</sup>. These factors, plus the growth of settled communities with some more powerful than others, would seem to have given rise to the view that some sections of humanity had certain preferential rights and status over others. Enlightened communities that treated all races as equals were often the exception. This view was particularly prevalent among Arabs, who took a leading role in the slave trade. There were also presumably elements of racism in the Crusades. This may have been countered to some extent by the invasion of Spain by the Umayyad Islamic Dynasty and the establishment of a very advanced and tolerant civilisation there, extending to Christians and Jews. But then followed a bloody campaign by Catholic Spain, with the memory of the Crusades and the fear it generated of Muslims, to retake the country and eject the Moors. From this some historians state that there developed very strong white supremacist notions. It was exacerbated by the Inquisition and also by early colonial campaigns against heathen "*barbarians*". It was often accompanied by persecution of the Jews. These notions spread through Western Europe and were in turn exported with colonialism generally. The idea of racial differentiation and segregation took a particularly strong hold in the Americas, especially with the mass taking of slaves from black Africa to the new world.

By the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it seems that a key question among the Christian hierarchy was whether "*Blacks*" and "*Indians*" had souls and were fully human. Religion, especially the Christian religion in its various forms, was used to justify racist divisions. But as many coloured people became Christians, this influence tended to lessen over time. Increasingly in its place, certain biological and other pseudo scientific theories were used to justify racial distinctions. This was strengthened by the rise of Western Europe as the predominant colonising, industrial and mercantile powerbase in the world. It was often thought that this was self-evident proof of the superiority of the "*white*" races.

The European penetration of the colonies, and its drastic effect on the native populations, gave rise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the view among some writers that it would probably lead in time to the extinction of the "*savage races*". The European "*races*", being considered superior, would, on this view, survive and predominate under the survival of the fittest concept as a result of the new evolutionary theories then current. It was alleged that there was a link between intelligence and race, a view that later led to theories and practices under the description of "*eugenics*", which

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<sup>29</sup> I do not propose to go into a full discussion of the arguments for this view over other views.

<sup>30</sup> The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity, (2006, Princeton UP).

survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Segregation, or at least isolation and marginalisation, was often seen as the solution.

## Australia

Australia has had a long history of racial discrimination, both against its own indigenous inhabitants and also against some categories of migrants or potential migrants. Thankfully more enlightened attitudes seem to be now making some progress, but racist attitudes seem to be still widespread. There may be a denial of this fact, but denial is said to be one part of the problem (Szoke, 2012)<sup>31</sup>.

A critical factor in the emergence of the Australian nation was the fear of Asian mass immigration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We saw this expressed, for example in the “*White Australia*” policy<sup>32</sup>, a policy that was at the base of the founding of the Australian federation and which continued as Government policy well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>33</sup>. Formally this policy has now been abolished, but its traces still remain. We also saw substantial elements of racial prejudice in the treatment of indigenous Australian Aboriginals<sup>34</sup>, traces of which also still remain<sup>35</sup>. In Queensland we had the saga of the Kanakas.

As I see it, one of the difficulties about the ongoing debate as to how to remedy the scourge of racism in Australia, and no doubt in other parts of the world, lies in the fact that those who contribute to the debate generally pay little or no heed to the value of the moral and spiritual dimension in offering solutions at a fundamental level. They may dwell on the practice of racial discrimination by reference to an associated religious affiliations and the discrimination that may

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<sup>31</sup>Talking about Racism: Equality and Social Cohesion in Australia, Australian Human Rights Commission, University of Melbourne, 2 April 2012, where she said:

*“A key feature of racism in Australia is denialism. Such denial may be a genuine lack of understanding that an act may be racist. However, there are also deliberate falsehoods, misinformation or evasion. Suggestions of racism may also be dismissed as an overreaction, where people think that telling a racist joke, for example, should be taken as just a bit of fun. Too often, stories start with “I’m not racist, but....”. Ultimately, racism:*

*is a denial of human relationship. Yet for many people it remains almost invisible, unnoticed except when violence is involved. Those who do not experience it often fail to understand how profoundly offensive it is.”* (International Council on Human Rights Policy, *The persistence and mutation of racism*, Policy paper, 2000, Preface.)

<sup>32</sup> There is considerable literature on this policy, but see M Lake and H Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, (2008, MUP)

<sup>33</sup> For an early discussion of racism in Australia see F S Stevens (Ed), *Racism: the Australian Experience*, Vol 1 Prejudice and Xenophobia (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (1974, ANZ Book Co). There is a mass of literature since published.

<sup>34</sup> And no doubt elsewhere in the world.

<sup>35</sup> As to the Baha’i view on this matter see National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Australia, *Aboriginal Reconciliation*, op. cit. The author of this present paper has written on this subject: “*Aboriginal Customary Rights: The Challenge to Baha’i Australia*” in K Puri (Ed), *Indigenous Peoples: In the Wake of Mabo*, op. cit. See also the discussion in the Submission by the Australian Baha’i Community on the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, op. cit.

accompany them<sup>36</sup>, but they do not normally go beyond this to identify the great religions and their teachings as having an important spiritual and moral value in combating racism<sup>37</sup>. No doubt the reasons for this are varied, including the fact that most commentators on Australia take a secular approach, and because religion is often seen as a major cause of racism rather than as a solution<sup>38</sup>.

The secular approach stems from the fact that Australia is overwhelmingly a secular, pluralist society and this notwithstanding the historical Christian presence. We in this country who are of Western origins have inherited and still live to some degree with ideas of Western European or “white” superiority, ideas that are supportive of racism. No doubt the reasons for this are largely historical, but this does not make it any more acceptable. These ideas, discriminating against non-whites, tended to be of more importance in the formation of the Australian nation than any religious associations or principles. This accommodation of racist ideas in the practice of religion was, in my view, more of a reason to condemn that aspect of the practise of religion rather than a condemnation of the religion itself as originally taught by the Founder. In other words, it is a condemnation of the abuse of religion.

True religion, in my humble opinion, is to be measured largely by the extent to which it teaches and inculcates the virtues such as peace, justice, hope, unity and love. These are some of the main “fruits” spoken of in the New Testament<sup>39</sup> by which you can recognise the religiously valid. As is to be seen from the Baha’i teachings, it is fundamental to true religion that it rejects any discrimination or prejudice based on race and related factors. But we tend to underestimate the heavy influence inherited from birth through our predecessors and their prejudiced attitudes in this regard. There is no doubt that there is a strong tendency for these attitudes to exercise a considerable influence on succeeding generations.

I personally acquired this “white” perspective as a child from my relatives in Australia, an influence going back some generations to their forebears in England and Scotland, although that perspective was not perhaps of the most virulent kind. I have had to fight against it and to develop my own ideas and principles. I am glad to say that my somewhat independent streak enabled me to start to undertake this task as a young man. I was fortunate to have considerable contact with Aboriginal people in country Western Australia as a young lawyer, an experience that helped shape my ideas. That experience has since been expanded to include contact with people of many countries and backgrounds. I also had an early interest in matters international, an interest that was further encouraged by my law studies and extending to international human rights. And then I became a Baha’i in 1980 and was able to fairly quickly take on the expansive and universal teachings of that

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<sup>36</sup> Issues of race and religion are often intertwined.

<sup>37</sup> For example, the recent book by Wei Ling Chua, *Racism in Australia: The Causes, Incidents, Reasoning and Solutions* (2011, Balboa Press).

<sup>38</sup> It is possible to see in this one of the main reasons why many people have been turned off organised religion in the last 100 years or more.

<sup>39</sup> New Testament, Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 7; 16:20.

Faith opposing racial and other prejudices and promoting a consciousness of human unity and oneness. I absorbed these teachings, and it has often lead since to the opportunity to try to put these teachings into practice in a non-confrontationist way. It is still work in progress. The Faith and its teachings were of great assistance in putting my rather fragmented ideas into much more order and context within an overall spiritual and moral framework based on the purpose of human life.

I hope I can share something of my viewpoint in this talk in the hope that it may assist others in Australia who would like to do more about countering racism in this country.

## The Baha'i Teachings and Practice

Any consideration of the Baha'i teaching on racism must, in my view, commence with a consideration of the nature and essence of the human being. The Baha'i position is that the human being is at the apex of creation<sup>40</sup> and exists in and subject to a special relationship with the one supreme, transcendent Deity (however called). I realise this will immediately create a problem for those of you who have non-theistic perspectives, and those who might regard the human being as just another animal, perhaps a little more developed than its closest neighbour-species. But I ask you to bear with me for the moment and just accept this proposition for the purposes of this explanation whether you agree with it or not, as it is essential to start from such a monotheistic approach to understand the Baha'i teachings on racism.

According to the words of the eldest son of the Founder/Prophet of the Baha'i Faith Baha'u'llah<sup>41</sup> and his successor (Abdu'l-Baha, 1912):

*"According to the words of the Old Testament God has said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This indicates that man is of the image and likeness of God -- that is to say, the perfections of God, the divine virtues, are reflected or revealed in the human reality. Just as the light and effulgence of the sun when cast upon a polished mirror are reflected fully, gloriously, so, likewise, the qualities and attributes of Divinity are radiated from the depths of a pure human heart. This is evidence that man is the most noble of God's creatures<sup>42</sup>...."*

But what does this mean in practice? It is in my opinion a reference to the view that humans have an inherited capacity, spiritual in nature but exercisable with the aid of human reason, to be able to exhibit as a matter of choice the divine virtues and qualities in their own life when rightly guided and educated. For example, the virtues of honesty and truthfulness, of love and compassion, of tolerance, humility and acceptance of difference, etc. The virtues are seen as being part of the

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<sup>40</sup> I use this term "creation" advisedly, and do not suggest that it excludes an evolutionary approach to human development. I do not see any necessary inconsistency between religion and evolutionary theories.

<sup>41</sup> 1817-1892.

<sup>42</sup> The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 69, Talk at Fourth Annual Conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Handel Hall, Chicago, Illinois, 1912, Notes by Joseph H. Hannen. This indicates potentiality, not necessarily actuality. Human beings clearly have the capacity for both good and bad thoughts and actions.

Divine bestowal on human beings, a spiritual gift that is reflected in the life and teachings of the founders of the great religions, with a concomitant bestowal on the human being of a capacity to recognise those gifts as such and to choose to implement them in their own lives. Like all the great religions of the past, this is seen as a primary avenue for the development of the individual human being both spiritually and morally. It is a view that rejects the concept of the relativity of moral values, although the application in practice of particular virtues may require some balancing with others virtues<sup>43</sup>. It also rejects the tests of material utilitarianism or enlightened self-interest as the sole test in measuring the worth of moral principles. These Divine virtues are seen in universal terms in their application to all human beings without discrimination, although still sensitive in their application to the expectations of particular cultures. The aim ultimately is to enhance harmony, unity in diversity and peace among all humanity. Also espoused is an equal opportunity for all people, without discrimination, to educate and train themselves in the acquisition of the perfections of the Divine, to acquire knowledge and to aspire towards excellence in all things. Associated with this view are elements of individual responsibility and accountability. Thus it has been said (National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, 1991):

*"The Word of God as presented in the Bahá'í writings offers compelling insights as in the following examples: "Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty."*<sup>44</sup> "

So this view already pre-disposes the ordinary member of the Baha'i Faith to take a tolerant view of other people regardless of their race or background. In part it is for this reason that the belief in and practice of racism is rejected totally by the Baha'i teachings. Thus it has been said (Universal House of Justice, 1986):

*"Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress."*<sup>45</sup>

But the Faith provides a much deeper basis for this rejection. This revolves around the teaching that humanity is one race and one people, and that we need to develop a consciousness of this truth in order to create a harmonious, united and just future for all. This is a principle which, as I have already stated, has an application and truth at a scientific level, in that the prevailing scientific view

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<sup>43</sup> In this regard, it is necessary to draw a distinction between the universality of these virtues, otherwise sometimes called "*principles*", on the one hand, and the application in practice of those virtues to suit particular cultures on the other – see R Howard, *Human Rights and the Search for Community*, (1995, Westview Press).

<sup>44</sup>The Vision Of Race Unity; America's Most Challenging Issue, (1991), quoting from Baha'u'llah, Founder/Prophet of the Baha'i Faith, *The Hidden Words*.

<sup>45</sup> Promise of World Peace, quoted in the Submission by the Australian Baha'i Community on the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, op. cit.

is that we all a single species descended from one small tribe that came out of Africa and spread around the world not so many generations ago into a maximum degree of diversity. We have now passed that point. Humanity is now in the process of coming together in an interdependent "global village". Dispassionate observation indicates that humans are increasingly developing an understanding of the many commonalities and shared interests that go to make up the human race as one global society on one small and fragile planet. It is an ongoing, evolutionary process, with many prejudices and difficulties to be overcome, a process still a long way from completion, but with the outlines of a new and much more united global order capable of being discerned in the future. It is a process that encompasses everyone.

This concept of oneness is also, on the Baha'i view, a spiritual truth, asserting that we are one race and one family under the one supreme, transcendent Deity. It is a spiritual oneness, that is, it is the same Divine spirit that connects us all and establishes our oneness. Belief in the oneness of humanity has been made, by the teachings of this Faith, an element of the belief in the one supreme Deity. The ultimate goal of the unity of the human race is seen by the Baha'is as a goal towards which a harassed humanity is being driven by the spiritual forces and the spiritual impetus released by the revelation of the Founder/Prophet of the Baha'i Faith.

*"The oneness of humanity is a spiritual truth abundantly confirmed by science. Recognition of this truth compels the abandonment of all prejudices of race, colour, creed, nation, and class--of "everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others." The principle of the oneness of humankind "is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope.... It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal.... It implies and organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced." (Universal House of Justice, 1986)<sup>46</sup>*

In another Baha'i statement it was asserted that:

*"At the root of all forms of discrimination and intolerance is the erroneous idea that humankind is somehow composed of separate and distinct races, peoples or castes, and that those subgroups innately possess varying intellectual, moral, and/or physical capacities, which in turn justify different forms of treatment.*

*The reality is that there is only the one human race. We are a single people, inhabiting the planet Earth, one human family bound together in a common destiny, a single entity created from "one same substance," obligated to "be even as one soul." (Baha'i International Community, 2001)<sup>47</sup>*

It must follow that if we are spiritually one then any discrimination based on race or other related grounds can have no justification. Any such discrimination should therefore not only be prohibited by

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<sup>46</sup> The Vision Of Race Unity; America's Most Challenging Issue, op.cit.

<sup>47</sup>Statement to World Conference against Racism, Durban, South Africa, 25 August 2001.

secular law, including human rights law, but on this view it is also already prohibited by Divine law. More than this, racial prejudice is seen as a primary barrier to world order and peace, so its prohibition is an essential and necessary aid to the establishment of a just, peaceful and spiritual global society, a primary goal proclaimed by the Baha'i Faith and perhaps in a less emphatic way by all the great religions of the past. Such prejudice is seen as a primary basis for conflict and contention in the world and hence inimical to the achievement of that goal.

But of course it is one thing to make a law, it is another to apply it in practice, especially when it is really directed at the internal thoughts and beliefs of the individual. Secular law is particularly weak and ineffective in such matters. This issue is not avoided in the Baha'i writings, as in the following (Universal House of Justice, 1986):

*"Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be overcome..."*

*The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its entrenched pattern of conflict, can change to a world in which harmony and co-operation will prevail.*

*World order can be founded only on an unshakeable consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm. Anthropology, physiology, psychology, recognise only one human species, albeit infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires abandonment of prejudice - prejudice of every kind--race, class, colour, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.*

*Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental prerequisite for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind. Universal acceptance of this spiritual principle is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace. It should therefore be universally proclaimed, taught in schools, and constantly asserted in every nation as preparation for the organic change in the structure of society which it implies.<sup>48</sup>*

In recent decades, the Baha'i global community has embarked on a worldwide educational program designed to more effectively put these teachings into practice, both within the Baha'i community itself and also beyond that community into the wider public<sup>49</sup>. The various parts of this program are open to anyone interested. Central to this program are a sequence of "study circles" or courses, as part of an ongoing institute program of self-learning, capacity building, reflection and action. These are built around a three-monthly cycle of planning, action and reflection within the community using a system of clusters, or larger groupings of members. The institute process is complimented by regular children's' classes, junior youth and other programs and activities, including devotional meetings. Various centres of learning and other systematic organisational arrangements have been

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<sup>48</sup> The Promise of World Peace, op cit.

<sup>49</sup> For more details, see paper by W Jaros, op. cit.

established to facilitate this process. All participants are treated as being equal, there being no priesthood or clergy with the potential to distort this principle. The process is designed to empower the individual to find and follow the spiritual path in life through an understanding of our spiritual nature and by developing our latent inner capacities to improve our own lives and of those around us on a non-discriminatory basis. A lifetime of learning and service is envisaged. As a necessary part of this program, the teachings of the Faith relating to the oneness of humanity and the elimination of prejudices have a primary place.

Speaking of the Institute process, the, the current ruling body of the Baha'i Faith, has stated (Universal House of Justice, 2011):

*"The main sequence of courses is organized so as to set the individual, whether Baha'i or not, on a path being defined by the accumulating experience of the community in its endeavour to open before humanity the vision of Baha'u'llah's World Order. The very notion of a path is, itself, indicative of the nature and purpose of the courses, for a path invites participation, it beckons to new horizons, it demands effort and movement, it accommodates different paces and strides, it is structured and defined. A path can be experienced and known, not only by one or two but by scores upon scores; it belongs to the community. To walk a path is a concept equally expressive. It requires of the individual volition and choice; it calls for a set of skills and abilities but also elicits certain qualities and attitudes; it necessitates a logical progression but admits, when needed, related lines of exploration; it may seem easy at the outset but becomes more challenging further along. And crucially, one walks the path in the company of others."*<sup>50</sup>

It can therefore be seen that a person who takes the spiritual approach advocated in the Baha'i writings will have a much more compelling cause for seeking to adhere to the oneness principle in practice and will actively seek to cultivate the knowledge and ability to do so. The vehicle to do so is already in place in the form of this process I have already described. He or she will be likely to go out of his or her way to learn and reorient his or her life so as to demonstrate that belief in word and deed, and to contribute in a positive way to the construction of a global society that is free of any discrimination on the basis of race or on related grounds. The view that this is a Divine commandment gives enormous impetus to this ongoing process of learning and application, far more than any secular law or any secular teaching could.

*"The principle of human oneness strikes a chord in the deepest reaches of the human spirit. It is not yet another way of talking about the ideal of brotherhood or solidarity. Nor is it some vague hope or slogan. It reflects, rather, an eternal spiritual, moral and physical reality that has been brought into focus by humanity's collective coming of age in the twentieth century."*(Baha'i, International Community, 2001)<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Further guidance on the implementation of institute courses, 12 December 2011.

<sup>51</sup>Statement to World Conference against Racism, 25 August 2001

The Universal House of Justice, in its message to the world for the International Year of Peace, has expressed similar sentiments on the special value of a spiritual principle:

*"There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them."* (Universal House of Justice, 1986)<sup>52</sup>

The question is, do these teachings actually work in practice. Well, of course it would be wrong to assert that the whole Baha'i community is totally free of race prejudice. But this is a goal to which that community is fully dedicated to under the guidance and inspiration of the Baha'i teachings, and consequently one on which it places a great deal of emphasis, both in terms of education and in other ways. The global Baha'i community now comprises some 6-7 million peoples, spread over virtually every country and territory of the world<sup>53</sup>. Many of them throughout the world are now undergoing the ongoing educational process already described, with a view to acquiring a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Faith and of the means for their more effective implementation. This is part of a wider program of transformation both individually and for society as a whole. Any unbiased examination of the Baha'i community will reveal that the prohibition on racism and the cultivation of good and lasting "inter-racial" relationships are given a primary place in this ongoing process of self-learning and to a marked extent in the practice of this dispersed and diverse community. The emphasis in this global community is on the development and promotion of fellowship and unity within the Baha'i community and beyond, across all barriers. The diversity that exists among the different peoples is treated as a thing of beauty that does not detract from the overall principle of the oneness of humanity. It is treated as something of great value. All decision making within the community is by a special form of spiritual consultation among equals, with minorities given a special place.

Speaking of this, the Universal House of Justice has welcomed the open examination of the global Baha'i community to see it in operation and how the members drawn from virtually all countries and backgrounds are working towards a harmonious and united society without any prejudice. It has stated:

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<sup>52</sup> The Promise of World Peace, op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> I understand the only places where there are no Baha'is residing are the Vatican and in North Korea.

*"The experience of the Bahá'í community may be seen as an example of this enlarging unity. It is a community of some three to four million people<sup>54</sup> drawn from many nations, cultures, classes and creeds, engaged in a wide range of activities serving the spiritual, social and economic needs of the peoples of many lands. It is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles, and cherishing equally all the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history. Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail. If the Bahá'í experience can contribute in whatever measure to reinforcing hope in the unity of the human race, we are happy to offer it as a model for study."* (Universal House of Justice, 1986)<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The global Baha'i community has grown considerably in numbers since this was published.

<sup>55</sup> The Promise of Word Peace, op. cit. For some varied comments on the Baha'i experience in the USA see G Etter-Lewis and R Thomas (Eds.), Lights of the Spirit, (2006, Baha'i Publishing); Christopher Buck, Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy, (2005, Kalimat Press); RW Thomas, Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress, (1993, Baha'i Studies Publications).