

Everyday Reconciliation in Primary Schools: New Celebrations and Ongoing Silences

Messages children receive and interpret about reconciliation, Australian history and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, and race, racism and whiteness

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Declaration

I, Talia Avrahamzon, declare that, this thesis, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. This thesis contains extracts from jointly authored papers arising from this thesis in which I made an equal contribution to and is used here with the permission of the other authors. This thesis does not exceed 115,000¹ words in length, exclusive of footnotes, tables, figures and appendices.

Signed Date

¹ Approval for additional words was granted by the Associate Dean College of Arts and Social Science, ANU.

Dedication

I dedicate my PhD to Edin, Noah and Mika. It was always about you, with you, for you, and to find ways to work together to create a better world for now and the future. To Edin thank you for your deep interest in the topic and for playing your guitar and singing Ed Sheeran during the busiest of days to make me stop and catch my breath. To Noah for counting my words and for ensuring everyday ended with cuddles and puzzles and for your gentle but strong courage. To Mika for constantly dancing and singing very loudly, making sure I joined it, but for also making me realise how important this work is when just the other day you told me you wished your skin was lighter. Thank you for always grounding me and being three of my most important teachers who give me laughter, love and hope in bucket loads.

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אני אוהבת אותך ותודה עם כל הלב

Abstract

Almost thirty years have passed since the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established to progress a process of reconciliation between Indigenous people, non-Indigenous Australians and the state. Throughout its existence as a statutory body (1999-2001), the Council, with Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous members, positioned the education system central to the process of reconciliation. Schools were seen to have a critical role in unsilencing Australia's past by increasing children and young people's awareness of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on social, cultural and historical matters. Schools also had a key role in supporting educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. In response, the term 'reconciliation' has been promoted in national and jurisdictional education policies, strategies, curriculum documents and professional teaching standards.

At school, all children receive implicit and explicit messages about reconciliation, Australian history, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, but also about race, racism and whiteness. These messages are delivered daily through a range of material, discursive and affective processes. They include the imparting of teachers' beliefs and values, pedagogical practices, the hidden and unhidden curricula, resources and ceremonies. As such, schools are 'sites of intense cultural politics' (Bourdieu 1984; Levinson, Foley and Holland 1996) where relationships are established, understandings are developed and power is navigated through and within race based assumptions (Vass 2012).

Although the education system's efforts to contribute to reconciliation have been ongoing, there has been little long-term ethnographic research on understanding how reconciliation is experienced and engaged with by children, teachers and schools in the everyday. I refer to this as 'everyday reconciliation'. Understanding how schools are engaged in everyday reconciliation is critical in assessing whether approaches are responding to the original vision expressed by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation as well as more recent reconciliation frameworks. Increasing an understanding of everyday reconciliation in schools is also significant given the evidence that children are social actors acquiring, developing, and redeveloping ethnic or racial-based intergroup relations from an early age.

This doctoral research set out to understand everyday reconciliation at the policy, school and classroom levels as well as through the perspectives of children. Through a qualitative multi-disciplinary inquiry it seeks to uncover how, why and for whom reconciliation is being

(re)constructed in education settings. Throughout the 2016 school year I undertook a multi-sited school ethnography in two urban, culturally diverse primary schools on Ngunnawal Country in the education jurisdiction of the Australian Capital Territory. Using Indigenous Studies and decolonising approaches as a framework (Martin 2003; Moodie 2018; Nakata 2007; Rigney 1999; Smith 2012), I explore the types of messages children receive at school at multiple levels including observable symbols (artefacts of reconciliation), metaphors (beliefs and values about reconciliation) and underlying assumptions (schemas of reconciliation) (Ortner, 1973; Schein 1990).

The research included school and classroom observations, as well as interviews and focus groups with 52 children in Years 3 and 4 (8-10 year olds) (including 8 who identified as being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child), 25 educators (teachers, executives and Indigenous Education officers), 6 Directorate staff, and 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents from the region. A particular focus was on accounting for the diversity amongst often homogenised 'Indigenous' and 'non-Indigenous' people and explores whether a child's migrant, ethnic or cultural background contributes to different engagement with reconciliation.

The study reveals that in the main, schools reproduced forms of 'colonial storytelling' (Behrendt 2016) about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. Thus, despite educators' strong commitment to engage in some form of reconciliation, policies and practices served to maintain the structures of the 'silent apartheid' (Rose 2007). Within the silent apartheid, cultural deficits are perpetuated through silencing racialised social, economic and structural disadvantages experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In some cases, this led to the creation of schools, classrooms, practices and policies as sites of what I refer to as 'settled reconciliation', in which good intent and celebrations of perceived Indigenous culture(s) silence diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' experiences and agency, and ignore ongoing settler colonialism. This includes assimilation, racism and a privileging of whiteness, all of which the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, educators and parents in the study experienced themselves. Some children and teachers did find ways to challenge and disrupt the normalisation and privileging of settled reconciliation. However, for the most part, children (re)constructed and embodied the same messages of settled reconciliation that they were exposed to at school.

The implication of these findings is that there is a need for schools (the policies, practices and people) to engage more with and interrogate assumptions about reconciliation; about the

purpose of schooling; and finally, about children's development of and embodiment of racism and whiteness, and their readiness to engage in transformative reconciliation.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Education Research
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ANTaR	Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
ANU	Australian National University
APS	Australian Public Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AuSSA	Australian Survey of Social Attitudes
CAR	Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer preamble
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CCP	Cross Curriculum Priority
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Indigenous Affairs
GMAR	Grandmothers Against Removals
ICSEA	Indigenous Education Officer (IEO)
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NTER	Northern Territory Emergency Response
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan (program)
SEA	Socio-educational advantage
SRW	Sir Roland Wilson (scholarship)
UN	United Nations

Publications arising from this thesis

Journal Articles and Chapters

Bar-Tal, D. & Avrahamzon, T. (2016). Development of delegitimisation and animosity in the context of intractable conflict. In C. Sibley & F. Barlow (Eds), *Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge Press.

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Conference Abstracts

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Table of Contents

Everyday Reconciliation in Primary Schools: Ongoing Silences.....	New Celebrations and 1
Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Acknowledgement to Country.....	iv
Other Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	viii
Acronyms and abbreviations	xi
Publications arising from this thesis.....	xii
Journal Articles and Chapters	xii
Conference Abstracts	xii
Table of Contents	xiii
List of figures	xviii
List of Tables.....	xviii
Preamble:	xix
Everyday Reconciliation on Ngunnawal Country	xix
Part 1: The Study of Everyday Reconciliation	1
Chapter 1: Everyday Reconciliation	2
Introduction	2
Education and Reconciliation.....	6
Positioning the research in the literature.....	14
Historical Process of Reconciliation in Australia	15
Theoretical Lens of Reconciliation	27
Overarching Paradigm of Everyday Reconciliation	30
Initial influencing Theories and Concepts	32
Ethnic-Racial Socialisation	32

The Acquisition of Prejudice and Stereotypes	34
Reconciliation as an Intercultural Understanding School Strategy	34
Decolonising Critical Race Theory	36
Additional Theories and Concepts	40
Habitus, fields and affect.....	41
Reading Everyday Reconciliation	45
Chapter 2: I wish to acknowledge – my standpoints and biases	46
On reflexivity	48
Country.....	51
Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country	53
My journey through Acknowledgements of Country	55
Beyond protocols	55
Unveiling privilege and non-whiteness	57
Being the critical sociologist, the ally, the anti-racist, the advocate.....	59
Being non-Indigenous in Indigenous Studies.....	61
Reconciling my Standpoints----	63
Chapter 3: The ABCs and 123s of Exploring Everyday Reconciliation – Methodology and Methods.....	64
Introduction	64
School Options: Finding a ‘field site’ or two	64
Red Gum Primary School and Acacia Primary School	65
‘Containing’ a multi-sited field site	68
Researching Everyday Reconciliation	70
Indigenous Advisory Group	72
Researching primary school children’s experience of everyday reconciliation ...	72
Culturally responsive research	74
Multicultural Ethnography.....	75
Going to school.....	76
Consents: Permission to attend school	76

Which uniform should I wear today? Building rapport with Principals, teachers and children	79
Just a typical day of [participant] observations	80
Fieldnotes, fieldnotes and fieldnotes	90
Learning to read the data	90
Reconciling the writing.....	91
A final note on methods and methodology	93
And the bell rings.....	94
Part 2: Celebrating Reconciliation, Silencing Racism.....	96
Introduction to Part 2: Celebrating Reconciliation, Silencing Racism	97
Analytic Framework for Part 2 of Everyday Reconciliation.....	99
Chapter Four: Artefacts of Everyday Reconciliation	105
Introduction: ‘The symbols are important’	105
Section 1: Symbols of everyday reconciliation.....	106
Just another manic Monday at Red Gum Primary.....	109
The Reconciliation Action Plan Meeting at Acacia Primary.....	113
Section 2: Quantity of Symbols.....	117
Quantifying symbols of reconciliation	119
Section 3: Types of Symbols	126
Symbols of whiteness	126
Indigenising Symbols	133
Symbols of Silence – Silencing Symbols.....	148
Symbols of ‘Resistance’	157
Conclusion	162
Chapter 5: Beliefs and Values about reconciliation	165
Section 1 What is reconciliation?	167
Ambiguities of meaning	168
Talk about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures Cross Curriculum Priority	172

Awareness of one's own limited knowledge in engaging with the Cross	
Curriculum Priority	178
Indigenous and non-Indigenous binary	181
Section 2: From white apathy and disinterest to white anti-racism – ‘affect of reconciliation’	
	185
Taxonomy of the field of Everyday Reconciliation	185
The fine line between white empathy and white anti-racism	196
Critical Hope.....	201
Conclusion	202
Chapter 6: Unconscious frames of everyday reconciliation	204
Assumptions about the ‘Aboriginal Problem’ within Indigenous Education policy and public discourse	206
Assumptions about Reconciliation.....	209
Culture is the answer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	209
Culture is the answer for non-Indigenous students	211
Assumptions about Schooling	213
Assumptions about children.....	216
Conclusion	218
Part 3: Silencing Reconciliation, Celebrating Racism	222
Introduction to Part 3: Silencing Reconciliation, Celebrating Racism.....	223
Children’s understanding of ‘culture’	226
Children and (re)constructions of identity and culture	227
What culture are you?	228
The potential and limitations of understanding identity and culture from the demographic surveys	230
Chapter 7 – ‘Shhh. You can’t say that’: Children’s talk of racism and racist talk.....	233
Section 1: Talk about racism.....	235
Racism is Black and White.....	238

Racism as an individualised pathology.....	244
A distinct hierarchy – from black to brown to white – also going beyond skin deep	246
‘Don’t talk about race’, or racialisation or racism.....	248
Section 2: Racism in talk – ‘I’m not trying to be racist but’	252
Anachronistic racism.....	254
Children’s experiences of racism	255
Unawareness of whiteness	258
Racism in talk – with and amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children	259
Conclusion	264
Chapter 8: ‘I love learning about Aboriginal cultures, as I love ‘all historical stuff like dinosaurs’ – Ambiguities and tensions in children’s perspectives.....	267
Section 1: The ascribed Indigene.....	269
Indigenous, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or Ngunnawal?	269
‘Being’ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	271
Anachronistic positioning.....	274
Contemporary dystopian stereotypes.....	275
Romanticised Other – the noble savage.....	277
Section 2: Ambiguity and contradiction.....	278
Past (uncivilised) and Contemporary (civilised).....	279
Colourblindness (sameness) and Difference (Othering).....	285
Special and Normal.....	288
Conclusion	291
Chapter 9: Critical Hope –	unsilencing the ‘silent apartheid’ 295
Implications of Everyday Reconciliation for future research considerations	299
Finding glimpses of critical hope	300
Postscript	304
References	305

Legislation.....	336
Appendices	337
Appendix A	338
Ethics Approvals.....	338
Appendix B	343
Letters of Information and Consent Forms.....	343
Appendix C	356
Children Demographic Survey.....	356
Appendix D.....	359
Children Focus Group Questions	359
Focus Group Scenarios Term 2	359
Focus Group Scenarios Term 4.....	360

List of figures

Figure 1 Word cloud, inaugural ACT Reconciliation Day, May 2018	xxiii
Figure 2: Indigenous Education model: for, about, by, with Indigenous people	13
Figure 3: Settled Reconciliation	199

List of Tables

Table 1: Characteristics of the two schools chosen as field sites.....	68
Table 2: Participants and mode of engagement	88
Table 3: Process and methods throughout the school year	89
Table 4: The similarities between the Schein and Ortner approaches	100
Table 5: Summary of the artefacts, metaphors and assumptions	104
Table 6: Some symbols and artefacts of reconciliation at two schools	118

Preamble:

Everyday Reconciliation on Ngunnawal Country

On a cold morning in late May 2018, I packed the car with my three children and we travelled through the north of Ngunnawal Country to participate in the inaugural Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Reconciliation Day public holiday. As we drove past the sign that says 'Welcome to Ngunnawal Country' we crossed the border between New South Wales and the ACT, despite that fact that we were already on Ngunnawal Country. We saw signs to the suburbs of Ngunnawal, Bonner (named after Neville Bonner, Australia's first Aboriginal parliamentarian), and Gungahlin (Aboriginal word (unknown which language) meaning 'little rocky hill'). I wonder how many of those living on this Country know the meaning of these suburbs? We also see signs to Watson, Barton, Deakin – all named after Australia's prime ministers, all Anglo-Australian males, and I consider the same question, how many of those living here know this? In the centre of Canberra, once known as Kambri (meaning 'meeting place' in Ngunnawal language), we park on Coranderrk Street, presumably named after the Aboriginal Mission in Victoria where in 1881 the Kulin people convinced the Government that they could run the mission without a white overseer. How many people have heard of Coranderrk, or of other Aboriginal activists who resisted and fought and continue to fight for self-determination and the unveiling of ongoing colonial ways of seeing, being and doing?

Before getting out of the car I turn around and say to my children that I am feeling uneasy about today. Edin, my 11 year old, asks why, to which I respond that I don't think we should be celebrating reconciliation. Without missing a beat, he says, *'Mum I see it differently. It's like when we have to clean the house and it takes a whole day. You have to take a break in the middle to have lunch so that you have the energy to do the next lot of cleaning in the afternoon. Having a day off for reconciliation is that break – it's like lunch – it gives you energy to go back and fight some more'*. Feeling re-energised because of this 11 year old's perspective, we cross the road and enter the gates of Glebe Park, in the centre of Canberra. Mika, my three year old quickly observes *'Mummy there are a lot of police here'*, of all messages she could note, this is the one she articulates. Live music is playing on two stages, children's voices and squeals of delight come from the jumping castles and we can smell fish and chips being fried at one of the food caravans.

In 2016, the ACT Government underwent a public consultation process to consider a Reconciliation Day Public Holiday. The Consultation Outcomes Report (Elton Consulting 2016) acknowledged both support and opposition to a Reconciliation Day Public Holiday. The report suggested that those who were not supportive of the day saw this as an attack on the monarchy; did not agree that such a day was a celebration for *all* Australians; or were racist. (2016: 4) There were also responses that supported a public holiday to celebrate cultures, however, for it not to be labelled as ‘reconciliation’. The report recommended an awareness raising campaign to ensure that the public holiday not be simply a day off, rather ‘an inclusive celebration and showcase of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture’ [sic in the singular] (2016: 4). Given the overwhelming support, Reconciliation Day was legislated in 2017 and on 28 May 2018 the first Reconciliation Day was ‘celebrated’ to mark the beginning of National Reconciliation Week. National Reconciliation Week was established in 1996, following on from a national reconciliation ‘prayer’ week in 1993, and has since become one of the prominent weeks on the public calendar for ‘reconciliation’. The week is marked by National Sorry Day on 26 May, followed by the anniversary of the 1967 Referendum on 27 May, and Mabo Day 2 June. The National Reconciliation Week theme for 2018 was ‘Don’t Keep History a Mystery’.

The main event of the ACT’s Reconciliation Day was ‘Reconciliation in the Park’. The flyer for the day was distributed throughout the ACT through letterbox drops, posters in cafes, and was included on the email signatory of government employees. Canberrans were called to celebrate and support Reconciliation Day, by participating in the following activities: ‘Indigenous history and culture activities (sic in the singular); live music; traditional dance; storytelling; Bush tucker talks; free kids art workshops and amusements’. Prominently displayed on the poster was the folk band Busby Marou, a duo from Rockhampton Queensland. On the day, one of the band members was introduced as ‘Jeremy Marou of Torres Strait Islander heritage’. No one made mention of Tom Busby’s heritage. At a National Apology event that I attended a few months earlier, they were introduced as reflecting ‘reconciliation’, and given Marou is considerably darker-skinned than Busby, having the band prominently displayed on the poster and being the lead act of Reconciliation Day, presented a visual of ‘black and white’ Australia coming together. In introducing Busby Marou, the day’s commentators, Ms Genevieve Jacobs and Dr Chris Bourke, observed the joy and happiness of the crowd and commented that ‘this is what reconciliation is all about, we should all be proud of ourselves’. Both had commented in the media in the previous week that Reconciliation Day needed to be more than celebration.

Although no public data has been released on the number of Canberrans who braved the cold to ‘celebrate and support’ the first ACT Reconciliation Day, there were many families out and about just based on the long lines children standing patiently to enter the petting zoo. Small tents of different organisations, including Reconciliation Australia, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserves, ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation), and the United Ngunnawal Elders Committee, were set up providing information about their respective organisations. Yet, despite the theme of the day – ‘Don’t keep history a mystery’, at the event there were no specific activities that explicitly engaged in learning about local history or broader Australian history. At the Reconciliation Australia tent ‘post-it’ notes were available to make a pledge to reconciliation through writing ‘what reconciliation means to you’. There were no activities that mentioned colonisation, or Frontier Wars, or the Hollywood Mission at Yass. No mention of the Stolen Generations or the protests a few days earlier by Grandmothers Against Removals (GMAR) (in response to the current systematic Aboriginal child protection ‘crisis’) out the front of Parliament House. No mention of sovereignty or of land rights or of Indigenous peoples’ rights, or of treaty, or the Tent Embassy or even the Uluru Statement of the Heart.

A few days later in a hall one street away from the events of Reconciliation Day, I attended a public panel discussion ‘Reconciliation in the ACT – Are we there yet?’, hosted by the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis. The flyer for the event included the following:

- Native title has been completely extinguished in the ACT;
- Canberra’s Indigenous students fall two years behind their non-Indigenous peers in educational outcomes;
- Canberra’s Indigenous people are 21 times more likely to be incarcerated compared to non-Indigenous people, and the ACT has the second highest rate of Indigenous incarceration in Australia;
- An Aboriginal child in Canberra is 12 times more likely than a non-Aboriginal child to be removed, under a care and protection order, from its parents and the ACT has the second highest rate of removal of Aboriginal children in Australia;
- 7.6% of Canberra’s Aboriginal community report that they live in housing in which they do not have access to working sewerage facilities;
- 46% of Indigenous males and 39% of Indigenous females in the ACT over the age of 15 used an illicit drug or other substance in the last year; and
- 35% of Aboriginal children in Canberra live in poverty.

The three panellists were Louise Taylor (Kamilaroi woman, and at the time, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Legal Aid ACT Legal Aid and since the ACT's first Aboriginal magistrate), Julie Tongs OAM (Wiradgeri woman, CEO of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service) and Kim Davison (Bujigal woman, Executive Director Gudan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation). They raised the following key messages during the hour-long session in front of approximately 150 public attendees:

- Aboriginal people, including the three panellists, are not listened to. Right across the country, blackfellas feeling utterly powerless, which sits at the heart of all the issues;
- There is exhaustion resulting from the reports, reviews and royal commissions where recommendations are not implemented;
- Law enforcement and community relations in the ACT are worse than 18 years ago;
- Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service and Gudan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation are not funded to do crisis services, although both are responding to crisis daily as Aboriginal families and individuals want Aboriginal services not mainstream services;
- There is an ongoing demonisation of Aboriginal people; and
- The statistics in relation to child protection removals reveal that Kevin Rudd's apology was hollow.

Throughout the panel discussion, the three panellists and the Convenor, Jon Stanhope AO engaged specifically with the concept of reconciliation with these quotes as examples:

Reconciliation is like the dodo bird.

Reconciliation is about pinning on a badge and feeling good.

Reconciliation doesn't feature in the lives of the clients we deal with.

We need self-determination not reconciliation.

Key thing is there's never been a truth-telling. We need that reckoning.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a plea to the Australian people and is about a reckoning and truth-telling.

The theme of this week – what's the theme? – don't keep history a mystery. Come to Winnunga for a day and see what history has done to our people.

The juxtaposition of the two events described above culminated one week later, where on the Reconciliation Australia's social media post, the 'post-it' notes from the public holiday had been collated into a word-cloud within a map of Australia (see Fig. 1). Words that invoked emotions of empathy, joy, celebration and positivity were used such as 'unity', 'new beginning', 'respect', 'land', 'wisdom', 'celebration', 'sorry', 'move forward' were presented in bold. Words that invoked discomfort, such as those that reflected the reason for reconciliation were absent: colonisation, colonialism, ethnocentrism, race, racism, structural disadvantage, white privilege and power, inequity, and inequality. The largest word of 'unity', centred in the map of Australia seemed to reflect an image of a 'united Australia'.



Figure 1 Word cloud, inaugural ACT Reconciliation Day, May 2018 (Source: Reconciliation Australia).

Such selective pledges about the meaning of reconciliation, as well as the way reconciliation is (re)constructed, experienced and interpreted reveal a reconciliation that perpetuates the power and privilege of the dominant non-Indigenous members of the community under a banner of 'good intent' and doing the 'right thing'. This reconciliation, its affective, material and discursive assemblages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures and histories, is all about race, racism and whiteness. This reconciliation is what children are exposed to, interact with, embody and (re)construct at schools on a daily basis. This thesis is a story – the story of how reconciliation is (re)constructed in two primary schools on Ngannawal Country, and how children from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic backgrounds understood, interpreted and embodied these messages. This is a story of everyday reconciliation.

Part 1: The Study of Everyday Reconciliation

Chapter 1: Everyday Reconciliation

Introduction

In 2011, when my partner and I were looking for a school to send our son Edin, the criteria we used included explicit promotion of cultural and ethnic diversity, as we wanted him to see himself in his peers – English was his second language, one parent was born outside Australia, and he comes from a religious, ethnic and cultural minority. Also, we were committed to ensuring the school engaged with diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories and cultures. The school we found seemed to tick all the boxes using the ‘right’ language of embracing and celebrating diversity and the embedding of Indigenous cultures and histories. One day during kindergarten, Edin returned from school and asked whether I was aware that *‘All Aboriginal people had been killed by the white people. There were a few left. They all have problems. Don’t worry mummy, we can help them’*. After talking with the teacher, it became clear that she was committed to providing her kindergarten class with alternative narratives to the silence of Indigenous experiences and perspectives of Australia’s colonial history that she had grown up with.

The following year, Edin experienced a week-long school celebration of NAIDOC Week², the national week celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The school had engaged with local Elders to plan the week-long activities: there were talks for teachers and parents about local history and cultures, cooking demonstrations with local and national native food, two different storytellers, music lessons, and visual arts activities with local Aboriginal artists. Edin declared that he wanted to be an Aboriginal boy, to which I asked what does that mean? *‘I want to have black skin, eat kangaroo, and throw spears’*.

Three distinct threads played out in these two reflections. Firstly, the teacher and the school had expressed commitment and good intent towards delivering narratives of Australia’s history and exposing children to different aspects of Indigenous cultures as well as diverse Indigenous cultures. This came with the teacher’s own awareness of the absence of messages that she had experienced during her own schooling, an absence that has been referred to as ‘the Great Australian Silence’ (Stanner 1969) and, specifically in education, ‘the Silent Apartheid’ (Rose 2007, 2015). Secondly, despite the good intent, the narrative that Edin

² NAIDOC originally stood for ‘National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee’, and the acronym has since become the name of the week itself.

articulated perpetuated stereotyped imagery of Indigenous peoples and cultures – stereotypes that invoked deficits, lack of agency and an anachronistic positioning – stereotypes that epitomised the ongoing colonial storytelling of what it is to be Indigenous and what is [are] Indigenous culture[s] (Behrendt 2016). Finally, despite this stereotyped imagery, there were also sentiments that being Aboriginal came with cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984; Connolly 1998).

A couple of years later, Noah, my second son, returned home from his new school during National Reconciliation Week activities. Activities included building a bush-tucker garden, doing dot-paintings on cut out hands, and hearing a non-local ‘dreamtime’ story in the library, all of which Rose (2015) suggests are ‘inappropriate by-products’. It was also the first time the school had flown the Aboriginal flag. That evening he asked me to test his spelling on the longest word he knows – ‘reconciliation’. He successfully spelt it and, interested to know what he had understood by the word given it was Reconciliation Week, I asked ‘*What does it mean?*’ He quickly responded, ‘*I dunno, we didn’t talk about it*’ and ran off. A couple of minutes later he returned and said ‘*Mum, I’ve worked it out. Reconciliation is you ‘wreck’ [sic] something then you fix it*’.

My interpretation of Edin and Noah’s experiences ultimately raised the question of whether good intent on the part of teachers and schools to engage with ‘reconciliation’ is causing more harm than good. Such an interpretation reflects some aspects of the highly contested ideological complexities within ‘reconciliation’ in the education field. Nakata (2007b, 2011) explains this space between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous peoples and the framing of knowledge that establishes how we can and cannot understand each other as the ‘cultural interface’. As Nakata (2007: 10) explains of the cultural interface,

...by the intersections of time, place, distance, different systems of thought, competing and contesting discourses within and between different knowledge traditions, and different systems of social economic and political organisation. It’s a space of many shifting and complex intersections between different people with different histories, experience, language, agendas, aspirations and responses. As much as it is currently overlaid by various theories, narrative and arguments that work to produce cohesive, consensual and co-operative social practices, it is also a space that abounds with contradictions, ambiguities, conflict and contestation of meanings that emerge from these various shifting intersections.

In response to my experiences as a parent, coupled with my professional work in social policy and community development in Indigenous Affairs (which I discuss in the following chapter), I became increasingly interested in this cultural interface, and more broadly how 'reconciliation' was being (re)constructed 15 years after the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) had tabled their recommendations to progress reconciliation in Australia. This was a policy platform that had aimed to unveil the 'silent apartheid' and the 'Great Australian Silence' by increasing awareness of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges of history, culture and society, and improve educational outcomes of Indigenous children and young people. I was particularly interested in how this was occurring in the 'everyday'.

Before continuing, a brief word about the title of the thesis and the concept of 'everyday reconciliation'. Early on in my PhD research I came across Essed's (1991) seminal work on 'everyday racism'. In her thesis and book, Essed captured not only the overt expressions of racism, but also the subtle and at times silent expressions, emotions and discourses of racism experienced, as understood and articulated by black American women in California and first migrants in the Netherlands. Essed rearticulated everyday practices – what were so often taken for granted, blinded or silenced by the dominant members of society who did not see or experience racism by viewing them through the experiences of black women. Since Essed's study, other studies of everyday racism and also everyday multiculturalism (Howard-Wagner 2015; Noble 2009; Wise 2005; Wise and Velayutham 2009), including specifically in schools have emerged (Herron 2017; Vass 2018; Walton et al. 2013a). As noted by Herron (2017), ethnographic studies of the everyday offer an opportunity to 'be attentive to complex, creative and uneven racialising practices, logics and experiences that are embedded and "come alive in repetitive acts, embodied and corporeal activities" (Nayak 2007, 743) within everyday' (Herron 2018: 24).

The study of Everyday Reconciliation is my attempt at encapsulating the often mundane, taken for granted material, discursive and affective assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) of reconciliation that occurs in the everyday of two primary schools. It is a qualitative, open-ended, multi-disciplinary ethnographic inquiry that explores the ways in which policies, curriculum, teachers, parents and children define and engage with reconciliation and the intricate and contradictory explicit and implicit relationships between reconciliation, Indigenous peoples and cultures, and Australia's history, and race, racism and whiteness. Capturing the complexity and diversity of policies, curriculum, teachers, parents and children's lived experiences including through the lens of diverse Indigenous and non-

Indigenous experiences, did not lend itself to 'prescriptive' definitions or theories of reconciliation. Furthermore, it did not lead to conclusively identifying what is and is not reconciliation, in contrast it demonstrates the difficulties of such interpretations and limitations in studying reconciliation through single theoretical lenses, and calls for new ways of conceptualising reconciliation. As a result, I did not select one discipline to anchor the thesis, rather relied on a range of literatures and theories to understand the everyday life at the two schools.

Such an approach led to the development of the notion of 'settled reconciliation' to assist interrogating approaches of everyday reconciliation. Settled reconciliation reveals that despite educators' good intent and strong commitment to what may have been considered 'reconciliation', schools mainly reproduced forms of 'colonial storytelling' (Behrendt 2016) about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, silencing diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' diversity, experiences and agency. This resulted not only in the continuation of the 'othering' of Indigenous Australians as an 'authentic' other, but perpetuated the silencing of systematic, structural and epistemic racism and discrimination, as well as self-determination and sovereignty, thus maintaining the 'silent apartheid'. Reconciliation under these conditions ultimately perpetuate and privilege whiteness and maintain existing power structures rather than enact transformative social change. Some children and teachers did find ways to challenge and disrupt the normalisation and privileging of settled reconciliation. However, for the most part, children (re)constructed and embodied the same messages of settled reconciliation that they were exposed to at school.

Structurally, the thesis itself is a narrative of my fieldwork and the complexities of studying everyday reconciliation as a whole – employing ethnographic methodology throughout the thesis, data collection, analysis and write-up. As such, the structure of the thesis is divided into three distinct parts: Part One provides the process of studying 'Everyday Reconciliation'; Part Two focuses on the messages children receive at school; and Part Three pays attention to the children's perspectives and interpretations of the messages. In order to help prepare the reader through the study and the thesis, this chapter provides the political and historical background to reconciliation, beginning with its relationship with the education system. I then briefly contextualise the historical process of reconciliation in Australia as part of the Indigenous policy agenda and national narrative over the past 60 years. Throughout the thesis I engage more critically with particular aspects of reconciliation relevant to each chapter. For example, Chapter 4 focuses on Practical and Symbolic Reconciliation, Australia's

Reconciliation Barometer and Reconciliation Action Plans and Chapter 5 focuses on Beliefs and Values of Reconciliation. This chapter also sets out the overarching paradigm, concepts and theories that have influenced the study.

The following section focuses on the relationship between education and reconciliation.

Education and Reconciliation

The historical, political, ideological backdrop of reconciliation within education is complex and multilayered. Until the 1970s, Australian Indigenous education policies were built on systematic denial, exclusions, segregation, assimilation and limited access to 'formal' education system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Such policies were reflective of imperialism and social-Darwinism assumptions about the 'natives' capacity to be educated in Western ways, and assumption in and of itself about schooling and education. In 1883, in the town of Yass, on Ngunnawal Country, 15 Aboriginal students were expelled after non-Aboriginal parents complained of their attendance at the local primary school. The students subsequently attended the Catholic school, in segregated classes (Cadzow 2010; Fletcher 1989b), however in response to this experience in Yass, the Minister for Education stated:

No child whatever its creed or colour or circumstances ought to be excluded from a public school. But cases may arise, especially among Aboriginal tribes, where the admission of a child or children may be prejudicial to the whole school (Minister for Education, George Reid, 1884 cited in Fletcher 1989b: 74).

In 1929, a similar incident occurred again at Yass Primary School, where non-Aboriginal parents complained about the attendance of Aboriginal students from the local Hollywood Mission. As it was compulsory for all children to attend school, this subsequently led to the establishment of a school on the Hollywood Mission, as explained by the late Eric Bell, Ngunnawal Elder, in his memoirs.

There was a school for Aborigines on the Hollywood Reserve within easy walking distance of my home...I remember the Hollywood school well from when I was six. It was an unlined, one room affair, and it was some time before toilets were built for the teacher and the kids. The school only went to grade 4, but all four grades were housed in one room, between twelve and twenty kids.... Each morning before going into the

classroom, we had a respectful flag-raising ceremony, and perhaps surprisingly, sang 'Advance Australia Fair' and even more surprisingly 'The Māori Farewell'. (Bell 2011: 42).

This law that enabled non-Indigenous parents or teachers to refuse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from attending school existed until 1972. However, for those who did access formal schooling, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, seeing and doing – knowledges, perspectives and voices including the use of language in schools (and in society more broadly) – were refused, absent and silenced. In direct parallel to this, the education system engaged in an ongoing absence and silencing of Australia's settler colonial history (and present). As noted by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016: 787):

Ultimately, it must be noted that the overarching theme of historical policies in Indigenous education were designed with the intent to erase the existence and/or visibility of Indigenous Australians and assimilate 'part-Indigenous' people into the mainstream, white Australia, thus attempting to stop the survival of Indigenous cultural practices and values.

In 1968, Australian historian W. E. B. Stanner delivered the Boyer lecture 'The Great Australian Silence' in which he articulated that Australian historians had neglected to include critical narratives about Australia's history – invasion, massacres, genocides, assimilation. From Stanner's perspective this silencing was not just omission, rather a targeted approach to narrate a particular account of history.

It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale. (Stanner 1969: 25).

The impact of this forced forgetting (Price 2006) or cult of forgetfulness (Gunstone 2012) enabled the maintaining of the settler colonial narrative about Indigenous Australians. As explained by Moreton-Robinson (2009: 62),

...knowledge of the impoverished conditions under which Indigenous people lived was shared by those who controlled their lives. They acted disingenuously and their silence about Indigenous poverty operated repressively as 'an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there was nothing to say about such things, nothing to see, and nothing to know.

As a result, awareness of the racialised social, economic and structural disadvantages experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was replaced by the settler colonial cultural deficit narrative about Indigenous Australians. This has continued to occur in education policies, despite the global and national education shifts in the 1970s, that saw a global shift to address discrimination and improve educational equity for 'stigmatised groups'.

The particular silence that permeated within the education system was coined the 'silent apartheid' by Mark Rose, of the Gunditjmara Nation (2007). Rose (2015: 71) explains the silent apartheid as being twofold. On the one hand the education system acts as a 'promulgation' to the silence, creating ongoing ignorance which 'contributes to, sustains and then replicates itself as if it were a regenerate pandemic'. On the other hand, because of the longitudinal impact of access and participation in formal education, there is an 'abyss' where an absence of legitimate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and experience is also silenced, in which the 'space is consumed by misnomers, untruths and stereotype' (Rose 2015: 71).

This silencing within the education system, became increasingly obvious during the tabling of the report into the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnston 1991), which offered a number of recommendations to address this silent apartheid, specifically focusing on teacher training for student teachers, in-service training for existing teachers, and the involvement of Aboriginal people in such training specifically on unveiling the silence and learning 'Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters' (Johnston 1991).

The very establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) in 1991 was also a direct response to this silence and was explicitly tasked with three objectives: to determine ways to educate the public about Indigenous social justice and Australian history; to address the inequity between health and education outcomes; and to determine the potential for a 'document of reconciliation' (*Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991*: 3-4). Thus, two of the responsibilities were directly related to education: educating the general public, and addressing inequity in educational (and health) outcomes (although the third recommendation also contributes to education, as will be explained in Chapter 5).

The actual term 'reconciliation' had already begun to appear a few years earlier in bi-partisan State and National education documents and policies during the late 1980s with the first national education plan, the Hobart Declaration of Educational Goals for Young Australians (1989) stating:

All students have understanding of and respect for Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures to achieve reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians [sic].

During this era, the Commonwealth Government also developed a National Reconciliation and Schooling Strategy to assist teachers to increase their skills and knowledge of Indigenous history and society, again through training, but also through the learning of local history and engagement with the local community. The first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy was committed to in 1990 (developed on the back of the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Policy in 1982). This policy had a strong focus on increasing educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the policy focused on: the involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision making, equity of access to educational services, equity of education participation, and equitable and appropriate educational outcomes. Putting the six goals that focus on involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision making aside, of the 21 goals, three goals require schools as a whole to actively engage with Indigenous perspectives and knowledges:

17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages.

20. To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures. (Department of Employment Education and Training, 1989).

The word 'reconciliation' has remained in the past three national education declarations almost word for word, however, there has been a fundamental shift since its original focus from children and young people contributing to social justice, to the current focus on being about 'active and informed citizens'. The current national education declaration, known as the 'Melbourne Declaration' on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) 2008) explicitly states that for all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens, they need to:

Understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (MCEETYA 2008).

To support the implementation of the Melbourne Declaration, the first national Australian Curriculum was developed and since 2014 has explicitly required schools and teachers to contribute to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by engaging with Indigenous cultures and histories in all subject areas through the Indigenous Cultures and History Cross Curriculum Priority (CCP). Although originally not included (Maxwell et al. 2018), two aims are now clearly detailed for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures and Histories CCP:

1. that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum of each of the learning areas, can fully participate in the curriculum and can build their self-esteem; and
2. that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority is designed for all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures (ACARA 2011: para 2).

The Australian Curriculum is three dimensional with three CCPs, eight key learning areas (subjects), and seven general capabilities. One of the seven capabilities is 'intercultural understanding'. Such a capability is noted as a point of tension due to negotiating competing cultural imperatives embedded within the Australian Curriculum and intercultural understanding (Walton et al. 2014; Maxwell et. al. 2018). In order to support the implementation of the Indigenous cultures and histories CCP, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2014) require teachers to develop:

- strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and
- understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to promote reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers: 1.2 and 2.4 respectively).

Despite the recommendations since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report in (Johnston 1991), and subsequent reports and recommendations, this was the first

time that the teaching of 'Indigenous Studies' became mandatory for professional teachers at a national level (Nakata 2011).

As illustrated through the plethora of policies, strategies and curriculum documents, particularly through the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures and Histories CCP, 'reconciliation' within the education system appears strong. For some it has even been considered too strong: an independent review of the Australian Curriculum resulted in recommendations to decrease engagement with Indigenous cultures and histories and increase a focus on 'Western cultural, social and economic heritage' (Wiltshire and Donnelly 2014: 112).

There have also been strong critiques of the curriculum and teaching standards from a different perspective, particularly in relation to the approach taken in the curriculum that has led to a focus on celebrating 'culture' and the silencing of concepts. Concepts that would enable children to develop an understanding of Australia and Indigenous Australians place in it, such as sovereignty and the colonial settler state (Lowe and Yunkaporta 2013; Maxwell et al. 2018; Moodie and Patrick 2017; Nakata 2011). For example, in Lowe and Yunkaporta's (2013) cultural, cognitive and socio-political analyses of the CCP, they determined significant gaps in all three analyses that would enable children to acquire the knowledge and understanding about Indigenous cultures and histories and place in Australia. At a cultural level very little in the approaches documented in the CCP and accompanying documents would be considered 'Indigenous knowledges and perspectives' (Lowe and Yunkaporta 2013: 4). At a cognitive level, the majority of approaches focused on delivering content rather than developing critical thinking skills (Lowe and Yunkaporta 2013: 8). Finally, at a socio-political level, many key concepts that would enable an understanding of the experiences, histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – colonialism, land rights, sovereignty, invasion, racism were absent (Lowe and Yunkaporta 2013: 10).

Extending on this analysis, in relation to the very concept of 'reconciliation', the term appeared only once in the primary and secondary school curriculum, in year 3 (age 7–8) health and physical education unit, and suggests that talking about reconciliation in Australia builds relations. Furthermore, the cross curriculum priority is considered 'elaborations' rather than 'core subjects', which means teachers can choose whether they engage with it or not. Despite these concerns, the CCP has continued and is currently being strengthened through projects such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Curricula Project (Langton 2018).

It is important to note that despite the inclusion of the term ‘reconciliation’, in the literature, in policies, in the media as well as amongst teachers and policy makers, the discursive practice tends to focus on ‘Indigenous Education’. In a recent collection of essays on *Indigenous Philosophies of Education Around the World* (Petrovic and Mitchell 2018), the authors highlight that providing ‘a’ definition of Indigenous Education is difficult due to the very use of the term ‘Indigenous’, which itself ‘represents a multitude of different meanings across a multiplicity of contexts, and at times has been regarded as having a derogatory connotation’ (Petrovic and Mitchell 2018: 4). However, in addition to this caution, there is also confusion and a failure to distinguish between education and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as education about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, perspectives and narratives (Vass 2012; Wilson 2016). In the literature and in policies, Indigenous Education is most often defined as being both ‘for’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and being ‘about’ Indigenous perspectives, cultures and histories (Fogarty 2010; Price 2015; Vass 2012), which Nakata explicitly notes as being ‘Indigenous Studies’. As Fogarty (2010: 28) suggests, it is ‘both a distinct pedagogic field and a kaleidoscope of intercultural practice’. Some also suggest that Indigenous Education should also include ‘by’ Indigenous peoples and ‘with’ Indigenous people, demonstrating an overlap between Indigenous Education for Indigenous students, Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Studies research (which I discuss below).

For example, in his Indigenous Education model, Dreise (2018), a Gamilaroi scholar, suggests a model of four quadrants (see Fig. 2).

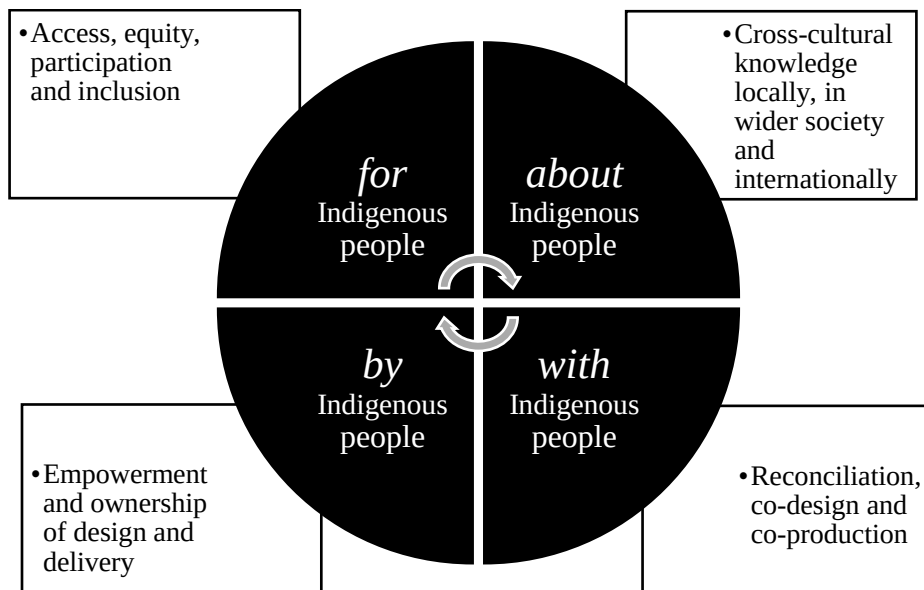


Figure 2: Indigenous Education model: *for, about, by, with* Indigenous people (Source: Dreise 2018).

Dreise posits reconciliation within the ‘with’ quadrant. However, as will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, reconciliation in education is (re)constructed by some as being located in all quadrants. That is, reconciliation is about, for, by and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and communities. Yet, simultaneously, for many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and educators, reconciliation is also resisted and should not appear in any of the quadrants, as a form of refusal, resilience and resistance (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Coulthard 2014). This resistance seems to be to a reconciliation that maintains the ‘silent apartheid’ (Rose 2015)

Rose (2015) highlights seven tenants of the ‘silent apartheid’. *Racism by cotton wool* refers to the preoccupation with ‘political correctness’ that has led to a range of approaches that go ‘soft’ on both expectations of Indigenous students, but also on how Indigenous Studies is explored. *Exoticism* is displayed in the preoccupation with the real ‘Aborigine’. *Missionaries* is the ongoing expressions of those who display ‘pity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’ and an innate endeavour to save the perceived ‘savage’ from Indigenous peoples. *Parallelism* is reflected in the additional programs that have been created specific for Indigenous students that remove them from mainstream programs. *Populist professional practice is demonstrated* in the ‘proliferation of pedagogical and andragogical packaged options of ‘Indigenous Education’ (Rose 2015: 75). Abrogation of responsibility via workforce is evident in the practice that Indigenous issues are handled by Indigenous staff, such as the

Indigenous Education Officer (IEO). Finally, educational ethnic profiling is reflective in the deficit discourse that permeates and is reproduced through the previous six methods that perpetuate and maintain the 'silent apartheid'. According to Rose (2015: 76), 'the teaching profession is as much a victim of the 'silent apartheid' as it is a catalyst'.

As noted by Nakata (2011: 2), what is required is a total rethink of education:

We need to re-think how we understand Indigenous students and what they contend with in classroom learning. We need to think differently about how all students, including Indigenous students are to engage with Indigenous knowledge and content and what we really expect of all students. And we need to think about how we conceptualise the learning space as an intercultural space, especially where the Indigenous and non-Indigenous intersection sits in relation to the general capability of intercultural understanding.

Positioning the research in the literature

There has been extensive research exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and Indigenous student 'success' (and 'failure') at school. In a recent systematic review of the research literature between 2006 and 2017, the 'Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families' (Lowe et al. 2018) team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian scholars identified the following key areas of research that have had extensive body of literature: pedagogic practices, curriculum, remote education, numeracy and literacy, school and community engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, teacher professional learning, school leadership and racism. However, to date there has been little focus in the literature on understanding schools' engagement in reconciliation per se, urban Indigenous education, or 'all' children's experiences and understanding and embodiment of these education policies, curriculum and practices.

In response to this gap, this thesis aims to contribute to understanding:

- How reconciliation is (re)constructed in primary schools;
- What are the messages 8–10 year old children of diverse cultural, ethnic and migrant backgrounds are exposed to in relation to reconciliation; and
- How children interpret, understand, embody and (re)construct these messages.

The study has also aimed to account for the diversity amongst the often homogenised 'Indigenous' and 'non-Indigenous' Australians, and has explored whether a child's migrant, ethnic or cultural background contributes to the differing experiences of reconciliation. Internationally, the project contributes to the limited evidence regarding primary school children's everyday experiences of ethnic-racial socialisation processes, including intercultural understanding and anti-racism approaches amongst diverse population groups, particularly in settler colonial settings. This thesis explores these questions in the context of two urban, multicultural primary schools located on Ngunnawal Country, within the ACT jurisdiction of education.

The following section provides the historical and political backdrop of reconciliation in Australia.

Historical Process of Reconciliation in Australia

Wolfe (2006) proposes that colonisation should be viewed as a structure, not an event, which is embedded in accessing and maintaining territory (Brayboy 2005; Moodie 2018; Moreton-Robinson 2015) where strategies are then employed to remove or eliminate the 'Native'. This is demonstrated with the declaration of Australia being 'terra nullius', a land without people, which was only legally overturned in 1992, yet a narrative that continues to permeate Australia's identity. It is also reflected in the lack of Government support in the pursuit of self-determination (in economic, social and cultural development), and the maintaining of state domination of Indigenous peoples lives. This is evident in the high rates of incarceration, lower life expectancy, poor education outcomes, and high unemployment (SCRGSP 2016). Yet throughout Australia's settler colonial history, despite the loss of land (including access to and destruction of), loss of lives through massacres, disease, poisoning and policy attempts to assimilate to the 'West', Indigenous peoples in Australia have engaged with a long history of resistance from the Frontier Wars till now, but also of maintaining and adapting diverse and dynamic Laws, cultures, knowledges, ceremonies, stories and songs. The following section explores some of this resistance and political barriers during the past 60 years through an exploration of Indigenous Affairs and reconciliation.

During the 1960s Indigenous Affairs was focused on self-determination and land rights, and the collective responsibility of the past (Gaita 2007). Such an approach was embedded in an inherent belief in social justice that cut across race, class and religion (Behrendt 2007) and

focused on increasing support of '[I]ndigenous rights and to build bridges of understanding about [I]ndigenous issues and people' (Sanders 2002: 2). This is reflected in the 10 year civic movement that culminated in the overwhelming public support for the 1967 Referendum that saw Indigenous Australians counted in the census for the first time and enabled the Commonwealth Government to create laws for Indigenous Australians. This period of Indigenous rights was also occurring in the background of national changes to the White Australian Policy, which was abolished in 1973 and saw an increasing national policy focus on 'multiculturalism'.

During this period there were also discussions of the possibility of a treaty between the Indigenous peoples and the Australian nation-state, as sparked by the National Aboriginal Convention to recognise and restore Aboriginal rights and political autonomy. In 1983, the Senate Standing Committee report ultimately dismissed the notion of a treaty and concluded that societal 'attitudes' lay at the heart of the 'Aboriginal problem' (Short 2012). In 1988, in Barunga in the Northern Territory, senior lawmen stated their proposal for 'recognition' on bark and offered it to the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke. This statement became known as the 'Barunga Statement' to which Hawke responded with a promise of a treaty, although in action there was a more diluted approach that focused on an agreement, or compact. This was likely due to the very vocal concerns of the then political opposition leader, John Howard (later prime minister) whereby he proclaimed '[a treaty] is an absurd proposition that a nation should make a treaty with some of its own citizens' (Howard 1988: 6). At the same time, the Government put forth the idea that non-Indigenous Australians needed to be 'educated' about the 'Aboriginal problem' before they would be ready to engage in a legal process of recognising Indigenous rights and political autonomy (Short 2012).

The first public use of the term 'reconciliation' (more broadly than the then national education declarations) seems to be with the establishment of CAR in 1991–2000 as a statutory authority under the *Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991*. The CAR, led by Patrick Dodson, the 'Father of Reconciliation', a Yawuru man, now Senator of the Labor Party, was tasked with identifying three key processes to recommend to parliament: firstly, how to educate the polity on Indigenous historical and social injustices; secondly, develop strategies to overcome chronic disadvantage through improving health, education, and economic conditions for Indigenous people; and finally, determine the interest and then develop a document/s for an agreement that recognised Indigenous rights (such as a treaty or compact) (Dodson 2007: 21).

In December 1992, to mark the United Nations (UN) inaugural International Year for the World's Indigenous People, the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, delivered his infamous 'Redfern Speech', which was the first Government 'official remembrance' (Short 2012) and acknowledgement of the historical and enduring impact of colonisation. However, what was significant in this speech was the acknowledgement of the importance of reflection and reflexivity, and the public recognition that non-Indigenous Australians may be the 'problem' to the 'Aboriginal problem'.

...the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with that act of recognition, that it was we who did the dispossessing, we took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion (Keating 1992).

However, this rhetoric of a new relationship and land rights as expressed in the speech, did not fully come to fruition during Keating's leadership period, nor has it since. This is despite the Mabo decision that finally acknowledged that Australia was 'occupied' prior to colonial invasion and settlement in 1788 and the development of the *Native Title Act 1993*, which still continues to be a political, legal and moral issue in Australia (Short 2012).

In 1996, the election of Howard as Prime Minister changed not only the definition and implementation of reconciliation but the political ideological tendencies from the left to a directive right (Sanders 2009), challenging the very notion of the process of reconciliation and its particular relationship to rights and self-determination. Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs during Howard's era became known as the 'assimilation era'. In 1997, the *Bringing Them Home Report* was tabled in Parliament. The *Bringing Them Home Report* (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997) publicly disclosed the devastating impact of government policies during the 1940s through to the 1970s of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families and communities on the basis of race. Howard rejected the request to provide an apology to the Stolen Generation on behalf of the Crown, and furthermore disregarded a multileveled approach to reconciliation and failure to acknowledge the links between history, past and contemporary policies and outcomes, as exemplified in the ultimate focus on 'practical' reconciliation.

Such an approach undermined and contradicted the very process of reconciliation showing an 'insensitive attempt to eradicate social, historical, and cultural distinctiveness along with the

socioeconomic disadvantage' (Sanders 2009: 7). Furthermore, Gunstone (2006) contends, the very process of reconciliation during this period through its different campaigns and community education processes (such as the Study Circles project³, publications, media resources and newspaper supplements) marginalised the non-nationalist issues that were of concern to many Indigenous peoples. Whilst noting that not all Indigenous peoples agreed with these concerns, Gunstone (2006) lists the concerns as being '*sovereignty, a treaty, self-determination, the addressing of power relationships and land rights*' (2006: 403).

In May 2000, CAR tabled their two reports: the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 1999) and the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 2000). It contained six key recommendations, four national strategies (National Strategy to sustain the reconciliation process; promote recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rights; Overcome Disadvantage; and economic independence) and an Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation. The declaration was an aspirational statement that encapsulated many aspects of reconciliation: valuing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original custodians; the need to acknowledge the history and ongoing impact of colonisation; human rights; two way 'journey' of healing; injustices, justice and equity; and ultimately respect. Such a declaration embodied the responsibilities and affordances to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. However, failed to include the non-nationalist issues such as sovereignty and treaty (Gunstone 2006).

However, the Government's response to the CAR recommendations (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation 2000) was a promotion of the policies and programs that already existed in terms of attempting to reduce 'Indigenous disadvantage'. The response was silent to the role non-Indigenous people and the entrenched ongoing settler colonial structures and institutions, as a whole, play in understanding the need for reconciliation, the requirement for truth-telling and un-silencing the past, as well as the ongoing need to reduce racism, prejudice and discrimination. Furthermore, a number of studies (Green and Sonn 2005; Maddison and Stastny 2016) have determined that community education approaches during this time which aimed to increase non-Indigenous Australians responsibility to engage in reconciliation 'largely failed' (Maddison and Stastny, 2016: 235).

³ The Study Circle Kit was a toolkit produced in 1993 by CAR and developed by the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education, to support local community groups to engage in reconciliation through a structured learning process (CAR 1993)

CAR ceased to exist from 2000, and formally became Reconciliation Australia, a private, non-Government organisation, funded by both Government and philanthropy. The objective of the Government funding to Reconciliation Australia is 'to raise awareness of the need for reconciliation among individuals, organisations and communities and in particular to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, building respect, trust and opportunities to reduce disadvantage' (Prime Minister and Cabinet 2014: 12). According to annual reports, funding from Government to Reconciliation Australia has remained stable for at least the past eight years.

On 28 May 2000, over 250,000 Australians 'united' to participate in the Reconciliation Bridge Walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 'support of Indigenous Australians', as well as in response to the explicit rejection by the then Prime Minister Howard to formally apologise to the Stolen Generation. This movement has become 'symbolic' of one of the successes of the reconciliation process of enhancing awareness and commitment towards reconciliation within the general public. It is this very march that is often mentioned as reflective of Australia's commitment to reconciliation (Biddle 2017; World Economic Forum website). Yet, this march as well as the positive commentary about the march is also criticised as failing to strengthen the public knowledge of the marginalisation of Indigenous people (Coopes 2008; Cowlishaw 2010).

Deeming the self-determination era a failure, Howard continued to make significant changes to Indigenous Affairs, starting with the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). ATSIC had been established in 1990 under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989* and had two primary roles: as an elected body to act as a governing voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and as an administrative body to implement programs and policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as a Government agency. Structurally there were barriers in achieving these goals, such as the interface between ATSIC and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (Behrendt 2005). According to Behrendt (2005), its abolition was based on three reasons: a perception that it had failed in alleviating the widespread socio-economic disadvantage; a preference to refocus on regions; and it was a vocal critic of government performance. The abolition of ATSIC resulted in the loss of an elected body that advocated for Indigenous Australians at a national policy and program development and implementation level.

Altman (2007) refers to this period, and the subsequent policies that followed as a return to the pre-1967 era, to assimilation and to neo-paternalism. According to Hollingsworth (2006)

and others (Dodson 2007; Sanders and Hunt 2010) Indigenous policies and programs failed due to how the problem and solutions were defined: 'Attempts to limit the agenda and definitions of the problem ensure that programs are poorly targeted, fail to include key political and historical understandings, and are not "owned" by the communities in which they operate' (Hollingsworth 2006: 194).

In 2006, just under 20 years after the handing over the Barunga Statement, Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, the prominent Yolgnu leader and one of the signatories to the Barunga Statement requested the statement back, and whilst doing so, stated

Sovereignty became treaty, treaty became reconciliation and reconciliation became nothing. ...We will dig a hole and bury it. It will be a protest but I also hope that it can represent a new start for Aboriginal people (National Indigenous Times 2006).

However, this new start did not occur, and in 2007 the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) or the 'Intervention' arguably led to the cementing of the complete dismissal of self-determination, autonomy and rights (Altman and Hinkson 2007). The intervention occurred on the back of the *Little Children are Sacred* Report (Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse 2007), which documented high rates of child abuse and neglect, calling on the Northern Territory Government and Federal Government to work with communities to make children a priority. However, the response was in total contrast to this recommendation, and instead, Howard suspended the Racial Discrimination Act (1975) and coordinated an internal military response into 64 remote communities of the Northern Territory, leading to both national and international criticism (Howard-Wagner 2018; Lovell 2012).

In 2007, Kevin Rudd as the new Prime Minister was required to respond to three processes within Indigenous Affairs (Sanders and Hunt 2010). Firstly, Howard's refusal to apologise to the Stolen Generation, which Rudd promptly did in his first moments of becoming Prime Minister. Secondly, the abolition of ATSIC, regarding which Rudd and the Minister of Indigenous Affairs committed to establishing the National Congress of Australia's First People, although did not have the same powers as ATSIC. Thirdly, Rudd was required to respond to the NTER. In contrast to his change in policy and approach to the first two legacies, he not only continued the NTER but extended it albeit reinstating the Racial Discrimination Act. Two additional reforms in Indigenous Affairs took place under Rudd's Government. First, Australia signed the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which had been rejected by

the previous Howard government. Second, the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) multilateral committed to and signed the National Indigenous Reform Agenda and subsequent National Partnerships, including those of Indigenous Affairs (Sanders and Hunt 2010).

Even with these differences between Howard and Rudd, Rudd continued the generational revolution in Indigenous Affairs that developed in the late Howard years of mutual obligation: 'responsibility sharing', 'partnership' and a 'whole of government approach', and the push for 'evidence-based policies' (Sanders and Hunt 2010: 222). It was during this era that the Closing the Gap agenda was established. The Closing the Gap Agenda aimed to respond to the 'gaps' in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, in a range of sectors and developed measurable targets (and actions) in areas of early childhood, health, education, housing, community safety, governance, and leadership. Such a program however was embedded in the neo-liberal legacies of Howard, both in its framing and its approaches. The 'gap' mentality and discourses (Altman and Fogarty 2010; Gillborn 2008; Howard-Wagner 2018) are 'a discursive strategy that serves political purposes by deflecting attention away from the actual scale of the disparity, whilst concurrently masking incremental improvements' (Vass 2014b: 183). During 2017–18, Closing the Gap has been undergoing a 'refresh'.

In 2013, the then new Prime Minister, Tony Abbott declared himself the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, and began to implement the Indigenous Advancement Strategy in response to the little improvement in outcomes in Closing the Gap agenda. The title of the strategy implies the need for 'advancement', presumably towards western notions of wellbeing and socio-economic individualism, and echoes the language of assimilation (Sanderson 2007). Structurally, he transferred the Indigenous Affairs policy and program responsibility from the then Department of the Families, Communities, Housing, and Indigenous Affairs to the central agency of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Indigenous Advancement Strategy refocused Indigenous Affairs into a five-stream program, which no longer included 'Reconciliation' as a policy or program area. 'Constitutional Recognition' through the Recognise Campaign, however, became more prominent.

In 2015, with yet another change in leadership, albeit with the same Liberal–National Coalition in power, reconciliation continued to grow in ambiguity and contradictions. The new Prime

Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, opened Parliament in the Ngunawal language⁴, the language of the Custodians on the Country on which Parliament sits, the first time the language had been spoken by a Prime Minister. He also participated in Sorry Day events, acknowledged the importance of the Referendum Council undertaking proceedings in Uluru to discuss Constitutional Recognition without his attendance. He seemed to pledge ‘speaking with and not to Indigenous people’ (Grant 2017: 39). Despite this, his racialised policies (Howard-Wagner 2018) continued to be implemented in contradiction to the very notion of what should constitute ‘mutual respect’, partnership and collaboration.

Returning to the above mentioned ‘Recognise’ campaign, this campaign was implemented by Reconciliation Australia and was twofold: firstly to increase the public’s understanding of the importance of constitutional change in the lead up to a potential referendum; and secondly, to garner Indigenous perspectives on how the Australian constitution should be changed. There were two constitutional changes being tabled: firstly, the inclusion of a preamble that recognises Indigenous Australians as the First Australians, and secondly, changes to the ‘race’ laws that enable governments to make (both positive and negative) laws that impact specifically on Indigenous Australians. In June 2017, at the National Constitutional Convention, a delegation of 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from all over Australia came together in Uluru. The convention and the process of engaging with the many leaders was driven and organised by the Referendum Council, a Government-appointed Indigenous and non-Indigenous leadership group established in 2015. However, participants at the Convention were identified through an Indigenous led, self-determined Indigenous caucus of leaders, co-chaired by Megan Davis (Aboriginal constitutional lawyer, expert advisor to the UN Indigenous rights and academic), and Pat Anderson (an Alywaree Indigenous rights activist, and 2018 NAIDOC person of the year).

The purpose of the convention was to come to a consensus on how to progress constitutional recognition, and to finalise options for Parliament to consider to be included in a referendum. After two days of deliberation, the Council tabled their rejection of constitutional recognition, and delivered an aurally powerful, and ornate visual statement, the Uluru Statement of the Heart (2017). The call within the Uluru Statement of the Heart was a request for structural support for an Indigenous voice to Parliament and a ‘Makaratta Comission’. The Makaratta

⁴ When I describe Ngunawal language, I use the spelling used by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies which is currently engaged in a project to revitalise Ngunawal language.

Commission would include both an agreement making (treaty) process and truth-telling of history process. Makaratta is a Yolgnu word meaning, 'the coming together after a struggle'. The Uluru Statement of the Heart does not mention the word reconciliation once. However, this was publicly rejected by Turnbull, with yet the establishment of another committee to determine a way forward.

Despite this refocus from reconciliation to recognise, the two are somewhat inseparable. As Coulthard (2014: 107) reflects on reconciliation and recognition in Canada, where 'acquiring or being afforded due recognition by another subject (s) is often said to play a fundamental role in facilitating reconciliation between individuals and a state where symbolic and structural violence has occurred'. As Dodson (2018: 60) declares,

First Nations people are simply asking our parliament for recognition of who we are. We are seeking recognition of our sovereign status. We are seeking acknowledgement of our joint histories and the appalling injustices that we have suffered. We are sovereign peoples. We are the First Peoples of this country.

In August 2018, another leadership spill in the Liberal Party resulted in Scott Morrison becoming Prime Minister, from the electorate of 'Cook', the County of the Gweagal people, of the Eora Nation, and the landing place of Captain Cook. As the Federal Treasurer, in the 2018 Budget he allocated close to \$50 million dollars to celebrate the 250 year anniversary of Cook's arrival (in 2020), including \$3 million for a new Captain Cook Statue to be erected in his electorate.

In his 2008 maiden speech, the day following Kevin Rudd's National Apology, Morrison acknowledged that Australia is

...a strong country is at peace with its past...I do not share the armband view of history, black or otherwise. I like my history in high-definition, widescreen, full, vibrant colour...Rather, having apologised for our past – as I was proud to do in this place yesterday – let us foster a reconciliation where true forgiveness can emerge and we work together to remove the disadvantage of our Indigenous communities, not out of a sense of guilt or recompense for past failures but because it is the humane and right thing to do. Having said this, we cannot allow a national obsession with our past failures to overwhelm our national appetite for celebrating our modern stories of nationhood. We must celebrate our achievements and acknowledge our failures at least in equal measure. We should never feel the need to deny our past to embrace our future (Morrison, 2008) .

Within the first week as Prime Minister, Morrison selected Tony Abbott, the previous self-appointed Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, to be a Special Envoy for Indigenous Australia, with a priority focus on remote Indigenous Education by 'getting kids to school' and calling on approaches in contrast to the evidence of success in Indigenous Education (Fogarty 2018; Howard-Wagner 2018; Riley 2017). This appointment was made without consultation or engagement with the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council and received strong negative responses from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders and the public. As noted by Indigenous Senator Patrick Dodson, *'The First Nations people have asked the government for a voice and we get Tony Abbott!'* (NITV, 29 August 2018).

In summary, since the tabling of CAR recommendations in 2000, the Apology, and the Uluru Statement of the Heart, the reconciliation process has largely ignored the wider implications of engaging with the truth-telling of Australia's history, and has had little focus on the increasing awareness of the causes of Indigenous disadvantage, including dispossession, poverty, lack of control, and ongoing institutional and structural colonisation and racism. As Muriel Bamblett (2009) eloquently explains

To close the health and wellbeing gap we first need to 'close the gap' in our imagination. We need to imagine an Australia that embraces the First Peoples of the land and respects their rights and celebrates their cultures and communities...the gap in health and wellbeing will only start to close if the gap in our relationships and our understanding of our national story is also narrowed. For as long as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples feel like aliens in their own land, the impact of systemic and personal racism will remain an impediment to addressing indigenous disadvantage. And until we resolve the issue of our foundation as a polity imposed upon, rather than negotiated with, the First Peoples, we will remain a nation with little vision.

However, the failure to recognise this can be understood as reflective of a broader contradiction within liberal democracies during this current 'neo-liberal phase' (Howard-Wagner 2015, 2018; Sanderson 2007), beginning during the Howard leadership years and having continued and strengthened into the contemporary. During this phase, the notion of inherent rights and self determination afforded to Indigenous people as citizens, were rephrased as being particular rights afforded to Indigenous groups as being 'privileged' (Howard-Wagner 2015). It is within this neoliberal Australia that reconciliation is positioned in the realm of individualism, where all Australians have the right to express and share their

individual cultural heritage; however, they must maintain commitment to a 'white' mainstream Australia (Hage 1998; Howard-Wagner 2015). As Howard-Wagner explains this occurs in three ways: firstly individualism constructs individuals as equals (Moreton-Robinson 1999); secondly individualism assimilates racial and ethnic groups into the 'white' mainstream; and finally, 'any claim to rights outside of this core are rendered invidious' (Howard-Wagner 2015: 101). Thus, being 'Australian' is reduced to all that it is to be white, and being white is reduced to being 'human', where the discourses of the one 'human race', 'sameness' and 'colourblindness' permeate throughout the education system (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Pollock 2004, 2017).

According to Gunstone (2006), this focus on a 'single, national Australian identity, culture and history' was embedded throughout the 1999-2000 reconciliation process through its use of language and alignment of historical events. For example, the use of the words 'united' Australia and a 'shared history', as well as the focus on national events such as the 1967 referendum and the reconciliation bridgewalks in 2000. Furthermore, it was also evident through the appropriation of Aboriginal 'identities, cultures and histories' (2006: 402) into the mainstream. He argues:

This nationalist attempt by the reconciliation process to 'lengthen and strengthen' non-Indigenous peoples' connection with Australia by merging Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture and history would also blur the distinction between 'Indigenous' and 'non-Indigenous', thus restricting any challenges to the existing power relationships (Gunstone 2006: 401-402)

This neo-liberal phase is also reflected in the increasing withdrawal of the social and infrastructure responsibilities of the state, in response to a market-driven economy, simultaneously coercing 'action to ensure stability and conformity' (Sanderson 2007: 33). As Sanderson argues, 'the complexity inherent in this contradiction is played out almost daily in the form of the growth of laws and regulations restricting established civil liberties, the growth of security mechanisms, both public and private, and the feeding of the fear and greed agenda through the growing appetite of the media for sensational and salacious material' (2007: 33).

In recent years, I was observing what seemed to be a dramatic decrease in the very use of the term reconciliation in public policy and on Government websites, where today the only mention of reconciliation on the Australian Government's Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website, the Department responsible for Indigenous Affairs, is in relation to National

Reconciliation Week and the funding of Reconciliation Australia. It is likely that one of the main reasons for this was the increasing focus on constitutional recognition. Yet Australia still has National Reconciliation Weeks, Reconciliation Lectures, Reconciliation Action Plans, and now in 2018 in the ACT, a renewed energy with the inaugural Australia Reconciliation Day Public Holiday. During the 2018 Australian National University (ANU) Reconciliation Lecture, Peter Yu, prominent Yawuru leader, began the lecture acknowledging the current nebulous state of affairs of reconciliation:

I would like to say at the outset that I believe the once laudable concept of a Reconciliation whose initial objective was to heal the wounds of our nation's historic injustices and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in a modern Australia under the terms of an agreed political settlement, no longer exists.

Reconciliation has lost its moral and political gravitas.

While I know and believe sections of the general community remain committed to the concept and aspiration of Reconciliation, it has become a nebulous and meaningless term and used by anyone as a throwaway concept to apply their interpretation about the relationship between Indigenous people and the Australian State.

It has become part of Australia's lazy dialogue concerning Indigenous people dominated by symbolism which has little connection with the realities of people's lives.

Such reflections were not different to how local Aboriginal leaders discussed reconciliation during the Reconciliation Week panel mentioned in the preamble to the thesis. Such reflections are also similar to my own interpretations of how the majority of teachers (re)constructed reconciliation in their schools and classrooms – in the main, teachers had no awareness of the formal reconciliation process, nor an overall understanding of reconciliation being about understanding historical and contemporary structural or social injustices or a treaty, rather was reduced to the embedding of Indigenous perspectives, knowledges and cultures and to some extent histories.

It is important to acknowledge that throughout my PhD I was faced with a constant internal and external questioning of why I was engaging in 'reconciliation' when it is not necessarily how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples articulate what is the priority in Indigenous

Studies or Education or more broadly. At times, when I mentioned that I was researching 'reconciliation', Indigenous and non-Indigenous Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Policy colleagues, academics and peers would often tilt their head with a questioning frown. I often heard comments that reconciliation is 'whitefella business', that 'we don't need to reconcile with anybody', that it stands for 'silly nation'. I observed how simply on hearing the very word 'reconciliation' it invoked a range of emotions from anger, sadness, and distancing. Yet for other people I met, hearing the term invoked what seemed to be empathy mixed with pity, a tilt of a head and a slow nod with closed eyes, and an acknowledgement that 'it' is a really important study 'to help the poor Aboriginal people'. There were also those who seemed not to have heard of the term – and on hearing its connection to engaging with Australia's history as well as Indigenous Australia, it was not uncommon to hear a short 'Hm', mixed with a kind of eye roll and huff. It was these vastly different affective responses that drove my commitment to study the very concept of 'reconciliation'.

'Reconciliation' was and continues to be part of the Australian narrative including the diverse responses to 'it'. Despite the growing literature in understanding attitudes (and emotions) towards Indigenous Australians (e.g., Reconciliation Australia Barometer 2014, 2016 Reconciliation Australia 2015, 2017; Augoustinos and Rosewarne 2001; Pederson et al. 2000; Pedersen et al. 2006; Pedersen et al. 2011) and reconciliation per se (Burridge 2015; Cowlshaw 2010; Green and Sonn 2005; Gunstone 2006, 2012; Howard-Wagner 2016; Paradies 2016; Maddison and Stastny 2016; Stastny et al. 2016), there has been limited (if any) long-term ethnographic research that has engaged with children, teachers and schools offering a distinct urban locational perspective about how reconciliation is (re)constructed and an opportunity to explore the emergence of subtle and overt interactions between reconciliation and race, racism and whiteness. Increasing understanding of how, why and for whom reconciliation is being constantly (re)constructed in education settings such as schools is critical in developing strategies to progress the possibility of reconciliation that CAR originally envisioned as well as how it un-silences the 'silent apartheid' (Rose 2015).

Theoretical Lens of Reconciliation

Before concluding this section, it is important to provide a brief theoretical lens to reconciliation. The very definition of reconciliation is complex and considered at the political, societal, institutional, religious and/or cultural and individual level, as being both a process and an outcome. As a process, definitions include 'dynamic, adaptive processes aimed at

building and healing...a process of change and redefinition of relationships' (Lederach 1997: 842) and a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future (Bloomfield 2003: 12; Ramsbotham et al. 2011). As an outcome mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, mutual trust, positive attitudes, as well as sensitivity and consideration for the other party's needs and interests are often articulated (Bar-On 2005; Bar-Tal 2013).

Internationally, theories and analysis across different disciplines on reconciliation focus on two states or individual groups within intractable conflict, such as Northern Ireland, the Balkans, South Africa. This is unsurprising given it surfaced as a response to the South African apartheid system, Latin American dictatorships and the genocidal episodes of the 1990s which focused on transitional justice, truth commissions and official apologies (Coulthard 2014; Moses 2011). However, whilst the 'reconciliation industry' (Coulthard 2014) began as transitional justice in intractable conflicts, it has more recently been applied in settler colonial contexts like Canada, Aotearoa-New Zealand. and Australia (Bashir and Kymlicka 2008; Celemajer and Kidman 2012; Coulthard 2014). This is evident in the vast body of research in Australia on reconciliation (Behrendt 2007; Gunstone 2006; Maddison et al. 2016; Maddison 2017; Moses 2011; Short 2012); recognition (Davis 2018; Povinelli 2002; Wood 2012); and apology (Ahmed 2014; Celemajer and Kidman 2012). In states emerging from intractable conflict, reconciliation is moving from one regime to a different one, usually from a dictatorship to democracy (Trimikliniotis 2013). In settler colonial states, however, some form of 'democracy' has already been established by the colonisers. Contending with and confronting historical atrocities and structural inequities, between the colonisers (and ongoing settlers through migration) and First Nations, however, still requires a different regime.

There are strong voices within the public and within the academy who suggest that the term 'reconciliation' is not fit for settler colonial states – that there was not 'conciliation' in the first place. Another concern is the promotion of the goal of reconciliation being a shared identity (Verdeja 2009), where in settler colonial states, the challenge of the First Nation minority is to maintain their 'Indigeneity' rather than assimilate and acquire new, shared identities, thus preventing continued loss of culture including assimilation from continuing to occur (Moses 2011; Short 2012). Extending the work of Little (2014) and Schaap (2005), Maddison (2017) suggests an alternative aim that engages with an antagonistic democratic framework as it will enable reconciliation to be enacted not through 'oneness' from occurring, rather the enabling of shared identities, including different perspectives to work towards a commitment to the

state. Drawing on Daly and Sarkin's (2007) work, she suggests challenging and changing the social institutions or structures that are in place in order to ultimately account for diversity. As Daly and Sarkin suggest (2007: 188)

Create a nation and a national identity able to contain all groups and the contests among and between them, 'not by forcing parties to move closer together but by providing a new conception of the state to which all parties are committed.

This new nation requires a process of social transformation, reliant on understanding the 'network of relationships, mechanisms and process promoting justice and address the root causes of enmity' (Trimlikniotis 2013). It is a well established premise that the root causes of enmity in settler colonial states is colonialism, imperialism, ethnocentrism and whiteness (Alfred 1999; Coulthard 2014; Du Bois 1903; Fanon 1967; Mills 1999; Moreton-Robinson 2015). Alfred (1999), renowned Kahnawake Mohawk scholar notes,

The imperial demand for uniformity is obsolete and unachievable in the (ethnically, linguistically, racially) diverse social and political communities characteristic of modern states. Justice, demands recognition – intellection, legal and political – of the diversity of languages and knowledge that exists among people, indigenous peoples' ideas about relationships and power commanding the same respect as those that used to constitute the singular reality of the state. Creating a legitimate post-colonial relationship means abandoning notions of European cultural superiority and adopting a mutually respectful stance (Alfred 1999: 63).

Thus, transformative reconciliation between First Nations peoples, the nation-state and the broader community should fundamentally be about destabilising and dismantling existing power structure and norms embedded in colonial whiteness, bringing together a notion of diverse truths from at least two asymmetrical (in power and size) conflicting groups.

Maddison (2017) offers an overarching framework at multiple levels of reconciliation to achieve this. Building on extensive fieldwork in Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Australia and South Africa, she proposes three interconnected elements of reconciliation: constitutional reconciliation, institutional reconciliation and relational reconciliation. Constitutional reconciliation focuses on new political orders through 'settlements and agreements; constitutional design and reform; and citizenship (Maddison 2017: 159). Institutional reconciliation includes material and institutional transformation, such as redistribution of wealth and services, land reform, and reparations (Maddison 2017: 162). Relational

reconciliation refers to the transformation of relationships between people, which includes a strong understanding of multiple truths and truth-telling of the past. Such an approach dramatically shifts reconciliation from the false dichotomy of symbolic and practical reconciliation to argue that all three elements are required.

Whilst such conceptual and theoretical frameworks of transformative reconciliation may provide tools to examine reconciliation, as will be revealed, they also demonstrate the limitations of applying prescriptive definitions or theories of 'reconciliation' to the study of the everyday, in which there may be support or active rejection, because of the very definitions, theories and approaches. Thus, locating the study of Every Reconciliation within an interdisciplinary field reveals the limitations and challenges of existing discipline-based theories and frameworks of reconciliation, furthering the study of researching the concept of reconciliation itself.

Having set the background of reconciliation in Australia, I now turn attention to the key paradigms, theories and concepts to assist in navigating through the journey of everyday reconciliation through the following eight chapters.

Overarching Paradigm of Everyday Reconciliation

A thesis concerned with Everyday Reconciliation cannot be anything but an active engagement in 'Indigenous Studies', which encapsulates the study of Indigenous Studies as well as Indigenous research methodologies and decolonising approaches of researching with Indigenous peoples, perspectives and Country. Thus my study attempts to actively engage with the expansive body of work of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Research Methodologies and decolonising literature from Australian and abroad including the work of Battiste; Bodkin-Andrews; Fredericks; Friere; Martin; Moreton-Robinson; Martin Nakata; Sana Nakata; Paradies; Rigney; Said; Tuhiwai-Smith; St Denis; Walter; Wilson. 'Indigenous Studies' research begins with Indigenous peoples, be undertaken for Indigenous peoples and benefit Indigenous peoples (Moreton-Robinson 2013; Rigney 1999; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012[1999]). Indigenous Studies research then not only challenges the static and fixed construct of 'Aboriginality' but also actively disrupts the belief and processes that privileges non-Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. In doing so, it challenges processes of continued 'othering' of Indigenous knowledges and experiences by acknowledging them as part of human (Battiste and Henderson 2009) making them as 'true' as non-Indigenous knowledges and experiences

(Martin 2003; Smith 2012; Rigney 1999, 2006; Walter 2010). As Tuhiwai-Smith (2012:192) notes in undertaking Kuapapa Māori research:

Kaupapa Māori research is both less and more than a paradigm. It does set out a field of study that enables a process of selection to occur, which defines what needs to be studied and what questions ought to be asked. It also has a set of assumptions and taken-for-granted values and knowledge upon which it builds. In this sense, it can be fitted into some of the ways a paradigm is defined. However, it is also more than the sum of those parts. Kaupapa Māori research is a social project. It weaves in and out of Māori cultural beliefs and values, Western forms of education, Māori aspirations and socioeconomic needs and western economies and global politics. Kaupapa Māori is concerned with sites and terrains. Each of these sites is a site of struggle. Each of these sites has also been claimed by others as 'their' turf.

Rigney (1999; 2006) offers three critical principles in order to carry out the process of what he calls 'Indigenist' research: resistance as the emancipatory imperative; political integrity; and the privileging of Indigenous voices. Resistance as the emancipatory imperative responds to the requirement that Indigenist research engages with issues of self-determination, and 'the issues which have arisen out of the long history of colonisation, occupation, and oppression of Indigenous Australians' (Rigney 1999: 116). Martin (2003) extend Rigney's framework of Indigenist research to also include recognition of Indigenous worldviews, knowledges and realities as vital to existence and survival; locating research on 'Country to honour social mores of how Indigenous peoples live, learn and situate themselves; emphasis of social, historical and political contexts; and not only privileging the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but also the lands (Martin 2003: 205).

Rigney (2006) explicitly acknowledges that such approaches are not 'methodological separatism' rather it is 'about the exploration of theoretical frameworks that encourage the possibilities of intellectual, political, social and economic emancipation' (Rigney 2006: 40). Just as Rigney calls to go beyond dichotomies of white/black, Nakata (2007a, 2007b, 2011) also challenges the dichotomy of 'western' vs 'Indigenous', by finding a way to increase understanding of different worldviews and how they can contribute to the greater system through his articulation of the 'cultural interface', as mentioned earlier. Such an interface assumes complexities that exists and requires the working through of those complexities. Everyday Reconciliation required my own engagement in the complexities, which is outlined

in Chapter 2, and also through finding ways to disrupt the ongoing binaries and dichotomies, as will be discussed in Chapter 3.

In addition to engaging with Indigenous Studies, given Everyday Reconciliation was also about exploring how children engaged with everyday reconciliation, I was also influenced by the increasing body of work within Social Studies of Childhood, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 as a methodological frame. However, it is important to note here Sana Nakata's (2015, 2018) work on the politics and governance of childhood in Australia and its intersection with the politics and governance of Indigenous Australians, and highlight the interplay between these two paradigms. Sana Nakata explains that the history of Australia is a history of interventions in the childhood of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As such, 'the politics of childhood is predominantly about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children' (Nakata 2018: 106), one which is embedded in the ongoing seventeenth and eighteenth century imperial thought processes and assumptions that First Nation peoples were in a 'state of uncivilised savagery' requiring assimilation. She argues the way childhood has been constructed and then explored politically and within research is predominantly through a paternalistic Western lens of childhood. Thus, although Indigenous Studies and Social Studies of Childhood are very different fields and paradigms, both engage with challenging colonial frames and assumptions about agency, power, and privileging of particular voices.

Initial influencing Theories and Concepts

Prior to entering the field, I initially drew from four key literature bases: ethnic-racial socialisation; the development and acquisition of prejudice and stereotypes; reconciliation as an 'intercultural understanding' school strategy; and decolonising Critical Race Theory (CRT) and whiteness studies. These are outlined very briefly below in relation to everyday reconciliation.

Ethnic-Racial Socialisation

Ethnic-racial socialisation is the process that involves both explicit and implicit messages about the meaning and significance of race and ethnicity; racial and ethnic group membership and identity; racial and ethnic stratification; and intergroup and intragroup interactions (Priest et al. 2014: 2). In a recent review of 30 years of ethnic-racial socialisation studies, Priest et al. (2014) found the majority of international research has focused on four themes and

differentiated them against majority and minority children (the authors' terms). For minority children, racial-ethnic socialisation focused on *cultural socialization and preparation of bias*. For majority children, the themes that emerged were on the *promotion of mistrust* and *egalitarianism* (Boykin and Toms 1985; Hughes et al, 2006). The review also identified an overwhelming majority of studies undertaken in the United States (where 86 of the 92 studies in the review were from the United States), primarily centred on racial relations between Black and White Americans. In Australia, the limited work on ethnic-racial socialisation in primary school settings is emergent (Walton et al. 2013b, 2014).

The ethnic-racial socialisation review (Priest et al. 2014) offered a range of recommendations including educators (and parents) needing to consider the explicit and implicit ethnic-racial socialisation messages they are giving to children of all ages, to all racial/ethnic backgrounds. The authors explicitly suggested that amongst majority children, further understanding of approaches that enable the skills and understanding to recognise whiteness and white privilege are required; where for minority children, the emphasis should be on the promotion of identity and belonging. They concluded with suggesting that messages of egalitarianism should not ignore or perpetuate racial/ethnic inequalities as well as continue to both proactively and reactively prepare minority children for experiences of bias and support them when such experiences do occur. Such recommendations permeate the literature of Indigenous Education where we are encouraged to ask, how do we enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to be engaged with a curriculum that mirrors the strengths about their cultural identity, as well as engage with the historical context that has created that fragmentation? (Battiste 1998) and how do we promote a strength-based approach to Indigenous cultures simultaneously raising awareness of historical social injustices and contemporary inequities as a result of settler colonisation and race, racism and whiteness?

As a key socialisation agent, schools and the education system contribute greatly to ethnic-racial socialisation of children and young people – not only relating to reconciliation and multicultural society – but also in terms of 'one's own cultural identity and sense of belonging' (Walton et al. 2014: 112). This occurs by imparting society's ideologies and ethos, values, goals, myths and narratives of the state to the next generation (Apple 1979; Bekerman and Zembylas 2012; Bourdieu 1973). Furthermore, school settings are critical in creating and re-creating the nation's 'collective' experiences, including collective grief and mourning (such as acknowledged on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day) or collective pride (such as through Harmony Day, and often Reconciliation Week), which are central to developing a group or

nation's identity (Bekerman and Zembylas 2012). Through a range of education methods including teacher's beliefs and values, pedagogical practices, the hidden and unhidden curricula, text books and ceremonies, schools become 'sites of intense cultural politics' (Bourdieu 1973, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Levinson et al. 1996). Thus, schools should be seen as 'racialised cultural landscapes; a space where relationships occur, understandings are shared and developed and power is expressed and deployed founded on race based assumptions' (Vass 2012: 178).

The Acquisition of Prejudice and Stereotypes

For much of the 20th century, understanding children's development and acquisition of prejudice and stereotypes has been central to social scientists (Bar-Tal and Avrahamzon 2016; Keenan 2018). As I have written elsewhere (Bar-Tal and Avrahamzon 2016), the categorising of race develops as young as 3 years of age, where children develop racial awareness and are capable of ascribing difference (see Aboud 1988; Dunham et al. 2013). With regards to ethnic groups, children are receptive to developing and redeveloping prejudiced attitudes from as young as 3–6 years of age (Aboud 1988; Aboud and Doyle 1996; Connolly 2012; Katz and Kofkin 1997). Social-cognitive theorists would argue that during these early years, the preschool child has an egocentric social perspective and preference to their own group. At around 8–10 years of age, cognitive maturation occurs and evidence starts to reveal a reduction in outgroup bias or ingroup favouritism (Hailey and Olson 2013; Raabe and Beelman 2011). It is because of this evidence, that the study of Everyday Reconciliation focused on 8–10 year olds.

Although there is limited longitudinal evidence, there is still extensive evidence revealing the continuity between children's political and ethnic-racial socialisation and how they inform an adult's beliefs and attitudes (Bandura 1986; Hess and Torney 2005). Social psychologists have established that early socialisation, with the acquisition of negative stereotypes and prejudice, has a lasting impact on the lives of society members in their adulthood. It thus plays a major role in the dynamics of the intergroup relations (Augoustinos and Rosewarne 2001; Devine 1989; Dovidio et al. 2001; Sears and Levy 2003). As such, the importance of understanding prejudice and stereotype acquisition is critical both for children and society now as well as for how children may interact with diversity in the future.

Reconciliation as an Intercultural Understanding School Strategy

Within the literature there are many names given to programs or processes that aim to increase respect and understanding of diversity, or presumably – its flipside – reduce prejudice and stereotypes. A recent international meta-analysis and systematic review of school based programs that aim to reduce prejudice or increase respect for diversity in 3–11 year olds between 1980 and 2017 (Keenan 2018) developed a taxonomy of intervention strategies. The taxonomy included: social learning approaches; cognitive development approaches; socio-emotional approaches; awareness raising approaches; and anti-bias approaches. The comprehensive study, based on 101 interventions and including 15,268 children globally, revealed that for ‘majority’ children programs that were based on social learning approaches (that is, there were positive social role models from minority groups and group contact on shared learning experiences); if the intervention was delivered by the teacher; and that the program was embedded in the curriculum, then the program was most effective. Keenan (2018) also determined that for minority children, both anti-bias and cognitive development approaches were causing harm. Thus, the findings of this study call for more nuanced understanding of approaches in schools and to question what works for whom and under which conditions. It was also notable that of all the 101 studies in the analysis, only 1 per cent was from Australia (n=1), highlighting the gap in evidence within Australia.

Throughout the thesis, I choose to use the term intercultural understanding alongside everyday reconciliation as opposed to other concepts, as it is the term that is used in the Australian Curriculum. The link between reconciliation and intercultural understanding is highlighted in the very text of education policies and curriculum, whereas reconciliation is achieved through the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. Such an approach would be classified as ‘awareness raising’ approaches in Keenan’s meta-analysis and systematic review as discussed above. Keenan (2018:309) notes the limitation of this approach that ‘mere exposure to other groups is not enough to reduce prejudice’.

Extending this, within critical reviews of ‘intercultural understanding approaches’, there appears to be two consistent themes about what the approach should include: firstly, the acquisition of knowledge about the ‘Other’, and secondly, critical engagement in reflexivity and understanding of the assumptions we make about culture, race, power and privilege – that is, the unveiling of ethnocentrism, whiteness, and ongoing colonialism. Thus, intercultural understanding is an ongoing learning process that includes the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge required for interacting with people from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural backgrounds through reflexivity (Walton et al. 2013a; Schick and St Denis 2005), not

just learning about the 'other'. Such an approach extends awareness raising approaches to also include socio-emotional approaches and anti-bias approaches. As suggested by Walton et al. (2013: 181-182):

[intercultural understanding] is not only about acquiring objective knowledge about other cultures: rather, it is located in the interactive and experiential spaces in which an understanding of self and one's own culture is developed in relation to an understanding of people from other cultures.

However, a strong evidence base both in Australia and abroad reveal that intercultural understanding 'accentuates rather than undermines existing social and political hierarchies' (Aikman 1997; Gorski 2008; Schick and St Denis 2005; Sensoy et al. 2010; Sleeter 1991; Walton et al. 2014, 2018; Watkins and Noble 2014).

Studies have identified the majority of approaches in Australian schools focus on celebratory cultural approaches (food, clothing, dance, art) in learning about the 'other' (Walton et al 2013a; Watkins and Noble 2014). As Gorski (2008: 519) argues 'we practice intercultural education so long as it does not disturb the existing socio-political order; so long as we can celebrate diversity, meanwhile excusing ourselves from the messy work of social reconstruction'. The risk of only focusing on the first approach to intercultural understanding maintains and perpetuates the hegemony, as suggested by Aikman (1997) in her reflections of intercultural understanding with the Harakmbut of the South East Peruvian Amazon (Peru), such approaches

maintain[s] the distribution of power and forms of control which perpetuate existing vertical hierarchical relations...Thus, this interculturality remains embedded in relations of internal colonialism (Aikman 1997: 469).

Decolonising Critical Race Theory

Another overarching lens that informed Everyday Reconciliation was Decolonising Critical Race Theory (CRT). In order to explain, I first focus on CRT. CRT exposes the ongoing creation and recreation of 'western' norms, and how they impact and lay privilege on the power of whiteness, its 'culture' and structures. The seminal work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (2006) extended CRT from its original application within the law and civil rights movement, to education. Many Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies scholars such as (Bodkin-

Andrews et al. 2017; Moodie 2018; St Denis 2011; Vass 2014a; Walter and Butler 2013) in Australia and abroad engage, critique and extend CRT to Indigenous Education. Extending CRT, Brayboy (2005) developed Tribal CRT which attempts to elevate the role ongoing colonisation, and not just racism, plays in society. However, Moodie (2018), a Gomeroi scholar, suggests that a new lens is required for engaging with CRT and Tribal CRT, and suggests Decolonising CRT as the proposed model.

Moodie's (2018) model focuses on seven tenants:

1. Acceptance of the logic of elimination (Indigenous subjects are not considered sovereign peoples and that colonisation is a structured process to justify the acquisition of territory);
2. Indigeneity can be used as a political tool for justice;
3. The focus on sovereignty and Indigenous futurity;
4. Engagement with the cultural interface (not through defining what Indigenous resistance should look like or what is Indigenous ways of knowing and being might be, rather, interrogating the complexities of power and resistance imposed on its positioning);
5. An understanding of relationality and collectivism;
6. Application of Indigenous methodologies; and,
7. Reparative activism (Moodie 2018: 38-40).

Moodie argues that CRT provides a 'set of tools' to 'interrogate existing and reinvented bases of discrimination' (including deficit discourses about Indigenous Australians) (2018: 42).

However, Moodie's concern is that it does not locate place and sovereignty as a central tenant and promotes a rethink of CRT to enable 'a centring of Indigenous difference and the disruption of the knowledge-power dialectic which perpetuates deficit discourses' (Moodie 2018: 43). Moodie's (2018) Decolonising CRT model seemed to be more reflective of the aim of the study of Everyday Reconciliation, both in its methodology as well as its theoretical lens than CRT.

Whiteness and critical whiteness studies in education

Integral to Decolonising CRT is the two-pronged concept of whiteness which has been mentioned throughout this chapter. Whiteness is the privileging of white epistemology and structures, as well as the culture of silencing and normalising this white culture in order to

maintain its privilege and power (Apflebaum 2010; Frankenberg 1993). As Moreton-Robinson (2004: 75) strongly attests 'whiteness is constitutive of the epistemology of the West; it is an invisible regime of power that secures hegemony through discourse and has material effects in everyday life'. Mills (1999) in his extension of the concept of the social contract into the realm of the racial contract, articulates whiteness as being:

Both globally and within particular nations, the white people, Europeans and their descendants, continue to benefit from the Racial Contract, which creates a world in their cultural image, political states differential favouring their interests, an economy structured around the racial exploitation of others, and a mortal psychology (not just in whites but sometimes in non-Whites also) skewed consciously or consciously toward privileging them, taking the status quo of differential racial entitlement as normatively legitimate, and not to be investigated further (Mills 1999: 40).

Embedded in the racial contract are socially and historically constructed racialised relations that are reflective of 19th century imperial thinking, in which Western Europeans adhered to feeling more superior than the 'other' through a 'cognitive imperialism' (Battiste and Henderson 2008 cited in Kidman et al. 2018). Being different to this 'superior' cultural group and its moral order was and is simply seen as 'deviance or deficit, and at times arcane' (Morris 1999: 163), where it became and continues to be 'natural' to view individuals and groups (and their structures and epistemology) not simply as different, but as 'less', and in some cases non-existent. This is demonstrated in the justification of settler-colonial societies in which 'settler denial that previous societies (or societies with systems of governance recognised by the imperial metropolis) were in existence prior to colonisation' (Kidman et al. 2018: 233). Kidman et al. (2018) extends the racial contract to a Settler Contract and apply it as a framework to explore historical and contemporary Indigenous education aims in Aotearoa New Zealand. The authors demonstrate that through the promotion of particular colonial narratives whilst silencing others, the Settler Contract is maintained within the education system.

Colonial storytelling as a form of whiteness

Thus, how whiteness manifests itself in everyday reconciliation within the education system, is through the imparting of values and beliefs in the children and young people to maintain this normalised white Australian national identity and white futurity. Central to this is how Indigenous peoples and cultures, and histories, are thus 'represented' against this 'norm'. As

noted by Fforde et al. (2013: 164) the majority of non-Indigenous Australian's 'sole point of reference and understanding' is from Eurocentric representations about Indigenous Australians, which do not necessarily reflect how Aboriginal people saw (and continue to see) themselves (Dodson 1994; Langton 1993). In *Finding Eliza*, Larissa Behrendt (2016), renowned Yuwaalaraay Aboriginal lawyer, academic and film maker develops the concept of 'colonial storytelling' of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Behrendt explores how First Nation Australians are represented through the exploration of multiple texts (historical and contemporary), including the different narratives of Eliza Fraser, a white woman who was shipwrecked on an island off the East coast of Australia in 1836 and spent time with local Aboriginal people, the Butchulla people. Using colonial narratives, Behrendt clearly demonstrates how both historically as well as in the contemporary, First Nations Australians and cultural practices are in the main presented with either a negative perception (violent, aggressive, disorderly, irresponsible, drunk), 'a threat to the peaceful and cohesive life in the city, a danger to the social fabric rather than making a contribution to it' (Behrendt 2016: 170) or as 'the noble savage'.

As Behrendt (2016: 166) states, the

...noble savage and his culture are untouched and untainted, a notion that is intertwined with naturalism, the idea that what is closest to nature is most pure....The noble savage is not tempted by the commodities and conveniences European society has to offer, rejecting all possessions in favour of a simple life, communing with nature and developing a higher consciousness...[He] is passive: he is unable according to the romanticised view of this narrative, to adapt to new surroundings and circumstances, and so will instead perish. This ignores the ways in which many Aboriginal people have transformed their cultural practices to resist and survive dispossession. And it criticises any attempt to modernise Indigenous culture (the way all other cultures modernise and evolve) as lacking in authenticity or highlighting how the Indigenous culture is becoming extinct.

Thus, just as the Indigenous child remains fixed and static, as discussed earlier by Nakata (2018), so too do Indigenous Australians and their cultures in general. As a result, 'any confrontational aspect of the Aboriginal presence is stripped away...' (Behrendt 2016: 167) but furthermore, there is little attention given to the 'successful – and rather uneventful – day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people who participate in a broad range of community activities' (Behrendt 2016: 169). Although one may suggest that the representations of Indigenous

Australians in 'romantic terms' is positive, extensive literature highlights its problematic approach as it continues to contain Indigenous agency to traditional stereotyped notions of authenticity (Behrendt 2016; Kinnane 2015; Paradies 2006). Langton (2011) is weary of this approach as Indigenous agency and authenticity is thus trapped in tradition – ignoring 'diversity, choice, complexity and vibrancy' (Langton 2011: 110).

Just as Stanner (1969) suggested the silence of historical narratives were an intended omission, colonial storytelling of the Indigene should also be understood as a purposefully created narrative about Indigenous Australians. As Alfred and Cornthassel (2005: 601) confirm,

[T]here is a danger in allowing colonisation to be the only story of Indigenous lives. It must be recognized that colonialism is a narrative in which the Settler's power is the fundamental reference and assumption, inherently limiting Indigenous freedom and imposing a view of the world that is but an outcome or perspective on that power.

As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, it is through the ongoing colonial storytelling in the classrooms and schools that the 'silent apartheid' is maintained.

It is important to note that there are increasing diverse narratives of Indigenous Australia within politics, the public domain, literature, the visual and performing arts, media (NITV), and on social media. Alongside these narratives, however, opposition remains, including a resurgence of colonial narratives, such as new statues of Captain Cook and the increasing numbers celebrating/commemorating ANZAC Day, as a form of promoting an Anglo-Australian national identity.

Additional Theories and Concepts

As I immersed myself in the field and continued to engage in the data through an ongoing inductive approach, the implicit and explicit messages that children were exposed to appeared to be reflective of the broader discourse surrounding reconciliation, Indigenous peoples and cultures and Australian history. This involved the silencing of race, racism and whiteness in the broader society that has also emerged in other fields, such as sport (Judd 2012, 2015), media (McCallum and Waller 2016), health (Fogarty et al. 2018). The following offers a brief background to the key theories and concepts, that I engage with and further develop throughout the thesis.

Habitus, fields and affect

Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1984) offered a theoretical framework to understand the interplay between the structures of society and how they are then interpreted and reproduced by individuals, policies and institutions, and at times resisted. Bourdieu (1984) proposed that one's behaviour and attitudes are internalised by the socio-cultural-historical context of the wider world they live (the social space or field) and how individuals then shape their world. These values, perspectives and worldviews are unconsciously and consciously played out by policy makers and school administrators, executives and teachers, as well as children, in 'fields' which reproduce a socially constructed world based on unconscious assumptions, and are then maintained through the ongoing reproduction of the habitus in discursive, material and affective assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). As Maggie Walter (2010: 46), a Palawa sociologist, explains of this process, by 'encapsulating our deep social and cultural conditioning our habitus reproduces and legitimates our values, perspectives and worldviews'.

Race as capital

Within this interactive process, there are multiple systems of 'capital' – social capital, cultural, economic capital. However, further to this there is a growing body of literature that demonstrates and argues for race to be considered as capital.⁵ Empirical evidence in a range of sectors, including the criminal, legal and education sectors, have demonstrated that despite an acceptance that race is not biological, the social construct of race continues to operate through including and excluding particular norms, predominantly created and maintained by the dominant Anglo-Western-white 'race'. As Walter (2010: 47) explains, 'societally produced and reproduced race is still a potent explanatory of why one group, distinguished by skin colour, culture, or place of origin, differ in life chances to others'. As such, I am drawn to the definition that racism, then, is an avoidable and unfair phenomena that produces disparities in resources, opportunities or benefits among racial or ethnic groups (as well as cultural and religious groups) (Berman and Paradies 2010; Pager and Shepherd 2008). However, I incorporate how race, racism and racialisation occurs relationally through the interaction of bodies, spaces, and events producing 'assemblages of material, discursive and affective forces,

⁵ Similarly, feminist scholars have also argued for gender and sexuality to be considered as capital, and not only as secondary to social capital.

intensities and encounters' that are irreducible to a timeless essence (Mills 2014; Yancy 2014; Zembylas 2018).

As noted already schools are racialised spaces. The way in which race then acts as a form of capital in schools is evident in the increasing empirical evidence of children's experience of racism within schools. Mansouri and Jenkins (2010) demonstrated that for children, the school itself is the most common place for children to experience racism and racial discrimination. In a 2009 survey of 698 secondary students from four Australian states, researchers found 70 per cent of those from non-Anglo Australian backgrounds reported experiences of racism during their lifetime, with 67 per cent of these experiences occurring in school (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010). The Priest et al. (2014) study in Victorian schools revealed that one in five children experience racism daily and primary school children are 26 per cent more likely to experience racism than high school students. Furthermore, it is evident that Indigenous Australian children and young people experience greater bullying and racial discrimination than any other stigmatised ethnic-racial group in Australia (Priest et al. 2016).

There are both quantitative and qualitative studies exploring the experience and to some extent, prevalence of racism. Using the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children, Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2017) demonstrated that over three waves of data collection the child, the primary carer or the family reported at least one form of racism. The study also revealed that racism adversely influenced the majority of health and mental health outcomes for the Primary Carer (noting that there was some positive relation to reported experiences of racism and increase in knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, hugging and listening to the study child). Such a study demonstrates the importance of taking into account experiences of vicarious racism, which can have negative association on outcomes such as childhood illness (Priest et al. 2012), socio-emotional wellbeing (Becares et al. 2015), and mental health outcomes (Benner and Wang 2016). Furthermore, beyond witnessing familial experiences of racism and/or racial discrimination, the simple awareness of racism and/or racial discrimination towards a child or young person's own ethnic-racial group, including systemic or institutionalised racism has also been found to be a key influencing factor in detrimental education outcomes for ethnic-racially stigmatised groups (Heard-Garris et al. 2018).

In terms of the phenomenon of race acting as capital, a rapidly increasing number of empirical studies have demonstrated how racism influences health and education outcomes (Bodkin-Andrews, O'Rourke et al. 2010; Bodkin-Andrews, Dillon et al. 2010; Burchinal et al. 2011; Chavoux et al. 2003; Dandy et al. 2015; Hughes et al. 2009; Rivas-Drake et al. 2014; Williams et

al. 2016). Consistent with international studies on racism and child health, Indigenous Australian children and young people's experiences of racism and racial discrimination has been associated with anxiety, depression, suicide risk/thoughts, overall mental health, drinking to excess, frequent marijuana use, low self-esteem, physical illnesses, general health (Priest et al. 2011, 2013; Zubrick et al. 2005). Bodkin-Andrews, O'Rourke et al. (2010) and Bodkin-Andrews, Dillon et al. (2010) found that Indigenous high school students' experiences of racism and racial discrimination had direct association with education outcomes, including a 5–8 per cent disadvantage in standardised spelling and mathematics tests; teachers' grades across English, Maths and Science; and increased patterns of academic disengagement.

Studies have also determined that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults' experiences of racism are multi-faceted (overt, old-fashioned forms and new, subtle forms of racism) and multi-levelled (macro, structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal). For example, in an interview based study, Mellor (2003) determined that Aboriginal and Torres Islander people experience racism at multiple levels – including name calling, avoidance at an interpersonal level, denial of access to services at a structural level, and selective views of history at a macro level. She also revealed that the study participants experienced not only unconscious, newer, subtle forms of racism but also frequent old-fashioned overt racism. Such findings have been supported by other qualitative studies (Bodkin-Andrews and Craven 2013). However, embedded within the literature of racism – experience, prevalence and outcomes – is a predominance to position racism as 'individualised perceptions and direct interpersonal interactions' (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2014). Such an approach fails to acknowledge how the very construct of racism by individuals serves to silence diverse experiences of racism. For example, in an Australian study (Beyond Blue 2014), one-third of non-Indigenous 25–44 year olds surveyed (n=993) suggested that Aboriginal people should be more like other Australians, or that physically moving away from an Aboriginal person is not racist or discriminatory. The evidence of experiences of racism, coupled with critiques of the study of racism not only calls for new attention to the construct of racism but also in understanding how it manifests and is experienced epistemically, institutionally and structurally.

Affective capital

In addition to race being 'capital', 'affect' is also emerging in the literature as a form of capital, given its influence in how spaces or fields become embodied and inhabited particularly by

race, racism and whiteness (Ahmed 2014; Walton 2018; Zembylas 2007). Ahmed's (2004) concept of 'affective economies' is fitting to everyday reconciliation, as affect connects 'bodily space to social space, the psychological to the collective, bonding communities within a shared feeling world, and creating boundaries and surfaces as they demarcate self and other through particular emotional valences' (Steyn, 2015: p5). Ahmed (2014) calls for a rethink in how we consider affect, not only what emotions are, rather what they do within a field. As Zembylas (2007: 457-8) explains, 'emotional capital may be understood as involving emotional practices that are inextricably linked to the ways individuals and groups form their habitus and perceive themselves and others'.

Understanding what everyday reconciliation 'does' is important in shifting from the individual to the collective and to the structural (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015; Zembylas 2018). As Tolia and Crang (cited in Zembylas 2018: 89) explain, affect 'captures the complex ways in which flows of affect, material elements and discourses coalesce to form social phenomena that are beyond individual subjective responses, feelings and sensibilities'. Thus, engaging with affect enables greater understanding of how everyday reconciliation is 'experienced, expressed and circulated within or across fields' (Zembylas 2007: 458). Particular emotions are 'capitalised', creating an affective economy within the field to either invoke or prevent a response (Ahmed 2014; Zembylas 2007) – such as Reconciliation Day invoking emotions of joy, happiness and pride (Preamble), or excluding teaching staff who do not accept the view of 'invasion' as opposed to 'colonisation' (Chapter 5).

In this context, the field of 'everyday reconciliation' is not only the two schools (and the broader education system) but a community that is committed to some form of 'reconciliation' (however the term was defined by the individual). According to Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.), there are three key 'orthodoxies' within this current reconciliation field:

- There are two kinds of people in Australia – Indigenous and non-Indigenous (with debates surrounding Indigeneity, however less so for diversity within non-Indigenous);
- The relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous is a problem of 'nationhood' (the problem itself and solutions are debated);
- Giving this attention includes 'affirming the Indigenous as valued' (Rowse and Pertierra n.d.).

As will be demonstrated throughout the thesis, the affective economies within this field predominantly supports the celebration of Indigenous culture(s) and to some limited extent

‘colonial history’, whilst silencing sovereignty, race, racism and whiteness. Calderon (2014) describes this as ‘Settler Grammars’, which can be understood as ‘a double movement of recognition and dismissal; a process which strives to account for the contemporary presence of the indigene, whilst maintaining an intellectual and temporal distance from the lived realities of Indigenous peoples’ (Moodie and Patrick 2017: 440).

Reading Everyday Reconciliation

In concluding this chapter, it is important to clarify upfront that throughout the thesis I use both the terms ‘Indigenous’ and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ peoples and cultures. I recognise that these terms do not reflect the diversity of participants in the study, nor the diversity within Australia. I also use the term ‘Indigenous’ interchangeably with ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ for ease in readability. However, I acknowledge that both terms are colonial labels.

As mentioned earlier, the structure of this thesis is divided into three distinct parts. In ‘Part One – The Study of Everyday Reconciliation’, I focus on the processes of studying everyday reconciliation. The preamble locates the research on Country and this chapter has focused on locating the study politically and historically as well as providing the literature base and theoretical lenses for the study. In the following chapter, I share my standpoints and positions, followed by the methodology and methods of studying and writing about everyday reconciliation in Chapter 3. In ‘Part 2: Celebrating Reconciliation, Silencing Racism’, I concentrate on the multilayered implicit and explicit messages children were exposed to at two schools using a conceptual framework that explores the symbols, the beliefs and values and the assumptions of reconciliation within the two schools. In the final section of the thesis, ‘Part 3 Silencing Reconciliation, Celebrating Racism’, I focus on children’s perspectives, interpretations and embodiment of reconciliation. Both Part 2 and Part 3 begin with their own introduction, offering further detail of the narrative that emerges in each chapter rather than provide such detail here.

I now want to share a little bit about who I am because it is important for this research and to be clear about my standpoints and my biases.

Chapter 2: I wish to acknowledge – my standpoints and biases

I wish to acknowledge that we are meeting today as well as acknowledge that the research I will share occurred on Ngunnawal Country. I wish to acknowledge the Custodians of this Country, and pay my respect to their Elders past, present and future. This country continues to be their Country, never ceded, and I stand in solidarity listening and learning how to live on and with this Country. I am humbled by the generosity of the custodians toward me being on their Country as well as those who live on this Country from other Countries.

I also wish to acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators that I worked with and contributed to this research. At primary school, growing up on Dharawal Country, I was privileged to have possibly the first Aboriginal Principal in Australia, Uncle Vic Chapman, and to learn about his stories of courage of growing up Yuwaalaraay in Western New South Wales during the 1930s through till now. Through him, I was enveloped by stories of Thirroul on Dharawal Country – where the mountain meets the sea. As an advisor in my PhD, I have been privileged to still be taught by him. I also wish to acknowledge Ginibi Robinson and Scott Gorringer, who invited me to present this workshop as part of their leadership and intercultural understanding process with the Directorate. There were many other educators that I learnt from, and I use the word educator broadly, not by a western definition, rather those who shared their knowledge so openly with me; the children, parents, teachers, my panel members who come from diverse Countries and cultural heritage, clans and language groups - Yuraalawaay, Bundjalung, Allyawarre, Kalkadoon, Dharawal, as well as those who don't know their Country due to dispossession and removal. As well as all the other participants in the research from other diverse cultures and ethnicities within Australia and abroad.

I wish to acknowledge that I am part of everyday organisational cultures and a broader society that privileges me, just by virtue of being non-Indigenous. For the past few years I have listened to stories and seen contemporary

experiences of colonisation, invasion, racism in all its forms towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults as well as other non-Anglo Australian children living on this Country, and am inspired by different responses of resistance, and the drive to work together to dismantle the structures that maintain and perpetuate this conscious and unconscious power and privilege. I, like the teachers in this study, have much to learn and I continue my commitment to learn from the mistakes I make along this journey, despite the discomfort they invoke. My engagement in this thesis topic, has been one way for me to reflect on my conscious and unconscious contribution to everyday reconciliation.

I now want to share a little bit about who I am because it is important for this workshop, this research and for you to understand my positions, my standpoints and my biases.

27 November 2017

This Acknowledgement of Country was delivered late November 2017 at the beginning of a one-hour workshop I gave at the ACT Education Directorate. The workshop was part of a broader three-day intercultural leadership program developed for all Principals and senior executives that had been delivered over a six-week period. I had been invited by Ginibi Robinson and Scott Gorringer, two of my advisors to be part of the process, for they had a vision that sharing the research that we had been discussing for the past few years, would enable conversation and challenge some of the Principals' assumptions about how their schools were engaged in reconciliation. As I was bringing together the narrative and slides, I knew that in order to gain trust amongst these educators and policy makers, I needed to let them know who I was and what I was bringing to the table and I spent time agonising over how I would introduce myself. I face this now, as I introduce myself into this thesis. How do I balance the inclusion of my voice when I am wanting to privilege the participants? How do I offer my own story in a way that is not a self-indulgent reflection on who I think I am, what my interest is in this space and what is my approach? And how do I even have the skills to critically reflect on the normalisation of knowledge creation and power that gives me privilege by virtue of not being Indigenous? It is through this chapter that I offer my narrative in this research.

On reflexivity

The process of reflexivity is a critical process for all researchers in order to offer transparency and awareness of their subjective role in the research (Berger 2017; Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2016; Martin 2008). As Moreton-Robinson (2013: 335) states, 'Our understanding of reality and its meaningfulness exists because of our ability as subjects to assign meaning that has been produced historically and socio-culturally'. Although some use the term interchangeability with critical reflection or reflectivity, it is a process of critical self-evaluation of the researcher's own worldview, gender, culture, age and socio-economic status impacts on all aspects of the research. Throughout my PhD, different positions have affected this research in various ways (Berger 2017): how I constructed the research, access to the Education Directorate, schools, teachers and classrooms, the trust children placed in me to share their stories and views, the questions I chose to ask and re-ask differently, the interpretations of the data, and how I have chosen to disseminate the findings.

Reflexivity puts the onus on the researcher to understand which knowledge is privileged and why others are excluded (Nakata 2007a: 187). As Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012: 178) says:

Researchers have the power to distort knowledge to make invisible, to overlook, to exaggerate and to draw conclusions, based not on factual data, but on assumptions hidden value judgements and often downright misunderstandings. They have the potential to extend knowledge or perpetuate ignorance.

In an attempt to extend knowledge rather than perpetuate ignorance, we are required to understand the creation of knowledge within academia, research and our world more broadly (Russel-Mundine 2012). From the early days of my PhD I immersed myself in learning about Indigenous and decolonising research paradigms within the academy: *Decolonising Methodologies* (Linda Tuhiwai Smith 2012), *Disciplining the Savages: Savaging the Disciplines* (Martin Nakata 2007a), and Lester-Irabinna Rigney's papers on Indigenist Research Methodologies (1999, 2006). I extended into the literature of CRT, whiteness, colourblindness, and anti-racism (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Kowal 2015; Mills 1999; Moreton-Robinson 2003; Pollock 2008; Spanierman, Cabrera and Howard-Wagner 2015). As part of this deep learning, I sought to understand concepts of power and knowledge through Foucault (1988) and the relational transaction of society, culture and individuals such as Bourdieu's concept of habitus and capital (1984). This was useful for both understanding Indigenous Studies and Social Studies of Childhood, where assumptions and unconscious biases about agency, vulnerability and

participation are driven by power and privilege of particular patriarchal, Western, adult-centred knowledges systems and ways of seeing the world. Finally, given my field was in education, I was particularly drawn to critical pedagogy of the oppressed such as Paulo Freire's work (1997, 2000), Levinson, Foley and Holland's work (1996) and Michael Apple's approaches in understanding how education could have the capacity to change the power structures of society (2012).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, with regards to Indigenous Studies research, Rigney (2006) calls for Indigenist researchers to go beyond dichotomies of white/black and Nakata (2007b, 2011) proposes a way to increase understanding of different worldviews and how they can contribute to the greater system through his articulation of the 'cultural interface' (2007b, 2011). Such an interface assumes complexities that exist and requires the working through of those complexities. My PhD journey and thesis of *Everyday Reconciliation* required me to actively engage with the complexities of multiple worldviews and power structures within my research as well as with my own role in everyday reconciliation. As Martin (2008: ix) explains:

The implications and challenges for western research and researchers in this interface where conceptual, cultural and historical spaces interface or come alongside each other based on new relationships to knowledge, to research and to self.

Thus, as my study of *Everyday Reconciliation* became to be a critique of good intent in the education system under the banner of reconciliation, it has also become an ongoing critique of my own 'good intent' as a non-Indigenous researcher. As I attempted to engage in questions of decolonisation, I was required to also engage with such a process, in my writing, in my understanding and in my own engagement in the topic. However, as noted by Yap (2017), there is very little literature available that engages with this interface, rather it is either from the standpoint of Indigenous scholar or non-Indigenous scholar. In Yap's PhD '*In pursuit of culturally relevant indicators of Indigenous wellbeing*' (2017) where extensive fieldwork was undertaken on Yaruwu Country, she noted that

On the one hand, Indigenous standpoint is presented as part of the research methodology noting 'insider' insights and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and seeing (Tuihawai-Smith 1999; Martin 2003; Moreton-Robinson 2013). On the other hand, non-indigenous researchers working with and for indigenous communities write from a non-indigenous Western lens noting the historical race relations and being part of the dominant white society (Glynn 2008; Came 2013). I am neither (Yap 2017: 82).

Although to some extent I may relate to Yap's comments of also being neither, I am conscious of the critical challenge this literature poses in homogenising both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars which creates ongoing binaries rather than acknowledging more nuanced multi-identities, multi-experiences and multi-truths (Gorringe et al. 2011; Paradies 2006) that exist in both 'groups'.

Dorothy Smith's (1987; 1999) approach to standpoint as both theory and method to suggest that one can position themselves as understanding the patriarchal (and colonised, racialised, adult-centred) structures rather than just be constrained within fixed categories of gender, class, or race has been useful as a starting point to reflect on my standpoint. Smith (2005: 10) argues that 'the embodied knower begins with her experience', and as summarised by Moreton-Robinson (2013: 335), 'it accepts that political interests and moral values are part of knowledge production and they shape our research; as such all researchers' beliefs are inextricably a constitutive part of their standpoints'.

Using Dorothy Smith's (2005) advice, I must begin with my experience as the point of entry to my standpoint. My standpoint begins with my commitment to understanding and challenging racism, stereotypes and prejudice as well as my position that children are beings with agency contributing to society not just in the future but in the now. This began in my own childhood where I had parents who interwove their joint professional experiences and personal commitment and passions of predominantly working with and on behalf of children within multicultural and Indigenous communities as paediatrician, social worker, and early childhood educator. I also was privileged to attend schools that supported and encouraged my civic and societal engagement through memberships on committees (student representative councils), and actively protesting for the actioning of human rights (through Amnesty International). This passion of working with children and advocating on behalf of children and commitment to engaging with Indigenous rights and sovereignty followed me into young adulthood where I volunteered as a youth leader with democratic education, working with primary school children to support civic engagement; and into my professional life working predominantly in children's policy and social policy and program implementation, with a strong focus in Indigenous Affairs.

I deliver my narrative in this preamble through Acknowledgement of Countries that I have delivered throughout my PhD. Before I take you through a range of Acknowledgements of Country, I offer my understanding of the concept of Country and then the protocol of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.

Country

In 'Sensational Pedagogies', Harrison et al. (2017) provide a range of different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of the concept of Country (Bawaka Country et al. 2013; Fredericks 2013; Whitehouse et al. 2014). In doing so they expand a limited notion of Country being a geographical term 'to the way humans and other living creatures, the land, the sky and the waters are connected physically, spiritually, and culturally' (Harrison et al. 2017: 2). The Whitehouse et al. (2014) definition is:

Country does not mean environment or land, and is better understood as a vital interconnected web of social, ecological and spiritual relationships; it epitomises the way of existing in the viewing of the world that might be termed the 'relational ontology' of Indigenous Australians (p.58, cited in Harrison et al. 2017).

In Fredericks' paper 'We don't leave our identities at the city limits', she suggests that

Country means a place of origin in spiritual, cultural and literal terms. It refers to a specific clan, tribal group or nation of Aboriginal people and encompasses all the knowledge, cultural norms, values, stories and resources within that particular area – that particular Indigenous place (Fredericks 2013: 6).

I attempt to understand the concept of Country through my own evolving lens of seeing, doing and being – that of being culturally Jewish, as well as someone who actively attempts to listen, see, accept and understand different ways of seeing, doing and being even though I am aware that I may be limited in my understanding. I have had a strong connection to Israel ever since I can remember, which was always an enigma to me. On finishing high school I travelled to Israel to volunteer on a Kibbutz, and felt more at 'home' to a geographical place than ever before. However, over the coming years, my connection to Israel was one of tension and ambiguity as I travelled with my Israeli partner between Australia and Israel – I believed in the potential for Israel to be for Jewish people due to the historical experiences of persecution and anti-Semitism, at the same time as supporting the realisation of a Palestinian State. I passionately disagreed with the nationalism being delivered through *Sesame Street*, in the preschools that I worked in, in the songs we sang, and questioned how such an intractable conflict would end and relations shift between people with these blind (or not so unconscious) approaches to nationalism, national identity, and othering. I undertook a year of my undergraduate degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in an attempt to unpack and face some of the paradoxes of a 'Jewish democratic state', studying middle-East politics and

anthropology. I lived with Arab Israelis in my college and volunteered with the organisation 'Democratic Education', developing community based bi-education programs with Arab Israelis and Jewish Israelis.

During these years, I also discovered the Israeli desert. For me, the Israeli desert is a vast space where time and space are suspended. There is a silence and yet a distant echoing of movement and voices. The night sky is all-encompassing, not being able to work out where the sky ends and the land begins. Walking onto the desert I feel like a visitor, and a tiny speck and my heart beats differently, slower and louder. I am connected to both my parents' stories here, linked to a long past that brings it into the now. And I can hear and see the playing out of stories that I grew up with, like the story of Ruth, where the concept of *Hesed* (loving kindness) towards all people regardless of gender, age, nationality and culture provides the essence of what it is to be Jewish. I often wonder if my experience of the Israeli desert is similar to that of the concept of Country? Possibly, and possibly not and I don't propose that it is. I also am aware of a critical difference in relation to the concepts of relationality and country (Martin 2003). However, my reflections offer an attempted glimpse of the possibility of the feelings, the emotions, the connections, the responsibilities, the stories related to the concept of Country. In a way it responds to the call by Harrison et al. (2017: 4) to 'encompass emotions, listening, seeing and feeling, whilst arguing that a greater focus on affective learning will help us listen to Country'.

My commitment to engaging with Country throughout this research is driven by the notion of reciprocity to Country, to the custodians and Elders, as well as to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, parents, educators who were located and connected to the Country on which I undertook my research (Martin 2003; Nakata 2007a, 2011 ; Rigney 1999, 2006) – that of Ngunnawal Country. I use the name 'Ngunnawal' in response to advice I have received from the United Ngunnawal Elders Group who advise that the custodians of this Country are the Ngunnawal people, who consist of neighbouring families including Namadg, Wiradjuri, Wlagalu, Ngarigo, Gyundugurra and Nambri. I am aware that not all local custodians agree with the spelling, pronunciation, as well as whether there are other custodians to this Country. I do not wish any disrespect by only using the term Ngunnawal

and respect the diversities within the lived experiences of the Ngunnawal and neighbouring families, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living on Ngunnawal Country.⁶

The preamble of this thesis located my research on this Country, and by sharing some of my everyday experiences I attempted to be aware of the ‘connectedness and relatedness of the tangible and non-tangible and which become together in a mutually caring and multidirectional manner to create and nurture a homeland’ (Bawaka Country et al. 2013: 186; cited in Harrison et al. 2017). I also learnt about other Countries through those connected to this research – including Mithaka, Yuraalawaay, Bundjalung. I also acknowledge there were participants in the study who were not aware of their Country most likely due to past policies that forcibly removed their family members from Country and honour their experience. As explained by Fredericks (2013), connection to Country exists whether people live on their Country or not. My learning about and through Country, and especially Ngunnawal Country is still in its infancy and I continue to listen and interact with custodians who have been very generous with me in sharing their stories, including Aunty Matilda House who delivered a Welcome to Country to open my final PhD seminar.

Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country

Despite the rise of Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country ceremonies at official and societal events including Government launches of programs, football matches, Ed Sheeran concerts and at school assemblies they are protocols that are deeply embedded in traditional customs and of many (not necessarily all) Indigenous nations throughout Australia (Behrendt 2012; Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2016), as well as First Nations internationally. I have participated in many different Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgements of Country. They have included dances, songs, storytelling, smoking ceremonies, silences, narratives of experiences of past and contemporary experiences, discussions about relations, delivered in English, in Ngunawal and other Aboriginal languages.

As Martin (2016: 2) suggests of Welcome to Country ceremonies:

The ceremony should not only be used as a preamble in the form of a quaint set of words to be forgotten as soon as they are spoken. The Welcome is indeed the opening

⁶ However, as noted in Footnote 2, when I describe Ngunawal language, I use the spelling used by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) which is currently engaged in a project to revitalise Ngunawal language.

comments that then serve to orient everyone present and to raise the level of their attention to the important features of the Country where they have gathered...It is also to advise them how certain aspects of the Country can influence the proceedings and how people can ensure their own safety and the safety of others as they work together in that Country.

One of the most detailed explanations of the protocol of Welcome to Country is in Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews, Aunty Frances Bodkin, Uncle Gavin Andrews and Alison Whittaker's (2016) paper 'Mudjil'dya'djurali' (How the white waratah became red), D'harawal storytelling and Welcome to Country 'controversies'. Throughout the paper, the authors interweave a D'harawal story to provide evidence of the longstanding protocol of delivering Welcome to Country. They note that understanding the lessons and meanings in the story 'requires a much deeper reciprocal interaction between the story, the storyteller, the story-listener, and Country for the story itself over time' (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2016: 481), yet despite this are able to demonstrate the complexity and long-held tradition of Welcome to Country protocols as being embedded in the lives of the D'harawal people.

One of the purposes of the above-mentioned article has been to critique and challenge both academic and media commentary on the protocols, which in the main reduces the protocol as being 'racist' (Akerman 2010; Bolt 2012) or questioning its authenticity (Everett 2009; Kowal 2015; Windshuttle 2012). Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2016) are careful to acknowledge that some performances of Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Countries are 'out of place tokenism' (2016: 487; Fredericks 2013). However, what Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2016) finds concerning is the 'lack of any meaningful (or even willing) engagement with the meaning and history of either practice' and furthermore the potential for such misinformation to lead to the abolishment as a practice altogether (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2016: 487). Bodkin-Andrews and his collaborators (2016) liken the media and at times academic rhetoric about the protocols as silencing 'diverse Indigenous Australians customs, practices, and knowledges' (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2016: 487) and as such declare the commentary are acts of colonial storytelling (Behrendt 2016), white pathology (Moreton-Robinson 2009), epistemological racism (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016), and colourblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2014) all of which I discuss in detail throughout this thesis.

Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2016: 492) invite non-Indigenous Australians to realise:

that they are a necessary participant and part of the ceremony, for they are being welcomed and only need to listen...deeply. The deep listening mandates that the investments and privileges of whiteness defer to the history and connections long held by Indigenous Australians to place and Country. Such listening will facilitate the overcoming of non-Indigenous silences and erasures of Indigenous knowledges. Such listening shifts non-Indigenous investment in history and culture from a right to be Welcomed (with all the Indigenous cultural labour that comes with it), to a more coherent understanding of what underpins the practice of Welcome to Country. It should be real listening, and hearing. Rather than risking the survival of the ceremonies, or subjugating the ceremonies even further to pander to the hidden insecurities, and not-so-hidden narcissism, associated with white pathology, why not, in the words of Behrendt (2016) consider a 'humanitarian approach that respects Indigenous perspectives and knowledge [which] could lead to an Australia where all Australians have an investment into Indigenous history and culture...that celebrates diverse perspectives and experiences' (p. 201)?'

With due respect, I offer six different Acknowledgements of Country that I have delivered during the past four years to share my own journey in everyday reconciliation, as well as highlight some of the complexities of studying Everyday Reconciliation.

My journey through Acknowledgements of Country

Beyond protocols

*I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet
and pay my respects to Elders past, present and future.*

Racism Symposium, ANU, Ngunawal Country, May 2015

At the end of 2013 I was awarded a Sir Roland Wilson (SRW) Scholarship to undertake a PhD at the ANU. The scholarship was available to managers in the Australian Public Service (APS) who offered a topic of 'enduring public policy interest', had worked for the APS for over three years and met academic requirements. I had been working for the Department of Families, Housing, Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and its previous iterations for over 12 years, predominantly in community development roles and program implementation roles in the

child and family sector in regional New South Wales. The communities I worked with were often culturally diverse, yet racially divided – marked by interpersonal and structural assumptions, behaviours, and attitudes particularly about Aboriginal peoples. However, this racialised divide was silenced and yet permeated how issues of social and economic disadvantage were problematised within a cultural deficit model. This was all taking place with an increasing focus in celebrating diversity (such as Harmony Days) and Aboriginal peoples and cultures in the office and outside. I started to attempt to articulate these paradoxical observations – that on the one hand we celebrate diversity yet at the same time we don't interrogate the interpersonal, institutional or structures of racism in policy and the community – with senior Aboriginal and non-Indigenous staff, and was encouraged to apply for the scholarship.

One of the requirements under the SRW scholarship was to maintain and build connections between the APS and ANU. During my first year of the PhD I was involved in organising a forum for policy makers and researchers in the field of racism and wellbeing in the Australian context. This was my first workshop straddling the freedom of a PhD scholar with the growing containment of a public servant. In preparation for the workshop, I had spoken with key Aboriginal staff at ANU, and had organised a Welcome to Country to be delivered by Auntie Agnes Shea, a Ngunnawal custodian, to start the two-day workshop. I took seriously Auntie Agnes' offer during her Welcome to Country of listening and using Ngunnawal Country as a meeting place to discuss ideas. In response I started to re-write out my own Acknowledgement of Country to express gratitude and a commitment to listen. However, by the time it was my turn to present, I was so nervous about my presentation and feared that if I deterred from Government protocols of Acknowledgement of Country I would be engaged in a conflict of interest. And so I delivered a very short, generalised Acknowledgement, which in fact didn't even acknowledge Country, rather the Traditional Owners, which I have later come to realise for some is not necessarily an accurate term in describing the role custodians have to Country.

As my immersion into academic life increased, so too did my courage to publicly present my positionality as a way to focus on decolonising approaches, rather than only engage in Indigenous protocols (within institutional containment). I also came to understand that the silencing of privilege was just as political as not acknowledging this privilege.

Unveiling privilege and non-whiteness

I wish to acknowledge that we are on Ngunnawal, Ngunawal, Ngambri Country and pay my respects to Elders past present and future. I also wish to acknowledge that I am first generation Australian on my maternal side; my mother and her parents were born in Singapore after their families fled from anti-Semitic Iraq in the late 1800s. And on my paternal side I am fourth generation Australian and then from Eastern Europe.

National Centre of Indigenous Studies HDR Colloquium, ANU, November 2016

There were times that I explicitly chose to position myself as being non-white as opposed to being non-Indigenous. On the one hand, there may be some trace of Kowal's (2015) suggestions that such an approach is a rejection of being associated with a white nation or the fear of being stigmatised due to being 'white' or 'non-Indigenous'. However, there is another side to this narrative. Growing up I was always acutely aware of my mother's migrant story which began with my great-grandparents escaping anti-Semitism in Baghdad, Iraq, through to Singapore and Malaysia for two generations, and then onto Australia in the 1970s⁷. As a 14 year old my mother's move from Singapore to the Eastern suburbs of Sydney was marked with racism, even within the Jewish community, which during the 1960 and 70s was predominantly from Eastern European descent, known as Ashkenazi Jews in contrast to the middle-Eastern Jewish community known as Sephardi Jews.

During my own childhood in Thirroul in New South Wales, a very Anglo-Australian community, my mother's dark skin and big curly black hair and our cultural difference to the predominant Anglo-Australian, beach culture families was openly discussed. A strong cultural identity was promoted in the home and in both my primary and high schools. However, it wasn't all rose-coloured diversity and there were glimpses of a less than embracing society within and outside the school gates. Such as when my older sister was called a 'fucking Jew' in primary school, following which our Principal, Uncle Vic Chapman addressed the entire school about racism. Growing up I enjoyed being asked 'Where do you come from' or in response to me saying I am Australian, 'You know what I mean, where do you really come from? Lebanon, Italy, Spain, Iraq?'; however, my increased awareness of the normalisation of

⁷ My mother's family was able to migrate to Australia in 1965 as they were considered 'Other' on their Singaporean passport, enabling them to be recognised as British subjects. If they had not been in this 'category' they would not have been able to migrate to Australia at the time due to the White Australia Policy.

western cultures and that I am on the periphery doesn't always render the same positive feelings. I see this tension in my own children who continue to grapple with the same question and swing from the pride in being different with the awareness of being external to a perceived norm, a generation later.

Early on, in the field, being non-white was explicitly reminded to me in a focus group by one of the Anglo-Australian teachers as he filled out the demographic survey who looking up at me noted that I wouldn't have the same problem as him trying to work out what my culture is – 'Where are you from again?' – to which the two non-Anglo teachers looked at me, raised their eyebrows and smiled seemingly with a knowing glance – a micro-affirmation of not being 'white' amongst non-white peers. This all occurred whilst the three other Anglo-Australian teachers also shared their difficulties in determining their culture with him. In another experience, one of the teachers, who had migrated to Australia from South-East Asia less than 10 years ago, said to me on our first meeting, 'Oh I thought you were going to be Australian' to which I responded that I am, and in response was told 'You know what I mean. The Aussie Aussie one, with the blond hair that goes to the beach'. Only a few weeks later, this was countered by one of the boys in her class (who expressed his culture as being Indian), when he suggested that I was Aussie, which according to him was that I had a British background and was sporty, neither of which are true. These encounters, plus many more I had throughout this PhD, including being told – 'I just realised you aren't one of us' by an Indigenous staff member at ANU, as well as an Aboriginal colleague saying 'I don't view you as one of them' (referring to non-Indigenous researchers) highlight the vast and varied assumptions we can all make about one's cultural identity and ethnicity and the current complexities of engaging in Indigenous Studies.

For me, my predominantly non-white Jewish culture, heritage and ethnicity forms a significant part of who I am. This coupled with the assumptions people make, and experiences that I and my family members have had in relation to this identity has no doubt informed my strong interest and commitment in studying the acquisition and prevention of prejudice, stereotypes and racism and deep commitment to social justice. On the same day I was delivering the workshop to the ACT Education Directorate in 2017, I arrived home to face a confused Edin, who had returned from a two day interschool art camp in Canberra. He relayed to me that a 13 year old boy, on hearing that Edin was Jewish, told him that 'They should have tried harder to kill all the Jews back in World War II'. I began to navigate Edin's questions, confusions, interpretations of not only the comment but his questioning of why the teachers

didn't say anything to him about what had been said, and focused on the boy who was sent home from the art camp. I also couldn't understand why I hadn't been notified and I contacted the teacher of the camp the following day. It became quickly obvious that she held a strong assumption that the 13 year old had no idea what he was saying, that he felt really bad and now knows that it is unkind to say things like that and that Edin dealt with it really well (that is he didn't ask questions or seem publicly upset). What did that even mean that a 10 year old 'dealt' well with someone telling him that he should be dead because of his Jewish identity? The irony of this experience is that personally, my own family has had no direct connection to the Holocaust. However, my grandmother and her family were imprisoned in Changi Prison in Singapore during the second world war due to being British subjects. From Edin's experience, I certainly have come to have a greater understanding of the impact of vicarious racism and the way teachers navigate this space of responding to racism, as well as how children can respond and internalise racism in different ways.

I must admit, that for a long time I actively chose not to share my cultural or ethnic identity in an Acknowledgement of Country as I was conscious of the assumptions that are made that it can be misread as a certain insider privilege which I do not claim. As Brah (1996:207; cited in Yap 2017: 82) notes, 'racial positionality can create specific opportunities for the understanding of difference, but does not in itself assure a vantage point of privileged insight'. In addition, I have become conscious of the public gaze and words made towards me on hearing that I am Jewish, in relation to an assumed position that being Jewish means that I must agree with the political directions of the current (and many previous) Israeli Governments in relation to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Palestinians. Furthermore, I have also started to question safety aspects of publicly identifying as Jewish, with what seems to be growing anti-semitic sentiments both locally and globally. However, as pointed out to me by one of my supervisors, hiding my own story perpetuates the veil of white privilege that I also do not wish to do. I am still navigating the complexity of this each time I deliver an Acknowledgement of Country.

Being the critical sociologist, the ally, the anti-racist, the advocate

It's important to learn about the protocols that we engage with regularly at our school such as Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country. Acknowledgement of Country is sometimes likened to being similar to the acknowledging of a visitor entering someone else's house or classroom and sets out how you should respect the place, the people in it, the stories, the

experiences that have occurred in that space, and as such anybody can do this. However, Welcome to Country is like when someone comes to your house or classroom and a Welcome is offered by those who are the custodians of that place – they explain how the space and people within it should make others feel, provide information about the place, explain how to respect and contribute to and leave the space.

Acknowledgement of Country in my own children's school newsletter, May 2017

Throughout my PhD in addition to being active in the organisations I was connected to (such as on Reconciliation Action Plan⁸ committees at both the ANU and the APS), I was involved in other community roles, predominantly in relation to my own children's school and the Parent and Community Association. As Burawoy (2005) notes a 'critical sociologist' often works closely with other organisations and is engaged in 'making visible the invisible' also in those spaces.

The critical sociologist...works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local, and often counter-public. [She or he works] with a labour movement, neighbourhood association, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organisations. Between the public sociologist and a public is a dialogue, a process of mutual education... The project of such [organic] public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life. (Burawoy 2005: 265 cited in Apple 2016: 511)

This role of critical sociologist (or anti-racist, advocate, or ally, terms which I don't personally choose to use), and as an emergent social science researcher, is full of complexity and paradoxes. There is a fine line between action undertaken to eliminate racial oppression and structural racism and 'destructive' action, or possible action that perpetuates the existing structures (Friere 2000; Spanierman and Cabrera 2015). On the flipside, as Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) suggest not only is there a need to be conscious of working 'with' and not 'for' Indigenous peoples, there is also a need to have awareness of other (non-Indigenous) peers' positionality as raising awareness or engagement in actions in order to position the dialogue, can potentially lead to alienating both Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.

⁸ Reconciliation Action Plans are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Furthermore Kowal (2015) in her book *Trapped in the Gap*, identified a range of paradoxes white anti-racists in the Northern Territory health system are working within, including the minimalisation of the role they play in Indigenous Affairs to enable the 'Indigenous perspective to be central' (Kowal 2015: 47); and the challenge of responding to health and education improvements by not imposing an assimilationist's agenda (Kowal 2015: 49). Kowal (2015) suggests that one way forward is to start to forge new identities for non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples that are not oppositional.

If I agree with this, this is not a suggestion from a non-Indigenous person that aims at minimalising everyone's right to form and express their own identity/ies – rather it is a suggestion that we need a new 'critical ontology that allows the social worker [and other professionals] to reinvent, explore, and otherwise make transparent the professional self in the classroom or in real-world practice (Jeffery 2007 cited in Schick 2009) to transcend binaries of 'fixed subjectivities of coloniser/colonised' (Schick 2009). Schick suggests that such an ontology should start with 'Who do you think you are?'. I attempt to work through the labelling and assumptions of non-Indigenous, or anti-racist, or white, or critical sociologist, or ally and find ways to not be 'trapped' in such binaries.

Being non-Indigenous in Indigenous Studies

We would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation where we are presenting and open to listening to today. We would like to pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future and extend that to any First Nations person in the room. We acknowledge that we are two non-Indigenous PhD scholars presenting on reconciliation and racism and that we come to our research from multiple positions. However, we both come to our research with the knowledge that we are part of a broader institutional culture that privileges us as non-Indigenous. Like the well-intentioned teachers in the school, we have much to learn and our engagement in our chosen topics has been one attempt to explore, question and critique our own shift into hopefully more reflexive ways of challenging everyday reconciliation and racism.

Institutional Racism Conference, Deakin; co-presented with Melinda Herron, October 2017

Melinda and I came to learn about each other's work through a joint advisor – Dr Jessica Walton –and the Oceanic Ethnography and Education Network. We realised early on that we had much in common in our approach as well as in our interpretation of our fieldwork as well as our emotions in navigating this field as non-Indigenous researchers. We were excited to co-produce a conference paper for the 50 Years of Institutional Racism Conference: 'Celebrating Reconciliation – Racism in Celebration'. As Melinda and I sat waiting at the front tables for our session to begin, we were approached by one of the convenors of the conference to let us know that a conference participant had approached him to ask whether any of the panel we were on were Indigenous and that we should be prepared to respond to such questions. We immediately felt discomfort, a feeling we had discussed throughout the drafting of the presentation about the perception of two non-Indigenous PhD scholars delivering a paper on reconciliation and racism. However, we reflected on the processes we had undertaken throughout the research to ensure that diverse perspectives were being incorporated. We also hoped that our explicit standpoint and positioning in the research as non-Indigenous researchers attempting to navigate the everyday through critical race lens may enable us to deliver a presentation that discussed the concepts of reconciliation and institutional racism – not just from a non-Indigenous perspective but also one that aimed to highlight colonial storytelling (Behrendt 2016), epistemic racism (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016), a 'silent apartheid' (Rose 2015) and a white pathologising (Moreton-Robinson 2009). In the end we weren't asked about our backgrounds, and a Māori scholar approached us to share the similarities of her work in schools in Aotearoa – New Zealand, which has led to the potential for future collaborations.

However, this feeling of discomfort was not uncommon to me and was a regular visitor throughout my PhD. As noted in the previous chapter, there is a growing body of literature on the importance of understanding emotions and affect in anti-racism, decolonising, and education research. Zembylas (2017a) acknowledges the importance of awareness of one's own emotions and affect as an important aspect of reflexivity that is critical for social transformation:

Grounded in the assumption that discomforting feelings are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities and they create openings for individual and social transformation (Zembylas 2017a: 8).

Thus although not a positionality as such, understanding my own emotions and affect on me and my interaction with the study (including with participants, with colleagues, with the data,

and determining ways to present the research) and the PhD as a whole has been crucial to enabling greater insight not only into my own journey, but in relation to the study of everyday reconciliation.

Reconciling my Standpoints----

This chapter has highlighted my process of reflexivity, and the many different standpoints I have brought to this research but also the journey that I have taken and continue to take. My own engagement with the topic has enabled further insight into the everyday of the teachers, school executive, and policy makers who contributed to this study and the importance of reflecting on my own power and privilege as a non-Indigenous woman. As I continue to actively engage in this topic, as I listen more, it is likely that the Acknowledgement of Country I offer at different events will continue to change, and as I continue to critique the practice of 'reconciliation' and children's capacity to engage and drive social transformation, I commit to critiquing my own contribution and positionalities in it and whether the approaches I am taking may be contributing to social change or maintaining the current power structures and hegemony. As Martin (2003) suggests of being and becoming in Quandamooka Ontology, however, has lessons for those of us who are not Quandamooka:

It is through ontology that we develop an awareness and sense of self, of belonging and for coming to know our responsibilities and ways to relate to self and others (Martin 2003: 206).

Having now set the background to reconciliation in Chapter 1, and my own journey in this chapter, the following chapter focuses on how I approached the study of 'Everyday Reconciliation'.

Chapter 3: The ABCs and 123s of Exploring Everyday Reconciliation – Methodology and Methods

Research is finding out answers to questions you make up. If you want to know what kids think you should ask them. (Ram, aged 9)

Making the ethnographic process explicit is almost as difficult as making culture explicit (Wolcott 1998: 7).

Introduction

Having set the background to the research in Chapter 1, and my standpoints in Chapter 2, this chapter sets out how I undertook the research. The chapter begins with the process of finding a field site and the complexities of multi-sited field sites in education research. I then focus on my intent to explore ‘everyday reconciliation’, and the affordances of ethnographic approaches to engage with the everyday. The chapter then takes a chronological approach in exploring my first days at school, collecting data, and learning to read and write the data. Throughout the chapter I critically reflect on engaging with Indigenous Studies, a key paradigm of the study as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as undertaking research with children.

School Options: Finding a ‘field site’ or two

In July 2015, after returning from maternity leave from my PhD, I attended an ANU reconciliation seminar hosted during NAIDOC Week. NAIDOC Week is a national week of celebrations to acknowledge ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and achievements’ (NAIDOC Website). The first two presenters spoke about designing a new Australian flag and the returned Indigenous servicemen project, neither of which spoke directly to the theme of NAIDOC Week ‘We all Stand on Sacred Ground: Learn, Respect and Celebrate’. However, the third presenter stood up calmly and matter-of-factly stated that she would be focusing on the discomfort of the theme of reconciliation during NAIDOC Week. For her they were fundamentally different weeks requiring their own space, time and emotions: NAIDOC Week a time of celebrating and showcasing the resilience and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and histories; and reconciliation, a time of reflection of the impact of the invasion and ongoing colonialism and racism. The presenter

was a Bundjalung woman, Ginibi Robinson, who was one of the Human Resources Manager at the ACT Education Directorate. At the end of the seminar I approached her and introduced myself as a PhD scholar about to embark on an exploration of reconciliation in primary schools. She immediately suggested I focus on the ACT jurisdiction as the research would fit well with emerging ideas in the Directorate about cultural reform to supporting Indigenous students which was to take a whole of school approach, rather than individual student approach. During the months that followed, senior staff at the Directorate expressed interest and support for the project to occur in their jurisdiction.

In order to study everyday reconciliation, I needed field sites that were broadly engaged in reconciliation. There is no framework or measurement of 'reconciliation' in Australian schools and, given this absence, I relied on the Directorate's suggestion of 12 possible schools. I matched this with my own web-based inquiry regarding the schools and phone discussions with Principals. Four Principals expressed an interest in the research occurring in their school. One of the schools that had expressed an interest was participating in a national study on deficit discourse in Indigenous Education. Initially this seemed like a great opportunity to work with this national project; however, a significant component of this project included the delivery of intercultural understanding training. This injection of training, as well as my presence at the school, would possibly lead to the research being likened to an evaluation of pre- and post-training rather than researching 'everyday reconciliation', and therefore this school was not included. However, through considering this project, one of the Chief Investigators in the Deficit Discourse project, a Mithaka man, Scott Gorringe became one of my advisors.

Red Gum Primary School and Acacia Primary School

The two schools I chose to work with were Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary, pseudonyms based on local trees. During the initial phone discussion with the Principal at Acacia Primary, she spoke in detail about the school's approach which was not to focus on reconciliation, rather to celebrate and 'embed' Indigenous perspectives into everything they did, and in the main giving examples of the school's built environment. This attention was in contrast to Red Gum Primary's Principal whose focus was on the Indigenous students at his school and the activities the school offered them such as clubs specifically for Aboriginal children. He mentioned there were Aboriginal children who didn't know they were Aboriginal children because 'parents chose not to tell them'. Although I didn't know it at the time, these

two approaches became central to my understanding of how reconciliation was being delivered, understood and talked about in the two schools – for Acacia Primary, non-Indigenous students celebrating Indigenous perspectives and for Red Gum Primary, supporting Indigenous students through cultural programs.

The two schools chosen were the most geographically and demographically different of the four schools interested in the project. One suburb is a young, fast growing suburb, less than 10 years old, with a population of just under 6,000 people. The houses are large multi-levelled modern rendered houses occupying the majority of small blocks which are edged with manicured trees, hedging and lawns. The strip of shops opposite the school includes a supermarket, alcoholic beverage shop, hairdresser, chicken and chips shop, Chinese-Indian grocery shop and franchise coffee shop. This is often busy with families after school drop off and pick up time. There are two large reserves that possibly compensate for the small yards, however, these seem underutilised throughout the school week.

In contrast, the other suburb is very established – some children's parents had grown up in this community – and was almost twice the size of the other suburb. My drive into the community was through streets lined with small brick houses, some of which were newly rendered, others falling apart, some had established gardens, where some were very overgrown, with broken trampolines out the front. The suburb also had a strip of local shops opposite the school: coffee shop, pizza franchise, petrol station, independent supermarket, pet produce shop, and a shop that remained empty the entire year. Throughout the year, there were a range of community events advertised on Red Gum Primary electricity poles, printed on home computers – such as the Laos Festival. In contrast, the suburb of Acacia had one large multicultural festival that was professionally managed and advertised via the local government website.

A significant difference between the two schools is in the Indigenous student population: Red Gum Primary had over 10 per cent of the student population identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both, or multi-ethnic (such as Aboriginal, Samoan, Māori) and Acacia Primary had less than 3 per cent of students identifying as Indigenous. Both the schools' Indigenous population reflected more than their suburb's Indigenous population (which is 1.1% for Acacia Primary and 2.4% for Red Gum Primary), suggesting that Indigenous students (or their parents) may have identified as being Indigenous at school but not in the census or that Indigenous students travelled from outside the suburbs to attend the schools. This second assumption was suggested by Red Gum Primary's Principal who often spoke about

children travelling across the region to attend his school because of what the school offers the Aboriginal students.

The schools were of similar sizes with around 450 students, with an equal gender split in both schools. The schools varied in socio-economic status: Acacia Primary is classified as having higher than the national average socio-educational advantage and Red Gum Primary school having lower than the national average socio-educational advantage⁹. Both schools' student population is very culturally diverse: over 20 per cent of the students at Red Gum Primary and over 50 per cent of the students at Acacia Primary had a language background other than English. The census suggests that Acacia Primary's overseas-born population is predominantly from Southern and Central Asia (16%), followed by sub-Saharan Africa (4%) and north-East Asia (3%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016). For Red Gum Primary, the overseas-born population is predominantly from North-Western Europe (6%), Southern and Eastern Europe (3%), and South-East Asia (2%).

With regards to standardised testing of numeracy and literacy, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results in 2016 for Acacia Primary (of which a number of the children in the study would have participated) reflect reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy results similar to the Australian average; however, this was lower in all domains compared to schools with similar students (using the ICSEA). For Red Gum Primary, reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy results are all lower than the Australian average as well as compared to schools with similar students. I only relied on English literacy skills in the completion of demographic surveys, and found that some children had difficulty completing them. I responded by making it a standard process of reading out the survey questions to the group and offered students the alternative of telling me their answers if they preferred.

In summary, the characteristics of the two schools are set out in Table 1.

⁹ Socio-educational advantage (SEA) of a school is measured by the Index of Community Socio Educational Advantage (ICSEA) and is calculated using student factors such as parental occupation and education level, as well as school factors, such as geographic location. Acacia Primary was given an ICSEA Value of 1079, indicating a higher than average SEA, compared to Red Gum Primary. Drawing only from student's student-level factors of education advantage, Acacia's student distribution in 2016 was 10% in the bottom quarter, 50% in the middle quarters (of which 32% were in the top middle quarter), and 40% in the top quarter. This suggests a relatively high SEA, compared to the Australian average of 25% evenly distributed across the four quarters.

Table 1: Characteristics of the two schools chosen as field sites.

Red Gum Primary School	Acacia Primary School
Established suburb	New suburb
Over 10% of the school population identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	3% of the school population identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
20% of the students have a language background other than English	50% of the students have a language background other than English
Indigenous Education Officer	Indigenous Education Officer
Aboriginal teaching staff	No Aboriginal teaching staff ¹⁰
No mention of reconciliation, Indigenous Studies or Indigenous Students on the website	Explicit mention on the front page of the website about the school's commitment to embedding Indigenous Studies and reconciliation into the school. Information is also provided on the website about the namesake of the school.

‘Containing’ a multi-sited field site

In choosing two diverse schools I hoped to be able to contribute to the debate surrounding reconciliation through incorporating different vantage points from different schools. However, ethnographic research focusing on ‘education’ is difficult to contain to the imaginary school boundaries (Pierides 2010). Children receive messages from a range of sources beyond the school gates, evident from the children in the study when they mentioned their holidays where they saw lots of Aboriginal people on the streets in Darwin or the conversations they had with their step-mother about Aboriginal people. Further to this, the very notion of education being contained within the school gates is an imperialist approach to the very essence of education (Petrovic and Mitchell 2018). As such, although I focused on the two schools, I include these external messaging as expressed by the children within this thesis, albeit with some awareness of the limitation of exploring them in detail.

Possibly more challenging for containing the analysis to the school boundaries is the ethnographer’s knowledge acquisition and engagement with the research topic beyond the school gate. Pierides (2010) argues that the ‘visceral learning’ that has often been absent from educational ethnography is indeed an integral part of a multi-sited ethnography. In Chapter 2

¹⁰ There was no available data on other cultures or ethnicities of the teachers at either school.

I acknowledged how I come with multiple standpoints, and although I don't wish to return to this here, I do offer a brief summary to highlight how my engagement in other institutions, and the community in general, contributed to my understanding of everyday reconciliation, its ruling relations, agency and containment within structures of individuals, power of knowledge and how the 'system' regulates the everyday (Foucault 1988; Ortner 2006; Pierides 2010; Smith 2012). As noted by Marcus (2002: 96), ethnography in education begins in the 'world system, but because of the way it evolves its object of study, this mode comes circumstantially to be of the world system as well'. Fabian extends this and suggests 'the ethnographic commentator is beholden to a world outside the texts he or she produced...The ethnographic commentary must take notice of that world' (Fabian 2014: 56).

With this in mind, it is important to clarify where I actually 'hung out' and how these spaces contributed to my understanding of everyday reconciliation. Before and after school I often sat in the local coffee shops in both suburbs observing interactions in the community, and attended multicultural festivals in the school communities on the weekend. However, beyond these communities, at the ANU, where I undertook my PhD, I participated in Indigenous Studies courses, actively contributed to whole of university 'reconciliation activities' including the development of recommendations for strategic planning, and participated on RAP committees. I was also actively involved in my own children's school P&C meetings, driving community consultations (requested by the then Principal) to gain support in order to raise an Aboriginal flag at the school for the first time in 2016, and was subsequently invited by the new Principal and teaching staff to deliver professional learning opportunities about intercultural understanding. I attended events such as public Reconciliation Lectures, Apology concerts, museum exhibitions, plays and music gigs by Indigenous artists from throughout Australia. On weekends I visited places that children in the study had mentioned during focus groups, such as the War Memorial. And I monitored reconciliation in the media, on social media, on Government websites, and through daily 'google' subscriptions. All of these 'hanging outs' have contributed to this study, increasing its validity and possibly reducing the risk of making 'whopping generalisations from rather modest observations of a few cases' (Wolcott 1987: 9). Furthermore, such an approach enabled identifications of similarities between the social world of children within the school and the social worlds of adults (both within the school gates and beyond), an important consideration within ethnographies that engage with children (James et al. 1998).

Although undertaking a multi-sited ethnography did offer a much more critical engagement with the topic, on a practical level, undertaking a multi-sited ethnography certainly had its drawbacks. On some days it was difficult to determine how to split my time between the two schools. Both physical exhaustion (of driving to and from the schools, and at times to both schools on the same day)¹¹ and intellectual fatigue (of observing, undertaking interviews and focus groups, and then drafting notes in the evening, catching up with children and teachers who had shared their stories, as well as managing expectations from the children of helping them with their history projects or when I would be undertaking more focus groups) caught up on me. As I was witnessing the excitement of the children and teachers as we neared the end of each term, I was also very relieved to have two weeks off fieldwork after 10 weeks of being in the field to sort the data, review fieldnotes and start transcribing. Such logistical challenges coupled with the emotions of fieldwork are shared with Hage (2005) who reflected in detail the challenges of undertaking international multi-sited ethnographies, language, exhaustion, jet lag, building relations. I note the difference in comparing an international multi-sited ethnography to one that is almost in your own backyard, however I also experienced similar reservations within a multi-sited ethnography where the two key field sites were only separated by 33kms.

Researching Everyday Reconciliation

School ethnographies facilitate the exploration of a holistic approach to contextualising the everyday (Ogbu 1981): the culture of the school, the curriculum, the parent body, the teachers training, and offers new vantage points for reflection (Erikson 1984). Being located in the two schools an entire school year provided a long-term, flexible, open-ended approach to the study, reflecting what Wolcott (1987) suggests as being the ‘unwritten consensus’ of a required length for school ethnographies. The generous time also offered an opportunity to delve into the ‘aims, concerns, dreams and insecurities’ informing the children and teachers’ everyday social practices (Forsey 2000: 219) of reconciliation. Everyday reconciliation became to be as much about the unremarkable as well as the remarkable – the absences or silences of Indigenous perspectives and reconciliation as much as the one-off celebrations or excursions. My interest in the everyday was enhanced by my reading of Australian multi-disciplinary school ethnographies exploring culture, diversity, race and racism more generally (Herron 2017; Toner 2010; Walton et al. 2014; Wilson 2016) and abroad (Barley 2014; Connolly 1998;

¹¹ During my fieldwork I drove over 18,000 kilometres (kms).

Gebhardt 2015; Schick 2009; St Denis 2011). In addition, the implementation of contested reconciliation policies and disputed histories in schools occurring in states of intractable conflicts provided similar insights into ruling relations of power and knowledge (for Northern Ireland see Burns 2017; for Cyprus and Israel see Bekerman and Zembylas 2012; and for Israel see Bar-Tal 2013).¹²

Many of these studies were explicit in noting their multi-disciplinary approaches which included the disciplines and studies of Indigenous Studies, Childhood Studies, education (curriculum and pedagogy), anthropology, sociology, peace and conflict studies, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, whiteness studies, critical education, and social psychology. Although the benefits of multi-disciplinary studies have been articulated (Manathunga et al. 2006), navigating the extensive body of literature across different disciplines and ethnographic approaches (institutional ethnography, multicultural ethnography, critical ethnography, school ethnography, multi-sited ethnography) at times did become overwhelming. I equipped myself with a multi-disciplinary (and multi-cultural/ethnic and multi-gendered) panel that included experienced academics with extensive expertise in Indigenous Education, Indigenous Studies, anthropology, psychology, education, children's policy, participatory research with children, and ethnography.¹³

In Chapter 1, I discussed the 'paradigm' of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Research Methodologies and Decolonising Approaches (Martin 2003; Nakata 2007a, 2011; Rigney 1999, 2006; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012) and in Chapter 2 I engaged in my standpoints as a non-Indigenous researcher in Indigenous Studies. I don't wish to return to this discussion in detail here, except to note that throughout this chapter and the thesis, I will demonstrate how I have engaged with these protocols. Noting this, I am cognisant that I am a non-Indigenous researcher and as such, despite my attempts to actively engage with the protocols, the research may still be embedded in colonial and paternalistic assumptions (Aveling 2013; Bishop 2005; Wilson 2016).

¹² In 2015, I was privileged to be a visiting scholar for two weeks at Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland to gain greater understanding of reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

¹³ My panel changed during my thesis due to the relocation of a supervisor from the ANU to another State as well as a change in focus of the thesis from mixed methods to only qualitative research.

Indigenous Advisory Group

Within the first months, I established an Indigenous Advisory group which was instrumental throughout my PhD. Uncle Vic Chapman PSM, University of New South Wales Fellow, Yuwaalaraay Elder with over 40 years' experience as a teacher and school Principal, who was my primary school Principal growing up on Dharawal country; Ginibi Robinson, a Bundjalung woman working in education policy and human resource management in the ACT Education Directorate; and Scott Gorringer, a Mithaka man, the director of MurriMatters – a consultancy organisation in intercultural understanding and leadership processes in education. Both Ginibi and Scott live and work on Ngunnawal Country. The three offered the ideal positions of education policy, leadership, and practice and brought different perspectives from their own experiences and standpoints; however, all assisted in ensuring the study and my approach was continually challenging binaries, assumptions and deficit discourse throughout the study. I met regularly with Ginibi and Scott, prior to entering the field, and through the analysis and write-up phases. In July 2017, Scott and I delivered a workshop at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education in Toronto. The workshop was a combination of the emerging findings from the Deficit Discourse Project and from my fieldwork. Further workshops have occurred in different settings, often co-presenting with Ginibi. There is no doubt that my connection with these individuals as well as having Gawaian on my academic panel, enabled the establishment of other relationships, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the ACT community, and within the Indigenous education and research community.

Researching primary school children's experience of everyday reconciliation

Given my interest in understanding children's experience of the everyday, in relation to reconciliation within the context of their schools, as opposed to only focusing on teachers, classroom practice, and school and education policies, I was drawn to the multi-disciplinary field and methodologies within the Social Studies of Childhood. Within this field, children are viewed as producers and reproducers of social knowledge who actively engage with, interpret and influence their social contexts (Bessell 2010; James and Prout 1990; Mason and Falloon 2001). This is particularly salient when exploring ethnicity and race given the increasing empirical evidence that children are social actors acquiring, developing, and redeveloping

ethnic or racial-based intergroup relations from an early age (Boutte et al. 2011; Connolly 1998). As suggested by Corsaro (1997:24)

Children do not simply imitate or internalise the world around them. They strive to interpret or make sense of their culture and to participate in it. In attempting to make sense of the adult world, children come to collectively produce their own peer worlds and cultures.

This field of study has brought a paradigm shift within research from viewing children as an object to viewing children as 'subject, relational and sited in generational ordering' (McNamee and Seymour 2012: 159; see also Lange and Mierendorff 2009). Childhood viewed this way is a social status in its own right, not just a transitional stage (Qvortrup et al. 2009), where children are 'active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live' (James and Prout 1990: 9). This is increasingly discussed and framed as 'children's agency', and within the research agenda, is often explored in relation to Article 12 of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF 2005). There is much theoretical and practical debate on the extent and limitations children can express their agency in research, for example whether children can really exercise agency (Graham and Fitzgerald 2010). As such, adult researchers need to be attentive to the ongoing power dynamics in undertaking research with children, which I discuss throughout this chapter.

Although research with children and about childhood has expanded during the past few decades, research with children in primary school – particularly in relation to concepts such as race and ethnicity – is still relatively small. Paul Connolly's (1998) ground-breaking, albeit at times confronting, ethnographic research undertaken in a low-economic, multi-ethnic London primary school expanded the field of understanding how racism intercepts with the creation of young people's lives as well as demonstrating the affordance of long-term ethnographic processes in engaging with children's lives. Although Connolly's particular focus was on how race and racism influenced the shaping of gendered identities of 5–6 year olds, he concluded that although the intervening processes could be easily seen in peer culture, to understand it fully it must be understood by exploring the social organisation of the school and the local community. This drew on a well-established premise that acknowledges that context plays a very crucial role in the acquisition of understanding of race, racism, racialisation, stereotypes and prejudice (e.g., Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005; Connolly 199; Devine 1989; Hirschfeld 1996; Raabe and Beelman 2011; Sherif et al. 1961). This premise is embedded in the understanding that children's discourse and discursive practice – their speech, actions, affect and

embodiment – must be understood and considered in the societal and cultural context in which they live. The study of Everyday Reconciliation enabled such an exploration within the school context, and to some extent the broader societal context.

Culturally responsive research

Both Indigenous Studies and Social Studies of Childhood call upon the re-positioning of the ‘subject’ as being central to their fields. Wilson and Wilks (2013) note the similarities embedded within the two methodologies including: the ‘right to participate; centring the participants’ perspectives; valuing the research as a process; acknowledging past marginalising research practices; and concerns about the representation and authenticity of findings’ (Wilson and Wilks 2013: 142). As noted by Wilson (2016), who undertook research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in New South Wales schools, oppressive research relationships are not always based on colonial history; children and young people too can be subject to colonisation (see also Berryman et al. 2013). Wilson demonstrated throughout her thesis that engagement with Indigenist research approaches and child-focused methodologies ‘informed and strengthened each other to some extent, and acted as warning beacons to check on the rights and proprieties of students within education and social structures’ (Wilson 2016: 128). This was also my experience in researching Everyday Reconciliation which will be explored throughout the chapter.

I was required to have a strong awareness and commitment to these approaches, through active engagement with the ANU and the ACT Education Directorate’s institutional ethics processes¹⁴, as well as with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) (2012) and the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC 2003) guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research, and the NHMRC National Statement on ethical conduct in human research (2007). At times, tensions between the different approaches emerged. For example, the initial process of gaining ethics clearance revealed strong assumptions by the ANU ethics committee about the ‘vulnerability’ of both Indigenous participants and children (Parsons et al. 2015). Yet, in my approach, I was seeking to promote agency and ‘reject notions of children’s [and Indigenous peoples’] essential vulnerability and/or incompetence’ (Heath et al. 2007: 407 cited in Herron

¹⁴ My PhD study was given formal approval from the ANU Human Ethics Committee in December 2015 (#2015_687) (Appendix x), followed by the ACT Education Directorate Ethics approval in January 2016 (no protocol number issued) (Appendix A).

2017: 71). The same concerns have been raised in relation to the way Indigenous peoples are still subjected to 'colonial domination' in the above-mentioned guidelines (Saunders et al. 2010). Other examples of tensions and how I navigated them are offered throughout this chapter.

Multicultural Ethnography

With regards to the ethnographic approach to the study, although I drew from a range of different approaches at different times of the research (such as critical and institutional ethnography), one of the most influential approaches that fit with everyday reconciliation, as well as culturally responsive methodologies, was ethnographies of 'everyday multiculturalism' (Herron 2017; Wise 2005). As suggested by Semi et al. (2009):

Everyday multiculturalism puts forward a specific methodological approach: a preference for listening and direct observation, devoting attention to the meaning attributed by the actors to their practices and situations, a preference for intensive analysis of specific cases and attention to the dynamics of relations (Semi et al. 2009: 73, cited in Herron 2017).

Studies of everyday multiculturalism certainly fit my approach to listening, observing and devoting attention to the actual meaning attributed by the participants at the school to their practices of everyday reconciliation, particularly for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants as well as children. Such an approach made no assumption that reconciliation, defined in curriculum and education policies as being through learning about Indigenous cultures and histories was creating 'more constructive relationships' (ATSIC 1995: 50). Nor whether children were actively engaged in 'reconciliation' even if they were receiving messages, or even wanting to talk about such topics. For some children this was very much the case, as one of the children commented when I started asking questions about Australian history, *'I'm so relieved you are asking questions about Australia now. I don't know anything about Aboriginal things and am not interested, but I do know about Australian things'*. Noting this, everyday multiculturalism acknowledges that perspectives are not static and are at times unstable (Semi et al. 2009). Talking with teachers and children over the course of a school year revealed some of these shifts, however, as is discussed in depth in Chapter 8, such shifts and slipperiness occurred within the same hour children participated in a focus group revealing children's perspectives to be encased in ambiguity, contradictions, paradoxes and tensions –

all part of their interpretation of the social worlds (Spyrou 2017). Such an approach offered the opportunity to also explore how children's and teachers' perspectives about Indigenous peoples and cultures played out in the classroom and in the playground, in support or contrast to how they may have expressed their understanding during formal interviews and focus groups.

Armed with my newly bought lunchbox and school bag equipped with a Samsung tablet, smart pen and old-style notepad and pen, I began my fieldwork experience in the second week of the school year in 2016 by meeting both Principals at their school face to face for the first time.

Going to school

The following section sets out my initial days at school, gaining consents, building rapport, my methods, and note-taking.

Consents: Permission to attend school

My first meeting with the Principal at Acacia Primary was a walk and talk through the school, where I was proudly shown the physical attributes of the school (discussed in detail in Chapter 4). As well as the tour, she shared reflections about Indigenous rights, self-determination, recognition, treaties and social justice leading to a feeling that we possibly may share relatively similar standpoints of being non-Indigenous, female, using the language of an 'ally'. This was so until I asked about introducing myself to Indigenous families at the school, which seemed to shift her body language and tone: *'The project is about how Indigenous perspectives are embedded isn't it? I am not sure why you need to talk to them'*. It seemed in contrast to the discussions we had been having in relation to rights and agency. It also quickly highlighted the risk of labelling participants in the study, which I discuss later in this chapter. It took three terms of persistent requests to be given an opportunity to reach out to the Indigenous families in the school (through sending a message out in the newsletter to invite families to meet with me at a morning tea). This first meeting was very casual; however, in the main, my engagement in this school was quite formal.

One of the only similarities in that first meeting with Acacia Primary Principal to the meeting with Red Gum Primary Principal was the repetitive mention that schools are very busy places

and I might not get what I am after, a message repeated throughout the year. I responded each time that how the school is, including the busyness is all part of the research. With the Red Gum Primary Principal, our first meeting was a traditional office meeting where he shared his perspectives of the school's approach to reconciliation being about what they are doing for Indigenous students. Although this meeting was formal, in contrast to Acacia Primary, the engagement in the project was very casual, and I was given full access to the school, told to come in whenever I want, ask teachers to participate, and if I needed any policies just ask. No tour or map was given, making my feelings of being 'lost' those first few days physical not just metaphorical.

I attended one of the first staff meetings of the year at both schools in order to introduce the project and create interest. I was introduced by each Principal as a researcher who is going to support 'our commitment at our school for the work we do here regarding Indigenous students/regarding Indigenous perspectives' and teachers were encouraged to participate in the research. Information sheets and consent forms were handed to all teachers at the staff meeting and I left a box in the staff rooms at each school for returns, which I checked every few days – within days I had 16 teachers at Red Gum Primary willing to be involved in the study. Identifying four Year 3–4 teachers to be the 'classrooms' involved in the study was also a very quick process at Red Gum Primary, where a number of teachers seemed to jump at the offer to be involved in the project.

Once the two Red Gum Primary classes were identified I met with the children and initially we talked through the concept of research – asking the children what is research, how does one do research, if one wants to know what children think, who should a researcher ask and how should they ask? The children were actively engaged in this discussion, and by the time I finished explaining that I was a student researcher wanting to learn about what children know about Indigenous peoples and cultures they were already offering information about what they wanted to share. Consent notes were sent home on the same day, with a school cover letter, and the week's school newsletter included a small blurb about my presence in the school, encouraging caregivers to allow their child to participate and return their consents. However, consents trickled in very slowly those first few weeks. Although I wasn't surprised by the lack of returning consents (which was competing with other notes for school camps, school swimming carnival, approval for posting photos on the school website), it was still disheartening.

After a couple of weeks, I began to explore options of an incentive scheme. As noted by Bessell (2006) the literature regarding incentives and rewards in engaging children with research has diverse views, and this also emerged amongst participants. I spoke with teachers about their views about establishing an individual or class-based incentive scheme. The teachers were supportive of both, however, the Principal less so and asked that I attempt to meet parents at the school gate to talk to them about the project. I attempted this for a couple of days, however, given that I didn't know the children, I found it difficult to know which parent belonged to which child. Teachers also advised that some of the children didn't get picked up by their parents and walked home. The following week I was encouraged again by the Principal to attend the parent drop-off and pick-up for the school camp. I supported the Principal's request, despite my own discomfort, and arrived at 7am to face a few anxious parents whilst apologising profusely to the teachers with whom I was attempting to build rapport. Despite gaining a few consents this way, I felt like an extra confusion that morning walking around with consent forms and information sheets amidst teary-eyed as well as very excited 8–10 year olds, concerned parents farewelling their children for the first time, and overwhelmed teachers ticking off children and their sleeping bags. I finally gained support to implement a class incentive of ice-blocks for the whole class if we received 10 returned consent forms or a pizza party if we received 15 returned consents. This was approved by the Ethics Committee as being low risk or discomfort (as per the recommendations set out in the *Understanding Consent in Research Involving Children: The Ethical Issues – Handbook for Human Ethics Research Committee*, developed by the Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne) and children were advised of this new process to increase the number of consents being returned. This incentive was given to all children, regardless whether the form supported involvement in the study or not.

As mentioned earlier, the process at Acacia Primary was different, where the Principal had hoped for a formal establishment of a project team prior to my starting in the classrooms. The idea of a project team seemed very sound and I was supportive of the approach. We agreed that the team wouldn't direct the project, however be the sounding board for ensuring I had access to the people or information I needed. The project team would include the two key teachers in the study, the IEO and the Principal. As mentioned earlier, I had undertaken the initial introduction of the project at a staff meeting at the end of February, however, I did not have any consents for teacher observations. It became a tension of 'chicken and egg' – as I wasn't supported to attend the school until a project team had been established, however, from my perspective I wasn't allowed to talk with teachers in order to build rapport and

engage with them. I was advised that the project team wasn't able to find a time to meet due to part-time working arrangement, and in response I suggested different ways to keep the project team informed throughout the project. I was finally given approval to meet with the two classroom teachers at the beginning of Term 2. Wang (2013) in his school ethnography acknowledged the power dynamics between school leadership and teaching staff (or other potential participants), and the balance required to continue to build rapport and relations with subjects who may have been 'encouraged' to participate in a study. It is possible this may have occurred at Acacia Primary. Consents had already been sent home prior to my meeting with the children and by the time I met the children for the first time, 13 children had already returned their consent from one class, and four from another class. Given the number of children already in the study in Red Gum Primary (35), and the lateness of getting started at Acacia Primary, I did not attempt to increase the number of participating Acacia Primary children.

Which uniform should I wear today? Building rapport with Principals, teachers and children

Walking through the school gate of Red Gum Primary School those first few days were daunting. I wanted to portray myself as knowing where I was going and what I was doing, but felt very confused who I was in this new environment – I wasn't a student, I wasn't a teacher, I wasn't a parent – I couldn't decide what to wear – do I go casual for the children, formal for the Principal, somewhat in between for the teachers, can I wear open toe-shoes in 40 degree heat or is that a safety issue? In classrooms, I sat up the back on a kid's chair with my tablet on my lap, listening attentively, straight back and focused wanting to build rapport with the teachers by portraying the 'good' student. And then realised such an approach distanced myself with attempting to build rapport with children. As cited in Herron (2017), 'the early days of acquiring bodily competence can be humiliating and/or humorous, but are always steeped in learning' (Madden 2010: 83).

Shedding the early days discomfort was about finding a research style where I could be authentic in the field. As attested by Emond (2005: 131) 'ethnographic researchers must develop a style which is comfortable to them and which reflect their "true self"'. As I sat attempting to respond to questions about my I-phone or tablet with a few of the children, their giggles at my lack of awareness of the latest 'app' was the same giggle and roll of the eye of my own children. I was a parent of children the same age as the children in the study, so I

started to talk about my own children with the children of Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary. I would use my own children's sport and music interest or what we got up to on the weekend, their hobbies, what apps they were interested in. The children asked to see the latest photos of my children. With teachers I openly shared how my research interest was driven by experiences of being a parent of school-aged children and I continued to draw on my own experience on the P&C of my own children's school, or use examples of school-work I had observed from my own children.

Positioning myself as a parent, however was only one position that enabled the building of rapport with children and teachers. As discussed in the previous chapter, for some teachers I was also non-white, aligning myself with a very small minority in the Anglo-Australian teaching community. This was also relevant to children who were non-white, where I used my own and my children's bilingualism, or shared stories of growing up being the only Jewish student at my school, as a way to express the importance of their narratives and experiences, particularly when other children in a focus group were discussing a dominant perspective, including using statements such as *'I am the normal culture'*, or *'I eat normal food'*. For some of the Indigenous children and educators in the study, my link to individuals in the community, having an advisory group of well known people in education, as well as having previous networks through working at the APS assisted my initial building of rapport. I also relied on established networks such as the Indigenous Education Consultative Group to engage with parents and caregivers across the region.

Just a typical day of [participant] observations

From the moment I signed in as a visitor in the school, I would be interacting, listening, observing the morning assemblies, literacy groups, drama classes, lunchtime in the staffroom or playground. At Red Gum Primary I was provided a term schedule, which in the main the teachers maintained making it relatively easy for me to plan the week and which classes I would be attending. Acacia Primary seemed more ad hoc in lesson planning and I relied on sending a weekly email on a Sunday evening in an attempt to check what the weekly plan for the class was to be. I was keen to observe the classroom activities in general, which I did, however the email approach was aimed at ensuring I was attending the more explicit lessons that teachers were conscious of being about Indigenous perspectives, cultures or Australian history. It is possible that by sending an email it may have influenced decisions by the teacher to include a lesson, however, in the main, most responses from the teacher was that they

weren't doing anything this particular week, suggesting that teachers were not necessary responding to the project through 'social expectancy effect' (Vroom 1964). There were times I would receive a text late at night from a teacher letting me know they were going to do a lesson specific to Indigenous perspectives the following morning at 9am, changing the plan for the day.

I was amongst the children in their classrooms and at school events for 3–5 days a week. I attended all classes, however, predominantly focused on classes of the social sciences (history and geography) and classes held in the kitchen garden (which occurred once a week), assemblies, national days such as Harmony Day, and school excursions. I found classrooms provided an opportunity to observe teachers and class practices, but not necessarily observe children's understanding of the research topic. It was very common for me to arrive to class and be told that *'you are really welcome to stay, but we aren't doing anything to day that would be of interest to you'*. At times, what would often unfold were critical ethnographic moments that were of interest. For example, in one class I arrived to be told that there would be no discussion about Indigenous cultures today but I am welcome to stay. The entire first 25 minutes of class was a discussion of the transformative nature of culture using Flamenco dancing as an example of a culture being influenced by external cultures and influencing other cultures. The teacher provided examples throughout the lesson of how Australia's culture had been influenced by many cultures and how it has changed over time. He was correct in advising me that there was no discussion of Indigenous cultures, however, its absence in such a detailed discussion of culture per se, as well as a discussion on Australian culture became crucial in my identifying the 'absence' and 'silencing' of Indigenous Studies, as is discussed in Chapter 4. It also contributed to my interpretation of Indigenous cultures being viewed to be 'static' and 'in the past', or being 'erased'. Thus this 'absence' became data in and of itself, as discussed in detail in Part 2.

In both schools I was warmly welcomed by the staff in both the kitchen gardens, which is a physical building as well as a program that children attended once a week. At Red Gum Primary, whilst mixing the school's vegetable produce into chutneys or jams, we would discuss the changes to the education system at a societal level, the lack of civil action and social justice campaigns for children to get involved in compared to when the kitchen-gardener went through school, and his approach to teaching and children (he facilitated a philosophy club on Monday mornings with children aged 8–10 years).

The kitchen garden at Acacia Primary School was part of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture room where each class would come once a week. I would help prepare the ingredients for the day and set them out on the benches ready for the chaos of making biscuits with 25 eight year olds. Once the chaos was over, I would help clean up and over washing dishes the teachers and I would talk freely about the pressures of lack of time in schools nowadays to engage in topics for a long period due to the competing priorities (specifically the standardised testing of NAPLAN), the passion of the school leadership, the limited capacity for individuals to drive initiatives due to a range of pressures, and the confusions on how to navigate diversity and cohesion when there are so many cultures at the school. These encounters and informal conversations in the kitchen garden were vastly different to the formal interviews that I held with the same teachers. Campbell and Lassiter (2015: 89) acknowledge the difference between formal interviews and informal conversations suggesting the need for an ethnographer to be conscious of the power dynamics, the knowledge, the assumptions that are made in both encounters.

I began to know quite a few of the children from both schools well. They would come and sit with me in the back of the class, regularly talking to me about the latest 'app' they had on their technology, which was much more up to date than mine. I knew what they had for dinner, what books they were reading, where they holidayed, what they had done on the weekend, the fights they had in the school yard, which peer had treated them unjustly. I was welcomed into their lunch circles and conversations wouldn't stop as I opened my own lunchbox; sometimes they would include me into their conversations, other times they seemed oblivious to my presence. They would ask that I join their group during groupwork, and when I was away they would bring me up to date on what they had decided whilst I was away. In a way, these encounters may have demonstrated my attempts at being 'least-adult' (Mandell 1985).

When I arrived in Term 3, children from both schools repeatedly asked if they could hang out with me and participate in a focus group. I was invited into the world of some of these children, even receiving invitations to come to their home to participate in their festivals, an offer I didn't take up. Regardless of this I was conscious that children may have been filtering. Yet, it wasn't uncommon for them to acknowledge that I was coming with knowledge about the topic – as when I asked children of both schools during focus groups where they would access more information about Indigenous cultures, quite a few responded 'you', amidst giggles. And yet, not once did children ask whether their responses were 'right'. I was a strange

being in the children's school world for the year – I wasn't their teacher, I wasn't their friend, I wasn't a parent at the school.

In Red Gum Primary, I was invited to attend the clubs offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by the coordinators (internal and external to the school). More than half of the children attending the clubs were part of the study, however, I was acutely aware of being the only non-Indigenous person in the room during most weekly activities. During one of those weeks, Government officials and philanthropists came to observe the session, taking notes, whilst they sat up the back of the room – exuding an energy of Indigenous children being 'observed'. It was in stark contrast to how I had hoped I had been attempting to observe the club as well as other classes, sitting on a desk casually to the side of the room, not taking notes if there was a small group, handing out glue-sticks to the children for them to stick in the worksheets and talking with the children during activity time. The staff included me in jokes about the children or school, spoke with me casually before and afterwards, inviting me to join them for coffee. At that point, my observation of the officials observing the children in the club made me stop and reflect on my approach and realise the need for constant reflexivity.

One of the ethical challenges I was faced with during the observations was a constant questioning of calling out racism when I observed it, which seemed to be occurring daily in different forms, particularly those embedded in whiteness. Vass (2012) reflects on this tension in his study of whiteness in schools, including the time it takes to present the argument to raise awareness of how particular comments are racist, as well as the risk to him amongst peers if he did suggest particular acts are racist. If I had called out every act of racism and/or observations of whiteness, I suspect I would not have been invited back into the classroom or the schools. Yet as Vass (2012) noted, it is possible that some of the teachers would not have understood the critique anyway. As I became more confident in the field, I would share theories of development of prejudice and stereotypes in children to at least challenge some of the assumptions of children being colourblind, and then overlay it by using some of the observations from the opposite schools as focus group discussions.

In addition to observations

I coupled the observations and informal discussions with more explicit lines of questioning through in-depth interviews and focus groups with staff and students. I found this to be

useful, particularly in the latter half of the year after I had been observing classes and children, as it was a way to test my observations and emerging data analysis. Furthermore, I was able to use some of the observations as focus group scenarios to enable teachers to explore real examples from classroom or schools. The following section focuses on the children focus groups in detail, and provides some reflection on other methods I used with adult participants.

Children focus groups

Focus groups reflect safe peer environments that are familiar to children in their classroom work (Mauthner 1997). Furthermore, the use of focus groups have been found to be an effective way of gathering children's views on sensitive topics including race and culture (Garley et al. 1997; Hennessey and Heary 2005). After spending a term hanging out in the classroom with the children at Red Gum Primary, I began the focus groups at the beginning of Term 2, in the mornings during literacy rotations. However, if I wasn't able to get to class in the morning, I was told to just ask the children if they were happy to not participate in what they were doing and I could do the group whenever I wanted. Further to this, one of the teachers commented that participating in the focus group was important for the children as a learning approach. I would suggest one name and the teachers would suggest a few children who she/he would work well with, or we would let the child choose their own friends.

At Acacia Primary, I only spent a couple of weeks in the class prior to starting the focus groups. I was required to do them on the day that the teacher had permanently off as she did not want the children to miss any 'school' work that she was teaching. The relief teacher (one of the executive staff) chose which children were to be grouped together, which he did alphabetically, based on the list I gave him. The four children in the second class participated in one focus group together and was held on a morning of revision, again so that the children would not miss out on new work.

All focus groups from both schools were held in locations just outside the children's classroom: in the wet areas (where painting occurs), group teaching areas, empty classrooms that looked onto active classrooms. At times I was able to offer the children a few options to choose from, and in such cases they tended to choose the classroom furthest away from where their teacher and remainder of the class were. A few times boys asked whether we could do the focus group under a tree outside. Due to the strict requirement for me to be in view of teachers, I decided that it would be preferable to remain inside. Both schools had open

classroom structures, which often meant that children were able to see their peers and be seen by their peers, and at the very least hear them. Very rarely did peers approach the focus groups and if so the children participating asked them to leave.

Focus groups began with me reminding the children that they had agreed to be part of the project and I asked again whether that was still the case. For the children from Red Gum Primary this was particularly important as they had agreed a month or two earlier than the time of the focus group. At this point I also asked whether the children would be happy for me to record the focus group *'I am really wanting to listen to what you have to say and instead of writing it all down I would like to record the focus group. I won't be sharing the recording with anyone, it's just for me to remember what you said'*. Some children seemed perplexed by this, however all did agree to be recorded. I showed them the smart-pen recording device which was a good way to build rapport with all the children as they were fascinated by the microphone on the pen. I offered to them that they would be able to hear some of the recording at the end of the focus group, which we did.

Each focus group took a two-staged approach, often with a fruit break in the middle (which reflected the daily routine of having a fruit break at 10am). The questions used in these first focus groups were adapted from the Talking Culture research project in Victorian schools that targeted similar aged children, parents/carers and teachers (Walton et al. 2014), and are included in Appendix D. The first stage of the focus group were direct questions about what the children knew about Indigenous peoples and cultures, Australian history and reconciliation, with the second half of the focus group dedicated to scenarios. Although some children did not provide answers to all questions, in the main children were engaged in the focus groups and seemed comfortable to participate. Children would ask regularly if they could attend additional focus groups.

During Term 3, I transcribed the focus groups verbatim and began undertaking initial line-by-line coding into categories. Already producing a lot of data, one of the gaps that seemed to be emerging was a different attitude (and awareness of other people's attitudes) towards Indigenous peoples and cultures compared to other cultures in Australia, as well as the use of the word and concept 'respect'. I decided to return to the children in Term 4, sought their interest to participate in additional focus groups, as well as asking what they wished to talk further about. The overwhelming response was 'yes' to focus groups and that they really liked the scenarios. In response I developed new scenarios, checking them with my advisors, teachers, and my own children, with the hope they would illicit discussions about these two

concepts. During this second round of focus groups, I was also able to make use of my fieldnotes and emerging categories and themes by checking back with the children regarding their perspectives on a particular lesson, or experience of events, such as assemblies and excursions. Throughout 2016, I undertook 29 focus groups with the children.

Teacher focus groups

In Term 2, Term 3 and Term 4 I also undertook focus groups with teachers at the schools. The focus groups followed a similar format to the children's focus groups in that it began with direct questions followed by scenarios (which were changed slightly to be presented that '*you have a child in your class that says... how do you respond?*'). In only one of the focus groups did discussions become impassioned, where some teachers suggested to one of the participants that his views were quite 'racist'. The teacher in question held his view and suggested to the other teachers that he had 'a right to his opinion', which I supported and mentioned the agreed values of the focus group. Directly following the focus group as well as the following day I approached the teacher and asked whether he had any concerns about what was being shared during the focus groups, to which he responded that he didn't. This was further highlighted in his continued deficit views being observed during staff meetings and informal discussions I observed with other teachers.

After the first focus group at Red Gum Primary, the participating teachers requested another focus group during the year, not to share with me their knowledge, rather as a way to engage in a continued dialogue and learn more about the topic from each other. Although I was not undertaking participatory action research, the very act of creating a space to enable dialogue began a process of increased engagement in the topic by teachers.

Parents focus groups

I had originally hoped to engage with parents of the children in the study, and the majority of consent forms that returned supported this. However, after several failed email attempts to choose a day and a time (including during and after school hours), I was only able to run one focus group with two parents. Although their two children were from the group of the children I knew well, and offered a different vantage point to discuss the findings, I have chosen not to use this parent data in the thesis.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents focus group

In contrast to the difficulties in engaging with parents at the school, I engaged with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents across the region relatively easily. Early on in 2016 I had presented to the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Group, who supported the research and offered to organise a focus group of parents from the region. This became a critical focus group in the study and was held one wet wintry evening at the ACT Education Directorate, halfway through my fieldwork. Ten parents attended, three of whom I already knew well, and for two hours they spoke about their experiences in the schools their children attend, some high schools, some primary schools, some private schools. They shared their expectations (and aspirations) of what schools should be including for their children in relation to culture, history, diversity, experiences, approaches and what that should look like for all children regardless of culture. I followed up the focus group with formal interviews from three of the participants. I have also met with a number of parents to share the findings. I have committed to return to the participants at the end 2018 to give an update on the research.

Engagement with the Directorate

My engagement with the Directorate occurred throughout the study. During the school holidays in 2016, as well as throughout the following two years, I undertook interviews with staff. Until this point, I don't consider that my position as a public servant or with the SRW scholarship had played any role in engaging or preventing engagement with participants. However, it is likely that with Directorate's staff my ability to identify with policy makers and understand bureaucratic culture may have strengthened my ability to access senior staff and processes. As discussed in the previous chapter, in late 2017 I was invited to deliver a workshop to senior staff and all the region's school Principals (primary and secondary, and early childhood education directors) on the preliminary findings of my research. Reiterating that my research was not participatory action research, the very act of sharing the assumptions we make about reconciliation, as well as hearing the children's interpretations opened a dialogue, which in turn created a space for more critical engagement in what one may suggest as being transformative reconciliation. I return to this workshop in my conclusion.

The participants and the mode of engagement in the study are summarised in Table 2. The process and methods used throughout the school year is summarised in Table 3.

Table 2: Participants and mode of engagement, Everyday Reconciliation study

Participant group	Total	School	Ethnic/Racial/Cultural Identity (using participants' terms) ¹⁵	Country of Birth	Parents' Country of birth	Engagement in Study
Children	52	35 Red Gum Primary, 17 Acacia Primary	8 Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or multi-ethnic (ie Samoan, Aboriginal, Māori) children 18 Anglo-Australian children (includes terms Australian, normal, peach, Aussie) 20 Multi-ethnic children (includes terms half Pakistani-half Australian; Pakistani; Pakistani Australian; mostly Australian) 2 Non-Australian children (includes an Australian citizen but not Australian; non Australian citizen) 5 Unknown (don't know, or not completed)	8 born outside Australia	26 at least one parent born outside Australia	Observations Focus groups
Teachers (includes executive, classroom teachers, IEOs)	25	14 Red Gum Primary 11 Acacia Primary	3 Aboriginal Educators	23 born in Australia 2 born overseas		Observations Focus Groups Interviews
Directorate Staff	6		2 Aboriginal Staff 4 Anglo-Australian Staff	6 born in Australia		Interviews

¹⁵ This is discussed in detail in Part 3 of the thesis. Children may have been counted twice dependent on how they defined themselves.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander parents	12	Across the region (including parents of children attending the two schools)		Australia		Focus groups Interviews
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Table 3: Process and methods throughout the school year, Everyday Reconciliation study

School	Term 1	School Holidays	Term 2	School Holidays	Term 3	School Holidays	Term 4	2017 and 2018
Red Gum Primary	Teacher Consents Children Consents Observations in class		Children's Focus Group Teacher Focus Group		Teacher Focus Groups		Round 2 of Children's Focus Group Teacher Focus Group	
Acacia Primary	Teacher consents		Children consents Observations Children's Focus Groups		Observations			
Other		Interviews with Directorate Staff		Indigenous parents Focus Group Transcribe Focus Group Coding		Transcribe Interviews Coding		Transcribing, coding Interviews: Directorate Staff Interviews: Indigenous parents

Fieldnotes, fieldnotes and fieldnotes

Clifford (1990) suggests that fieldwork involves a whole range of ‘notes’ – inscriptions (the written observations, memos, reflections), transcriptions (of interviews, focus groups), and descriptions (of the historical, socio-cultural worlds). It is through these interpretive texts, field documentation emerges (cited in Campbell and Lassiter 2015: 72). My *inscriptions* included my tables I kept of how many times the word ‘Aboriginal’ was used in a lesson, or the diagrams of who was sitting where in each class, and the print-off of the school song which has handwritten notes of my feelings of hearing the words sung in assembly and which child was scowled at by the teacher for not focusing on the song. They also include the notes I scrawled down during lunchtime and the dictated notes that I made on my I-phone on the way home from school reflecting on the day. The *transcriptions* include the informal and formal interviews with teachers that I recorded on my I-phone or tablet, including lunchtime discussions in the playground. And the *descriptions* included writing editorials, never sent, in response to what was occurring in the media – such as racist comics – or my research into the background of Harmony Day or Sorry Day. Although the vignettes throughout the thesis are a mix of all the different notes, I am certain that these reproductions of ethnographic knowledge are an accurate reflection and interpretation of my fieldwork. However, I am conscious of this work not being free of normative and other biases which are informed by my multiple positions and standpoints, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Having described the methodological approach, highlighting some of its affordances and limitations I undertook in the field, I now turn attention to the approach I undertook in reading and writing Everyday Reconciliation.

Learning to read the data

During the first months of 2017 I continued to transcribe the last months of focus groups and interviews, sort the data into categories (thematic as well as structural) and code. As Bazely (2013) suggests this phase was used to both manage the data and develop ideas. I immersed myself in the sounds of the classroom, listening to recordings or to the songs that were played in the classroom, and adorned my office walls with pictures of the classrooms and schools. The total immersion seemed to enhance the emergence of patterns that appeared on ‘post-it’ notes around my office, stuck to different pictures, and on white boards around my house.

During this process I returned to my broad research questions:

- How is reconciliation (re)constructed in primary schools?
- What are the messages 8–10 year old children of diverse cultural, ethnic and migrant backgrounds exposed to in relation to reconciliation?
- How do children interpret, understand and embody these messages?

Observations and transcripts were initially coded line-by-line resulting in multiple categories (Bazely 2013; Charmaz 2006; Saldana 2016). I initially rejected the emergence of ambiguities and inconsistencies within similar themes as expressed by the same child and returned a number of times to re-categorise the same transcripts. However, as pointed out by Spyrou (2017), engaging with children's contradictions and ambiguities in researching concepts of race, racism and racialisation in fact challenges static and generalised labelling of whether a comment or approach is considered racist, as well as leading a more true reflection of the social realities of the children. He strongly suggests that it is more ethical to engage in such contradictions when undertaking research with children during the fieldwork and data analysis. This is explored further in Part 3. Once coding was undertaken and categories emerged, the themes were explored through multiple approaches and writing styles including mind-maps on large whiteboards; discussing categories and themes with peers (including PhD students, teachers and parents not in the study), panel members and the Advisory Group; and delivering conference papers that offered opportunities for feedback (such as the Oxford Ethnography and Education Conference).

Reconciling the writing

I found the most useful way to explore ethnographic writings was to read recent theses that engaged in similar topics of culture, race, intercultural understanding: Toner (2010); Wilson (2016); Gebhard (2015); Herron (2017); Barley (2014); Riley (2015). Some of these emergent ethnographers became friends co-presenting conference papers (such as Melinda Herron with whom I co-presented at the 50 Years of Institutional Racism Conference in 2016).

Writing *Everyday Reconciliation* was an attempt to challenge the (re)creation of binaries and perpetuation of particular 'truths' that exist within *Everyday Reconciliation*. One of the initial dilemmas I faced was maintaining confidentiality of the region, schools and of course participants. The commitment to maintaining confidentiality has been a priority throughout the study and in dissemination of findings, from this thesis to conference presentations, to feedback to the Directorate; however, it has raised the ethical tensions between

confidentiality, Indigenous Research Methodologies (including decolonising approaches such as locating research on Country), and critical research on education and ethnography. For example, originally, I was not able to locate the research on Ngunnawal Country due to ethics requirements. Through working with the Directorate's ethics committee, we jointly addressed this by ensuring that the schools and all participants were unidentifiable, and I have been able to acknowledge that the research was undertaken on Ngunnawal Country. Maintaining confidentiality of the schools and participants have been achieved through the use of pseudonyms, as well as not including a number of narratives as well as descriptive factors of the schools and participants.

Providing descriptors to participants in the study also required consideration. With regards to the 13 key educators who participated in either in-depth interviews or classroom observations (there were additional educators who participated in focus groups), nine identified as having Anglo-Australian backgrounds, three identified as being Aboriginal, and one was born in South-East Asia and migrated to Australia in 2010; six were male, seven female; seven had been teaching less than three years, six had been teaching more than 15 years (three of whom had been teaching over 25 years). Identifying the teachers (particularly if they were not Anglo-Australian) through ethnicity made the teachers easily identifiable.

For Indigenous educators and children, protecting their identity was even more critical given the small numbers in the study (three of the 12 key educators identified as being Aboriginal), with an additional two participants from the Directorate. I could identify all five participants by their Aboriginal country, nation, or language group, or position (Directorate staff, teacher, IEO). However, such an approach leads to each individual being identifiable. The same concerns hold true for identifying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the study, and I discuss this in much more detail in the Introduction to Part 3. This tension between wanting to de-homogenise 'Aboriginality' (Rigney 1999, 2006) and the importance of maintaining confidentiality, led me to label Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander participants as either a child or student, a parent or educator. I am conscious of the implications of generalising and offer my awareness of diversity across Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island identities and cultures.

Another aspect of explicitly choosing not to 'label' my participants under particular terms such as 'anti-racist' or 'white', was the refusal to engage in what Forsey (2000) argues has been a confusion between a cultural and moral relativism, that risks the caricaturing of teachers in ethnographies as either 'goodies' or 'baddies' (Forsey 2000). Drawing on the work of Nader

(1974), Marcus and Fischer (1986) and Ortner (1995), Forsey argues for a critical approach to ethnography that ensures a balance between ethnographic critical output and representing teachers 'fairly'. All educators from both schools engaged in different approaches and affect throughout the year, whether through approaches that reflected 'white apathy', or 'white rage' or 'anti-racism', at times teachers would jump between 'categories' even within one lesson. This reality of a more nuanced display of embodying 'labels', coupled with the high risk of identifying participants, led me to label teachers as either being Indigenous or non-Indigenous, and their gender. It is important to note that I was just as conscious of the risks of labelling children, and this is explored in more detail in Part 3.

One of the final challenges I found in writing was as a constant reflexive question – who am I to critique whether the approaches are reconciliation or 'Indigenous perspectives' and also have I understood the children's perspectives adequately? I found the testing of my observations with my Indigenous Advisory Group, as well as PhD peers undertaking research in Indigenous Education, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and participants in the Indigenous parents' focus group all useful in attempting to provide examples that for some may be considered colonial storytelling (Behrendt 2016), white pathologising (Moreton-Robinson 2009), deficit discourse (Gorringe et al. 2011), or epistemological racism (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016). It is important to note that not all agreed that a particular approach was an Indigenous perspective, demonstrating the complexities in this field.

In this vein, throughout the thesis I use narratives, at times lengthy narratives, to give 'power and space' to Indigenous viewpoints as well as the viewpoints of children. As noted by Taylor (2009), and applied cleverly by Vass (2014b) in his exploration of race and whiteness in Australian schools, they are 'designed to trigger a reaction in the reader as they are challenged and confronted by the experiences, perspectives and position of the speaker' (Taylor 2009: 5).

A final note on methods and methodology

It is important to return to an earlier point that my overall approach, analysis and ethnographic writing were not dictated by one discipline. The ethnography itself provided the 'toolkit' in both studying, writing and interpreting everyday reconciliation (see Herron 2017; Maddon 2010). Such an inductive and iterative approach reflects the ongoing analysis that has shaped the conceptual content of the study, and the redirecting of inquiry. As mentioned in Chapter 1, to reflect this iterative and ongoing analysis approach is reflected in the very

structure of my thesis, and is a narrative of my fieldwork and the study of Everyday Reconciliation as a whole. It draws from a range of disciplines, literature and theory to explore the everyday reconciliation of the 52 children, and the messages that their teachers and their two primary schools on Ngunnawal Country delivered. To support the reader through this complex analysis, I offer introductory chapters for Part 2 and Part 3 detailing the specific analytical and conceptual frames I draw from to explore the data. In approaching the entire thesis as an ethnography, I hope to continue to contribute to multi-disciplinary studies taking place in Indigenous Studies particularly in the field of everyday reconciliation, or rather, what emerges, in the field of everyday racism or everyday whiteness.

It is important to note that the limitations of such a study is that I focused on two primary schools on Ngunnawal Country. As McCallum (2003:) notes from her studies on public opinions on reconciliation in three different locations ‘The reflexive way participants understood reconciliation highlights the significance of studying locally situated knowledge of public-policy issues’ (cited in Stastny et al. 2016: 162). Understanding how reconciliation is enacted in particular locations is thus important. However, it does then limit the study to two locations on Ngunnawal County. Noting this, through the application of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus coupled with my expansive ‘field’ beyond the two school gates, demonstrates that in the main the teachers, classroom practice and schools were reflective of some generalisable practices across locations and even institutions. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, this study has raised many more questions about the study of Everyday Reconciliation both theoretically and in practice, beyond the two schools’ gates.

And the bell rings....

Equipped with the tools outlined in this chapter, during the following six chapters I present my analysis: ‘Part 2: Celebrating reconciliation, silencing racism – messages to children’ and ‘Part 3: Silencing reconciliation, celebrating racism – children’s interpretation, understanding and embodiment of everyday reconciliation’. This to-ing and fro-ing between the messages children receive and the way they express their understanding is the narrative I present throughout this thesis: messages of celebrating cultural diversity and containment, the privileging, silencing and normalising of western cultures and structures, deficit stereotypes and romanticised generalisations – entangled in binaries, tensions, paradoxes, ambiguities and contradictions of past and present, colourblindness and difference, and sameness and othering. Ultimately it is a narrative of how colonial storytelling of reconciliation, Indigenous

peoples and cultures, and Australia's history silences race, racism and whiteness and in doing so maintains the 'silent apartheid'.

Part 2: Celebrating Reconciliation, Silencing Racism

It's all about understanding Aboriginal culture. You get the ignorant and the activist. They make us frightened to do stuff. It all comes back to understanding. If we understand we will respect. (Non-Indigenous, female teacher, 2016)

Introduction to Part 2: Celebrating Reconciliation, Silencing Racism

When I began to explore the options of schools following on from a meeting with the ACT Education Directorate, I began reading about the schools through their websites. The Acacia Primary School Principal's Welcome on the school website explicitly stated that the school embraces the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective in the Australian Curriculum as a centre point of the school's curriculum focus and quotes the Australian Curriculum's statement of aim to:

Ensure that all young Australians will be given the opportunity to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, their significance for Australia and the impact these have had, and continue to have, on the world. (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority)

Acacia Primary's commitment to Indigenous perspectives and the Australian curriculum was further reiterated throughout annual school plans, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures was explicitly noted as being front and centre as part of the school culture. The research project I was undertaking was mentioned in the 2016 Annual School Plan and School Board report.

In complete contrast to this explicit commitment, Red Gum Primary had no mention of any aspect of reconciliation nor any mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, community, cultures or histories on their website nor in any school policy. These contrasting public approaches revealed themselves also in the way the Principals spoke of reconciliation.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, at Acacia Primary, on explaining my research interest to be centred on understanding how children are engaged in reconciliation in primary schools, the Principal was very quick to state that *'We don't focus on reconciliation, as we do it all the time, it's embedded in everything we do.'* Again, this was mentioned when I met with the Principal during my first tour of the school where she showed me all the physical attributes of the school that were 'Indigenous'. In our discussion, there was no mention of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander students, rather the priority was about all students learning about Indigenous perspectives.

This embedding of all things Indigenous as being reconciliation was in contrast to the Red Gum School Principal's primary focus entirely on Indigenous students. In our first interview I began with mentioning the research project being about reconciliation and asked how does he think his school engages in this. His response began with a focus on literacy and went on to explain that the staff had undertaken a whole of school professional learning day at Namadgi National Park. I confirm with him he is referring to English literacy. I also learn throughout the year that he knows very little of the local area including the cultural and historical significance of Namadgi National Park to the local Aboriginal community. In the middle of the interview a boy walks past the office and the Principal stops and says pointing at him 'Now if all the Aboriginal kids were like him. He does really well'. He continues to explain his focus for the year.

*I have um asked for this year that dance and art to be the focus. For there to be recognition for Aboriginal dance and art. That's also been accepted by one of the Aboriginal teachers here who says that that is a very very valid, you know, path to take in the school. We have had art projects that um Aboriginal students and that's been a very successful learning connection for them. And they're amazing artists as well. Like the art that we've um developed at the school through that has been fantastic. But I'd like to see it explicit. As you walk into the school that the people can see that the value, the values are there. Um that we value that culture. And and what it means for this place because the place here is, is quite sterile and very, very un-Aboriginal, if I could use that term. Because you can't see Aboriginal art everywhere and you can't see any form of um cultural connection. It's very very minimal and that's, that's another project that I would you know, I'd like to see that build. So that you can just walk in here and just see it straight away.'*¹⁶

This seemingly separate approach to reconciliation at the leadership level at both the schools – Acacia Primary's approach of 'Indigenous Knowledges and Perspectives' for non-Indigenous children, and Red Gum Primary's approach of cultural symbols, cultural programs or culturally appropriate pedagogies for Indigenous students – are reflective of the literature of

¹⁶ The display of Aboriginal artwork to make the school more 'Aboriginal' did not appear to occur during the year that I undertook my fieldwork.

predominantly how 'Indigenous Education' is defined as well as the two aims of the Australian Curriculum.

Part 2 of this thesis focuses on how reconciliation was constructed, such as described above, in the two schools to demonstrate the implicit and explicit messages children were exposed to in the everyday.

Analytic Framework for Part 2 of Everyday Reconciliation

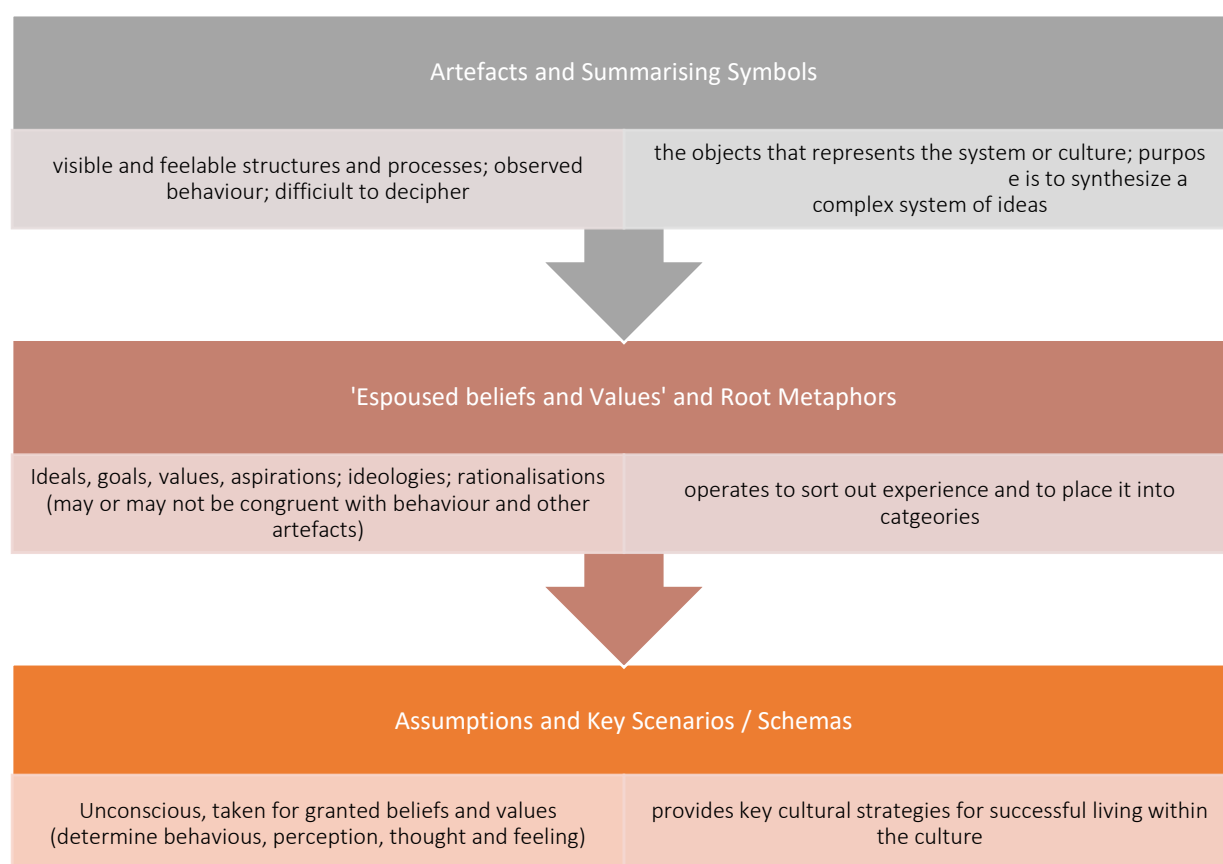
In order to make sense of how the schools constructed reconciliation and the explicit, the implicit, the repetitive as well as the absent messages children were exposed to with regards to reconciliation, I have relied on two analytical approaches: Sherry Ortner's (1973) influential anthropological concept of 'key symbols' and Edgar Schein's (1990, 1996) three levelled model of organisational culture. Both approaches provide an indicative analytic framework to interpret the messages embedded in everyday reconciliation at multiple levels at the schools – firstly the surface level; secondly the beliefs and values about the type of messages that are delivered; and finally, the assumptions and unconscious frames that influence decisions and approaches about the previous two levels. These are discussed in detail below.

Ortner (1973: 1343) describes key symbols as being those symbols that are public symbols that 'the internal organisation of the system of cultural meaning as that system functions for actors leading their lives in the culture'. Ortner's use of the word 'key' invokes the unlocking of the meaning of messages and of the culture generally. She orders key symbols at two levels – 'summarising symbols' and 'elaborating symbols'. 'Summarising symbols' bring together a range of meanings of the culture under one symbol, such as the flying of an Aboriginal Flag or an Acknowledgement of Country. Essentially, the summarising symbols 'stand for' how the school values reconciliation as a 'whole'. The second mode of symbols are those that order experience and action, and are labelled 'elaborating symbols'. Such symbols are divided into two further aspects: root metaphor and key scenarios (or schemas). Root metaphors are basic metaphors or how individuals categorise or describe aspects of their cultures and structure meaning applied to the nature of the world. For example, a root metaphor could be that reconciliation is learning about Indigenous cultures and histories. Key scenarios, which Ortner later comes to describe as being 'schemas' are the scripts that sit behind the attitudes and behaviours and are unreflectively followed. As examined and noted by Dureau (2012), Ortner's model is often uncritically applied as a mode of understanding symbols and cultures. I too, simply apply Ortner's model, however, by incorporating Schein's organisational culture lens,

(1990, 1996) I demonstrate the applicability of Ortner to school ethnographies and the study of the everyday but also to organisational cultures.

Schein (1990) defines ‘culture’ as the shared implicit assumptions that direct ‘perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and, to some degree, their overt behaviour’ (Schein 1990: 11) and has demonstrated that organisational culture reveals itself at three levels (1990, 1996). Firstly the overt daily behaviours of the school – what one can see, touch, feel – are described as being the ‘artefacts’ of organisational culture, similar to Ortner’s summarising symbols. Secondly, how those in the school view themselves is described as ‘espoused beliefs and values’, similar to Ortner’s root metaphors. Finally, a school’s culture includes the ‘tacit assumptions’ that determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings and behaviours (Schein 1990). As Schein suggests (1996), this third level is difficult for ‘insiders’ to observe, similar to Ortner’s reflections on elaborating symbols. He also argues that there are often contradictions between the entrenched held assumptions, beliefs and values and artefacts. The similarities between the two approaches are demonstrated in Table 4.

Table 4: The similarities between the Schein and Ortner approaches



Adapted from Schein (1990) and Ortner (1973)

Applying Schein's approach to school culture is not novel (Corbett et al. 1987; Schoen and Teddlie 2008. Schoen and Teddlie (2008) in their response to a call for a conceptual framework for understanding school culture suggested the use of Schein (1990) as it enabled the study of schools through a cross-discipline approach as well as unpacking the school climate and culture to understanding the difference. They argue that the use of Schein's framework highlights the inextricable link between school culture and climate, that they are components of the same construct, and despite extensive discussions regarding the semantics of the terms, they conclude that the approach enables the study of a school at multiple levels. The application of Schein (1990) to school culture has also been applied in Australia and is currently incorporated into school leadership training by the Stronger Smarter Institute (Gorringe and Spillman 2006)¹⁷.

Ortner and Schein's approach to culture and symbols also fit well with the description offered to me by one of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents during a focus group when she described how she would hope the school would look for her children.

The way it's been described to me in the past – it's Face, Place and Space.

The space is that our kids see themselves in symbols and they see themselves in curriculum and they see not just themselves but their family. The symbols are important as they show that you are making an effort and we are wanted there and it is important that we feel welcome there. And an effort is being made to feel at home there. Symbolism shows us the effort. But when there's too many symbols, it's like they are compensating for the lack of other things. There's no point if the kids don't know what they mean.

The face is people see ourselves in the members of staff.

And the place is the culture that everybody has the right level cultural competency to make people feel safe. It's also about time and opportunity to form as a community and work together as a community.

It's everything about the school you are not just relying on the teacher to have enough empathy and respect and knowledge, it's the whole school, the

¹⁷ The Stronger Smarter Institute was established by Professor Chris Sarra who challenged schools to shift approaches built on 'soft expectations' towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to approaches that reflected 'High Expectation Relationships' (Sarra 2012). The Institute was previously known as the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute.

ethos of the whole school, the culture of the whole school. (Parent, Focus Group, June 2016)

In a way, the space reflects the artefacts of the school or the summarising symbols; the face reflects the beliefs and values of the staff or the metaphors of the school; and the place is reflected in a school that unpacks the deficit and stereotypical assumptions about Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories and understands power and the privileging of western norms of knowledge and systems. However, what this also reveals is one perspective of what ‘transformative reconciliation’ in schools could look like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Applying Schein and Ortner to everyday reconciliation in the two schools lent itself to the framing of everyday reconciliation as multilayered within existing racialised social spaces – emerging in and through affective, material and discursive assemblage. Thus, just as Zembylas (2010) calls us to consider race, racism and whiteness within school settings this way, the following three chapters demonstrate that everyday reconciliation can also be understood through the same concept of assemblages. I understand the process of assemblages in relation to Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of habitus in which structures of society are interpreted and reproduced by individuals, policies and institutions, producing a ‘field’ of everyday reconciliation, in which at times was resisted. Thus, the two schools were influencing the children through the assemblages of reconciliation, but also the way children and teachers embodied these messages also shaped the schools. Acknowledging everyday reconciliation in this way thus requires an understanding of children’s in this interactive process.

Thus, although Part 2 is about how reconciliation is (re)constructed in the schools, it cannot and should not be understood without children’s active engagement (or non-engagement) in this interactive process. As such, throughout the following chapters I do include children’s engagement, articulation and embodiment of the construction of reconciliation in the classroom and the school. Despite this, I am cognisant of children being peripheral in Part 2, almost appearing as inactive recipients of messages. However, I attempt to counter this by centring children’s experiences and perspectives in Part 3 of the thesis.

Even though both schools had very different displays of reconciliation at a surface level (both at a school leadership level as discussed above, but also in the quantity of the touchable displays of reconciliation), the beliefs and values about reconciliation and associated concepts, as well as the assumptions that were influencing these beliefs and symbols were the same in both schools amongst the teachers. This demonstrates the power of broader, implicit,

racialised and patriarchal structures and assumptions in determining how reconciliation and associated concepts are (re)constructed, and the messages teachers assume children should be and are exposed to. Given that the types of symbols and beliefs and values and the assumptions were often shared across teachers from both schools, Ortner and Schein also offered a framework to explore the messages children receive at a structural level, rather than positioning individual teachers as the case study. This was particularly important in responding to the challenges of confidentiality outlined in the previous chapter. Individual teachers in the main are represented as ‘community of speakers’ (Gebhard 2017; Schick 2000; Yoon 2012), rather than individuals. As explained by Schick (2000: 100–101).

What [teachers] say is not attributable to certain individuals but is owned by communities of speakers. In this regard, their language is unexceptional...It is the utter unexceptionality of the remarks that I am interested in observing.

Noting this, however, at both schools there were individual teachers who were very aware of the colonial and adult-centred structures and the concept of whiteness and actively attempted to challenge and disrupt them (see Chapters 4 and 5). Likewise, there were also individuals at both schools who were very vocal about promoting the unconscious colonial biases not as biases but as ‘truths’ and any shifts from this worldview was challenged vehemently, expressing strong sentiments of white fragility, fear and anger (see Chapter 6). These individuals, who expressed strong agency to either promote or challenge the existing structures, form an important part of understanding the complexities and contradictions of everyday reconciliation in both schools. As such, I have included these individuals throughout the following three chapters. Their gender, as well as whether they identified themselves as being Indigenous or non-Indigenous are offered. However, in order to maintain confidentiality, further detail, including which school, their age, or their self defined ‘culture’ are omitted. It is important to note however, there were teachers from both schools, from both Anglo-Australian and non-Anglo-Australian backgrounds, and different age groups, as well as length of service as a teacher, that are represented as being ‘external’ to the community of speakers.

A summary of the following three chapters is displayed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of the artefacts, metaphors and assumptions of Everyday Reconciliation

Schein and Ortner	Everyday Reconciliation	Examples
Artefacts and Summarising Symbols	Symbols of Everyday Reconciliation	Quantity as commitment Symbols of Whiteness Indigenising Symbols Symbols of Silence and Silencing Symbols Symbols of Resistance
Espoused Beliefs and Values and Metaphors	Beliefs and Values of Everyday Reconciliation	Beliefs about reconciliation Affective taxonomy of reconciliation
Assumptions and schemas	Assumptions of Everyday Reconciliation	Assumptions about the Problem Assumptions about Reconciliation Assumptions about Schooling Assumptions about Children and Childhood

What emerges during the following three chapters is the reduction of reconciliation to a predominant [superficial] celebration of Indigenous Australia, often defined within colonial storytelling of what is Indigenous culture (in the singular), resulting not only in the continuation of the ‘othering’ of Indigenous Australians as an ‘authentic’ other, but perpetuates the silencing of systematic, structural and epistemic racism and discrimination, as well as self-determination and sovereignty, thus maintaining the ‘silent apartheid’. Reconciliation under these conditions ultimately perpetuates and privileges whiteness and maintains existing power structures rather than enacting transformative social change.

Chapter Four: Artefacts of Everyday Reconciliation

The symbols are important as they show that you are making an effort and we are wanted there and it is important that we feel welcome there. And an effort is being made to feel at home there. Symbolism shows us the effort. But when there's too many symbols, it's like they are compensating for the lack of other things. There's no point if the children don't know what they mean.

(Parent, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parent Focus Group, June 2016)

I have been struck by how little the children mention the many items that form the built environment around the school, that were pointed out to me by teachers as being an example of how the school embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. I ask the children what they know about Aboriginal cultures and what the school has around that promotes the cultures. They talk about a dance troop that came to the school hall from the Northern Territory, that in class they chose their own totem and they wrote their own 'Dreamtime' stories. They don't talk about the built environment – the stuff you can see everyday - the flags, the artwork, the names of the buildings, the big display of library books. Actually that's a mistake, the other day one of the girls mentioned that since I have been in the school there's a lot more things out like the library book stand in the middle of the library displaying 'Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Books'. I am questioning whether I should be explicitly asking what children consider to be representative of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures around the school, however, this absence of discussion seems to be a finding in and of itself. (Fieldnotes, Acacia Primary, June 2016).

Introduction: 'The symbols are important'

The above quote from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent as well as my own fieldnotes demonstrate the importance as well as the tensions embedded within symbols of reconciliation. For this parent whose children attended different schools in the region, symbols were considered important, however she also expressed concern that at times there were too

many. She also noted that unless children are aware of the meaning and context of the symbols, they are superfluous. I also questioned this gap between the symbols and understanding of meaning in my own fieldnotes where I observed that at Acacia Primary School, children did not necessarily associate particular symbols as being 'Indigenous' or reconciliation, in contrast to how teachers viewed the symbols. As will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, the comments made in the two opening quotes and fieldnotes seem in contrast to how the schools, as well as the broader public, value and engage with symbols of reconciliation, and more specifically Indigenous cultures and histories. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the summarising symbols (Ortner 1973) or artefacts (Schein 1990) of reconciliation at the two schools. It is divided into three sections: the first section examines symbols of everyday reconciliation; Section 2 focuses on the quantity of symbols; and Section 3 explores the types of symbols. Both Ortner (1973) and Schein (1996) acknowledge that although symbols are easy to observe, they can be difficult to interpret, requiring an understanding of how meaning about the artefacts are interpreted by the group (values and beliefs) as well as the tacit structures embedded in the culture (assumptions). Thus, even though this chapter focuses on the surface level of reconciliation at both schools, it is very difficult to engage with them without interweaving the broader context ascribed to the symbols, which emerged through interviews, focus groups, and within Government and public discourse about reconciliation and associated concepts more broadly.

Section 1: Symbols of everyday reconciliation

Concepts of 'symbols', 'symbolic' and 'symbolism' have featured prominently in the reconciliation narrative since the establishment of CAR during the late 1980s. Attendees at the 1997 Reconciliation Convention turned their backs on the then Prime Minister's comments describing Australia's past simply as being a 'blemish'. Cathy Freeman ran with an Aboriginal flag and Australian flag in her victory lap during the Sydney Olympics amid supportive crowds in the stadium, simultaneously the symbol of a strong public discourse that the Australian flag represents all Australians and that the Olympics are a-political. The image of over 250,000 Australians 'united' during the Reconciliation Bridge Walk across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 'support of Indigenous Australians', as well as in response to the explicit refusal by the then Prime Minister Howard to formally apologise to the Stolen Generation after the tabling of the *Bringing Them Home* report (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997). The inaugural 2018 Reconciliation Day Public Holiday in the ACT has been established. RAPs have been developed in businesses and Government organisations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander flags fly at schools and on Government buildings. As Davis describes in an interview, the 'annual ritualistic performance' of the Prime Minister delivering the 'Closing the Gap report' which fails to meet its goals each year (Dapin 2018). Even events that occurred prior to the 1990s are being re-visioned into 'reconciliation', such as the 1967 referendum campaign as the start of 'reconciliation', as documented on the Reconciliation Australia website.

The very term 'symbolic' has been synonymous with reconciliation more broadly, where during the 1990s the then Prime Minister John Howard reduced reconciliation to either being practical or symbolic. Under Howard, practical became measures to redress the differential outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Processes of self-determination (such as treaties, Indigenous voices) and engaging with racialised relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples were reduced to 'symbolic gestures'. The past was to be forgotten and the contemporary was to focus on making things better.

Now I totally agree that they [Aborigines] have been appallingly treated in the past. But I didn't do that. I won't feel guilty about it. But because we feel guilty we have these nonsenses such as treaties. And it is nonsense. I say let's forget about the past and start again and just concentrate on making things better for the Aborigines (Howard 2004 cited in Beresford 2006)).

Making things better for 'the Aborigines', however, became assimilation, marked with neoliberal values and policy processes that problematised the Aboriginal problem due to cultural deficits, rather than through a rights-based approach to self-determination. However, as Dodson (2018) attests, the creation of this binary between symbolic and practical is 'a false dichotomy' (2018: 59). He reflects on this era that addressing the deeply entrenched inequities and inequalities is determined by being absorbed into the West. 'Public policy that celebrates Indigenous culture has been shunned...the way forward is for Indigenous people to abandon their identity and be absorbed into European society' (Dodson 2007: 22).

The tensions between practical and symbolic gestures of reconciliation have continued to be embedded in the discourse in relation to reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs more broadly since Howard's Prime Ministership, still often creating heated social media and public debate. Most recently, 'symbolic gestures' were prominent in the discourse surrounding the Constitutional Recognition public education campaign – 'Recognise'. Throughout this campaign a red 'R' bold on a black background was commonly seen on bumper stickers and on office billboards. However, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples voiced dissent

to the Recognise Campaign, particularly online (such as Liddle, McQuire, Foley as cited in Dreher et al. 2015), arguing that the very process of the Recognise Campaign and the focus on constitutional changes was merely ‘symbolic’ rather than offering real opportunities for structural changes. They suggested treaties were a preferred option for self-determination and realisation of rights rather than constitutional changes. In some States and Territories such processes have begun, such as in Victoria, and Northern Territory (noting that many complexities embedded within a treaty process as well as the ongoing experiences of First Nations peoples in Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand despite treaties). Asmi Wood, Indigenous barrister and constitutional recognition academic during the Recognise Campaign, argued that constitutional recognition has the potential for being both symbolic as well as entrenching legislative provisions:

First, the symbolic constitutional recognition which acknowledges the place of Indigenous peoples as the first inhabitants of this Continent. Second the substantive constitutional provisions that promote equality for Indigenous people and prevent the discrimination and adverse treatment of Indigenous peoples (Wood 2013: 156).

Megan Davis, extends this to acknowledge that the very concept of ‘recognition’ can be both symbolic and offer structural changes:

It can be symbolic, something like a statement of acknowledgement inside a constitution, but it can also mean ‘substantive reform to power relations’ – as in reserved or designated seats, a treaty or agreement-making power, or an autonomous region
Davis (2018: p23)

However, Davis notes that the very concept of recognition within the Recognise Campaign was often reduced to being either a symbolic gesture of acknowledgement, or a legally binding gesture (Davis 2018).

The Government’s quick rejection of the proposal embedded in the Uluru Statement from the Heart (as discussed in Chapter 1), due to concern about the potential impact on Australia’s democratic political structures of creating a possible ‘third arm of Parliament’, highlights a continued paradoxical politics of recognition and reconciliation that has existed, and continues to exist, both in Australia and in other colonial settler states such as Canada (Coulthard 2014). It is a rhetoric of ‘listening’ through the establishment of CAR, the Recognise Campaign and Referendum Council (amongst the many other processes, commissions and reports such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnston 1991); the National Inquiry

into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997); and the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Final Report (2000)), yet a dismissal of recommendations that would seek to establish opportunity to enshrine Indigenous voices or suggest structural changes, or more explicitly challenge the normalised Western structures that have been established to maintain the benefits to those that fit within the norms (Mills 1999).

This paradox of ‘gesture politics versus meaningful recognition’ (MLDavis, tweet, 02.06.2018) has become a symbol of reconciliation in and of itself. As explicitly noted by Megan Davis in a social media tweet ‘meaningful recognition versus gesture politics’ under the photograph of the then Prime Minister, Turnbull, walking with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, as part of an AFL Indigenous Match, ‘Dreamtime at the G’. What made this tweet so poignant is that the walk Turnbull was undertaking was the annual Long Walk, a walk that commemorates Michael Long, an ex-AFL-playing Aboriginal who walked from Melbourne to Canberra to meet with the then Prime Minister, John Howard, and to raise awareness of the social injustices towards Indigenous peoples. This paradox of symbolic gestures as opposed to meaningful engagement is also evident in the recent appointment of Tony Abbott as Special Envoy to Indigenous Australians as well as how many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, educators and leaders on Ngunnawal Country spoke of reconciliation.

Having set the background to symbols and symbolism in reconciliation in general, I now take us through the school gates of Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary Schools to see, hear, and observe what was happening in the everyday.

Just another manic Monday at Red Gum Primary

It's a warm morning, as I walk past the faded and torn Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island and Australian flags flying high at the school entrance of Red Gum Primary School. It seems in contrast to the newness of the school which opened a couple of years ago, evident in the relatively small trees still attempting to offer shade to the children amongst the concrete playground. I walk into the administration building, which houses the school's executive staff offices, a wide open space for students and parents to hand in notes and

couches to sit on whilst waiting to be picked up if sick, and a long bench where the admin staff sit behind computers. On the narrow wall next to the long sign-in desk is an Aboriginal artwork – a dot painting, possibly not local to the area given the traditional central Australian style, however, there is no information about the artwork so it's just a guess. During an interview a couple of weeks earlier the Principal had commented that his focus for the year has been to increase the amount of Aboriginal artwork in the administration building to make it more culturally friendly for the Aboriginal children. A few of the students and staff have connections to Central Australia, however, there are many from other Aboriginal countries, as well as some students who are not aware of their cultural ties and I wonder whether all the artwork will be reflective of dot paintings. I sign in, take a 'visitor's pass' from the box which I shove into my bag and walk into the school.

As I push open the glass doors, I am confronted by concrete. A whole lot of concrete that in summer is glaring and hot and in winter creates a chilling wind tunnel. It's as if this concrete is covering up Country and maybe this was what the Principal was reflecting on in his observations that the school is 'un-Aboriginal'. I make my way through to the Kitchen Garden which is a two-room building at the back of the school, one a classroom with two large wooden dining tables and the second a kitchen with multiple stoves, ovens and sinks. The children are sitting on the floor, with the teacher sitting on a chair and a wooden painted talking stick is passed amongst the children if they wish to contribute to class discussion. Today it is all about Anzac Day, in preparation for the public holiday commemorating (celebrating) the battle of Gallipoli in World War 1, and subsequent wars. No mention is made of Aboriginal Australians representing Australia, nor the Frontier Wars. The teacher mentions the two referendums where the Australian public voted no against conscription. He also talks about how ANZAC Day itself was instigated by women (the mothers, wives and girlfriends) who had remained in Australia and wanted to remember the soldiers through recognising their service, and that initially the Government was not supportive of this day. Just prior to making Anzac biscuits the teacher plays on the smart screen 'And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda' – an evocative song both visually and the

as well as the words, about the battle of Gallipoli. The children don't bake the sweet crunchy ANZAC Biscuits, ones usually eaten during Anzac Week, rather, they make Anzac biscuits or 'bricks' that the ANZACs would have eaten whilst in the battle to show the children how hard it would have been for the ANZACs, including the type of food they would have eaten. During the baking, a girl asks what was the war actually about? The teacher responds 'It was about countries wanting to take over land from others. England wanted to take land from Turkey and the Turkish were protecting their land'. One of the Aboriginal boys in the class looks up and says 'Just like the Aboriginal people, when the British came to Australia and they tried to take the land'. The teacher agrees and says 'That's right, they tried very hard'. The school siren goes and the children all run out of class for their first break.

Straight after the first break, the Year 3-4 children all noisily congregate waiting for a shared class in the hub area. Groups of children chat, point, giggle and I find it difficult to decipher the banter. It is obvious that most groups of children are culturally, linguistically and ethnically mixed. In contrast to the ethnic diversity within the groups, the groups are explicitly gendered. In the hub there are posters describing the school values: caring, respect, positive attitude, and learning. One of the teachers enters hastily and calls out two girls to join him a little down the corridor. It is obvious that he is fuming. And although they are separate from the rest of the children, snippets of the conversation can easily be heard. 'You never call another kid a name related to their skin colour...I know you are a good kid but this is not acceptable.' Both girls look embarrassed. The girls come back, sit apart, no one reacts including to console either child, and the same teacher sits in front of the children, wipes his brow, takes a deep breath and starts the lesson. It hushes down surprisingly quickly as he captivates them by reading the book 'Are We There Yet' by Alison Lester. This book is the teaching resource to start discussions of landmarks in Australia, one of the curriculum requirements for Year 3. Throughout the reading of the book, the teacher provides additional storytelling adding to the simple text of the book. He tells stories of some of his growing up in Darwin, on Larrakia Country, and he explicitly states he is not Larrakia and shares with the children which Country he and his family are from.

Half an hour later down the corridor, numeracy class is happening, and a teacher enters the class and calls out the 'Indigenous children' by name to come – the 'club' is on today. As the four children noisily depart the class, the class teacher does not react. The children run out of class, running past posters displaying dark skinned and fair skinned children playing together with the captions of 'respect' and 'kindness'. As they slow down to walk through to the back of the library, front covers of a range of books are displayed prominently on the wall. The books are diverse, from Harry Potter to Star Wars and also include 'Maralinga, The Anangu Story' (the Yalata and Oak Valley community members with author Christobel Mattingley description of what happened in the Maralinga Tjarutja Lands of South Australia, before and after Australia's nuclear testing bombs) as well as one book about diversity 'A Life like Mine. This week's focus at the Club is on sore ears – the irony is felt by the teachers and staff of the Club regarding their repeated requests for the children to sit down and 'listen', as they have a frustrated giggle on the side with each other. The local Aboriginal Medical Centre staff lead the discussion by stating that 'Our children, our mob have more ear aches than the 'normal' children'.

After the second break of the day, all students noisily and confusedly line up for their Monday afternoon electives. One of the electives is a didgeridoo class, offered by one of the Aboriginal staff, only to boys, from Kindergarten to Year 6. It is held at the 'Indigenous Rock Garden'. Unlike the rest of the concrete jungle of the school, the Indigenous Rock Garden is located in what seems to be the only patch of grass with established gum trees. It's hidden, behind classrooms right at the back of the school. I hadn't explored this area on my self-guided tour of the school a few months earlier and had only come across it after the Principal had asked if I had seen the Indigenous Rock Garden. 'An Indigenous Rock Garden?' I questioned as I had never heard of one before. I began to ask other teachers about this space. Some of whom had no awareness of it. Others relayed frustration that some of the Aboriginal families and some teachers a couple of years earlier had requested the creation of a yarning space at the school, however, an executive staff member had decided that what was needed was an Indigenous Rock Garden. Today at the Indigenous Rock Garden boys sand hollowed out tree branches,

discuss designs they would like to draw onto their yidakis (digeridoos), and learn about protocols of playing, including discussions about the use of the word digeridoo and that in different areas there are different names.

(Collated fieldnotes and interviews, 2016)

The Reconciliation Action Plan Meeting at Acacia Primary

It was halfway through Term 3, I had been coming to Acacia Primary School every week for the past 3 months. Today didn't involve classroom observations nor focus groups. I had been invited by the Principal to participate in the inaugural RAP meeting. Up until now, neither of the schools in the study had a RAP. As I walk past the school gates, after all this time I still struggle to make out the words 'Welcome to Country, please leave your footprints on our land', which apparently are inscribed in local language. However, this lack of visibility is in contrast to the large Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island and Australian flags flying prominently above the administration building. As I walk into the building, on the glass door is a display of pictures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Olympians, entitled 'Our Indigenous Olympians' (there are no other pictures up of any other Olympians). I walk past another set of large flags displayed in the foyer. As I look into the glass wall of the Principal's office, there is another set of flags on her desk. And on the bench where parents are loitering with the school office staff, there is another set of flags standing tall on the bench. That is four sets of flags. In one building.

The Principal's office and adjoining meeting room have additional artefacts: the AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia¹⁸ on the wall, boomerangs, tea-towels, clapping sticks, books all displayed on a shelving system that runs from one end of the room to the other. I sign in and walk through the staff only section of the admin building. The walls are adorned with diverse Aboriginal artwork, which includes information about the artist and the works, as well as photos of the school's opening four years earlier, which

¹⁸ The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia (Horton 1996) is an attempt to represent all the Indigenous languages, tribes and nation groups, based on published resources between 1988-1994. AIATSIS notes the map's limitations including that it is contested by some traditional custodians, is for general use and not to be used for Native Title purposes (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies).

included a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country by a local Elder. Such ceremonies are now held every year to start the school year. The building names have local words (however, I only ever heard teachers and children refer to the buildings as being the brown building or the red building). There are no parent teacher meetings at this school, instead there are yarn-ups. And as you walk into the modern library, there is a display of 'Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander books'.

As I walk past the glass doors of the hall, the anthem has finished and two students are at the lectern. I know what they are saying – 'We wish to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Ngunnawal Elders, past present and future. Together we will continue to care for the people, animals and land we are on. We also extend our acknowledgement and respect to all the cultures that make up this school community'. On the left hand side of the wall is a display of children's artwork, where at the top of the display are the words Reconciliation Week 2016. This display, about three meters wide, two meters high, included A4 printed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag as the centre piece. The remainder of the display included words 'friendship', 'respect', 'trust', 'harmony', 'peace', 'accept', 'together', 'everyone' in children's handwriting; cut out swans as well as A4 coloured in photocopies of swans, surrounding included contributions of all classes at the school; small drawings of symbolic images of 'Aboriginal' art symbols (boomerangs, emu tracks, snakes), and pictures of two feet symbolic of 'walking together'. Opposite this display is a display of a large tree with the title NAIDOC Week 2015 clearly displayed above.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander room houses the kitchen garden program and both the coordinator of that program and the Indigenous Education Officer are located here. It is in this room all classes come once a week for an hour to learn about 'culture', sustainability, cooking, gardening. Whilst there this morning I am shown Year 6 jerseys that have just arrived, designed by the children and a local Aboriginal designer. The jersey has Aboriginal motifs on the body of the shirt and on the sleeves the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, are prominently displayed. The Australian flag, smaller than the other two flags, is on the back, and a comment is made

that given most of the girls have long hair it will even be hidden – ‘Isn’t that great’.

When asked what I am up to today, it becomes clear that neither staff member had been notified of the RAP planning meeting. Feeling uncomfortable that they hadn’t been invited, I make an excuse that I need to go and return to the staff room. I walk past a display of the letters of the alphabet covered with Indigenous dot motif designs and a few words presumably related to Indigenous perspectives are stuck under the letters. They include: bush and bogong (moths) under the letter B; Ngunnawal, nomadic and nutrition under N; tucker, taste, texture for T. There is no A for Aboriginal or T for Torres Strait Islands but there is I for indigenous [sic with lower case I]. This is particularly interesting given children in one of the classes at this school tell me that they must use the word Indigenous, not Aboriginal.

Back in the staffroom, the meeting begins and both the Indigenous Education Officer and the kitchen gardener walk in – there was a mix up in sending out an email to participate. The meeting firstly focuses on a chronological reflection on what the school and staff have already achieved in reconciliation and a long list of artefacts of reconciliation is produced on a butcher’s paper, even longer than my own reflections of walking through the front gates of the school. One of the participants sits back, smiles and nods stating that ‘We all deserve a pat on the back’. The meeting then leads to a brainstorm on butcher’s paper with headings based on the three themes prescribed by Reconciliation Australia for the school RAP: Respect, Relationships and Opportunities with columns of ‘in the classroom’, ‘around the school’ and ‘with the community’. One of the teachers comments that even the way they are developing their RAP isn’t white-man’s approach – I’m not sure which aspect of the process she is referring to.

The discussion is predominantly a reflection of what was already being undertaken in the school, which in the few years since the school opened seems an incredible amount – from Welcome to Country ceremonies, use of local language to name buildings and school plays, engagement with the local community. However, teachers also include other examples such the purchasing of authentic tea-towels and table cloths for the school with

Indigenous designs. This example remains with me as I had recently come across the work of Rose (2015) and his notion of the 'silent apartheid', where in relation to teacher's blindspots he explicitly comments – 60,000 years of richness is relegated to 'tokenistic myths and images on tea towels' (2015: 67).

In the Respect column 'kitchen garden' is heavily circled and I ask why the kitchen garden program is included under the term respect. The response is: 'Everything we do we link back. We talk about the Indigenous nomadic lifestyle and how Aboriginal people couldn't go to Woolies or Maccas. It's linked to bush tucker, environment, land, sustainability'. I sit there thinking that it may be good to suggest for staff to read 'Dark Emu' by Bruce Pascoe, a book that has challenged the notion of Aboriginal peoples being nomadic, raising awareness of the sophisticated agricultural practices as well as the socio-political-historical context early settlers were needing to position to maintain the possession of land for the Crown. Although I eventually suggest 'Dark Emu' to individual staff members at a later opportunity, at the time, the thought that I couldn't get out of my head was that no one in the world had Woolies and Maccas during the era of 1788.

Collated fieldnotes and interviews, 2016

These two narratives were the 'everyday' for the children and staff at Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary Schools. They reflect the schools as 'racialised cultural landscapes' (Vass 2012; Walton 2018; Zembylas 2018), that from the moment the children walked through the school gate, they were exposed to affective, material and discursive assemblages of reconciliation and associated concepts of Indigenous peoples and cultures, Australian history, reconciliation as well as race, racism and whiteness. The built environment, choice of curriculum documents, ways teachers interacted with students and with staff all became part of the assemblages. However, as demonstrated in the above narratives, these symbols were also strongly embedded within narratives of paradoxes and contradictions about cultural deficits and cultural strengths, unity and diversity, stereotypes, colonial storytelling as well as resistance and resilience. Not one teacher, nor one classroom, nor one school presented one narrative or delivered one approach, even within one lesson; thus in one day children were exposed to a cacophony of messages.

Drawing from the above narratives as the anchor and incorporating additional narratives from fieldnotes, interviews and focus groups, the following two sections of this chapter explores the summarising symbols or artefacts of reconciliation at both schools. In the next section, I apply Ortner's approach to listing the symbols to reveal a fundamental difference between the two schools in 'quantity'. Following this, I then focus on the different 'types' of symbols which I have grouped into four broad categories: symbols of whiteness; Indigenising symbols; symbols of silence / silencing symbols; and symbols of resistance.

Section 2: Quantity of Symbols

Ortner's (1973) approach to determining whether a symbol is key to a group is much more expansive than the previous Prime Minister John Howard's reduction of some aspects of reconciliation being symbolic, as discussed above. Ortner (1973: 1339) suggests the following ways to determine whether a symbol is key to a culture based on five approaches:

1. One is told that the symbol is important
2. Positive or negative reactions to the symbol are observable
3. The symbol emerges in different contexts (behavioural or systemic, in conversation and action and in different domains)
4. A particular symbol is spoken about more than other symbols
5. There are restrictions on the use or sanctions regarding its misuse.

Using Ortner's approach, Table 6 highlights some of the symbols and artefacts of reconciliation at the two schools.

Table 6: Some symbols and artefacts of reconciliation at two schools, Everyday Reconciliation study

Acacia Primary Artefacts of Reconciliation	Red Gum Primary Artefacts of Reconciliation
Examples • Many Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island flags throughout the school, outside, in classrooms • Acknowledgement of Country posted in classrooms and on doors • Diverse artworks with information about the artist and artwork in the administration block • Local language used to name buildings • Smoking Ceremony to start the school year • Acknowledgement of Country at all assemblies • Harmony Day Assembly with whole school singing 'We are one but we are many' • Reconciliation Week activities • 2015 NAIDOC Week artwork in the hall • 2016 Reconciliation Week artwork in the hall • Curriculum resources • Explicit link to the cross-curriculum priority on school website; • Displays throughout the year in school foyer: 'Our Indigenous Olympians' with photos of Indigenous Olympians • Displays of books (by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors on bush-tucker) in the Kitchen Garden • Display of alphabet of Aboriginal 'things' in the Kitchen Garden • Year 6 jersey designed by local Aboriginal artist) • Library book display: 'Some of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Books' positioned in centre of the library • RAP committee established and draft RAP written • Professional Learning for all teachers during staff meetings led by IEO • Classroom lessons on local Ngunnawal history • Classroom geography lessons that use 1970s remote Aboriginal schools to compare similarities and differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools¹⁹	Examples: • One set of Australian, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island flags at entrance to the school; • Acknowledgement of Country at all assemblies; • NAIDOC Week Assembly • NAIDOC Week artwork displays; • Harmony Day activities that began with a bacon and egg breakfast muffin and a show case of displays of dance and song led by the children; • Curriculum Resources (some reserved in a special area for Indigenous students for when they attended literacy support groups); • Indigenous Rock Garden • Artwork in the office • Displays of books (by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors on bush-tucker) in the Kitchen Garden • Didgeridoo Elective applying Aboriginal protocols to who can participate (boys only) • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Clubs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students • History unit on First Contact • School Excursion to National Museum • Reading of Nanberry by Jackie French during group reading

¹⁹ There were many other symbols that have been removed from Acacia Primary's list to maintain anonymity of the school. However, if were included would demonstrate even more dramatically the difference between the two schools in terms of quantity.

As Ortnner predicts, during this phase of documenting a list of symbols, the list becomes a jumble of both actions and products (1973: 1339), aimed at students and/or teachers/and or the wider school community. The list quickly becomes a list of symbols that could be defined as being 'Indigenous' – Indigenous books (whether it's by an Indigenous author or about Indigenous perspectives on a particular topic such as bush tucker), Indigenous protocols (Welcome to Country or teaching didgeridoo only to boys), use of local Indigenous language (on buildings and in school song), local Indigenous history (as per the Australian Curriculum requirement) – and a few symbols that explicitly engage with the term 'reconciliation' (during National Reconciliation Week). Given that the Australian Curriculum explicitly focuses on reconciliation being about learning about Indigenous cultures and histories, it is unsurprising that the schools, at a surface level, respond to incorporating symbols that engage with culture (and, less so, history).

As I produce the list, it becomes obvious that I too may be falling into the trap of ignoring other symbols that are embedded in this space of reconciliation – symbols of race, racism and whiteness. I question, should I be producing a list in contrast to a 'reconciliation' list to ensure I am not silencing the interplay between reconciliation, and race, racism and whiteness? What would a list of whiteness symbols look like? How does one create a list of whiteness when the school in and of itself is a white space and the symbols of reconciliation seems to perpetuate this whiteness? Furthermore I consider adding additional columns to Table 6 to identify the types of symbols (which I discuss below) they may be (e.g., whether they are Indigenising Symbols or whether they are more aligned to Symbols of Silence). However as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, the labelling of a symbol without context can become problematic. I respond to these particular questions and nuances in the following section.

Quantifying symbols of reconciliation

Returning to the above list, despite its limitations, the tabling of a list of symbols of reconciliation highlights a fundamental difference in the quantity of symbols and artefacts between the two schools. As mentioned, executives and teachers at Acacia Primary spoke of 'embedding Indigenous perspectives in everything we do'. Although this was not as explicit in the way executives spoke at Red Gum Primary, symbols within the built environment were certainly the starting point in discussing reconciliation, such as flags and artwork. For example, two of the executive staff at Red Gum Primary raised that the reconciliation priority for the school during the year was to increase the amount of Aboriginal artwork in the school:

Last year we started talking about it and we've put some, like I mean it sounds so petty doesn't it, but put some artwork in the front office just so that it looks like, you know, like we're when people come into this school, you go oh well, they do think about um you know their Indigenous families a lot because look there's artwork in front of us. So yeah we just think beforehand it didn't show that. So this year we are trying to make more of the ceremonial type and you know the, the face of the school. That we will celebrate and put it out there a little bit more so it's in our school plan for 2016 that there will be a bit more.

Interview, female Executive, April 2016

The quantity and outputs of artefacts and summarising symbols is often interpreted as reflecting outward commitment and positive attitudes (Ortner 1973) towards reconciliation. Such an approach seems to be demonstrated in Reconciliation Australia's RAP program, and how reconciliation is measured within the biennial RAP Impact Measurement Reports (Reconciliation Australia 2016). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Reconciliation Australia is a private, non-Government organisation, funded by both Government and philanthropy, tasked with continuing the work of CAR, which ceased to exist from 2000. The RAP program provides a framework for 'organisations to realise their vision for reconciliation and are a business plan that outline how an organisation will contribute to reconciliation in Australia' (Reconciliation Australia 2016: 4). There are three 'pillars' that inform all RAPs – Relationships, Respect and Opportunities and organisations can develop four different types of RAPs – Reflect; Innovate; Stretch; or Elevate reflecting 'different stages of the organisation's reconciliation journey' (Reconciliation Australia 2016). According to the 2017 RAP Impact Measurement Report, 933 organisations have created a RAP, which includes large corporate businesses, government agencies, non-government agency sectors, such as the early childhood sector. In the 2016 report, RAPs were deemed as 'having an extremely positive effect in workplaces across Australian – they are helping to inspire respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and igniting more action to support reconciliation' (Reconciliation Australia 2016: 3). However, this seems to be in contrast to other data, also presented by Reconciliation Australia, as discussed below.

The 2016 RAP Impact Measurement Report suggested that non-Indigenous individuals in a company with a RAP believe that trust between the two reconciling 'groups' is higher than those individuals in a company without a RAP. However, of concern is a large difference

between non-Indigenous people in a company with a RAP compared to those without a RAP in terms of perceptions about the prevalence of prejudice towards Indigenous Australians; where 6% compared to 49%, respectively, believe there is high level of prejudice between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians. Such a result suggests those non-Indigenous people in companies with RAPs could be perceiving Australia to be more ‘reconciled’ – which is in contrast to the experience of Indigenous Australians, where empirical research suggests that Indigenous Australians experience prejudice, discrimination and different forms of racism, at an interpersonal, intrapersonal, institutional and structural and meta level, as discussed in Chapter 1. They also experience different forms of racism including explicit (old) racism, not just subtle or covert racism on a regular basis (Bodkin-Andrews et al 2017; Cunningham and Paradies 2012; Ferdinand et al 2012; Habibis et al 2016; Mellors 2003; Paradies and Cunningham 2009;) (see Chapter 1). For example, in a study based in Victoria, 97% of respondents had at least one experience of racism in the previous year of the survey, while 70% acknowledged worrying about racism (Ferdinand et al. 2012).

It seems that RAPs have become the ‘summarising symbol’ (Ortner 1973) of reconciliation rather than being viewed as part of the process, or an output. A quick search of the word ‘reconciliation’ on the Commonwealth Department of Education and the ACT Education Directorate illicit the Department’s RAP as the first link. This is further demonstrated on the Reconciliation Australia website where on the homepage, RAPs are the first of seven tabs, rather than ‘What is reconciliation’, which is fifth. This particular question of the direction that Reconciliation Australia has taken reconciliation was reflected on in Megan Davis’ summary on the process of the 12 constitutional dialogues held throughout Australia in the lead up to the 2017 First Nations National Constitutional Convention held at Uluru. Davis (2018) explained that during the first day of each dialogue, she was surprised that the concept of truth and truth-telling emerged about Australian and Aboriginal history:

Many participants felt that Reconciliation Australia was not focused on truth and justice, but aimed at galvanising citizenship rights and services, such as employment opportunities. Reconciliation however is squarely and solely about truth and justice. Before there can be justice there must be truth (2018: 28).

This call for truth-telling responds directly to research undertaken by Reconciliation Australia itself. Reconciliation Australia’s Reconciliation Barometer, is a biennial measurement on ‘reconciliation’, developed in 2007 by Reconciliation Australia and Auspoll, and attempts to measure the progress of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In

2016, it acknowledged that a reconciled Australia is built on strong relationships, greater mutual respect and improved opportunities for Indigenous peoples (Reconciliation Australia 2016). Those surveyed included 2,277 non-Indigenous Australians (note that no information is provided on whether they are 'self-identified', nor is additional information provided on the diversity of this group), representative of the 2011 Census population, and 500 self-identified Indigenous Australians recruited from a professional market and social research panel. It is noted that the Indigenous Australians in the survey are not necessarily representative of Indigenous Australians, particularly those living in remote areas of Australia. Despite the limitations of the survey including a deficit approach (Moodie and Patrick 2017; Rowse 2012), the Barometer offers data reflecting the general public's awareness about Australia's history, which has increased from the beginning of the survey in 2007: 32% of non-Indigenous Australians do not accept that government policy enabled the removal of Indigenous children from their families without permission until the 1970s; 36% do not accept that Indigenous Australians were subjected to mass killings, incarceration, forcibly removed from their land and restricted movement throughout the 1800s; one-third of Australians do not accept that Indigenous Australians did not have full voting rights until the 1960s; and just over 50% accept Australia was 'owned' by Indigenous Australians prior to colonisation. More alarming is that 33% of Indigenous Australians compared to only 28% of non-Indigenous Australians recognise the need to rectify past wrongs before all Australians can 'move forward' (Reconciliation Australia 2016: 13), despite the overwhelming response throughout the constitutional dialogues and convention.

As noted it seems that RAPs have come to symbolise reconciliation, and in a way, reconciliation has been reduced to a 'tick-box' of whether an organisation or business has a RAP (or organising committee such as the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games). This is evident in the emphasis placed on RAPs as the measure of reconciliation by Government, where Government funding for Indigenous communities is being directed from Indigenous-led organisations to non-Indigenous organisations based on whether the organisation has a RAP or not (Davis 2018). Just like so many other processes in Indigenous Affairs and policies, reconciliation has been reduced to a technocratic process of outputs that perpetuates the existing racialised systemic power structures rather than investing in processes and outcomes that acknowledge and work with re-shifting power and privilege, engaging with Indigenous voices and aspirations (Jordan and Fowkes 2016; Sullivan 2008). Such sentiments have been expressed by leading academics in reconciliation and Indigenous leaders. Maddison, co-director of the Indigenous Settler Relations Collaboration, suggests reconciliation is now

‘associated with meaningless platitudes rather than transformation’ (2016: 16). Similarly, Patrick Dodson (2018: 59) suggests ‘as we entered this new century, the process [of reconciliation] became corporatised, bureaucratised and almost redundant’.

The year I was in the field, the ACT Education Directorate reviewed their RAP, which is required tri-annually by Reconciliation Australia. The Directorate committed to undertake the review as an organisational cultural change process. As part of this process, the Directorate engaged with Murrimatters Consultancy, an organisation that uses the traditional intercultural understanding process based on Mithaka protocols of Engoori. The RAP process included extensive engagement with Indigenous staff members, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group, and was co-chaired by Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff members. The RAP, including the entire process, was published as a poster as well as postcards with an image of a tree with deep roots reflecting opportunities as organisational growth, respect as individual accountability, and relationships as reflecting engaging locally. The branches of the tree are key actions agreed to in the RAP – from documenting Ngunnawal Elders’ life stories through to incorporating actions into Performance Development Conversations as well as the development of a Cultural Integrity Framework (discussed in detail in Chapter 9). There were no employment targets included in the RAP as they were already included in the Directorate’s Employment Strategy. Evident from the RAP itself was a focus on organisational cultural and structural changes. The postcards and the poster explicitly had the question – ‘*What is your next most powerful step?*’ central on the page – in an attempt to instil an ongoing conversation about reconciliation, in response to the review of the previous RAP not being implemented. It was also an attempt to ensure the RAP was ‘kept alive’ as a process, rather than the end result. However, according to Directorate staff the RAP 2016–2018 was never endorsed by Reconciliation Australia as it did not ‘fit into their pro forma’ (Directorate Staff interview). As a result, it would seem that the technocratic process of RAPs impacted on an ongoing process that may have potential to extend reconciliation from a ‘corporatised, bureaucratised and almost redundant’ (Dodson 2018: 59) process to one focussed on organisational cultural and leadership change to reconciliation and Indigenous Education more broadly. Despite this, the RAP is still a central policy within the Directorate.

In 2014, the year I began my PhD, Reconciliation Australian began a philanthropically-funded (by BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities – a mining company) school RAP program known as ‘Narragunnawalli’. The term itself is a Ngunnawal word meaning ‘alive, wellbeing, coming together and peace’, as the main offices of Reconciliation Australia are located on Ngunnawal Country. Since it began, support for the program has increased rapidly: at the end of 2017, 1,825

schools and early childhood learning services across Australia had developed a school based RAP (more than RAPs in general). In Narragunnawalli's formal evaluation (2016–2017), 247 school RAP Working Groups completed a Service Reflection Survey, to 'measure the current state of reconciliation' (Biddle 2016: 6) in their school or early learning service. The survey consisted of 24 questions and attempted to measure reconciliation in the classroom, around the school and in the community. The measures used by the evaluators were very high level such as 'How many classroom teachers and educators regularly use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching and learning resources to assist in teaching'. No specific information was sought on what is an 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resource'. Biddle (2016) notes that those who completed the survey had a high level of uncertainty in answering the questions in terms of their knowledge about what was occurring at all three levels. Yet, the evaluation reports found a statistical correlation between schools that flew a flag, had teachers who had undertaken cultural competency, and delivered an Acknowledgement of Country at school. In the Service Reflection Survey, no additional information was sought on the nature of the cultural competency program, or whether staff and students had an understanding of the protocol of an Acknowledgement itself. Such an evaluation, through its reduction of reconciliation to superficial outputs, perpetuates the ongoing positioning of 'symbols' as being reconciliation in and of itself.

It is important to note that at the time of my fieldwork, Narragunnawalli, not just the evaluation, seemed to reflect the tick-box approach to reconciliation. However, on the Reconciliation Australia website during the few past years, there has been an increasing focus on engaging with more socio-historical perspectives and not only the culturalist approach. This includes a focus on 'racism' and encourages schools to have an anti-racism strategy as well as access to resources explicitly linked to racism. In addition, Reconciliation Australia also provides resources that support teachers to critically engage with different narratives such as 'commemorating or celebrating national days of significance' (<https://www.narragunnawalli.org.au/curriculum-resources>). This seems a positive shift; however as demonstrated throughout the thesis, policies that may attempt to instil social transformation are not in and of themselves the end result and even seemingly positive policies can be interpreted through the concept of 'settler grammars' which continue to maintain a settler society whilst celebrating a particular Indigene (Moodie and Patrick 2017).

In 2016, neither of the schools in the study of Everyday Reconciliation had joined Reconciliation Australia's school Narragunnawalli program, however, some of the staff at Red Gum Primary did consider it to be a good idea. Acacia Primary was starting to undergo a

process of developing a RAP, as described in the above vignette. What was interesting at Acacia Primary was a number of the staff had expressed scepticism about the RAP process and articulated that they did not need a RAP to embed Indigenous perspectives. However, at some point during the year a number of the staff had decided to start to explore undertaking a RAP. As described in the opening narrative, the majority of the discussion focused on what the school had already achieved. Furthermore, some of the approaches that I observed that were considered 'Indigenous' and used as examples during the meeting were possibly more closely related to Behrendt's (2016) notion of colonial storytelling, as discussed in Chapter 1, of what may be considered an Indigenous perspective. However, specifically with regards to the drafting of the RAP, as the committee was writing all the RAP activities on the butcher's paper, which was drawn up with tables and columns, one of the staff members suggested that even the way they are doing the RAP isn't even 'whiteman's approach', and documented on the butcher's paper that *'our approach is not a tick-box RAP'*, suggested an awareness of the community discourse that RAPs (and reconciliation) have been reduced to tick-boxes, while not necessarily de-tick boxing the approach. Despite this, the process of developing a RAP at Acacia Primary seemed to become self-congratulatory, as opposed to a reflexive process of questioning and considering whether approaches being undertaken in the school were actually contributing to 'reconciliation, respect and recognition'. This reiterated that a RAP was the outcome, not the tool to progress reconciliation. Acacia Primary's RAP did not progress further than the meeting described at the beginning of this chapter whilst I was undertaking fieldwork.

In concluding this section, given this thesis is about understanding how children interpret the symbols, it is important to note that many of the children did not acknowledge that the symbols that were promoted by teachers – or what was interpreted by me as being symbols of reconciliation – were related to reconciliation, or even as being reflective of Indigenous cultures. Very few children at Acacia Primary acknowledged the many symbols in the built environment, and in fact I began to question whether I should be explicitly asking them about the symbols; however, the absence of discussion reflected a finding in and of itself. Furthermore, even if children were aware of particular symbols, it did not mean they understood the meaning behind them. For example, a significant number of children from both schools were not aware of the purpose of an Acknowledgement of Country, despite their active engagement in it at school assemblies. What this suggests, however, is the importance of continuing to talk about and provide context about the symbols.

Section 3: Types of Symbols

Having listed the symbols of reconciliation in a table form, four broad categories of symbols emerge: symbols of whiteness; Indigenising symbols; symbols of silence/silencing symbols; and symbols of resistance. However, within each category of symbols, further categories develop, for example Indigenising symbols can be Indigenous protocols (such as Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country); and they can also be colonial storytelling of what is 'Indigenous', such as the establishment of an Indigenous Rock Garden becoming more a symbol of whiteness or a silencing symbol. As discussed in the introduction to Part 2 of the thesis, in relation to the assemblage of symbols of whiteness, the affect, engagement, and discourse surrounding the symbol can lead to it being interpreted by children and teachers, and from diverse backgrounds, differently. For example, the Aboriginal clubs at Red Gum Primary offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were clearly articulated by Aboriginal staff as resisting reconciliation, compared to other staff considering the clubs to be 'reconciliation' as they are about offering Indigenous students time to 'develop' culture and identity. These nuances are discussed in much more detail below.

Before continuing, a brief comment about 'exposure' to the following symbols. In the Luke et al. (2013) summative evaluation of the Stronger Smarter Learning Communities project using both control and non-control schools, teachers reported on the low amount of time they allocated to embedding Indigenous content, topics and knowledges. On reading this evaluation, it made me question how I would quantify the time allocated to messages of reconciliation. However, I concluded that there are extensive complexities in doing so. Such as how does one 'quantify' the amount of time children spends on 'whiteness', or how does one quantify time within the hidden curriculum, such as during assemblies or the celebrations of national days, or just by observing that there are many flags or the Indigenous rock garden is hidden in the back of the school? Thus, the following section focuses on the types of symbols as 'events' of reconciliation as opposed to quantifying the time spent on individual lessons. I do make some reference to whether particular approaches were 'one-offs' or more common as this is important in understanding the majority types of messages.

Symbols of whiteness

As noted in Chapter 1, there is a growing body of research building on the Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) application of critical race theory to an education setting, demonstrating that 'schools sustain inequities through operating as a function of White property' (Harris 1993,

cited in Vass 2014a: 177). Such literature not only identifies schools as space of whiteness, but also how whiteness is then relationally and socially (re)produced in institutionalised ways (Ahmed 2014; MacDonald and Reynolds 2017; Schick and St Denis 2005; Walton et al 2014; Walton et al 2018; Walton 2018; Vass 2014b; Zembylas 2010). Schick and St Denis (2005) argue of schooling in their extensive work on anti-racism and Aboriginal education in the Prairies, Canada,

The normative cultural practices of whiteness are pervasive throughout levels of schooling from administration to textbooks to interpersonal actions. The absence of racial recognition renders the whiteness – as normative – of most school activities invisible (2005: 300).

This was evident in both schools with the majority of staff being Anglo-Australian females; the textbooks in the main, including history books, were written by non-Indigenous people; and the way teachers and children interacted were all framed within a normative white culture.

The Easter Bunny hides whiteness

In order to extend how symbols of whiteness permeated the classroom and the two schools, I offer a description of one of the classes I observed during Easter at Red Gum Primary. I choose this example to demonstrate that whiteness emerged in many ways, not just in discussions of Indigenous cultures and histories, and how reconciliation is then constructed within a backdrop of this whiteness.

The teacher Anne had come to me earlier in the day, rolled her eyes and complained that this afternoon's class would be disrupted because they needed to offer religious Easter scripture classes (in the ACT this is an opt-in process where only one family needs to request such lessons and the schools then need to offer a class). Anne invited me to observe her class in the afternoon as she was going to be exploring different cultures instead of Easter. The lesson began with Anne sitting on a chair in front of about 30 children sitting eager-eyed on the floor, and she asks 'What do we mean by culture?' Hands tentatively raise from the floor – 'different countries', 'different cultures in the same country' and that 'in different parts of the world there are different rules and religions'. Anne agreed that all the three answers were correct and shared that 'everybody has a culture, sometimes we

forget that'. She goes onto suggest that 'even though we think others have accents, they would think that we have accents'.

The use of the word 'we' and 'others' stood out as she said them, and seemed to be an attempt to promote a shared identity within the group. Looking around the group there were many children who were visually non-Anglo Australian in contrast to the Anglo-Australian heritage of the teacher. These were the children who identified on their demographic surveys as their 'culture' being Pakistani, Indian, Iraqi, Samoan, not Australian or not even half Australian which others did. Religiously some of them identified as having none, being Muslim and Hindu. A number of these children have strong non-Australian accents. Looking around I considered how many of the children on the floor have the opportunity to 'forget' that they are considered to have a culture or forget that they themselves have accents against a white Australian norm? Despite this attempt to unify the group, I was interested at the potential the teacher was taking the discussion in raising awareness of the one of the tenants of whiteness that silences 'white culture' as being cultureless.

However, rather than extending this, Anne changes the conversation and she tells the children that this afternoon we are going to learn about how other different cultures celebrate Easter. We all move closer to a smartboard and watch a ten minute youtube video that showcases Easter rituals in Bermuda, Norway, Europe, and Sweden. A brief discussion about what the children learnt from the clip is opened up, and children suggest that it is cold in Norway during Easter as there was snow and they eat different food. The children are then encouraged to split into groups of four and the activity for the remainder of the class is to develop a poster of Easter. Children use class laptops to research celebrations on the website 'why Easter' which provides a list of countries children can choose from, where out of 18 countries listed, by far the majority are Western countries – including United States of America, Russia, England, Sweden. The children's posters remain on the wall for a couple of weeks following this activity as a reminder of 'Easter'.

At no point during this 1.5 hour lesson did children nor the teachers suggest or question that some people, including the children in the lesson, do not celebrate Easter. Nor was there a discussion about how secular Australians

celebrate Easter. There was no mention of the Easter Bunny, Easter Hat parades common in primary schools, nor chocolate Easter eggs, despite the shiny foil symbolic of chocolate Easter eggs being seen on the floor throughout the week.

Collated Fieldnotes, April 2016

This was the lesson offered to the children who had not attended the religious Easter class. Some of these children presumably did not attend because it was not how they celebrated Easter, if at all. Such a lesson reveals how 'whiteness' permeates the classroom and becomes embodied within the class and school through the discursive, material and affective assemblages. Firstly the teacher's discursive practices – from the use of the terms 'we' and 'others' that suggest that the teacher was attempting 'a unified discourse community' (Hollingsworth 2009) or racial bonding (Sleeter 2000; Vass 2014b) in which the Anglo-Australian teacher assumed the children were just like her. Visually, linguistically, ethnically and culturally (amongst other points of difference including age) the children were not a unified discourse community. Such a process seems to fit within a racelessness logic (Schick and St Denis 2005), which suggests that the classroom has moved into a post-racialised society, and that the 'others' are external to this group. Secondly, the very topic chosen to explore culture for a group of children who possibly did not celebrate this Christian (and also secular) Australian festival as well as the material resources the teacher chose to use as tools in her classroom represented majority Western cultures. Finally, the observation that no child suggested that they do not actually celebrate Easter, or the absence of discussion of the way Easter is celebrated in Australia, demonstrates the possibility of students 'feeling constrained in their speech or adapt their way of thinking' (Walton 2018: 63) to this space of whiteness.

These particular examples of whiteness-in-action (Yoon 2012) reflect similar findings from other studies. Walton (2018) in her self-reflexive piece on her own experiences being the only Asian at her school detailed how she did not question teachers or when she spoke up about her racialised experiences amongst peers, teachers devalued or rejected her experiences. Vass (2014b) in his reflections of being a teacher in a high school setting, where he offers four different chronicles of how whiteness emerged in classrooms with students or around the photocopier with peers, provides similar observations.

Multiculturalism silencing reconciliation

In a contrasting example that seemed to challenge this whiteness-in-action, I offer further explanation of the lesson I describe in the Chapter 3 regarding flamenco dancing, which occurred in the same school, with a different teacher.

The children are sitting on the floor, and Paul, the teacher begins the morning lesson by sharing with the children that he bought a CD of Flamenco music from an op-shop over the weekend. He tells the children that he would like to play them some of the music, and puts the music on for a couple of minutes. Most of the children listen attentively and those who don't are given evil eyes by their peers. After a couple of minutes, Paul stops the music and asks the children how the music makes them feel. One boy says 'It sounded like Asian music because of their Asian accent.' Another boy says it is more like a Mexican accent. The teacher doesn't challenge them but asks is India in Asia, as he turns on his smart screen and looks for a map of Asia, centring India on the screen. He plays the song again, this time whilst the song is playing he tells the class that the singer is singing about a man on a cross. A few of the children yell out 'It's about Jesus'. Paul doesn't agree or disagree. Paul explains that the type of music is flamenco and that it is a combination of music including Indian, Greek and Egyptian. Paul then suggests that Flamenco music and dancing was established in Spain by gypsies, who are travellers who in one part of Spain lived in caves, and some still do. He explains that flamenco music has been influenced by external cultures, and Flamenco dancing also influences other cultures. Paul then shifts the conversation to Australia, and he asks whether Australia is considered Asia or not, and the conversation quickly shifts to West Papua, where Paul shares that depending on who you talk to in West Papua, they will give a different answer as to whether they are part of Papua New Guinea or not depending on who they are and how they view their history. The discussion returns to Australia, and Paul comments that Australian culture had been influenced by many cultures and many cultures are influenced by Australia. There is no mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures influencing Australia, nor the culture of whiteness influencing Australia in its appropriation of Indigenous cultures or non-Anglo cultures, nor is there any mention of how Australian white culture has influenced

Indigenous cultures. The class ends with Paul putting some examples of flamenco dancing on youtube.

This particular lesson demonstrates active attempts to disrupt whiteness such as Paul not making an assumption that the children know who Jesus is by explaining the song is about a man on the cross; the small interlude about West Papua having a contested history with multiple narratives; his focus on discussing the fluid nature of culture, including Australia's culture being influenced and influencing other cultures. However, despite this, there are also a significant number of silences and absences that are predictable of whiteness within colonial-settler states. In talking about Australia, Paul makes no reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures influencing or being influenced by colonial or multicultural Australia. Such an obvious omission demonstrates the entrenched positioning of Indigenous cultures as being static and anachronistic. It also demonstrates how teachers often did not naturally incorporate discussions of Indigenous Australia within broader discussions. What is of particular interest regarding flamenco music is it is considered as music of the 'oppressed', as a form of resistance to the aristocracy of Spain (Washabough 1995). It is in the absence and silencing of the origins of the music beyond being a fusion of cultures, as well as the silencing of Indigenous cultures within Australia, that whiteness is revealed.

The promotion of Australia being a multicultural, cosmopolitan society, which has been influenced by many cultures is relevant in the complexities of how 'multiculturalism' has silenced aspects of reconciliation, or at times combined them. Drawing on extensive multicultural scholarship, St Denis (2011) demonstrates how Canadian multicultural policies and practices prevent an anti-colonial analysis. She argues that 'racialised immigrants of colour are concerned that multiculturalism does not address racism and anti-immigration sentiments', compared to Aboriginal peoples focus with Indigenous sovereignty and continuing occupation of the land (St Denis 2011: 308). In this particular example above, St Denis' (2011: 310) argument that 'multiculturalism works against Aboriginal sovereignty and anti-colonialism in its production of national histories that imagine Canada [replace with Australia] as a socially just and successful multicultural state', is deeply fitting. Furthermore, only focusing on multiculturalism also can lead to the grouping of Indigenous Australians as an ethnic or cultural minority, just as with other minorities, which can lead to ignoring the ways 'people of color in settler formations are settlers on stolen lands . . . and historically may have been complicit with on-going land theft and colonial domination of Aboriginal peoples' (Lawrence and Dua 2005: 132, as cited in St Denis 2011: 311). This concept is particularly

important in Part 3 of the thesis in exploring whether a child's migrant story influences their engagement in reconciliation.

Despite these fundamental differences in 'reconciliation' (including Indigenous sovereignty and rights) and multiculturalism, both everyday reconciliation and everyday multiculturalism (Herron 2017; Wise 2005) function within a backdrop of whiteness. However, returning to an earlier point about teachers continually shifting their approaches within everyday reconciliation, in one of Paul's classes a couple of weeks later, immediately following the NAIDOC school assembly, he directly engages in a discussion with the same children about the changing nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Thus, on the one hand, when specifically engaged with Indigenous perspectives, Paul's approaches certainly disrupted whiteness, however, in other contexts, it was silenced and perpetuated its existence.

Physical spaces of whiteness

The final point I wish to make about symbols of whiteness is the physical environment of the schools and the location of particular symbols of what were considered as 'Indigenous'.

Fredericks (2013), explains 'spaces act as almost social texts, which convey signs, symbols and messages of belonging and exclusion, and produce and reproduce power relations within society'. In the opening two vignettes describing a typical school day, I detailed how at Acacia Primary, 'Indigenous' symbols were physically embedded throughout the physical environment of the school, from the moment of entering the school gate through to the back of the school. Such an approach certainly invoked a message of strong commitment and attempts to Indigenise the entire school environment. However, at Red Gum Primary, as noted by the Principal and in the description above, there was a stark contrast in lack of symbols, reflecting a very different space. Indigenous symbols tended to be 'hidden', such as the 'Indigenous Rock Garden' which was located right at the back of the school – if I had not been told about it I probably would not have realised it existed. Such physical positioning seemed to invoke a message that Indigenous spaces were out the back, segregated from the rest of the school. This segregation of space was further reiterated to me by staff who expressed concern about the lack of a permanent space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students, particularly evident in the shifting location of the Indigenous students' clubs (which was dependent on which room was available on that particular week).

These above examples of symbols of whiteness, are only a few of many that I observed throughout the school year in both schools that demonstrate the backdrop of the racialised

space where everyday reconciliation is (re)constructed. It is important to note that despite the following section being about Indigenising Symbols, it must be noted that some of the symbols could be categorised as being more reflective of symbols of whiteness than Indigenising. This will be explained in more detail below.

Indigenising Symbols

Within the Australian Curriculum and education policies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives have many different definitions and perspectives. They incorporate histories, cultures, stories, peoples, ways of life, ways of being, ways of thinking, experiences and viewpoints (Battiste 1998; 2009; Nakata 2002; Petrovich and Mitchell 2018). In addition, Moodie's (2018) decolonising CRT framework (Chapter 1) argues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives to ensure their 'futurity', with its 'technological possibilities and territorialisations' (Moodie 2018: 40), as opposed to maintaining a colonial storytelling of Indigeneity – including individuals, histories, cultures and knowledges.

As discussed in Chapter 1, there is an increasing body of literature that is demonstrating that despite the inclusion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures and Histories CCP and Teaching Standards, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives are not necessarily Indigenous perspectives or knowledges. For example, in Lowe and Yunkaporta's (2013) analysis of the Australian Curriculum the authors applied a matrix model to assess both the 'depth' (Yunkaporta 2009) and 'breadth and integrity' (Grant 1998) of Indigenous perspectives within the CCP. They concluded that the cultural content, approaches and the socio-historical perspectives included in the curriculum are in the main not reflective of Indigenous content and perspectives. Specifically, they determined that approximately only one-third (or 52 items out of 142) that make mention of the word 'Aboriginal' could be determined as being Indigenous perspectives. In a different study, Kelly (2013) in her doctorate thesis on pre-service teachers, concluded that the curriculum guidelines result in the exclusion of Indigenous experience as central to the Australian story, due the 'paradigm of viewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as 'the other', from the mainstream Australian story.

As demonstrated in the original narratives in the two schools as well as Table 5 regarding symbols in Part 2 of this Chapter, there was a diverse range of symbols that could be considered 'Indigenous'. They included Indigenous protocols such as Welcome to Country Ceremonies at school camps or to mark the beginning of the school year, or Acknowledgement

of Country during assemblies. At Red Gum Primary there were celebrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures such as NAIDOC Week events as well as the carving and teaching of didgeridoo for only boys, by Aboriginal staff. At Acacia Primary there were multiple sets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags on buildings and on school clothing, or local language on buildings. Both schools included some lessons about Aboriginal artwork demonstrating different approaches, as well as how they are also forms of maps, or how different Aboriginal communities 'had' (always positioned in the past) different climate systems to winter, spring, summer and autumn²⁰. Despite these events of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, overall the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives offered at Acacia and Red Gum Primary could be suggested as being 'inappropriate by-products' (Rose 2015) or 'colonial storytelling' (Behrendt 2016) of what is Indigenous knowledges and perspectives.

Inappropriate by-products or tokenistic symbols

In Chapter 1, I explored Rose's notion of the 'silent apartheid' within education that acts as promulgation to the silence as well as the creation of an abyss due to the silencing of 'legitimate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and experience' (2015: 71). One of the key challenges expressed by Rose (2015) is the application of inappropriate by-products in classrooms due to the 'abyss':

It is not only the 'silent apartheid' of the vacuum that it creates through sustaining ignorance, but more by the profusion of inappropriate by products generated to fill the void. These by-products are themselves often covert, presenting not as racism but as chronically jaded professional practice that is derisive and harmful to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the general population. Even in the 21st century, teachers are being encouraged to trivialise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through suggestions such as 'Make a Didgeridoo [sic] Like an Aborigine' from a cardboard tube and paint (Kool Children Crafts, 2014) (Rose 2015: 69).

Such approaches are evident in other recent studies that have explored Indigenous Studies in schools in Australia (such as Luke et al. 2013; Wilson 2016) and Canada (Gebhard 2017a; Schick 2009; St Denis 2004). Such inappropriate by-products and tokenistic approaches were also

²⁰ This class activity was directly from Pearson's Middle Years Primary Teaching 'history' resource. Three different Aboriginal Countries were used as examples in the activity, D'harawal in New South Wales, Noongar in Western Australia and Bining in Northern Territory.

clearly evident in everyday symbols of reconciliation at both Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary. At Acacia Primary, children shared that they were required to choose a totem 'like Aboriginal people had' (some had chosen a 'butterfly because it was easy to draw'; others 'a dog' and 'a wolf'). Another class activity was the writing of their own 'Dreamtime' Story or performing a Dreamtime story. Teachers used readily available web-based resources about Aboriginal 'culture' written by non-Indigenous people with their classes without questioning the author of the resources.

Just as there were less symbols overall at Red Gum Primary, there seemed to also be less of these by-products at Red Gum Primary. This is likely due to the focus of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'culture' being for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the club; Aboriginal teaching staff who offered additional classes to students on Aboriginal culture, such as the didgeridoo class; and a stronger focus on the history unit (which included some aspects of culture) as opposed to 'culture' or embedding Indigenous perspectives and knowledges. Noting this difference between the two schools, by-products were certainly discussed amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents from across the region during a focus group and interviews, indicating such by-products were not only occurring in Acacia Primary.

Parents shared many examples, at times through laughter, of what had occurred in their own children's school that reflected such approaches, and that their children were called upon to participate in them. For example, one mother explained how she had receive a phone call from one of her daughter's teachers complaining that her daughter had refused to participate in an Indigenous dance that had been created by non-Indigenous dance teacher for the Indigenous students.

It happened to my children at school where they called all the Aboriginal children together and they teach you a dance and to do a performance for the rest of the school. I got a call from my eldest who said on Monday they taught this dance and that she didn't want to do it because they're shaking their booty so much'. And my children have been taught not to do that. And I said that's fine not to do it and then I get a call from the school complaining that she is refusing to participate in the dance. I told them I agree with my daughter.

A different parent explained that they called on her son to inappropriately deliver a Welcome to Country, 'They've wanted him to do Welcome to Country and I said no because we are from Queensland so they're not even aware of protocols'. Another parent explained that her daughter

was in a class where the students were required to ‘create’ a Dreamtime Story, and the parent challenged the approach via an email. The teacher did not respond to the parent’s email, and told the daughter that she could research a Dreamtime Story, while keeping the same inappropriate task for the rest of the class.

In these experiences, where teachers were queried by the children and the parents, it not only challenged their approach but also the colonial-storytelling image of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians being ‘passive, childlike, and primitive’ (Behrendt 2016: 165) or the ‘Good Indigenous Citizen’ (Moreton-Robinson 2009). However, as Coulthard, Yellowknives Dene (Canadian First Nations) (2014) argues (drawing on the work of Fanon), in relation to interpretations of rejecting such by-products:

What implicitly gets interpreted by the State [or schools, or teachers] as Indigenous peoples’ resentment – understood as an incapacitating inability or unwillingness to get over the past – is actually an entirely appropriate manifestation of our resentment (2014: 109).

Such ‘inappropriate by-products’ as well as the lack of awareness of protocols is reflective of a culturalist approach (Pederson et al 2011; Walton et al 2013b; Watkins and Noble 2014) to intercultural understanding where its focus has been on learning about Indigenous people(s) and culture(s). Furthermore, as suggested by St Denis (2007), such approaches risk the (re)-construction and (re)-production of stereotypes of Indigenous perspectives, and they become the colonial storytelling of not only what is reconciliation, but also what is ‘Indigenous’. I wish to now extend this notion of by-products further through the lens of ‘colonial storytelling’.

‘Colonial storytelling’ Symbols

As discussed in Chapter 1, colonial storytelling (Behrendt 2016) refer to the narratives that are created to present an image of Indigenous Australians being the noble-savage or dystopian other, and they come to represent what is an acceptable ‘Indigenous construct’. Such notions of colonial storytelling of Indigenous Australians and cultures existed in the everyday at both schools. For example, as detailed in the above narratives, the use of the word nomadic on a display of ‘Indigenous’ words at Acacia Primary, or the establishment of an Indigenous Rock Garden at Red Gum Primary – what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students ‘needed’ being determined by a non-Indigenous executive (in place of a yarning space which was what was articulated by Aboriginal families and educators). Significant to the process of colonial

storytelling is an active and entrenched silencing of Indigenous people as knowers of their knowledges and narratives (Moreton-Robinson 2004; 2013).

Tracey Bunda (2018), a Ngugi Wakka Wakka academic, writes of her communications with Japananka Errol West, a Palawa intellectual warrior – where he explains his knowledge of Tasmanian history were not acknowledged and that he had to reference Henry Reynolds, renowned non-Palawa historian in order to gain any ‘legitimacy’. Such a preferencing of non-Indigenous voice creates a perceived lack of legitimacy in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as being knowledge holders of history. This ‘subordination’ was evident with some of the resources used by teachers in their classroom lessons, as well as resources that were simply on display in classrooms and libraries that were considered ‘Indigenous’.

One particular resource that stood out on the table in both schools was the large hardcover glossy book entitled *Explore Wild Australia with the Bush Tucker Man*, by Les Hiddins (Hiddins 1999). During the 1980s and 1990s, the book was turned into a television series, where the very first episode starts with Hiddens talking about an island off Australia’s north coastline not having a name and that the British explorer Bligh gave it ‘Restoration Island’. However, Hiddens is not Indigenous, and his knowledge about ‘bush-tucker’ was obtained from local Indigenous peoples. Henrietta Fourmile-Marrie (2000), an Indigenous rights activist from the Yidnji tribe, specifically uses the Bush Tucker Man, Les Hiddens, as an example of how ‘corporations gain access to, use, benefit from, and ultimately control components of traditional knowledge’ (Fourmile-Marrie 2000:164) without acknowledging or benefit being delivered to the local Indigenous knowledge holders (and sharers).

This process is well advanced in Australia where others have largely exploited our knowledge, with benefits accruing to those who have acquired, then disseminated, that knowledge. While to many the Bush Tucker Man, Les Hiddens, is the very public face of that process, many other non-Indigenous people and institutions are involved in the exploitation of Aboriginal knowledge. (Fourmile-Marrie 2000: 165)

This appropriation of Indigenous knowledge crafted into a book was central in both displays of ‘Indigenous books’ at both schools, perpetuating a cycle of Indigenous knowledges being appropriated and then disseminated, at times consciously at other times less so. I did not realise the context of this book until much later in the thesis, and unfortunately was not able to check with the teachers whether they knew of the controversy of the ‘Bush Tucker Man’; I suspect not and that they would have likely had chosen to display the book to reflect their

interest and commitment to sharing Indigenous perspectives such as ‘bush tucker’ with the children. However, given both of the teachers who displayed the book actively called on additional focus groups to further their understanding of reconciliation in schools, I also suspect that on learning about the book and the broader practice of appropriation, they would have either removed the book, and for one of them, even possibly have used this increase awareness with the children to discuss why he was removing it from his display as a decolonising process rather than just a removal of colonial storytelling.

Anachronistic symbols – the maintaining of the noble savage and the romantic other

Although the image of ‘Bush Tucker Man’ with the glossy, modern photo of himself on the front cover of the book may have contemporised the notion of bush food and medicine, many other symbols were far from positioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the contemporary. Rather, it was very common to hear grammatically the positioning of Indigenous people in the past by teachers, ‘they lived’, ‘they used to have different seasons’, ‘they had corroborees’, ‘they used symbols’ as part of their artwork. Or displayed in teaching resources used by teachers such as a worksheet that required children to provide answers to the following questions regarding ‘Taking Care of Country’:

Aboriginal people *lived* in small groups and moved from place to place within their territory according to the seasons.

Their diet *was* varied.

They *hunted* and *gathered* based on a take some leave some rule... (Lawless and Cameron 2012)²¹

Anachronistic positioning of Indigenous cultures reflects a lack of understanding that ‘culture is an organic fluid process that constructs and describes the economic, social and historic milieu of individuals or a people at any one moment’ (Schick and McNinch 2009: XV). Furthermore it contradicts Moodie’s (2018) suggestion that Indigenous knowledges and perspectives should demonstrate and promote their futurity.

²¹ According to the Pearson Education Australia’ website, [Discovering History](#) won Best Primary Student Resource – Arts/Science/Humanities at the Educational Publishing Awards Australia in 2013.

Australia's History in the Curriculum

It is highly likely that one of the reasons teachers maintained such a strong focus on the past was influenced by the strong focus in the curriculum and resources on colonial contact. The Australian Curriculum history unit for Year 4 students is comprised of the First Contact unit (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority HASS, History):

The content in the history sub-strand provides opportunities for students to develop historical understanding through key concepts including **sources, continuity and change, cause and effect, perspectives, empathy and significance**. The Year 4 curriculum introduces world history and the movement of peoples. Students study the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, their connection to place (sources, perspectives, significance) and their contact with other societies (change and continuity, perspectives, empathy). Through a study of navigation, exploration and/or trade (sources), students come to learn about Australia's early colonisation and develop understandings about contact between societies (continuity and change, cause and effect) and its effects on people and their environments (perspectives, empathy).

Inquiry Questions

Why did the great journeys of exploration occur?

What was life like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples before the arrival of the Europeans?

Why did the Europeans settle in Australia?

What was the nature and consequence of contact between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and early traders, explorers and settlers?

The diversity of Australia's first peoples and the long and continuous connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country/Place (land, sea, waterways and skies).

At Red Gum Primary, this unit of study was planned in detail by the three teachers (I discuss the planning meeting in detail in Chapter 5) and occurred during Terms 3 and Terms 4 where history occurred for at least 1.5 hours each week. Half-way through Term 3, the classes went on an excursion to the National Museum to participate in the 'Early Contact' museum program. The aims of the program are to:

Give students an opportunity to **handle and interpret objects** that show how Aboriginal peoples lived before 1788.

Facilitate students' exploration of Indigenous and European cultures and help them to **understand the impact of early contact** between the two cultures. (National Museum Early Contact Program).

On returning from the excursion children were tasked with drawing an item of interest they saw at the museum and to write about what they had learnt. These were then displayed on the wall for the remainder of the year. In addition, throughout the two terms, the book read during teacher reading (which occurred once a day) was *Nanberry*, by Jackie French (2011), a non-Indigenous author. In Term 4 children were given group-time to script their own play on any topic regarding 'First Contact' – life in England, the First Fleet, or arrival which could include contact. This history unit became embedded throughout other lessons (example, the plays were considered the children's writing task; the reading of *Nanberry* occurred during teacher reading).

Despite this embedding of the history unit, it is important to note the predominant maintaining of 'patriotic tales of settler and pioneer heroism' (Kidman et al. 2018: 234). In discussing how history is taught in schools in Aotearoa- New Zealand, Kidman et al. (2018) draw on the work of Mills (1999) and his construct of the 'racial contract' to demonstrate how a 'Settler Contract' seeks to silence and deny the past through repressing discomforting memories and thus perpetuating white ignorance. Kidman et al. 2018 note the differences between Indigenous Education in Aotearoa New Zealand and other settler colonial states due to a number of forces, however, the construct of Settler-Contract and associated epistemic norms seems applicable to Ngūnawal Country, particularly in some of the classes at Red Gum Primary. For example, the predominant focus on the arrival of the British settlers to Australia due to overcrowding in jails in England silenced imperialism and the establishment of 'settler-colonial societies in distant lands...on the basis of settler denial that previous societies were in existence prior to colonisation' (Kidman et al. 2018: 233). A maintaining of this history was also demonstrated by the majority of children choosing to develop a play about England or the First Fleet, with very few groups choosing to focus on arrival or the 'first contact', thus perpetuating the narratives of the settler contract.

Furthermore, as already noted, this unit maintained a very strong positioning of Indigenous peoples, cultures and technologies in the past. Even during a lesson about Indigenous language, using Tindale's map, the language used was 'this is where Indigenous tribes used to

gather before there were States'. Furthermore, at no point did teachers suggest that the way history itself was presented chronologically was a Western approach to understanding history. In response to exploring different ways of understanding history, teachers spoke of different sources as opposed to the existence of different epistemologies and ontologies of understanding history. As was explained to me by Ginibi Robinson *'From an Aboriginal perspective history is present – "history" as such is not linear but circular and there has been continuous connection to Country for us for 65,000 – time immemorial. Our connections to our cultures have continued and are living and connection to this Country is time immemorial'*. Embedded in the approaches observed at Red Gum Primary is a strong developmental approach to history, which Rusen (2004) argues leads to a Western ethnocentric view to development and civilisation.

At Acacia Primary, an example that demonstrates anachronistic positioning occurred during a geography lesson exploring similarities and differences. Although I did not observe the lesson, I was told about it by Sarah, the teacher, a couple of days later. The following is the transcript from the conversation about the lesson whilst Sarah was on her lunchbreak. As background, we arrived at discussing this lesson after I had asked Sarah to please keep me in mind if she was planning on doing any lessons that might engage with culture, or history, or Indigenous perspectives. She lit up and said 'Oh like last week', to which I asked what happened last week, feeling a little deflated that I had missed a class.

Sarah: When we did similarities and differences in geography, I focussed on a remote Aboriginal community and [the children] had to compare it to what their school is like and what their learning is like.

ME: Which community did you choose?

Sarah: I didn't choose one particular community. I just looked up [on youtube] the remote Northern Territory where there was nothing there really at that time. Maybe there have been some changes. We started to talk about some of the news that is on now. So the children were able to share, you know, that uniforms are not given out to the children. And I asked them why, and they said because these children would use them for something else and

*the parents will sell them all. This is in the news, on ABC News, so some of them knew and they talk about it.*²²

ME: Was the video from 2016?

Sarah: No, I tried to make it as different to our school as possible. I think it was from the 1970s. So then the children had to write out what were the similarities and the differences in the two schools. Some of them wrote that they are lucky that their parents are paying for education.²³ They then put the diagrams in their portfolios so that it's going home soon and the parents will see how they realise they are lucky. One child shared how lucky he is because his parents pay attention to education and the Aboriginal parents aren't paying any attention to education.

ME: Did you let the children know that the video was not from 2016?

Sarah: No.

ME: Did you suggest to the children that this may be very general statements and that there were and are many Aboriginal parents who were and are very supportive and encouraging of education.

Sarah: We had a lot of oral discussion. Sometimes this still does happen about uniforms. Some felt that things are changing. Some of them said that things are changing people are more interested in education.

This was an active approach to comparing similarities and differences between an 'Aboriginal' school from the 1970s and Acacia Primary in 2016. Similarities and differences from this angle were not about a geographic location, rather it seemed to be about a supposed moral stance on education, where the teacher positioned Indigenous students and families as disengaged which reflects the Rose (2015) assertion that ethnic profiling is embedded within the 'silent apartheid'. Such positioning speaks directly to Nakata's (2018) notion of Aboriginal children, families communities being a problem-object to be solved, or Wolfe's (2006) concept of establishing a narrative under the 'logic of elimination'. However, in both schools, this anachronistic positioning, whether intended or 'wilful ignorance' (Zembylas 2017b) seems in line with other school-based studies that identified similar approaches. Toner (2010), in her

²² At the time of this, mainstream media reported the closure of a school in North Queensland community due to violence at the school. There were also counter-narratives in the media about the portrayal of Aboriginal children, the community and the school being 'salacious accounts'.

²³ Note Acacia Primary is a public school.

thesis of intercultural understanding in the ACT schools, determined that the construction of Indigenous people were stuck in a static past or as 'unfortunate victims of modernity' (2010: 48). In Wilson's doctoral study of the experiences of Aboriginal students in six schools in northern New South Wales, Aboriginal children noted that from their perspective the focus was on how Aboriginal people 'used to live' (2016: 151).

In summary, despite a perception and promotion of these examples being 'Indigenous knowledges or perspectives', inappropriate by-products, colonial storytelling and anachronistic symbols formed significant, if not the most persistent and strongest messages, in both schools. The final type of 'symbol' I wish to discuss in relation to Indigenising the school and classroom is decolonising symbols. Although there were very few occurrences of such a symbol in both schools, I will share two of these below.

Decolonising Symbols

Decolonisation is inherent in Indigenising processes (Battiste 1998; Nakata 2002; Tuck and Yang 2012; Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). According to Sherwood et al. (2009: 24) decolonisation requires us:

...to examine the impact of colonization has upon their past and present in order to formulate a future that does not reinstate the past. To take these steps requires a balance of histories, informing our current political and social context, critical reflexive practice and open communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

One of the first classes I observed at Red Gum Primary was the airing of *Behind the News*. *Behind the News* is an ABC production aimed at upper primary school and engages with topical subjects in the news – changes to immigration policies, sugar tax, terrorism, the Wave Hill Walk-off. In this particular episode, 'Moving Australia Day' was the central story. Amidst the visual background of sausages on BBQs, Australian flags, and crowded beaches, the story begins with an explanation of the 26 January being the date that 'Captain Arthur Phillip took possession of the land for the British Empire. But Arthur Phillip wasn't just taking control of empty land. Aboriginal people had been living in Australia for at least 50,000 years before that, and that's why for many Aboriginal people Australia Day is not a celebration – it's a day of mourning. Some people even call it Invasion Day' (*Behind the News*, 9/2/2016). At this point the visual is in sepia with children dressed up as convicts and a re-enactment of the arrival of Arthur Phillip at Sydney Cove. It then jumps to images of 1988, where during the 'bicentennial'

celebrations of Australia marking 200 years since the First Fleet arrived, Aboriginal activists held huge demonstrations 'because they didn't think it should be a day to celebrate'. The reporter then explains that many people are suggesting a change to the date of Australia Day and offers a few suggestions such as ANZAC Day, Wattle Day, or 27 May (to mark the 1967 referendum). The segment ends on a positive note 'But whether the day changes or stays the same, it'll still involve some very special things: welcoming newcomers into our society, celebrating parts of our culture, and remembering the generations of Australians who have come before us'. The segment is only 3 minutes and 25 seconds.

Such an episode seems reflective of Sherwood's definition of decolonisation. However, exposure to this decolonising symbol seemed incidental rather than planned. Following on from the airing of the episode the teacher did not engage in the topic, nor explored any of the themes. Children were not asked what they thought or even a less confronting question, 'how do you celebrate Australia Day?'. What became obvious not just in this lesson, but during the weekly airing of *Behind the News*, was the teacher used it as an opportunity to catch up on other work, at times not even being in the classroom as the children were watching some confrontational topics (such as Terrorism). However, this particular episode as well as 'Australia Day' in general did emerge in a number of conversations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children including a lack of understanding about what the episode was about – 'I have no idea what they were talking about'. Another Aboriginal student spoke about how a non-Aboriginal person had told her that '*Aboriginal people go to Australia Day fireworks and they want to kill the white people. I have no idea what he is talking about. I think that they think that the Aboriginal people want to hurt white people but they don't*'. No other children mentioned Australia Day, until I began to ask about it in Term 4 during the second phase of focus groups. I discuss the response to this in Chapter 8.

Despite the potential for *Behind the News* to raise critical thinking and discussions, the use of videos in class enabled the teacher to actively distance herself from these more difficult conversations about the current cultural interface. Walter and Butler (2013) discuss the airing of 'Indigenous' content via videos during sociology courses at university as a 'seductive solution' employed by non-Indigenous lecturers to maintain the white gaze whilst reducing any need to engage in contentious discussions. Luke et al. (2013) also referenced the use of videos in a high school where Aboriginal children not only watched videos but also were witness to other students and teachers making inappropriate remarks. What is interesting in the airing of the *Behind the News* Australia Day episode, a couple of months later the teacher

who had used this teaching resource commented during an interview that it was good that it raised discussions amongst Aboriginal children.

One of the (Aboriginal) children was very emotional about the episode and he went home and had a conversation with his Mum about Australia Day. And he was asking questions about celebrating Australia Day and was really frazzled about it. So they had a discussion about it at home and he came back and said that I had a good chat with Mum. But I think it raised a lot of questions for some of them which is really good as we could have a discussion about it.

However, from my observations, these discussions did not occur in class, nor was there mention of non-Indigenous children opportunity or responsibility to engage in these discussions.

At Acacia Primary, one particular lesson stands out that engaged with decolonising symbols. It occurred following on from an interview I had with Jane, a teacher, a week earlier where we had spent a considerable amount of time talking about the positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the past.

Jane started the lesson by asking the children if they had heard of the word contemporary? Most children didn't respond, or actively said they didn't know. The few children who did respond suggested it was the 'future', 'timeline thing', 'past'. Jane stated that it means 'now'. Jane told the children that the lesson would be a contemporary view, what Indigenous people do 'now' and commented that 'We've learnt a lot about what they did in the past, and we will learn today about what they do now. About what Indigenous people in remote communities do now.'

Jane then invited all the children to get into groups of five and as a team they are to do 'vignettes'. She explains vignettes are a quick way of explaining or describing something and often used in drama as a frozen picture. She then says that she wants to see each team do an 'elephant'; which they all do, and do so differently. Then a computer.

After a few vignette 'practices', as Jane called them, she stated that vignettes can show one thing or a story. She then showed a YouTube video from Mutijulu, a remote community in Northern Territory, in which an

Yunkantjarra Elder talks about how the land owns the Traditional Owners. The words he uses to describe the relationship is inclusiveness between the land and people, oneness, raised with that thinking, and is a different type of land ownership to others.

Jane paused and asks the children how 'we' view land ownership? Creating a community through the use of the word 'we' I suspect she is referring to western /Australian concepts of land ownership, however, I can't help but look around at the diverse faces and ethnicities in the room and question to myself that maybe the 'we' is too general, such as what occurred during the Easter lesson at the other school. No one responds and Jane offers the answers – we build houses, we pay someone to have access to those kinds of things. She then pauses and asks – 'Do you think the person on the show views land this way? No he's talking about something that "used to be"'.

Jane then took out a small red box and asked for two volunteers to hold up a long piece of string that she took from the box. At one end was a tag that says '178', a couple of centimetres away it says '2000 year earlier – Christ'; then about 7 metres away at the other end of the classroom it says '30,000 years French cave paintings'; and finally '50,000 years ago, Indigenous cave drawings found in Australia'.

She then asked everyone to return to their groups and started to explain that she was working at a remote school and she talked to the children about their connection to land. She recalled the children mentioned that the connection gives a sense of belonging, and that it makes you take care of the land, feels like coming home. Jane then gave all the children one minute to think about where they belong the most – can be a connection to someone or something. She then invited one member to volunteer in each group to share their example of belonging for the group to do a vignette – the children then do their vignettes: a soccer field, home, a bedroom, sitting with a friend or family member.

Jane suggested to the class, 'we all have a connection to land, it's not just exclusive to Indigenous people. It's important to learn about us being all the same, although we may just experience these connections differently'.

A number of discussion points during this class reveals attempts at decolonising – raising awareness of a strong focus on the past but a need to also engage in the contemporary and providing opportunities to understand concepts of Country, which may be in line with the Harrison et al. (2017) approach to sensational pedagogies as discussed in Chapter 2. However, there were limitations to this lesson, in that it focused on ‘remote Aboriginal communities’ rather than focusing on diversity, including urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the contemporary. What is revealed here is that despite attempts of decolonisation, it is important to acknowledge the slipperiness of such approaches. Just as Indigenising symbols does not necessarily mean Indigenous perspectives and knowledges or cultures, decolonising may be more in line with non-Indigenous attempts to decolonise through a colonial lens, resulting in the maintaining of settler colonialism.

As a final example of how this is performed in the everyday, I offer a description of a particular version of Australia’s national anthem played during fortnightly assemblies at Red Gum Primary.

‘Indigenising’ but not ‘decolonising’ the national anthem

Each fortnight all classes at Red Gum Primary School come together in the large school hall to participate in the school assembly. Many children fidget as they sit cramped on the floor. It made me think of my own school assemblies where my legs would stick to the floor on hot days, cramps of shoes digging into calves, or being frozen in winter. Every assembly begins the same. With an Acknowledgement of Country, delivered by two children from an alternating class reading out ‘We wish to Acknowledge the Ngunnawal People and pay our respect to Elders past, present and future’ from a small piece of paper. It rolls off the tongue, however, I am aware many of the children are not aware of the meaning of this protocol, or even what Ngunnawal refers to. The two students ask everyone to please stand for the singing of the national Anthem. A crackle of the audio system, and then the deep sounds of the didgeridoo fill the hall air, making sounds that resemble a kangaroo hopping. After 10 seconds, clapping sticks join the didgeridoo and speed up the tempo, and within 20 seconds, children’s mumbled voices attempt to keep up with the quickest version of the anthem I have ever heard. It’s lucky the tape recording includes the vocals as I am not sure the hall of

children would keep up with the beat on their own. It's all over in less than two minutes and all are asked to sit down.

On hearing this version of the national anthem, one could mistakenly think that the inclusion of the sounds of the yidarki, one of the world's oldest instruments still used today not only by Yolngu men from Arnhem land, but other Indigenous men (and non-Indigenous people), has 'Indigenised' the anthem. In fact, a number of teachers spoke of the use of this anthem as being a positive inclusion of Indigenous perspectives. However, considering the history and the explicitly racist words of the National Anthem (e.g., where the term 'Advance Australia fair' refers to Anglo-Saxon heritage), such an approach could be argued as both appropriation (of the use of the sounds of the yidarki) and assimilation (into white-Australia), combined to maintain epistemic racism (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016). The national anthem was written in 1878 and replaced the anthem God Save the Queen in 1984. The anthem invokes strong sentiments of colonisation and one (white) national identity, where within the first few lines, 'we are young and free' implies a young nation, silencing thousands of years of Indigenous peoples existence on the continent, maintaining the notion of 'terra nullius'. Such an example clearly demonstrates how 'settler-grammars' (Calderon 2014; Moodie and Patrick 2017) play out in the everyday. That is, the inclusion (appropriation) of the Yidarki in the anthem has 'accounted for the contemporary presence of the indigene [sic], whilst maintaining an intellectual and temporal distance from the lived realities of Indigenous peoples' (Moodie and Patrick 2017: 440) through maintaining and articulating the ongoing settler-colonial state.

Having now analysed some of the complexity in Indigenising symbols– some which were reflective of cultural protocols or decolonising approaches – it can be seen that the majority were inappropriate by-products, or colonial storytelling. The following section focuses on symbols of silence or silencing symbols.

Symbols of Silence – Silencing Symbols

Symbols of silence or Silencing Symbols in reconciliation and surrounding themes is not new, such as W. E. B. Stanner's (1969) Great Australian Silence and Rose's (2005) concept of the 'silent apartheid' (Chapter 1). More recently, analysis of the Melbourne Declaration (Toner 2011; Reid 2009), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CPP (Lowe and Yunkaporta 2013; Salter and Maxwell 2015), intercultural understanding (Maxwell et al. 2018; Salter and Maxwell 2016; Walton et al. 2013a) and of the Australian Teachers Standards that relate to reconciliation (Moodie and Patrick 2017) all conclude that there are significant silences embedded within

these documents about Indigenous cultures and histories. These concerns were expressed early on in the development of the CCP (Human Rights Commission 2011; Nakata 2011). Lowe and Yunkaporta's (2013) comprehensive cultural, cognitive and socio-political analysis of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Cultures and Histories CCP revealed silences at three levels: cultural, cognitive, and socio-political (Chapter 1). In the same vein, Moodie and Patrick (2017) in their exploration of the teaching standards with teacher educators, argue that 'We suggest that by stressing culture at the graduate stage, the reality of Indigenous survival is recognised whilst substantive political concerns – such as sovereignty and self-determination – are erased' (2017: 443). However, erasure and absence of content is only one aspect of silencing.

In an Aotearoa New Zealand study MacDonald and Reynolds (2017) explore everyday racial silencing in mainstream highschools. The authors, one of Māori ethnicity, one of British heritage (2017: 49) skilfully use auto-ethnographic vignettes of a Pākehā teacher based on their own highschool teaching experiences to narrate the everyday, identifying a range of racial silencing at school. These include teachers' observation of 'silent' disengagement in the class by Māori and Pasifika students (2017: 51); the silencing and absence in classroom approaches that '[cultivate] critical consciousness regarding power relations' (Ladson-Billings 1995) (2017:51); the silencing of race in relation to this perceived student disengagement (2017: 52); the silencing of diverse reasons for minority students' silence in majority-white classrooms, from stereotype threat to it being a strategic approach of self-preservation (2017:53); and the silencing of schools as being racialised institutions and structures (2017: 55). This study demonstrates the complexity and different manifestations of 'everyday silencing', many of which were evident in both schools in the study of Everyday Reconciliation.

Before offering examples from Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary, I note that the terms 'Symbols of Silence' and 'Silencing Symbols' position 'silence' as both a noun and a verb. I do this consciously to demonstrate how symbols passively silence Indigenous knowledges and perspectives through their absence (Symbols of Silence) but also how symbols actively silence Indigenous perspectives and knowledges through colonial storytelling (Silencing Symbols).

The silencing of Indigenous voices

I observed three significant silences at both schools: the silence of Indigenous voice (diverse, contemporary and overall); the silence of race, racism and whiteness; and the silencing of reconciliation. In this section, I have chosen to focus on the silencing of Indigenous voice, as it cuts across all other silences. The silence of race, racism and whiteness was already touched on

above in symbols of whiteness and will be addressed again in Chapter 7, and the silencing of reconciliation is addressed in Chapter 5 and again throughout Part 3.

The silence of Indigenous voices evident in both the schools are reflective of the 2017 Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) Education Review: *Advocating for Indigenous Voice in Education* (Gillian et al. 2017). The authors propose five key interrelated contentions regarding Indigenous Education (2017: 2). Firstly, they note that colonisation continues to impact on Indigenous children families and communities in varying ways and is pervasive within the education system, curriculum, pedagogy and classrooms, 'through the hubris and hegemony of an education system that deems the Indigene virtually invisible and mute in the curriculum' (2017: IV). Secondly, the diversity of Australia's Indigenous population and needs to be responded to rather than treated as a one size fits all. The third premise the report focuses on is the need for the education system as well as society in general to increase its awareness of the impact of social and economic disadvantage on education outcomes (not Aboriginal culture). The fourth point raised is that despite financial investment in Indigenous Education, there has been little improvement and as such new policy and practice needs actioning. Finally, the requirement to actively engage Indigenous families and communities in the education of their children is fundamental. Fundamentally, the unsilencing of Indigenous voice in all these five areas was seen as critical. The concerns expressed in the review was evident in both schools through symbols of silence and silencing symbols. These symbols seemed to emerge in three different ways: erasing Indigenous voice through colonial storytelling; engaging with the 'right' Indigenous voice; and absence of Indigenous families and community.

Silencing Indigenous Voice in place of colonial storytelling

Earlier on in this chapter I discussed in detail the concept of colonial storytelling and offered examples of Indigenous symbols that were more in line with colonial storytelling. In the following example, I demonstrate that symbols that are clearly 'Indigenous' are being erased within a frame of colonial storytelling. As background, the teacher, Sarah, chose the children's book *When I Was Little, Like You* by Mary Malbunka (an Anangu author, educator) to read to her class during a geography lesson. The back cover of the book states '*playing with friends, building cubby houses, climbing trees, collecting sugarbags...a vivid picture of a truly Australian childhood in which country – ngurra – is life itself*'. In the inside cover, a number of prominent Indigenous women, including Jackie Huggins AM and Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue have

expressed their support for the book, and it has been shortlisted for a number of prizes. The words and colourful illustrations of the book invoke sounds of children laughing, running, being mischievous, learning from Country from the old people, being out bush learning about foods and medicines, being in school, and a very strong sense of family and community. Throughout the book Luritja words are used with an English translation either embedded in the text or included in a dictionary at the back of the book. At the back of the book there is also note about language from 40,000 years ago to now. One of the strongest messages in the book is about how 'learning' was from grandmothers and grandfathers, in the bush outside of 'school' and how the author now is one of the ones who *'tell them the stories we learned when we were little...'*.

The reading of the book follows a geography lesson in which the children were exposed to images of different locations – the city; remote; town; rural; pastoral; coastal – and children call out descriptive words for each picture. Sarah then says that 'In geography we will see how lives changed because of history and how people have resilience. They will keep on going on.' Sarah reaches for the book and starts flipping through it, reading only a few of the pages, in a non-sequential way, at times describing the pictures from her perspective rather than reading the text verbatim. Throughout her reading she adds comments shaking her head and clicking her tongue in a seemingly saddened way. The comments she makes during the reading include:

'It's so sad, children living in cubby houses and with all their families' (referring to a page that had text 'When we lived on the north side, we used to build ngurrangurra (cubby houses)...and continued to describe the building of a windbreak and lighting a camp fire, drinking tea and eating damper).

'These children are deprived'

'It's so sad'

'They had nothing'

'There would have been snakes'

Anne also commented that 'When the Europeans came there was no food for the Aboriginal people, they lived behind barbed wire, no fresh fruit or vegetables'. Whilst making this claim, Anne shows the page which has a

colourful garden of food. If she had read the text accompanying this illustration, it would have revealed that there was a vegetable garden in the settlement and that the children sneaked in and picked the fruit and vegetables, revealing a very different narrative of agency, children's mischievousness, and fun.

As she closed the book, Sarah states that 'they [Aboriginal people] have a struggle. Some don't go to school. They don't have good teachers. The Australian Government is working on it. The children struggle in school. Some of their fathers became wood cutters. Still the children were so beautiful. They didn't have new swimming costumes though.'

What emerges here despite a very contrasting version of the story written by Mary Malbunka, which was openly available for Sarah to read and share with the children, is a re-construction that presents a very different narrative. Through her colonial storytelling lens, Sarah recasts Aboriginal children as passive and primitive (Behrendt 2016). With Sarah's last comments, Sarah attempts to bring the narrative into the present and in following lessons presents the same narrative to the children about Indigenous Australians (a word she uses and tells children to use because that's how they like to be called) not having good education, schools, teachers and that the Government is working on it. Although this was one of only a few teachers who attempted to bring history into the present, how she does this continues a narrative of lack of agency, resilience, resistance and cultural deficits – again reflecting ethnic profiling, one of the tenants of the 'silent apartheid' (Rose 2015). Furthermore, it demonstrates a strong discourse of paternalism, with the Government being the saviours.

Throughout the reading of the book, the children are sitting at their desks, completely entranced and listening attentively; Sarah re-constructs the story in an incredibly captivating way, jumping back and forward, herself physically pointing out and describing the pictures in the book. There is no time not to be captivated and no child asks any questions. During the focus groups following on from this class, I asked the children what they remembered from the book, to which a few commented about the children not having any food or good schools, or a good education. A common comment was that it was a really 'sad' book, both that the book invoked a sense of sadness and pity in the reader but also that the children in the book had experienced a sad childhood. During one of the focus groups we had finished a little early and one of the girls picked up the book, flicking through it. I asked whether she wanted to read more of the book, thinking she would read in her head however she started reading aloud,

which included her own attempts at reading the words in language. As she started reading, she stopped and commented, 'Actually the book isn't so sad. It's just about the girl's childhood'.

Particular 'types' of Indigenous Voice

Extending this notion of silencing of Indigenous voice, there were times that Indigenous voices were welcomed, yet, only particular 'types' of voices, such as engaging with children who have strong connection to their Country as opposed to children who do not. The following is a collation of fieldnotes undertaken during this class.

The children are sitting on the floor and Leonie the teacher is asking the class 'Who were the first people in Australia?' One child yells out 'Aboriginal people'. 'How do you know that?' 'Because I do'. 'But why do you think that? Or how do you know?' responses include 'paintings on caves'; 'books'; and 'internet'. Leonie smiles and nods and says that's right from primary and secondary sources. She turns on the smart board, and the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous²⁴ Australian is displayed largely on the screen. She asks 'What is this map showing?' Children call out that it is the different Aboriginal countries and languages. Reid, one of the Aboriginal boys in the class asks whether he can show the class his language group. On pointing to his Country, Leonie says 'Wow that's amazing'. Leonie then looks directly at the two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls in the class (that she knows of) and asks whether they want to share their language group or where their family comes from? The two girls shake their head. A boy who identifies as being Māori pipes up and says 'I know my tribe's language group. I speak Māori'. Leonie dismisses him and says we aren't talking about New Zealand. Leonie then shows a YouTube clip about Indigenous languages which includes references of 160 Aboriginal languages having 'died off' as they were prohibited. The YouTube clip does not engage in who prohibited the use of language, nor the revival of some languages.

In a recap lesson a couple of weeks later Leonie asks the children what they have learnt during history class, amidst the responses that were then charted as primary and secondary sources, Leonie states, 'We can ask Reid because

²⁴ See Footnote 17.

*he has expert knowledge about where he lives', presumably referring to his Country ties, which is in the North of Australia. Although this may be accurate, there were a number of other First Nations children in the class who are not afforded the same label as 'expert'. Furthermore, Reid lives in the ACT on Ngunnawal Country.*²⁵

What emerges in this observation is a willingness to engage in one narrative of 'Indigenous' – that is of the Aboriginal boy (or girl) who knows language and has maintained their cultural links to their Country. Although there was some exploration of the broader loss (and extinction) of language, the discomfort the teacher expressed when the two girls said 'no' (later during a focus group I learn that the two girls are not aware of their family's Country/ies or language/s) was obvious. I am not suggesting that the teacher should have necessarily engaged in discussing this at a personal level in the class, however it reveals the complexity of having diverse Indigenous students with diverse histories and narratives in a class and how teachers navigate this diversity amongst Indigenous students. St. Denis (2007: 1079) writes of such complexities embedded in cultural revitalisation being a 'double-edge sword', in which 'it can create a positive sense of identity and common cause, but it also applauds some and discounts others'. At the time I wondered if the focus was localised, where a discussion on the prohibition of Ngunawal language, the bringing of many different Aboriginal people to Canberra (as well as the dispersing of those from Ngunnawal Country to other areas), would have been useful, rather than a more generic discussion about 'language'. What is important to note here is no cues were given to children about engaging with this history or complexities, rather a message of silencing was promoted through not engaging with it.

The promotion of Reid as being an expert with no acknowledgement of the other First Nation students being experts in their own narratives requires further exploration. From the teacher's perspective the focus was on Indigenous language, not loss of language or the revitalisation of language. Nor was the focus on Māori language. Of the four known First Nation children in the classroom, only one met the criteria of being able to represent the perceived authentic 'Aboriginal' child, and all other narratives were silenced.

Gebhard (2017a) found the exact same findings in her study of schools in Saskatchewan, Canada. Talking with teachers, she includes one of the comments made by the teacher in her study about a First nation Canadian.

²⁵ I do not include the name of the Country in order to maintain confidentiality of Reid.

Maryanne: For some of them, for some of them I think, possibly. The ones that really like, because, one little girl in my classroom is in the dancing, so she wears the little outfits that have the bells or whatnot on it and she does her thing. And she really has a really good grasp of her culture, and their traditions, and her parents talk lots about like the Mushum and Kokum and they read stories and, so she's very knowledgeable about her background. Like with seeing that connection happening at school, it really makes her proud... (Gebhard 2017: 7).

As Gebhard suggests, Maryanne's description of the little girl who is 'knowledgeable about her background' positions the student as an authentic actor of Indigenous culture and therefore, the 'right kind' of Indigenous student. The acceptance and promotion of a particular Indigenous voice, or perspective, has emerged in the writings of many Indigenous Australian scholars, such as Behrendt (2016), Gorringer et al. (2011), Moreton-Robinson (2009), and Paradies (2016). As Behrendt (2016) explains, the preference of the noble savage Indigenous voice has moulded the Indigenous (student, family, teacher) as being primitive, passive and childish –

never able to deliver their own message, never concerned with politics, they are only able to be the beneficiaries of the actions of the white people willing to help them, willing to carry their message (Behrendt 2016: 168).

Silence of Indigenous families and communities

The final section on Indigenous voice focuses on the silence of families and community in the schools. Firstly, however it is important to note that a number of teachers expressed deep conflict in wanting to ask but not knowing who to ask in the community, or the parents or the children to 'represent' an Aboriginal perspective. For example, during a focus group, despite some staff acknowledging that they relied on their students, there were some that expressed a concern about whether they should be asking the children who attended the clubs to come back into class and share an aspect of their culture with the class, and yet felt unease about doing that due to not wanting to place the child in a position of discomfort, as well as not knowing whether it was the right protocol to do so.

Noting this, from my observations throughout the year neither school invited local Aboriginal people into the classroom to share their stories, even when I had offered to make connections

with my contacts to talk to the teachers about local history. Engaging with the local community is an explicit recommendation in national education policies, the Australian Curriculum and Teaching Standards, as well as in the ACT agreement with the Elected Body. However, the lack of engagement with families and the broader community continues to demonstrate one of the biggest gaps between policy and practice, and was noted a number of times by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents from across the region. As one parent explained,

At my [child's] school, they first asked if I wanted to run [a lesson about culture] and I said no. Then I gave them a whole list of people and organisations that are aware of Indigenous issues so they could increase all their knowledge. And all the recommendations that I made they ignore them and they ended up getting people based on small price. They were some people I'd never heard of. So what this group is teaching them we don't understand. Maybe that they have found out that there great-great-grandmother was Aboriginal and they're black and they going in teaching cultural stuff. It just gives you the shits because you like you know I do know it's really frustrating.

Such frustrations were also expressed by another parent who specifically explained how the effort that had gone into the Teaching Standards and Australian Curriculum should have provided a framework for engaging with the Indigenous community but it has not.

It was supposed to be enough. It took that long for those standards to be developed there are now flaws in it that teachers can be assessed without any involvement of the community of the local Indigenous community; they can be assessed as being competent or efficient without any involvement whatsoever of the local Indigenous community. So what does that assessment really mean – it's mainly in the lettering. None of us know what's going on.

In concluding this section on the silencing of Indigenous voice, the absence of voice enabled the perpetuation of colonial storytelling and inappropriate by-products (and some of the examples could have easily been positioned as being a symbol of whiteness or 'colonial storytelling'). What is of particular interest that needs further exploration, is that children from both schools were very clear in suggesting that if they would like to know more information about Indigenous cultures and histories, the majority responded that they would

ask an Aboriginal person, or look in a book written by an Aboriginal person. Some children went as far as to suggest that their teacher did not know much about this topic ‘they just google it on the smart board in front of us’. Others suggested that if there were different perspectives from different sources they would ‘trust’ the Aboriginal person, as reflected in this comment by a girl student who identified herself as being British:

If [the book and my teacher] have different answers, I would ask an Aboriginal person and then I would trust the Aboriginal person.

A number of Aboriginal children reflected on learning nothing at school ‘No we don’t learn anything at school’, except at the clubs as well as from an Aboriginal teacher they had in a previous year. Yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children expressed strong pride in learning about being Aboriginal at school, ‘I love the clubs’; ‘I like teaching other kids’. Wilson (2016) found similar findings with Aboriginal children at primary schools on Gumbaynggirr Country, in regional New South Wales. In her analysis, Wilson noted that Aboriginal students in her study wanted to learn about Indigenous knowledges as well as learn about colonisation. Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as well as non-Indigenous children in the study of Everyday Reconciliation also requested these two critical approaches. They are discussed in much more detail in Chapter 8. These perspectives from children potentially challenge these symbols of silence suggesting the need to consider the delivery of messages through a range of approaches that explicitly include Indigenous voices telling the story about their own cultures and histories.

The final type of symbol I focus on is that of resistance.

Symbols of ‘Resistance’

As noted by Paradies (2016) resistance and activism has a long history in Australia from the beginning of colonisation (Pemmulway), through to individuals during the 20th century (Mama Shirl, William Cooper, Neville Bonner, Eddie Koiki Mabo), mass strikes (Wave Hill Walk-off), petitions (such as the Bark Petitions from the Yolngu to the House of Representatives) and social and civil rights protests (the Freedom Rides). Despite some of these examples of resistance being included in the Australian Curriculum, it is not until upper primary that this is studied in any detail (if the teacher chooses to engage with it).

There were very few symbols of resistance at both schools. At Acacia Primary, during an assembly, the Principal shares with the school community that she had seen the ‘google

doodle' that morning acknowledging Mabo's birthday, depicting an image of the late Eddie Koiki Mabo. At the assembly, she requests all classes to research who he was and what he did. On returning to class, the teacher opens Wikipedia, proceeds to read, adding her own remarks about Mabo, 'That when the whites came the Aboriginal people didn't have a piece of paper to say it was their land. And then there was Mabo who stood up for his rights.' She explains that then Indigenous people couldn't stand up for their rights not like now. She goes onto explain that 'They had nothing, had to live behind barbed wire. And then suddenly they were freed – because of Mabo. He is regarded by the Indigenous people as a king'. Although the focus on Mabo having potential to explore resistance, the narrative imposed by the teacher seemed more in line with colonial storytelling.

In contrast, in a classroom at Red Gum Primary, hanging on the wall in one classroom, Marie McMahon's 1984 political poster 'You are on Aboriginal Land'ⁱ was displayed prominently. During one lesson, the teacher brought the print down and asked the children what they thought was occurring in the poster. After some responses, including 'It looks like you Tyson' (from a non-Aboriginal boy to an Aboriginal boy), 'she looks angry', 'it says the words at the bottom because they were here first'. The teacher asks whether anyone has heard of the term 'occupation'. No one responds, in contrast to the descriptions offered earlier about how the woman in the picture looks (angry, sad, confused, tired of people not looking after her land). The teacher explains,

the British Occupation of Australia changed the lives of Aboriginal people forever. To this day our Government have never acknowledged that 'we' took Aboriginal land. In New Zealand the Government of New Zealand signed a treaty with the Māori. This is what this slogan at the bottom of the picture is saying – it's reminding us we are on Aboriginal land. I would use the word defiant and strong in describing her because she is fighting for her land.

Resistance to reconciliation

In contrast to symbols of 'historical' Indigenous resistance, another aspect of resistance was in resistance or refusal to reconciliation itself and in particular the by-products and colonial storytelling of reconciliation and Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories. There were some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and parents who commented 'what do we have to reconcile'. As one of the Aboriginal parents explained, 'For me reconciliation is simply assimilation. Why would I engage?'. This refusal to engage in 'reconciliation' per se was

strongly evident in Red Gum Primary, as demonstrated by the two different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'Clubs' offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students twice a week. One club was funded by the ACT Directorate of Health and focused on healthy behaviours: wearing deodorant, teeth brushing, eating healthy, and being active. This was offered most Wednesdays throughout the year, often during numeracy lesson (as noted by one of the teachers during a focus group). The second club was a 10-week program offered in Term 3 and Term 4, that had been designed with one of the Aboriginal teachers and an external organisation and focused on leadership, identity and culture. Local Elders were brought in to share their stories including of growing up on Hollywood Mission, of the joys of childhood memories as well as the stories of loss, containment, racism and colonisation. Aboriginal medical professionals from Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service speaking of ear, teeth and general health were also guest presenters, as were knowledge holders for local bush food and bush medicines. Children undertook written-based activities each week as part of the program that were then collated into a handmade book the children then decorated, and took home. Families were invited to participate in the celebration of the last day of this club, where the children shared their favourite aspect of the club: 'learning from the Elders', 'talking to the Elders', 'having the doctor come', 'being with all the other Aboriginal children at school'.

For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and staff who attended the clubs, particularly the second club, they valued them as a safe place to discuss cultural identity, growing up Aboriginal in an urban environment, and experiences of racism. The clubs offered a place to also engage in the uncritical way that histories and knowledges were being taught in their class. As I came to observe, they were spaces of re-storying (Corntassel et al. 2009) the everyday experiences of the children, and to some extent also for staff to either share the stories amongst the project team or visitors and also with the children. Re-storying is both the teaching of sacred living stories as well as the re-storying of colonial narratives within the mainstream – it is about 'passing on a narrative about history and an attitude about history' (Smith 1999: 19, as cited in Corntassel et al. 2009). Thus, not only is re-storying about the ongoing passing of sacred stories about living and responsibilities to Country, it is also a decolonising approach. As Corntassel et al. (2009) explain using the Nuuchal-nulth peoples' term 'huu-haa-paa',

haa-huu-pah signify a starting point for renewing Indigenous family and community responsibilities in the ongoing struggle for Indigenous justice and freedom. Haa-huu-pah also represent an alternative to the Canadian [replace with Australia] state's vision for

reconciliation, which seeks to legitimize the status quo rather than to rectify injustice for Indigenous communities (2009: 139).

In discussing the clubs with one of the Aboriginal staff members, and whether non-Indigenous students attended, particularly the second club, his response was very quick and firm that 'This isn't reconciliation. This is where our children are learning about their identity. This is not about the other children.' Such a response seemed to speak directly to the process of haa-huupah. As I came to observe, the clubs included discussions of being urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on Ngunnawal Country, sometimes away from Countries they knew they were connected to, others who were not aware of their Countries. Discussions included experiences of racism at school, of not sharing with peers that they are Aboriginal for fear of being told 'your skin is too white'. What the clubs were offering was the opportunity to understand the socio-historical-political context, and particularly the construct of Indigeneity even within their school, both in promoting diverse cultural identities, but also preparing the children for potential bias, and offering a space to share the already existent prejudice, stereotyping and racism. It offered an opportunity to engage with the complex realities of the everyday cultural interface, in which there is acknowledgement that, classrooms and schools are already intercultural spaces for many Indigenous students' and that 'Indigenous students must be engaged in how others think and construct the world as much as all students must be engaged in how Indigenous people think about and construct their worlds. (Nakata, 2011: 2). As such the clubs became a culturally safe place, noted in other studies (Riley 2015; Wilson 2016) as important by Aboriginal children and young people themselves.

In contrast, not one non-Indigenous teacher was aware of what was occurring at either of the clubs, a realisation that came to many of them during a focus group ('*Actually I have no idea what they do there*'), the clubs were interpreted by many teachers as being a great way of instilling culture. Earlier in the year when there was only the health club, one of the teachers described in her support of the clubs:

In my head the clubs make sense because your entire race has been decimated so of course go and learn about your culture. So, it is part of reconciliation. So it's about giving them a culture and enabling that culture to happen.

Thus, the clubs also highlight the differential meaning derived from symbols – for some it was reconciliation providing 'culture' to Indigenous students; for others, they symbolised resistance to the existing processes of reconciliation, offering a space of counter storytelling or re-storying

and truth-telling, a form of resistance to the everyday reconciliation. It also highlights the complexities within everyday reconciliation in creating opportunities by offering Indigenous-only spaces. This particular point was discussed in detail amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents who at times suggested that all children should be engaged in 'these kinds of opportunities', at other times maintaining that there had to be both opportunities for Indigenous students to meet separately as well as opportunities for shared learning. As one parent stated, 'there are times that it has to be just for the Indigenous children and there are times when it should be both'. However, the flipside of this was a concern expressed by a number of Indigenous parents that non-Indigenous students were not being exposed to this 'real' culture through not hearing these critical discussions that occurred at the club, and their predominant exposure was then reduced to by-products and colonial storytelling.

Such symbols of resistance raise significant questions about reclaiming cultural sovereignty being reserved for only Indigenous students but also whether schools, as a colonial system has a role in teaching Indigenous knowledges. There is much debate whether Indigenous knowledges and perspectives should be incorporated into the Western education system (Nakata 2007a; Nakata et al. 2012; Wilson 2016). As questioned by a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents who attended the focus group, their strong preference was for all students to have a focus on history rather than the teaching of culture, as expressed by this parent,

I think it is important for all children, whether they are Indigenous or not, that they learn about the history of the country they live. I think it's the history that is very important. They should learn the history of this country.
(Aboriginal parent, focus group June 2016)

However, the parents did acknowledge how closely linked culture is to history. Working through this complexity of whether all students should have opportunities to engage with critical cultural perspectives seems one of the challenges of everyday reconciliation at schools, and beyond the school gate: how to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spaces as well as spaces that offer real opportunity to engage in the culture interface. What becomes clear, particularly in relation to this example of symbols of resistance, is that the engagement with a symbol can be experienced in very many ways – whether the symbols are whiteness, Indigenous, silencing or resistance. Children and teachers' own worlds come to interpret the symbols in ways that make sense to them.

The final point I wish to make about the clubs is in relation to structural support and returns us to the schools being spaces of whiteness. One of the teachers who attended the clubs was not backfilled and needed to find a substitute for his class whilst the clubs were occurring. Furthermore, the lack of a designated space at the school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students was deeply felt, particularly by staff. During the year, the clubs were required to find new places as the room originally offered was taken up by the P&C to hold donations for the impending school fete. Yet, despite this, the clubs continued and the staff found new locations to hold the club. This in and of itself is a demonstration of the resilience and resistance of the Aboriginal staff at the school, as well as what could be interpreted as a deep commitment to supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to navigate the complexities of everyday reconciliation by offering these clubs.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on some of the symbols of reconciliation of the two schools. Through focusing on symbols of Whiteness, Indigenising, Silencing and Resistance it becomes obvious that in any one day children were exposed to competing and contradictory messages. At the surface level the schools seemed vastly different due to the quantity of symbols, however, in understanding the symbols as either 'whiteness', 'Indigenising', 'resistance', or 'silencing' there were strong similarities in the symbols that could be seen, heard, or touched in all the classrooms, across both schools. In the main, many of the symbols were reflective of Rose's concept of inappropriate by-products and Behrendt's colonial storying. This is in line with Castagno and Brayboy's (2008) review of the literature of culturally responsive teaching for Indigenous youth, which determined approaches were mainly 'reduced to essentialisations, meaningless generalizations, or trivial anecdotes' (p942), as well as in other Australian studies (Rose 2015; Wilson 2016). In addition to the quantity of symbols, the strongest contrast between the two schools was in symbols of resistance to reconciliation, possibly due to the high numbers of Indigenous students at the school, higher numbers of Aboriginal teaching staff, and a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents active in the school.

As demonstrated by the way teachers and school leadership spoke about the symbols, it is clear that the artefacts (Schein 1990) or summarising symbols (Ortner 1973) of reconciliation were valued as being an important (possibly the most important) aspect of how the school positioned itself in relation to reconciliation and specifically in relation to engaging with Indigenous perspectives and supporting Indigenous students. However, returning to the

opening quote by one of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, we are reminded that although symbols are important there are two critical aspects that need to be considered: quantity does not necessarily correspond with commitment and what is critical within symbols is an understanding of what they are aiming to achieve to ensure the very use of them does not perpetuate the 'silent apartheid', colonial storytelling, and the ongoing normalisation of whiteness.

Despite this caution of quantity and embedding reconciliation, throughout my PhD it was common for me to hear that 'celebrating Indigenous culture [sic] is the first step', 'we didn't have anything growing up so at least [the children] are learning something nowadays', 'something is better than nothing', 'it's the hook in and then we can talk about the real stuff' by both Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islanders, and non-Indigenous colleagues, friends, academics, and teachers. Such sentiments were evident in Rowse and Pertierra's (n.d.) interview-based study of 38 non-Indigenous Australians during 2015–2017, where the majority of participants strongly suggested that the Australian schooling system was 'an agent of changing norms about Indigenous culture' [sic]. However, unless the symbols reflect reconciliation, enact reconciliation and provide a starting point for discussing reconciliation, we should be questioning whether they are engaging in reconciliation, or perpetuating a particular narrative about reconciliation.

I continue to question whether the good intent of the inclusion of symbols can cause more harm than good. On reading *Finding Eliza* (Behrendt 2016), I was drawn to Behrendt's similar questioning regarding the possibility of 'harm' in a positive stereotype that garners sympathy. Behrendt (2016: 170) offers this reflection:

While the short-term compromise may appear advantageous, the long-term outcome for rights protection based on the assertion of the noble-savage or positive stereotype is extremely detrimental to the Aboriginal community. If rights are granted based on sympathy towards a particular stereotype, those Aboriginal people who do not fit within that paradigm will be excluded, and considered inappropriate beneficiaries of these protections because they are not 'authentic'; they will be seen as not Real. Those who do not embody the images of passivity, childishness and naturalism, who do not live lives based on an affinity with nature and devoid of any material possessions, who do not use quaint logic to deduce naive and simplistic understandings of the world around them, will be considered as being outside the set of worthy beneficiaries. And urban Aboriginal people, house owning Aboriginal people, angry Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people

who do not speak their traditional languages will all fall outside of the Aboriginal people who are perceived as deserving.

Behrendt's (2016) articulation of the harm caused by a perceived 'positive' stereotype (which seems far from positive considering it maintains the destruction of both diversity and extensive sophisticated knowledge systems), regardless of whether the short term outcome is positive, is deeply relevant to understanding the implications of how the symbols of everyday reconciliation in these two schools contributed to and maintained a particular narrative or colonial storytelling of 'Indigenous Australians'. However, as will be discussed in the following chapter, it is also about the creation of a particular narrative of 'non-Indigenous Australians' who sign up to 'celebrating' Indigenous cultures. Behrendt's (2016) eloquent reflections provides a frame for what also emerges in Part 3 of the thesis and how celebrating a noble savage as the romantic other has influenced how children position Indigenous peoples and cultures, perpetuating these stereotypes and colonial storytelling, maintain and perpetuating the structures of the ongoing 'silent apartheid'.

However, as both Ortner (1973) and Schein (1990, 1996) suggest, symbols cannot be seen in isolation, and all of the symbols discussed in this chapter operate within a socio-cultural, discursive, spatial and affective functioning (Kenway and Youdell 2011: 132). This leads us into the following chapter, based on Schein and Ortner's second layer of their conceptual framework: Beliefs and Values or Metaphors of Reconciliation.

Chapter 5: Beliefs and Values about reconciliation

It was the end of one of my first days in the field and John, Leonie, and Katie, the Year 3–4 teachers, are standing in the communal area chatting about rejigging the literacy groups, reflecting on whether they are currently working the way they had anticipated. Sally, a Year 2 teacher walks in, and Katie introduces her to me. ‘This is Talia, she is doing research on Indigenous stuff in schools. You’re interested in that aren’t you? You should come to a focus group. Aren’t you doing a course?’ Sally confirms she is doing the ACT Directorate of Education cultural competency course, that there are two staff doing it from the school this year. ‘I realised I don’t know enough and don’t want to keep putting my white foot in it’. John jumps in, ‘It’s hard to stay away from it. It is white,’ And they all laugh. Leonie then comments, ‘I find it really easy. Especially when Reid is in my class. I just ask him. I also know a lot already from Uni and I don’t shy away from it.’ Katie responds, ‘Really? I’m the opposite. I find it harder when there are Aboriginal kids in the class. I never ask them. And I never ask the families. There’s so much other things going on for the families. Celebrating their identity isn’t what’s important’. At this point Leonie lowers her voice almost to a whisper sending a message that she is aware that what she is about to say may not be appropriate, ‘Hey, you know Marcus in your class is Aboriginal even though he’s got really fair skin’. John, who is not as discrete as Leonie states in his usual voice, ‘I can tell because of his cheekbones’. Katie and Sally seem somewhat uncomfortable with where the conversation is going given their slight frowns, but neither say anything. The conversation ends abruptly when Katie looks up at the clock and says she’s got to go. Leonie says she needs to check something with Katie about tomorrow’s lesson plan and the group disperses. I explain the project in more detail to Sally, handing her an information sheet and she says she’s really keen to learn more, so anything that’s going on she is happy to be part of, and asks for the consent form which she signs on the spot. I confirm that I will be sending out a range of times for focus groups. (Fieldnotes, March 2016)

This brief interaction amongst four teachers at the end of the day sparked by a comment about the research project revealed some of the diverse beliefs and values teachers expressed

regarding reconciliation, Indigenous students and families, and the perceived complexities involved in teaching Indigenous Studies. Sally's awareness of the limitation of her knowledge and seeking to extend this through courses, or even participating in the research project, compared to Leonie who expressed confidence through learning about 'it' at university. Or Leonie relying on Aboriginal students in her class which was in contrast to Katie's discomfort surrounding Indigenous topics when she has Aboriginal students in her class. Also, Katie's assumptions about Indigenous families and that celebrating identity is not their priority, without having even spoken to them. Leonie's possible awareness of the inappropriateness of talking about skin colour in relation to Aboriginal identity, expressed by her quieter tone, which seemed in contrast to John's usual pitch in extending the discussion. Finally, Katie and Sally's discomfort in relation to this discussion about identity and physical traits, resulting in the end of the discussion. This small impromptu focus group was reflective of the diverse, at times ambiguous and conflicting views amongst teachers about reconciliation and associated concepts.

In Chapter 1, I outlined the political history of reconciliation, reconciliation in education policies and some theoretical perspectives on reconciliation. In Chapter 4, I focused on the Australian 'industry of reconciliation' through the concept of symbols. The aim of this chapter builds on these earlier discussions and explores everyday reconciliation through the 'beliefs and values' (Schein 1990) or 'metaphors' (Ortner 1973) teachers expressed about reconciliation and associated concepts. Understanding how reconciliation is talked about is critical, as through discourse we understand how reconciliation is 'instituted, solidified, changed, created and reproduced in social formations' (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 3, cited in Herron 2017: 136). As Foucault (1976) explained,

the central issue...[is] to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said (1976: 11, cited in Behrendt 2016: 192).

However, how reconciliation was spoken about (or not) is not just about the 'word' of reconciliation, but also how talking about reconciliation affected individuals and this community of teachers, and how they wanted to be perceived, as reflected by the possible distancing of Sally and Katie in the opening narrative. Thus, exploring beliefs and values about reconciliation is not just 'what' the messages are, but rather what they 'do'. As noted previously, 'emotional capital may be understood as involving emotional practices that are inextricably linked to the ways individuals and groups form their habitus and perceive

themselves and others' (Zembylas 2007: 457-458) creating a particular field. The field of 'everyday reconciliation' is not only the two schools (and the broader education system) but a community that is committed to reconciliation (however it was defined by the individual). Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.) suggest there are three key 'orthodoxies' within this current reconciliation field:

- There are two kinds of people in Australia – Indigenous and non-Indigenous (with debates surrounding Indigeneity, however less so for diversity within non-Indigenous)
- The relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous is a problem of 'nationhood' (the problem itself and solutions are debated)
- Giving this attention includes 'affirming the Indigenous as valued.

As demonstrated in the opening fieldnotes, Rowse and Pertierra's (n.d.) key orthodoxies seem highly relevant, as was their conclusion that there was no 'typical' non-Indigenous Australian way of talking and thinking about Indigenous Australia.

This chapter addresses belief and values of the teachers about reconciliation and associated concepts in two ways. Section One focuses on the teachers' definitions of reconciliation, which were diverse and ambiguous, however, one strong thread throughout the discourse was reconciliation or the focus of schools was reduced to the learning of 'culture' – both for Indigenous students and for non-Indigenous students. Section Two focuses on affect and explores reconciliation through a taxonomy of whiteness – from white apathy through to white anti-racism and suggests that the majority of this community of teachers were somewhere in the field of the 'fine line' between white empathy and anti-racism – a fine line that has created 'settled reconciliation'.

Section 1 What is reconciliation?

Before engaging with the teacher's understanding of reconciliation, it is important to extend on the theoretical overview of reconciliation provided in Chapter 1. As determined in Chapter 1, there are many definitions as well as reconciliation frameworks (Bar-Tal 2013; Maddison 2017). This diversity in definition and approaches on the one hand may seem problematic, however, as noted by Schaap (2005) ambiguity enables multiple meanings, and the idea also 'provides a common vocabulary within which citizens may contest the terms and possibilities of their political association' (2005: 13). Clark et al. (2016) suggests that the ongoing debate over the

meaning of reconciliation is important as containing it may limit where and how it might be enacted. As Sanders (2002) stated back in the early 2000s, reconciliation is a journey with no end and requires each generation to reinvent it. This was evident by Reconciliation Australia's 2016 review of their framework, where they arrived at five pillars of reconciliation: race relations; equality and equity; unity; institutional integrity; and historical acceptance (Reconciliation Australia 2016). The Executive Summary acknowledges that there has been a refocus of reconciliation from practical and symbolic reconciliation to include relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, which has 'opened up national debate on prejudice, discrimination and racism' (Reconciliation Australia 2016: 3). As demonstrated, the term reconciliation continues to be used, (re)invented and (re)constructed.

It is critical to note that 17 years after CAR tabled its recommendations, in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the term 'reconciliation' was not used once, rather the Statement called for a First Nations Voice, and a Makaratta Commission which is both a call for a truth-telling commission and a formal legal process (such as treaties). The silence of 'reconciliation' could be interpreted as a rejection or refusal of the current politics, or industry or 'field' of reconciliation, as was demonstrated in the previous chapter through symbols of resistance.

Ambiguities of meaning

I began all formal interviews and focus groups with teachers by re-explaining the background to the research – 'I am really interested in how reconciliation is undertaken in schools given it is in the Australian Curriculum and a Teaching Standard'. It became obvious during the first few interviews (which were held prior to any focus group) that teachers, including executive staff, were unaware that 'reconciliation' was included in the curriculum or teaching standards, evident by the comments, 'really' or 'I didn't know that'. I then asked what they understood by the term 'reconciliation'. The responses were very diverse from explaining what it is (discourse), how to do it (or not knowing how to do it) (material), as well as how it makes teachers 'feel' (affect). Comments from non-Indigenous teachers included:

Reconciliation is where you're trying to reconcile the differences um between two parties (Teacher, female)

It's a big concept. It is about the learning of history (Teacher, male)

Celebrating culture and different perspectives (Teacher, female)

It's about the Apology (Teacher, female)

So reconciliation is just acknowledging that um you know things happened earlier on in our history that nowadays we wouldn't agree with...I really don't think that the people at the time thought it was wrong, that was just the way they were brought up and that you know maybe they thought it was they were doing the right thing at the time but now we can look back and say nah.
(Executive, female)

So the way I see it um reconciliation is working with Aboriginal people about the things that they see need to be done, not what I see need to be done. Um having really obvious recognition in society, like Acknowledgement of Country but also in a whole lot of other ways like we have the flag, the Aboriginal flag flying. (Executive, male)

Such diverse meanings are to some extent reflective of Burrridge's (2006) survey-based study that explored the discourse of reconciliation amongst teachers and school leaders in New South Wales during 1999–2000. Drawing on 230 survey responses, predominantly with school leadership, Burrridge (2006) identified seven themes:

- Partnerships/harmony/walking together/learning together
- Social Justice/equity/equal status/saying Sorry
- Valuing differences/mutual respect
- Acknowledgment
- Recognition/understanding
- Acceptance of the past/tolerance
- Unity/one people.

Of the 230 surveys, Burrridge (2006) identified very few (three) respondents that considered 'mildly negative' views towards reconciliation: that reconciliation is a policy that invokes guilt (one respondent); that Aboriginal people should accept that it is not this generation that has injustices of the past (one respondent); and that there is a lack of understanding of the term reconciliation (one respondent). Burrridge noted that those who participated in her study had a predisposition towards reconciliation, or more broadly, Indigenous matters.

Despite similar sentiments overall, in contrast to Burrridge's study (2006) in which only a small number of survey respondents acknowledged the difficulty of enacting reconciliation, amongst the teachers in the study of Everyday Reconciliation, there was a very strong belief in caution, complexity and to some extent 'failure' of reconciliation, as noted by this teacher:

Reconciliation is really complex it's not just sorry it's establishing a relationship and it's a two-way thing and it hasn't really happened.

The following teacher spoke of how reconciliation for her growing up was linked to the Apology, which she interprets as being beyond an apology to the Stolen Generations. She also articulates a realisation that nothing really changed since the Apology.

Teacher During the 1990s, my whole childhood, reconciliation meant say 'sorry'.

ME For what?

Teacher For the Stolen Generation. For the invasion. For everything. Taking the land. Sorry for everything that has been done since we got here and taking responsibility for that. And it's such a naive notion that. Because I've observed, it is certainly on when there was the apology. Kind of felt with this it's all done and now it's like to get the ball rolling and everything else will fall into place everywhere. And nothing really changed though. Nothing happened. I think now it seems much more complex. Sometimes you hear people say reconciliation isn't enough. And sometimes you hear people say I want to be recognised and repay for it and sovereignty.

More than half of the teachers in the study were within the same age bracket of this teacher. Although a number of teachers did speak of the Apology, not one teacher expressed an awareness of reconciliation as a formal policy process during the 1990s, even those who were born during the 1950s through to the 1970s. Nor was there much engagement in discussions about Constitutional Recognition beyond that mentioned above. I return to the Apology later in this chapter.

In a more recent interview-based study by Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.), 38 predominantly urban non-Indigenous Australians adults (18–86 year olds, four of whom were born overseas), were asked more general questions about Indigenous culture within a broader study about culture during 2015–2017. Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.) demonstrated that compared to previous questions about culture in general, the shift in interview questions to focus on Indigenous culture revealed participants being more cautious in their responses and demonstrating 'awareness of entering a contested field'. Such 'caution' seemed evident amongst teachers in Everyday Reconciliation, such as Sally's lower tone when commenting on one of the Aboriginal

students. In addition, comments were made such as 'not knowing how to do it' or not knowing how and if Aboriginal students should be asked to discuss their culture.

Despite how teachers spoke of reconciliation per se, as mentioned in the introduction, in the main neither the concept nor the historical policy process of reconciliation were discussed with children. Talk of reconciliation only occurred during National Reconciliation Week in both schools. I was told by both children and teachers of their activities, as well as observing the displays given they remained up throughout the remainder of the school year. At Acacia Primary, children shared with me that they first were read the book of *The Swan*, the local Dreaming story of the Ngunawal people, as retold in written form by (the late) Don Bell, a local Elder. After the reading of the book, the children then coloured in a swan and went to the hall and stuck it on the school display of Reconciliation Week. One of the students explained 'We did Indigenous things for Reconciliation Week. We read a Dreamtime story and coloured in a swan'. This activity also reflected how teachers spoke of the activity. A description of this display was included in Chapter 4.

In contrast, at Red Gum Primary, there was no whole of school activity nor mention of reconciliation week at a school level or in most classes. On asking one of the Aboriginal educators whether there was to be an activity he was explicit in stating that National Reconciliation Week was not 'their' responsibility and anyway 'we are either dumped with everything or excluded from everything. This one is definitely not our responsibility'. Such reflections echoed Rose's (2015) suggestion that the 'silent apartheid' is maintained through the 'abrogation of responsibility to the Indigenous workforce'. However, as I walked into one of the classrooms during this particular week, on the board were the following words in red and black: 'resolving problems; conciliation reconciliation; Share our Pride; Stronger Smarter Revolution; Chris Sarra; Songlines the living narrative of our nation; For a better future EQUAL Futures; Powerful people'. On the right side of the board were the numbers: '250,000,000; 250 million years old; 60,000 years (referring to how many years Aboriginal peoples have been living in Australia); 18,000 years (referring to how many years Aboriginal people have been on Ngunnawal Country); Bible 2,000 years; 250 years (colonial Australia)'. A t-shirt in the same design as the Aboriginal flag was hanging on a coat-hanger on the corner of the left hand-side of the board. The teacher explained that he talked about all of these phrases with the children. What was of particular interest was the teacher noted a couple of weeks later that one of the executive staff had come into his classroom and had questioned what was on the board and why was he teaching this to children?

This questioning was supported by the majority of teachers' discourse that the approach that should be taken is a strong celebratory approach as children at this age are colourblind and racism is learnt later than this age, as will be discussed below.

Talk about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures Cross Curriculum Priority

Given that many of the teachers were unaware of the use of the word reconciliation in the curriculum and teaching standards, including, 'I don't even know what reconciliation is so how do I do it?', I then specifically asked what they understood by the curriculum or teaching standards in relation to Indigenous cultures and histories. Overall, the response was less diverse amongst the teachers and focused on three key approaches: the embedding of Indigenous cultures and histories into everything; Indigenous students being offered their culture at the school; and to a lesser extent, improvement in education outcomes for Indigenous students. These approaches are somewhat contradictory aims to Indigenous Education reflected in the Australian Curriculum and Teaching Standards (Maxwell et al. 2018; Moodie and Patrick 2017; Salter and Maxwell 2015; Wilson 2016), which will be discussed in detail in the Chapter 6.

Embedding Indigenous perspectives

Overwhelmingly there was a strong emphasis from teachers at both schools on the curriculum requiring that Indigenous 'perspectives' be embedded into everything they did. This has been discussed in detail in previous chapter, particularly by staff at Acacia Primary. However, it was also mentioned by teachers at Red Gum Primary, as expressed by this female teacher:

What we were taught at Uni in the Indigenous Education unit was to try and embed the learning styles and the stories and cultures into as many different curriculum areas as you could. We shouldn't say that 'now we going to learn about Indigenous history' so it was all about trying to embed it so it wasn't segregated, which I totally agree with. Otherwise you'd be adding another history unit and it wouldn't be how we would really want to be teaching that Because it's a shared culture and a shared history. That's what they were trying to get across to us. That instead of saying 'this is the Aboriginal history and this is the Anglo history, this is a shared history. And we need to

see all sides of that. And we need to be able to understand each side. I like that about the units and the approach.

Such an approach, seems highly reflective of the adding-on of presumed Indigenous perspectives to create a perceived shared history, or even national Australian culture and identity, and was reflective of the ‘Indigenising’ approaches, including by-products and colonial storytelling approaches, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. However, as noted by Australian historian Henry Reynolds, ‘it is not just a matter of attaching Aboriginal history to the back left hand corner of the old homestead or of even glassing in the back verandah. The changes will ultimately have to be far more radical — a new floor perhaps, even new foundations’ (Reynolds 1996: xv). Furthermore, despite the above example of history, what emerged most strongly amongst the teachers from both schools was embedding of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives of Indigenous culture, predominantly a pre-colonisation culture.

Such examples include this teacher’s comment about reconciliation being about understanding Aboriginal culture (in the singular):

It’s all about understanding Aboriginal culture. You get the ignorant and the activist. They make us frightened to do stuff. It all comes back to understanding. If we understand we will respect. (Teacher, female).

Or this male executive staff member who reflected on being allowed to get ‘it’ wrong.

We have the permission to do it [from local Elders] in case we got it wrong and it was very very clear from the Aboriginal community that they would be more offended that we didn’t do stuff than if we did it and got it wrong. They were also very clear to tell us that because of their disjointed history that they get it wrong and if they’re getting it wrong it’s fine for us to get it wrong so that permission was actually really important in my mind because it gave me a lot more courage to do things...

As can be interpreted from this last comment for many teachers, history and culture were often conflated. This executive’s reflection made me question the ‘it’ to which he was referring. The local Elders I met or heard speak or read their stories during the past few years seemed to know their histories well, histories that are not disjointed but rather have led to loss of and created new forms of Aboriginal identities and cultures within the settler colonial state and with and on Ngannawal Country. They include stories of growing up on Hollywood Mission, of not having choices, of child removals, of poverty, of exemption cards, of not being allowed to

speak language and once the Hollywood Mission closed, of being moved off Country. Also, of childhood memories of laughter, swimming, adventures and games. There are stories of activism, resilience and resistance, of language revival. Returning to the question of 'it', 'it' seems to be a pre-colonial 'exotic' culture. What this fails to acknowledge is that cultures are evolving, and a failure to acknowledge this perpetuates static, anachronistic positioning and representation of Aboriginal culture.

Despite the strong focus on culture, it is critical to acknowledge that very few teachers spoke of learning about Anglo-Australian culture, and the power and privileging of whiteness as part of reconciliation. As discussed in Chapter 1, such approaches, not just within 'reconciliation', are reflective of intercultural understanding more broadly within Australia (Kalantzis and Cope 1981; Watkins and Noble 2017; Walton et al. 2014;). For example, Watkins and Noble (2017) found similar tokenistic approaches to multiculturalism in New South Wales schools, to which they coined the phrase 'lazy multiculturalism'. They demonstrated that despite access to resources, including a team of researchers to support teachers to engage more critically in intercultural understanding, teachers still reverted to engaging in what Kalantzis and Cope (1981) called 'spaghetti and polka' approaches (stereotypical symbols of food, dance, song, artwork).

In addition to this strongly held belief about the learning of 'culture', some teachers expressed a range of reasons why they focused on 'culture' over history or contemporary discussions. They included available time to build up the context of such complex issues; not knowing how to make it relevant for children in 2016; lack of available local resources; an absence of knowledge of Australia's history. For example, this teacher explained that he did not have time to have an in depth discussion about the Stolen Generation: 'We didn't have time for a significant discussion on it because we ended up having to move on'. However, he explained (which I also observed) that he did incorporate reading a book by an Indigenous author or include Aboriginal artwork in an art lesson about abstract art.

Noting this, there were some teachers who did express more confidence in going beyond culture and being able to contextualise the past into the contemporary:

Paul One day we started talking about the cotton fields up in Queensland and I was talking about it. And I played a slave song. So we got talking about slavery that happened here. Then we moved onto Wave Hill, and I played 'From Little Things Big Things Grow'. That's the

story see, that's the level that you could teach it to explain power relationships. That's the thing. So who is Lord Vestey and where did he come from? And why was he so powerful? You can talk about the images. Why Vincent Langiari and his people, why did they work, you know for such small amounts and get paid. And there's lots of Aboriginal workers who are still waiting for their just wage, that they never got paid. See you can talk about those contexts that sometimes it's easier to introduce it by talking about it elsewhere.

Sally The tricky thing is those conversations naturally come up on their own. Teachable moments like that they don't come up often. So how do you manufacture them and to manufacture a conversation like that takes weeks and weeks and weeks of planning and scaffolding. Weeks and weeks and planting the seeds in their head and then when you finally have that moment about only 20% of the class will have that moment because some of this, it's tricky to have those big realisation moments. And to teach it properly takes a very long time and a lot of setup and context because unfortunately, and we use this excuse all the time, the curriculum is chock-a-block. There isn't, I feel a little bit like for teaching about history its doing culture and the cross curriculum priority focus on knowledges – that's a huge problem to find room to do this every day.

In this dialogue, Paul is expressing how he has engaged in 'teachable moments'. Sally on the other hand suggests that those moments are rare, but also they require extensive scaffolding. What emerged later in this focus group was Paul's strong awareness, interest and extensive reading of Australian history books by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, civil rights campaigns, social justice as well as pedagogies centring on children as philosophers. Paul's approach, as well as his knowledge of Australia's history and awareness of whiteness was evident in his capacity to confidentially respond to these 'teaching moments'.

Indigenous culture for Indigenous children

Another approach teachers at Red Gum focused on was supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to learn 'their' culture. In the following dialogue from a focus group with teachers at Red Gum primary, throughout the discussion there is a growing awareness

that the teachers are not aware of what actually occurs at the clubs, however, express their hope that is about giving the children 'culture', including the type of culture they hope the children are exposed to. They also raise some questions as to how they can then support this learning back into the class.

We had just started talking about the clubs in the school and I pose the question what goes on in the clubs and why are there clubs?

Sally They are part of a culture that we don't teach about.

Katie But we do teach about it. It's a good question, why are they taken out?

Sally I don't believe this, that this is a sentence that responds logically to that, the idea is that, so all the kids who come from China their culture is well and truly preserved. This China it's still there and there is a strong Chinese community and their culture has not arguably been obliterated to the extent that it's extinct.

Katie I see where we are going.

Sally So you're saying, so it is part of reconciliation, so it's about giving them a culture and enabling that culture to happen.

Katie But then you need to communicate with each teacher that's actually what is happening. So not be told 'they're Aboriginal so they're coming with me now' (referring to the process that an Aboriginal teacher comes to the classroom and says to the teacher I need these children to come with me).

Sally In my head I get it, that make sense, because your entire race has been decimated so of course go and learn about your culture.

Katie All I've been told is that they just need to come.

Sally I have no idea what they do in the club.

Lisa That conference that I went to on International trauma, he looked very normal he didn't wear feathers, he said that it's really important for the recovery of trauma the establishment of language and culture and the building of that and so the feeling of being connected to a group. What came out is that how very spiritual the Indigenous

Aboriginal people are and their ceremonies and a lot of those don't exist so we can be build them.

Katie I agree I think it needs to be communicated to people.

Sally I hope that's what they are doing at the club. I would love to carry on what they do in the club. I would love to carry that into the rest of the classroom and that be celebrated and that be shared with their peers, so that everyone. So little is shared about why they get to do special things.

The same teachers returned to this discussion later in the focus groups, expressing their concerns about their role as teachers 'teaching culture'. The teachers seem to shift between suggesting that it is not their role to teach culture to Indigenous children, as well as being cognisant of stereotypes, to stating that they are not sure how to teach Aboriginal children their culture, implying an underlying belief that it is their role. There is also disagreement that Indigenous 'culture' is taught in class. Such discussions demonstrated a real confusion about the expectations of teachers on 'teaching culture' and incorporating Indigenous social, historical and cultural perspectives.

Sally What I find challenging it's one thing to teach history because you can state the facts or whatever – in this year this happened and in that year this happened. What I find tricky is talking about it in a contemporary context. One of the reasons I asked to do the culture competency course is the idea of sitting in front of a class of which some are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and teaching them about their own culture. I'll have this foreign weird idea that all Aboriginal people live in the bush. It's condescending and not their experience of being an Aboriginal person they're not out fighting people in funny ways or do some things, so wasn't sure. That's what I find still tricky is how to, I don't want to teach my class as if this is something happened 1 million years ago in Narnia, but I also don't want to be telling them who they are and what they believe in because that's the role of their families. But at our school there are those who are Aboriginal but don't practice a lot of the culture or they don't identify.

Lisa Yeah or they don't identify necessarily as Aboriginal and they don't do a lot of things that other Aboriginals take very seriously. Like those they go and visit their Country and they practice their rituals and stuff. Other families don't so I'm still not sure really how to, it's like kind of, teach anyone who they are. It's so complex.

Katie Imagine trying to find a description about Australian culture this is what Australians do.

Sally (Jokingly) They all live on farms and sheep and everyone's called Steve or Kylie.

Katie And that's really difficult to do.

Sally And then there's the extra layer of cultural sensitivity and there are some rituals are that are not supposed to be spoken about.

Not only does this dialogue demonstrate a confusion about how to teach culture, but also reveals some of the confusion about the concept of 'Indigenous perspectives'.

Awareness of one's own limited knowledge in engaging with the Cross Curriculum Priority

Amongst all the teachers, there was a strong awareness of the limitation of knowledge from their own schooling about Indigenous histories and cultures, including those who attended school during the 1990s and 2000s, the 'peak of reconciliation' in schools:

When I went to school it was all English kings and queens. (Non-Indigenous, female teacher).

I don't remember learning anything from school. (Non-Indigenous female teacher).

The only exposure I had to Aboriginal culture when I was a child was the Dreamtime stories um so any of the things about removal of children or um you know all the massacres that happened and all never never touched on. (Non-Indigenous, male executive).

Such reflections are similar to observations made in other studies about schools during this period (Maddison and Stastny 2016; Rowse and Pertierra n.d.). Despite this awareness there were also teachers who spoke of now being confident as they had learnt a lot at University, as

expressed in the opening narrative. This learning occurred through having friends, or knowing someone, or that they spoke a lot about it at home.

We have an Indigenous friend who has actually received reverse racism in his life because he is quite light-skinned. Such as people saying 'Well you're not Aboriginal then' until that made his mum so angry. We had a lot of discussions with him. (Teacher, female)

I didn't learn much at all in my role as a teacher um until a couple of years ago here. Where I did a cultural competency online course um that's probably taught me more than most other opportunities I've had to learn. I also have learnt just through my own interest in um in the ACT. I've sought out to learn about the local context and um I wanted also to be able to teach and talk to some of my students about that. So there were little snippets of information that I gathered through some booklets that I read about the local history um but as I said, that there was nothing formal. That was just my interest and finding them through um parks and wildlife or through the um through going...I can't remember where I got them from. I think I got some on some information from a friend of mine who compiled a book about um native plants and the Aboriginal relationship with the land, and also...In fact, no I'd, I'd completely forgotten. I went on two excursions down to Wreck Bay so while that wasn't local I took, as the coordinating teacher, two groups of students down to Wreck Bay, where we went through a whole lot and I learnt a lot about um Aboriginal culture down there. And the continuing culture that they have there and that was probably, yeah, where I learnt the most. Because I was learning it in situ from the local Elders and I was also helping students to learn that. Yeah, so that's probably most of it. I've also got a son-in-law who does a lot of work currently on um Aboriginal cultural history in a number of ways and so he's doing his PhD and he's had long talks to me about different aspects of um culture and history of Aborigines in Australia in broad context. (Executive, male)

Of particular interest, the teachers who expressed this confidence from both schools were also the same teachers who were not aware of local history (despite expressing they were). Such as this comment by one of the same teachers,

I know that we've always acknowledged the Ngunnawal people but other than that I know very little about the local group. I know that there are lots of people in Canberra who aren't Ngunnawal and so I actually think that we are supposed to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and the Ngambri. (Female, non-Indigenous teacher, Interview, 3 April 2016)

Such teachers also had little awareness of broader demographics (such as knowing that according to the census around 3 per cent of Australia's population identify as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island person – they had assumed there were many more because their school had more than 3 per cent of students identifying as Indigenous), nor awareness of the historical and contemporary sensitivities surrounding Indigenous identity such as quantum or even use of the word 'Aborigine' as used above. This confidence was also evident in the approaches they applied in classroom practice (Chapter 4). Such approaches seem reflective of Rose's (2015: 71) assertion that

...[educators] emerge from their universities having had very little exposure to Indigenous insights, and then they inadvertently replicate this ignorance in their everyday practice by teaching nothing at all about Indigenous cultures, or worse teaching illegitimate or ill-informed Indigenous content. This cycle of ignorance contributes to, sustains and then replicates itself if it were a regenerative pandemic.

Such beliefs are strongly supported by other studies that explored teacher attitudes about incorporating Indigenous perspectives into their teaching. For example, Baynes (2016) cites the following studies in her exploration of teacher attitudes to incorporating Indigenous knowledges into the science curriculum. Harrison and Greenfield (2011: 74) noted that teachers 'lament that they do not possess the knowledge to teach about Aboriginal Australia'. Also identified is confusion surrounding what constitutes Indigenous cultural knowledge (Burridge, Chodkiewicz, and Whalan 2012), and the differences between Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous knowledges (Harrison and Greenfield 2011). Quince (2012) noted that teachers were hesitant about incorporating Indigenous content when they feel that they do not have the expertise to do this in an authentic way (Quince 2012). Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009: 63) determined that non-Indigenous teachers avoided Indigenous perspectives as they felt uncomfortable and were 'fearful of overstepping' cultural boundaries (despite whether they were real or imagined). The Burridge and Evans (2012) study highlighted that teachers noted having competing pressures being time poor and struggled to sustain the project in among the usual pressures of a school day. Kanu (2011) notes similar discourse amongst teachers in

Canada of their perceived lack of cultural knowledge as a barrier to implementing cultural and historical perspectives into their daily lessons.

However, teachers in the study of Everyday Reconciliation not only articulate their lack of knowledge about Aboriginal cultures and resultant lack of confidence as a challenge; they also note the complexities in knowing how to teach history. As explained by this female teacher,

I don't think it's guilt, I think it does come down to the tools that we have that I also think on a wider scale society has become so politically correct that our society is afraid to talk about intense issues. And so you find this in a lot of other topics so like the LGBTQI²⁶. So there's a lot of really serious topics but people stay away from it because I do not want to hurt anyone. I think it's the same in Aboriginal history because people don't want to offend. Where I think if you openly discuss we might be able to come up with better solutions and understanding of all people involved, both Aboriginal and Anglo-Australians.

Or this female teacher's response to knowing how to address racism where this teacher suggested she would not address children's expressions of racism or cultural exclusion of other students as she felt that it was a value being taught at home and was not her role as a teacher to address family values:

I feel it's is not my place to challenge it. I don't personally think it's right, but I don't think I can challenge it.

Thus the beliefs and values about reconciliation and engaging with the CCP as well as the barriers that teachers expressed was not only about Indigenous cultural knowledges, but also about how to teach 'contested' history (and making it relevant to children in the contemporary) and race and racism.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous binary

One of the only strong themes reflecting consensus amongst teachers within their discourse and discursive practice of 'reconciliation' was an obvious expression of the players of reconciliation: Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. No teacher acknowledged the heterogeneity of either group during discussions about reconciliation, despite both schools

²⁶ LGBTQI is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex

reflecting diversity, both within the Indigenous and non-Indigenous school communities. This homogenising of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is evident in other studies exploring discourses within reconciliation. Stastny et al. (2016) determined in their study of 'non-Indigenous reflexive self-awareness' using focus groups with non-Indigenous Australians during 2014, that participants spoke of 'we', comprising all non-Indigenous peoples in Australia and 'they' comprising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The concerns about this ongoing binary are expressed by Nakata (2002) in terms of ongoing complexities in the cultural interface. That is, the binaries 'confine Indigenous peoples to the position of "Other" by reifying the very categories that have marginalised us historically and that still seek to remake and relegate us within the frameworks of Western epistemes' (Nakata 2002: 285). Schick and St Denis (2005) draw on the work of Wendell (1989) regarding Othering of First Nation Canadians, which provides an important reflection,

When we make people 'other', we group them together as the objects of experience instead of regarding them as fellow subjects of experience with whom we might identify...We can all do this to each other, but very often the process is asymmetrical because one group of people may have more power to call itself paradigm of humanity and to make the world suit its own needs and validate its experiences. (Wendell, 1989: 116 cited in Schick and St. Denis 2005: 301)

There were some limited attempts at dismantling the binary and this Othering, evident at Acacia Primary, where active attempts to create an 'us and our' as opposed to 'us and them' were displayed throughout the year. Such as in the foyer display of 'Our Indigenous Australian Olympians' (Chapter 4), or extending the Acknowledgement of Country to include 'all cultures that make up our school community'. However, particularly in relation to the display of Indigenous Olympians in the school foyer, it seemed to have a counter result due to the lack of other displays of any other Olympians suggesting a possessiveness and a romanticising of Indigenous Olympians, perpetuating an Othering rather than dismantling it.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and parents' beliefs and values about reconciliation

In contrast to the focus on culture by teachers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents considered the responsibility of schools to teach the real history more important than culture. As these two parents suggested:

- *I think it is important for all children whether they're Indigenous or not, that they learn about the history of the country they live in. I think it's the history that is very important they should learn the history of this country, especially the non-Indigenous children.*
- *I think they should get the true history that would be a good start. Who knows what non-Indigenous children are learning at home from their parents the morals and values that their parents are giving. So no matter how you present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture or historical perspectives it will always be the thoughts of the parents. I would love to see it as part of the major curriculum that young people are given a true history and then they make their own choice. But we all know that's never going to happen. It is quite evident in schools from the headmaster down how the true history is not taught. You get really great examples of some schools whose headmasters, who want to be inclusive and present really good cultural aspects, but what always comes back is whose driving it is responsible for setting quality.*

This request for true history is what seems to have been the original intent of the recommendations of *Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (Chapter 1) (Johnston 1991), to incorporate Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters, however, as discussed in detail in the previous chapter, much of the approaches has been reduced to by-products and colonial storytelling of Aboriginal perspectives and knowledges. Despite the commitment by non-Indigenous staff to embed such Indigenous perspectives, the notion of 'embedding' itself (in addition to concerns expressed about the type of approaches being taken) was strongly challenged by all of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents as a concern.

Embedding silences it. If it's silenced it stays comfortable – they have to talk about the context. It's like the example of the reading a story by an Indigenous author and not acknowledging that it was written by an Indigenous author. Providing the context is important, even like just saying that 'when I grew up we didn't read books by Aboriginal authors'. But being able to talk about the context is uncomfortable. But that's proper reconciliation. You have to pull from the past, you can't just stop the past and start again. It's not going to help our children equip themselves with the stuff out there in the big bad world like the Adam Goodes stuff.

Specifically with regards to reconciliation, there were strong sentiments amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents that their children did not need to engage with ‘reconciliation activities’. As one parent explained:

You know it’s a discussion that we have to have, to tell them that you don’t have to go and reconcile with the white kids you just need to be yourself. But if you are talking from a parent perspective then I think it’s important to talk about it.

Thus, there was a real disconnect between non-Indigenous teachers’ beliefs and values and their approaches, and the expectations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and parents in the study about the focus schools should be taking. Noting this, not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and parents expressed this, where some focused on supporting staff to embed cultural protocols.

In summarising Section One of this chapter, there were diverse beliefs and values expressed amongst the teachers at Acacia and Red Gum Primary about reconciliation and the CCP. Some of the beliefs and values reflected contradictions or incongruency within teacher discourse however, this seems reflective of other studies exploring non-Indigenous attitudes towards Indigenous Australians and Indigenous matters (Cowlshaw 2010; Maddison and Statsny 2016; Paradies 2016; Rowse and Pertierra n.d.; Walter 2012). For example, Walter (2012) in her analysis of the 2007 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA) determined that both supportive attitudes and anti-Aboriginal sentiments ‘appear to incongruously coexist as the Australian norm’ (Walter 2012: 15). She explains,

This distinctively Australian, but contradictory, picture suggests a country and a national identity ill at ease with the place of Indigeneity in its consciousness, one in which Indigeneity remains unreconciled with everyday concepts of Australian society and Australian identity. This uniquely Australian unease is reflected in the often confused and conflicting direction of public attitudes towards Indigenous people, Indigenous culture issues and Indigenous political topics (Walter 2012: 15).

Having set the background of teachers’ beliefs and values about reconciliation, the following section explores how these beliefs and values affected the performance of everyday reconciliation and related concepts amongst the community of teachers at both schools.

Section 2: From white apathy and disinterest to white anti-racism – ‘affect of reconciliation’

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, understanding what reconciliation ‘does’ or the affect of reconciliation is as important as understanding teachers’ beliefs and values about reconciliation. In exploring possible ‘affects’ of reconciliation, I have found Spanierman and Cabrera’s (2015) taxonomy of whiteness useful in demonstrating teachers’ beliefs and values as a community of speakers. Drawing on the literature of sociology, psychology and education in the United States context, they refer to seven ‘emotions’ related to white racism through to white anti-racism: white apathy and disinterest; white fear; white melancholia; white rage; white guilt and shame; white empathy; and white anti-racism. The authors use the metaphor of a journey from white racism to white anti-racism, as does the rhetoric of reconciliation in Australia refer to the journey ‘of’ reconciliation or the journey ‘to’ reconciliation. However, despite my support for this framework, my observations of how individuals and communities engage with the journey of and to reconciliation is far from linear, both in discourse, affect and approaches. For example, a number of teachers may have expressed white anti-racism through commitment to learn about and teach local Aboriginal history (including discussing the Missions, resistance, the lack of rights to servicemen during World War I and World War II). However, in discussing culture and racism, they expressed a strong rhetoric of colourblindness, which in this taxonomy has been framed within ‘white apathy’. Such limitations of a taxonomy are noted elsewhere specific to the risks in perpetuating a homogenous representative of a particular field, ‘the Indigenous’, ‘the non-Indigenous’, the ‘antiracist’ (Rowse and Pertierra n.d.; Walter 2012). Despite such limitations of ‘labelling’ and homogenising, a taxonomy offers a framework to explore these contradictions, progressing the conceptual lens of understanding everyday reconciliation. It’s important to note that in the following section, I have focused on discussing in detail those emotions that the ‘community of teachers’ were mostly engaged with, and as a result provide much briefer accounts of other emotions that very few teachers expressed.

Taxonomy of the field of Everyday Reconciliation

White apathy and disinterest

According to Spanierman and Cabrera (2015), white apathy and disinterest is an attitude driven by the view that racism is not important to non-Indigenous people, that it is an individual

behaviour, and the lack of overt racist behaviour is proof that there is no need for active anti-racism and reconciliation. Racism is reduced to individual pathological acts of racism. Within this construct, colourblindness is prevalent.

Colourblindness – colourmute, racelessness and egalitarianism

Spanierman and Cabrera posit ‘colourblind ideology’ (Bonilla-Silva 2014), which includes both colourmute and racelessness discourse, as being deeply embedded in white apathy.

Colourmute discourse acknowledges that the construct of race exists, however, actively removes it (silences or mutes it) in talk or documents it as a process to reduce its significance. Racelessness on the other hand, is the process of actively suggesting that we have moved into a post-racialised society and there is now no longer race or racism. Both are part of the broader colourblind agenda (Priest et al. 2014) which is a perception that racism no longer exists, and fails to acknowledge the ongoing structural aspects of racism, where proponents strongly argue that race is not the influencing factor in social inequalities (Bonilla-Silva 2014).

The colourblind perspective is highly influenced by the normalisation of white culture to which all Others are considered different. As Howard-Wagner (2015) and Moreton-Robinson (1999, 2004) attest, such an approach assimilates racial and ethnic groups into the ‘white’ mainstream, and in doing so ‘enables and sustains the universality of whiteness as humanness’ (Moreton-Robinson 2004: 83). Drawing on the work of Bonilla-Silva (2014: 73), Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2016: 488) assert that colourblind racism is endemic in Australia:

Colourblind racism is a form of racism that has moved outside of the limited framework of antipathy. Instead, it is a thinly veiled ideology that denies the continual existence and impact of racism in all its forms, promotes false notions of individualistic equality to reject any attempts to correct the ongoing impact of racism (e.g., affirmative action), and embraces deficit discourses under the guise of ‘natural’ segregation (where they belong) and cultural victimhood (where they choose to belong).

It is important to confirm that there were very few teachers that reflected emotions of ‘white apathy’ or ‘antipathy’ per se towards Indigenous Australians. However, despite an overwhelming support to engage in Indigenous perspectives, the majority of teachers did engage with some aspect of colourblind discourses in various ways. These included comments such as ‘we don’t have a racism problem at this school anyone’, ‘I ask children to leave their

blackness at the door', 'I get that there were some bad things in the past but the focus should be now on how they learn'.

In a school-based ethnographic study (Walton et al. 2014) in four Melbourne primary schools, the authors explored how teachers delivered messages about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and racism with 8–12 year olds. Building on the growing literature of egalitarianism and colourblindness (Bonilla-Silva 2014; DiAngelo 2011), Walton et al. (2014: 113) determined that teachers delivered three main types of egalitarian-colourblind messages when talking about culture to primary school children:

- procedural-justice colourblindness (the belief that one's racial identity or culture should be not taken into account, 'we are all equal', as we are in a post-racialised society)
- distributive-justice colourblindness (cultural differences are taken into account and recognised, including discussions about how current structures are perpetuating difference, in order to enact a colourblind society), and
- colourmuteness (referring to the avoidance and silencing of talking race (Castagno 2008; Pollock 2004)).

Walton et al. (2014) determined that the dominant approaches amongst the teachers in their study were procedural-justice colourblindness and colourmuteness.

These two approaches were very similar to the way teachers engaged with colourblindness at both Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary. For example, with regards to procedural-justice colourblindness, teachers expressed that there were no concerns of racism at their school, yet simultaneously would suggest that the Aboriginal children hang out all together and don't really mix. As noted in the Walton et al. (2014) study, teachers did not wish to consider the implications or reasons for this non-mixing, rather that they 'like to stay together', not considering the potential of racism being a factor in this (which is discussed in Chapter 7). An example of how colourmuteness was promoted was reflective of the 'Easter lesson' discussed in Chapter 4. The very few examples of distributive-justice colourblindness could be seen on the board at Red Gum during National Reconciliation Week or discussions held during Harmony Day, where the teacher actively engaged in discussions with children as to why there are such days including that it is on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and how it is important to focus on the reasons for the days not just to celebrate them.

Another finding Walton et al. (2014) noted was that schools with higher multi-ethnic or multi-cultural population tended to include more messages about preparation for bias, where schools with higher numbers of Anglo-Australian students focused on egalitarianism. Both Red Gum and Acacia Primary had high numbers of children born overseas, spoke a language other than English, and additionally for Red Gum, had over 10 per cent of its school population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. However, promoting 'preparation for bias' was not the approach in either school. Rather, as was demonstrated in the Walton et al. (2014) study, schools with higher number of Anglo-Australian students, the overwhelmingly predominant messages taken by teachers and the school was a strong promotion of egalitarianism in the varying forms as well as a strong positive promotion of Aboriginal culture(s). The only exception to this occurred in the Clubs at Red Gum Primary where there were discussions that focused on distributive-justice colourblindness, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences were clearly taken into account and recognised, and discussions about how current structures are perpetuating difference occurred. However, as mentioned, there were very few occasions that these approaches included non-Indigenous children.

The authors of the Melbourne study (Walton et al. 2014) suggested that the strongest influencing barrier for engaging in more distributive-justice colourblind approaches was confidence and capability to engage. This was also evident amongst teachers at both Acacia and Red Gum schools where teachers expressed a lack of confidence and capability in discussing race, racism, prejudice, stereotypes as well as some aspects of history, as discussed in Section 1 of this Chapter. They noted they had not had any training on these topics at university or in more recent professional development courses, as discussed above in relation to the teacher who suggested the barrier was not guilt, but the tools that teachers have.

Overall, however, the way teachers and executives at Red Gum and Acacia primary expressed colourblind racism was very much in locating racism as an individual pathological approach. On asking teachers during interviews whether they have observed any form of racism and if so how they did or how would they respond, teachers spoke about racism not being 'kind', and would report it to the Principal. In one teacher's response she recounted how during the previous year she had to have a discussion in class about racism, as a girl had raised that her parent didn't want her to play with Aboriginal people.

ME Have you ever had to deal with children talking about racism in the classroom?

Teacher This girl came from Brisbane last year and said ‘My mum said we cannot trust the Aboriginal people and they steal’. And we were talking about laws – and I asked ‘Have you ever wondered why people go to the extent of stealing?’. We started talking. And I said ‘Just Because one or two or three do we shouldn’t say they all do’. But the girl kept saying ‘But my mum said we shouldn’t play with them’, and I said ‘We should try not to be mean’.

ME Were there any Aboriginal children in the class during this discussion?

Teacher I had one in my class. She’s the fair skinned kind but she wasn’t there that day. So we started talking and I explained that we all have different value systems that we have come from. (Female teacher, interview 2016)

In this particular example, the teacher ‘embraced deficit discourse and cultural victimhood’, which are both described by Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2016) as being central to colourblind racism. Furthermore, the very comment that the Aboriginal girl in her class was a ‘fair skinned kind’ failed to acknowledge the complexities of Indigenous identity and continued to engage in racism in her talk. This in itself was another strong sentiment amongst a number of teachers, where teachers made comments about particular children being ‘fair-skinned’ as noted above. One Aboriginal parent shared how the Principal at her daughter’s school had stood out the front of assembly and had talked about celebrating all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff. The Principal went on to say ‘that we don’t care whether they are a quarter or half, or an eighth Aboriginal. That we acknowledge them all’.

Colourblind approaches to race and racism were reiterated by both Principals, who focused on addressing racism by promoting respectful relationships and inclusion. Such an approach is expressed in the ACT Education Directorate Safe and Supportive Schools Policy(2016a), which includes terms such as ‘safe, respectful and supportive school environments’ and ‘bullying, harassment (including racial) and violence’. Although not mentioned in the actual policy, in the Procedures document (2016b) accompanying the Policy, racism is defined as extending from interpersonal forms into institutionalised policies, practices and structures:

3.1 Racism refers to any belief, attitude, behaviour or practice that reflects an assumption, stated or implied, of superiority of one cultural group over another. It is expressed through prejudice or discrimination and may take various forms, including verbal,

physical, social, psychological and electronic. It can be overt or covert and directed against individuals or groups. Racism can also be institutionalised into policies, practices and structures. (2016b:2))

The document goes on to suggest that racism can be directed at individuals or groups. However, it is in its examples of occurrence and context, that individual pathological approaches are the only examples offered, providing no examples of what institutionalised (or structural) racism looks like, nor recognition of systemic power imbalances and behaviours (from individual to macro) that perpetuate such imbalances, and how to address it.

The following three emotions in Spanierman and Cabrera's (2015) taxonomy are discussed briefly, as very few teachers in the study engaged in these emotions.

White fear

White fear occurs when there is a limited understanding of race and is expressed on the one hand through anxiety of not wanting to appear racist (so one does nothing) and on the other hand, an irrational fear of Indigenous people. In this space, individuals have low racial awareness, cultural sensitivity and diversity appreciation, as well as express high levels of colourblindness and prejudice (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015: 12).

White melancholia

White melancholia is an 'extreme and collective response to white fear', where there is a longing for a previous racially-homogenous, white nation that once existed. The irony is that grieving for Australia as a unified white nation, is grieving for a nation that never existed (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015: 14).

White rage

White rage is linked to resentment towards Indigenous people, and often expressed as reverse racism by white men due to the possibility of losing power and privilege (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015: 14).

As noted, in the main teachers were not located within these three emotional states (white fear, white melancholia, white rage) regarding reconciliation. However, there was one teacher,

John, who did shift between fear, melancholia and rage, as demonstrated during a heated history planning meeting discussion. I use this observation not only to demonstrate his position (and do so with trepidation of 'labelling' him as discussed in Chapter 3), but it is important to demonstrate how the other teachers then responded to him in a way to affirm their more positive approaches to reconciliation.

John and two of his colleagues, Sally and Katie had been undertaking a two hour planning session for the Year 4 History unit 'First Contact'. They had decided for their three classes to come together to deliver the history unit, which focuses on 'First Contact' in a collaborative teaching approach. Throughout the planning meeting they discussed and agreed to resources, as well as how to incorporate the history unit within other lessons (as detailed in the previous chapter). At the end of the planning session, Sally comments 'Before we finish up we should make sure we all agree which language to use', to which Katie agrees. However, John asks 'I don't understand what you mean'. Leonie explains 'We just need to be really careful about the type of language we use with the kids. Like we shouldn't use the word developed because the kids will interpret it as Europeans being more developed and that's not the message we are trying to give them'. Katie contributes, 'We should use the word invasion'. To this, John becomes hostile and angry. He puts both his arms up and shaking his head and with a raised voice tells them 'I am so sick of history being political. What about the history of my ancestors? I am so sick of being positioned as the bad guy.' He stands up, stands behind his chair and says that he will be using the terms 'developed' and 'underdeveloped', because after all, the British settlers were more developed, and storms out of the staffroom. I am left with Leonie and Katie who at this point make comments such as 'wow', 'unbelievable'. As they pack up their items, ready for class, Leonie comments that they can choose not to do this unit with John. The following week when I return to the school, I notice Leonie and Katie's classes have merged for this unit, whilst John and his class are in his own classroom.

This excluding of John from participating in shared teaching was one example of how his particular approach to reconciliation and engagement with the CCP became embodied within the staffrooms, classrooms and teaching practices. Through micro-affirmations (Vass 2018) between other teachers in the staffroom, teachers distanced themselves from him by stopping

conversations when he entered the room or making eye contact with each other when he left. A more explicit response to John emerged half way through the year with the sudden appearance of the large black and white artwork entitled 'austracism' in the staffroom. The artwork is text-based with lines of small font detailing examples of direct quotes regarding everyday casual racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Examples include – 'I'm not racist but...I don't know why Aboriginal people can't look after their houses properly...' and 'I'm not racist but...Aboriginal people weren't doing anything on this the land before we came...'. The words 'austracism' is in very large font across the artwork. The letters a.u.s.t. are in heavy black, with the word racism in a lighter grey, possibly suggesting the dominance of white-Australia dictating discussions of race, racism and identity. The word itself – austracism – if pronounced in a certain way seems a play on the word 'ostracism'. The artwork is by Vernon Ah Kee, from the Kuku yalanji/Yidinji/Waanyi/Gugu Yimithirr/Koko Berrin peoples, and the original is prominently displayed at the National Gallery of Australia.

Walking in to the staffroom half way through the year I was surprised to see the artwork suddenly appear on the wall. I commented about the artwork to the two teachers who had been in the history meeting by just commenting 'This is new', to which one of the teachers said looking up briefly, 'It was put up by one of the teachers', providing no other comments. A different teacher then walked past and commented 'he' (presumably referring to John) won't even notice that it is for him – he would need to be hit on the head with it before he notices it'.

John seemed somewhat oblivious to all of these responses –from the micro-affirmations amongst other teachers to distance themselves from him through to the artwork – often creating his own opportunities to share his perspectives. Such as when he came over to his colleague, interrupted our conversation, and stated 'I have worked out how to discipline the Aboriginal kids in my remote school next year. I am going to keep the kids inside whilst the rest of the class are rewarded by playing outside'. The teacher he had shared this with didn't even look up, and whilst shifting paper on her desk (which she was not doing whilst chatting with me) suggested that his approach was against the evidence of keeping kids who misbehave inside – 'what they need is outside play'. This is one of the only times I directly responded and suggested that he was making a big assumption about the children and that he probably should consider waiting till he starts at the school and meet the children to see if he actually needed to discipline them. His response was 'Nah. They will need it'.

Beyond the deeply held assumptions about Aboriginal children needing discipline as well as his possessive language of 'my remote school' John's need to share his approach, and

dismissiveness of our suggestions seemed to reflect the evidence that highly prejudiced individuals are significantly more likely to see their views as being consensually shared (Strube and Rahimi 2006), resulting in people with higher levels of prejudice more willing to come forward and express their views.

Despite this, John seemed to also reflect a tension between being the atypical 'White Australian' (Hage 1998: 57) who epitomises white fear, white rage and white melancholia, by distancing himself from this image by behaviour such as having Stan Grant's 'Talking to my Country' (2016) book on his bookshelf, wanting to go to a remote community to teach, and through his request during focus groups for a toolkit to know how to teach his Aboriginal kids. Again, demonstrating the contradictory displays of beliefs and attitudes reflective of this complex and nuanced 'field' of everyday reconciliation.

The following three emotions were where the majority of teachers expressed themselves; however, as will be discussed, they were predominantly in a space known as 'the fine line' between white empathy and white anti-racism.

White guilt and shame

White guilt and shame emerges in response to an understanding of structural racism and white privilege. Drawing on the work of Iyer et al. (2004), Spanierman and Cabrera (2015: 16-17) suggest that it can positively lead to 'cultural competence and social action', however, can also be driven by 'infrequent action and self-focus' (that is, driven by a need to make the non-Indigenous person feel better). As Rose (2015: 74) notes of what he calls the 'missionary',

While the missionary is often driven by a sense of compassion for the 'oppressed victim' they out of an innate sense of righteousness, justify and sanitise their endeavour as they go about their business of saving the 'savage' from themselves. Missionaries are often exalted by peers and managers for the work that they do and the vivacity with which they do it, circumventing any feedback loop from the Indigenous subjects of their work, and heaping praise on their endeavours.

Rose's reflections seemed to mirror the self-appraising discourse circulating Acacia Primary's RAP meeting I discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4). Staff expressed that the school had done a good job, that they 'all deserve a pat on the back'. They were grateful to the IEO who made them feel comfortable, however were concerned about the 'activists and the

ignorant', possibly as they may challenge their approaches. From a different perspective, white guilt and shame also acted as a deterrent to engage in more discussions with children. As one female non-Indigenous teacher explained,

I am glad the history unit for Year 4 focuses on when the Europeans arrive and does not go all the way up to the Stolen Generation. I would find that really hard. I can imagine if I was teaching that, it is closer to home and there are relatives of the children in that generation. (Female teacher)

White empathy

White empathy refers to 'understanding the dehumanisation and pain that has occurred towards Indigenous Australians and begins with sympathy, empathy and autopathy (where attempts are made by non-Indigenous Australians actively locate themselves to experience 'marginalisation and oppression', beyond empathising). Spanierman and Cabrera (2015: 19) suggest that white empathy is not 'sufficient' for enacting behaviours that challenge the structures that perpetuate white privilege. One example of this is the discussion regarding the Clubs and enabling students to attend because it gives them 'culture'.

However, the lack of awareness of what was occurring at the clubs (Chapter 4) coupled with observations that one of the clubs was not about culture, rather a health program (to teach children about teeth brushing and putting on deodorant – seems to reflect what Rose (2015: 72) refers to as racism by cotton-wool. In this case, not necessarily in relation to students' academic achievement, but rather in the teacher's lack of any questioning surrounding activities offered to Indigenous students, even when they were responsible for them such as during class time. Again, reflecting another tenant of Rose's (2015) 'silent apartheid' embedded in the way teachers engaged in everyday reconciliation.

White anti-racism

The final emotion in Spanierman and Cabrera's (2015) taxonomy is white anti-racism, defined as turning moral outrage into action. There were a very small number of teachers who actively engaged in actions of anti-racism. Spanierman and Cabrera suggest that an awareness and concern of where one's community of peers may be currently at in their 'journey' of white racism to anti-racism, is required in anti-racism. Without this awareness, engagement and suggestions of actions can have little effect on social transformation, and can potentially lead

to alienating both Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. There were a number of teachers who expressed concern about the current practices at Red Gum and Acacia Primary Schools. This awareness, coupled with frustrations, 'They just don't get it', 'they think that they are doing the right thing' seems to be an awareness that good intentions are not enough (Gorski 2008). This was expressed by this teacher:

It's and it's like I go round in circles sometimes um I think that it is – people aren't' being willing to change in order to have change at the moment. I feel like I keep banging my head against a wall because I feel like most non-Indigenous people don't want to change. They just want Indigenous people to change and that's not reconciliation that's just assimilation – um and that's unrealistic and it's also probably not in the best interests of our country. Because we have a lot to learn and if we aren't gonna validate that, like you know it's one thing to say oh you know what a beautiful culture, they have some really nice philosophies. But if you're not going to or willing to adopt it and maybe compromise on something that you're doing in your own life, then what's the point of just saying it? I think – but it's a mindset. I don't know. It's, you know I'm not saying that you'd have to go hunt for your food but just the basic philosophy of connection and appreciation and of land and country we don't do that enough I don't think. We don't stop enough and have that connection with our environment – and we don't teach that in schools. Why don't we teach connection to environment in schools? People would think it's airy fairy I think and that really gets to me it's actually quite important...it's around having the capacity to step back and say different perspectives or cultural perspectives and knowledges are as equal to importance as your own.

Offering a different example, one executive spoke of a shift in her thinking when she engaged more with local Elders and staff in discussions a couple of years ago surrounding 'reconciliation'. The executive expresses strong awareness of cultural humility, and her own personal journey.

I think the shift that happened in me also happened in the staff because of the way she led that conversation and the respect. And it was from heart you know it wasn't from paper or um that traditional sort of approach that one might take so when you ask me what does reconciliation mean to me it

means learning. It means seeing the world from a different perspective. Understanding that there are other ways of seeing. I thought I understood that there are a range of ways um of viewing the world um and and I've been helped to access a different way of viewing and understanding and reconciliation. So for me it's about getting you know that deeper sense of other ways of viewing the world that because of all of our education processes I guess have been closed off to us.

Although anti-racism is the last emotion in the taxonomy, Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) note a chasm between white guilt and shame, and white empathy on one side, and white anti-racism on the other side, which they call the 'fine line'.

The fine line between white empathy and white anti-racism

Within this slippery crevasse, there is a fine line between action undertaken to eliminate racial oppression and structural racism and 'destructive' action, or possible action that perpetuates the existing structures if there is an absence of ongoing critique and action (praxis) (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015:20). Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) note Freire's (2000) work that suggests many who claim to be anti-racists are working 'for' the marginalised group rather than 'with', which could refer to the ongoing deficit-driven, patronising view of Indigenous Australians as lacking agency. These suggestions are strongly supported by international Indigenist and anti-racism scholars (such as Kowal 2015a; Paradies 2006; Schick 2009; St Denis 2007). It is within this 'fine line' that the community of teachers of Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary was located.

I have come to refer to the fine line of everyday reconciliation as 'settled reconciliation'. The word settled refers to both a reconciliation for colonial-settlers (including newer migrants to Australia) that invokes 'comfort', but also the notion of settled being an end result of reconciliation, rather than an ongoing process. Settled reconciliation can be seen in the curriculum, a classroom, or the school as well as those who maintain and possibly amplify unequal power relations despite espousing that they are committed to reconciliation (or resolving) the 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' issues/matters/problems. This concept is explored more deeply in the following section.

‘Settled reconciliation’

In order to explain the concept of settled reconciliation, I draw on Schick’s (2011) analysis of Aboriginal Education policies in Saskatchewan, Canada, in which she questions how the plethora of policies, statements, strategies, and workshops that aim to promote diversity and address fundamental inequality of education outcomes for Aboriginal Canadians ‘have produced so little change’. Of particular interest is her summation that the policies that seek to promote diversity and understanding on the surface appear to be ‘doing good’ however, are not only perpetuating the current unequal power relations, but are intensifying and strengthening the colonial project, power relations and assimilation. Schick (2011: 466) asks

How the policy is but one example of a public project, given tacit approval by a collective settler consciousness, that is seen to be doing the right thing while maintaining, if not amplifying, unequal power relations with the appearance of approval from an aggrieved people.

It was the same question that I kept returning to throughout my fieldwork. In both schools, how do teachers with so much good intent coupled with an assumption that they are doing the right thing through their extensive amount of symbols, celebration of Indigenous Australia still maintain the same power relations, possibly intensifying the colonial project?

Schick draws on Ahmed’s (2004) concepts of collective guilt, fear (not the same as white fear), shame and transference to explore how ‘well-meaningness’ contributes to perpetuating the existing system and discourse of the Aboriginal problem within written policies. Through my own reading of Ahmed’s work (2014), she provides a compelling analysis of how Australia’s public expressions of apologies and Sorry Books (2014:468) are simply public displays of shame in response to colonialism. Ahmed (2014) suggests that shame engages with an acknowledgement of the past, which then enables the society to enter into a ‘recovery’ mode, and a form of nation-building (2014:472). This is clearly demonstrated in the words of the official Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008.

I ask those non-Indigenous Australians listening today who may not fully understand why what we are doing is so important to imagine for a moment that this had happened to you. I say to honourable members here present: imagine if this had happened to us. Imagine the crippling effect. Imagine how hard it would be to forgive. My proposal is this: if the apology we extend today is accepted in the spirit of reconciliation in which it

is offered, we can today resolve together that there be a new beginning for Australia. And it is to such a new beginning that I believe the nation is now calling us (Rudd 2008).

Rudd's language of a new beginning reflects a 'recovery mode'. As was discussed earlier, there were a number of teachers who conflated reconciliation with the Apology. One of the teachers explained how they had spoken about reconciliation during Reconciliation Week and linked it to saying sorry: 'and we talked about um reconciliation and how what does it mean to reconcile and we brought it back to um can people remember what was the Apology about so we talked about um we tried to link the two together'. The very act of a national apology, is the nationalising of shame itself, moving from individual shame into a 'national' shame, whereby allowing those in the contemporary to distance themselves both individually and historically from colonialism. 'Shame' then becomes a symbol of reconciliation, as was demonstrated by a number of the teachers when they expressed their guilt, of 'putting their white foot in it again'.

Schick (2011) also draws on Hage's (1998) work in Australia on whiteness and the 'white Australian' and proposes that shame can function as part of the nation-building agenda, as a counter will to the colonising national will (Hage 1998). This becomes a process to engender a superior sense of national self with a knowing that the past colonialism requires amending (Schick 2011: 470). As was discussed in the section above in relation to white fear, white melancholia, and white rage, the majority of teachers actively distanced themselves from John, as the stereotyped 'image' of Hage's (1998) 'white Australian'.

Ahmed (2014) warns of how acknowledging the past can lead to 'revealing and concealing'. Specifically, that is the revealing and acceptance of the past leads to a concealment of the present: 'Shame can still conceal how such wrongdoings shape lives in the present. The work of shame troubles and is troubling, exposing some wounds at the same time as it conceals others' (Ahmed 2014: 102). As a result, the awareness of current ongoing colonial ways become mute, because redress of the past takes precedent.

An example of this was raised earlier in this chapter where an Aboriginal parent had shared during an interview that the Principal at her daughter's highschool stood out the front of the school expressing acceptance of all Aboriginal students at her school, whilst simultaneously continuing to engage in racist, offensive Aboriginal identity discourse based on quantum, perpetuating historical colonial discourses on Aboriginality and identity.

What then becomes 'normative' in settled reconciliation is a signing up to a rejection of a colonial past and the celebration of the recovery, which includes a celebration of the 'Other'.

This is evident in Australia's public and policy discourse, where we 'value Indigenous cultures and histories' (Melbourne Declaration Preamble), we celebrate the ACT Reconciliation Day public holiday, or through the extensive display of Indigenising symbols at schools. Embracing the terms reconciliation, recognition and respect and publicly stating them in the Australian Curriculum or on the school website means that 'we mean well and can work to reproduce the nation as an ideal' (Ahmed 2004: 109), we are a new recovered, 'reconciled' nation, or a 'settled reconciliation' school, curriculum or classroom. Schick (2011) suggests that although the colonial past created the inequality, 'the colonial present continues the colonial outcome' (2011: 244). What emerges in settled reconciliation is an ongoing silencing of the realities of the present.

Settled reconciliation encourages celebrations of reconciliation and the Indigenous other and some engagement of historical grievances, providing an imagery of Australia as tolerant, harmonious and respectful towards Indigenous Australians. However, such an approach leads to silencing. The silencing of Indigenous experiences, diversity, agency, the contemporary, ongoing settler-colonialism including assimilation, and racism and whiteness. This premature jump from invasion and settler-colonialism to settled reconciliation through embedding 'Indigenous perspectives' (or assumed Indigenous perspectives) without engaging with the contemporary cultural interface, has stopped a conversation of historical and ongoing truth about settler colonisation, self-determination and sovereignty, perpetuating and reproducing Rose's (2015) structure of the 'silent apartheid'.

The way I visualise the implications of 'settled reconciliation' is shown in Fig. 3

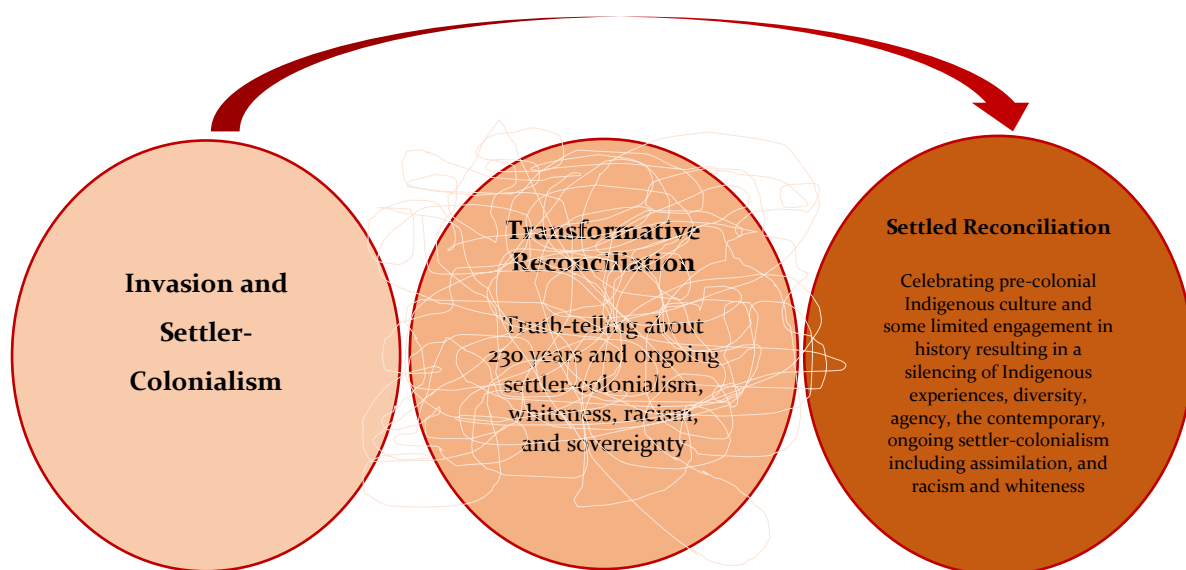


Figure 3: Settled Reconciliation (Source: Avrahamzon doctoral research)

The Australian Curriculum, the classroom or the school that silences the historical and contemporary aspects of race, racism and whiteness masked by celebrations of ‘authentic’ Indigenous identity and culture reveals a national identity that has ‘ideal subjects’ that are well-meaning, caring supportive of Indigenous people. In doing so, as Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) contend within their analysis of the curriculum, as well as others (Maxwell et al. 2018; Moodie and Patrick 2017), all that is required for children to understand contemporary experiences, relations and the space for continued dialogue, which underpins the cultural interface – is rendered silent. As Nakata (2012) argues regarding such approaches in tertiary settings, although it has relevance in all institutions,

...the end-point of instating regenerated Indigenous ‘ways’ or ‘traditions’ as the counter-solution to overcoming colonial legacies occurs too hurriedly in some scholarly analysis and in lecture settings (Nakata et al. 2012: 121).

However, reconciliation requires engagement in the contradictions, ambiguities, conflict and contestation of meanings, not settled reconciliation. As noted by Regan (2010), however, having relevance in Australia,

Settler violence against Indigenous peoples is woven into the fabric of Canadian history in an unbroken thread from past to present that we must now unravel, unsettling our comfortable assumptions about the past. At the same time, we must work as Indigenous allies to ‘restory’ the dominant culture version of history; that is, we must make decolonizing space for Indigenous history – counter-narratives of diplomacy, law, and peacemaking practices – as told by Indigenous peoples themselves (Regan 2010 [forthcoming], as cited in Corntassel et al. 2009: 138).

Despite earlier discussions about some teachers acknowledging their limitation in engaging with the contemporary (and thus a return to incorporating ‘culture’ or pre-colonial culture), everyday reconciliation seemed to predominantly function as settled reconciliation. As was explained by one of the executives,

Well I think well, I guess I can only speak from what we’re trying to do at this school which is about not making reconciliation a word. Making it a way that we live and be in the school and understand. Um – I still think, you know you’ve got to uh celebrate the essential, not celebrate well, is that the right word? Acknowledge the essential time you know it’s Reconciliation Week or it’s this or it’s that. You still, I think you still need to do that because they’re

symbolic. But um I think reconciliation is just is, is, is a way that we want to be. We want to be in a 'state of reconciliation', if you like in everything that we do. With the children I guess all of the sorts of things that we're trying to do at this school, which makes um you know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures part of as much as we can, part of our everyday life and normalising the um that in our curriculum, that that's a part of our curriculum. And that as Australians or going to Australian schools, that that is a very normal thing to learn about, because it's really um amazing, and a real um um significant um – um basic part of our country. So I think that's where we come from, or where I would come from.

Such a positive aspiration for creating a school as a 'state of reconciliation', or settled reconciliation, seems reflective of a colourblind society – that reconciliation has been achieved, that race, racism and whiteness no longer exists. However, as noted in Chapter 1, such approaches maintain the existing socio-political order, by maintaining and privileging whiteness: 'we practice intercultural education [replace with a 'state of reconciliation' or 'settled reconciliation'] so long as it does not disturb the existing socio-political order; so long as we can celebrate diversity, meanwhile excusing ourselves from the messy work of social reconstruction' (Gorski 2008: 519). As Green and Sonn (2006: 390) suggest 'white people can engage with processes, such as Reconciliation, so as to avoid any interrogation of dominance and privilege'. Or as Moodie and Patrick (2017) propose, reconciliation in and of itself is a form of Calderon's (2014) concept of 'Settler Grammars' (Calderon 2014), which can be understood as 'a double movement of recognition and dismissal; a process which strives to account for the contemporary presence of the indigene, whilst maintaining an intellectual and temporal distance from the lived realities of Indigenous peoples' (Moodie and Patrick 2017: 440).

Critical Hope

In concluding this section, Spanierman and Cabrera (2015) strongly suggest that critical hope is essential in the anti-racism journey, supported by reconciliation theorists across disciplines (Bar-Tal 2013; Clarke et al. 2016; Schaap 2005; Trimlikniotis 2013). Importantly, however, hope must include an 'analysis of systematic oppression, intentional action to disrupt oppression, and consistent self-reflection. It stands directly in opposition to nihilism, and intentionally integrates affect, cognition, and action' (Duncan-Andrade 2009, cited in Spanierman and Cabrera 2015: 20).

Those few teachers who were actively engaged in moments of what could be viewed as transformative reconciliation found different ways to maintain hope – through rejection of settled reconciliation, through keeping messages on white boards throughout the year, through re-focusing narratives to include the contemporary. I am conscious that for some, my presence in the school during the year also enabled a possibility for sharing critiques of practices as well as reflecting on peers who may be stuck in settled reconciliation. This included the request for focus groups that were not about participating in the research project, but as a tool to further engage in their learning process.

However, all of these beliefs and values, coupled with the findings from the previous chapter will not necessarily change behaviours and attitudes. As Maddison and Statsny (2016) contend, in their own focus group and interview based research on reconciliation with adult participants in four sites across Australia during 2014, despite adult participants having learnt about Australia's history including 'injustices and racism, massacres, reconciliation and, to a far lesser extent, pre-colonial history' (Maddison and Statsny 2016: 240), stereotypical understandings of Indigenous peoples and cultures persisted. They conclude, 'it would seem that merely filling the silence with cultural and educational "noise" is not sufficient for changing attitudes' (Maddison and Statsny 2016: 245).

Conclusion

In concluding, Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.) identified four key themes of how non-Indigenous Australians spoke of reconciliation. These are also reflective of how teachers both spoke about reconciliation and the approaches they took in their classrooms and schools (Chapter 4). Firstly, they note 'fearful and conditional white tolerance' (Rowse and Pertierra n.d.: 32) of difference that places conditionality over Black Australia. This was evident through the embracing of Indigenous symbols, however, limited through the overwhelming colonial storytelling narratives, the silencing of particular Indigenous voices and the predominant distancing from decolonising approaches. Secondly, it was evident through a consciousness of white privilege and of outstanding White obligation to repair relations with Indigenous Australians (Rowse and Pertierra n.d.: 32). One example of this was the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait children attending clubs during class time in order to 'give them culture' – 'it's the least we can do'. Next, Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.:32) note 'a history of improved awareness', with caution of what to say including embarrassment of ignorance. This emerged amongst many teachers who acknowledged that 'We didn't learn anything at school'. However,

some teachers were also conscious of children knowing more than they did. Finally, the theme of ‘oscillation between the demands of equality as sameness and of respect for diversity’ (Rowse and Pertierra n.d.:33): this was demonstrated in examples of mixed messages of egalitarianism and awareness of discrimination, prejudice and racism.

In addition to these four key themes, I would also add the following two themes on how the teachers from the two schools spoke of reconciliation. Firstly, there was a stronger focus on engaging with ‘culture’ rather than Indigenous perspectives on history or society. Secondly, the embedding of cultural perspectives as the goal of reconciliation has silenced the contemporary, creating settled reconciliation.

This chapter has focused on the beliefs and values of reconciliation and associated topics through exploring the discourse, including affect, surrounding reconciliation and (re)constructing reconciliation. Just as with the symbols of reconciliation discussed in Chapter 4, children were receiving ambiguous and at times conflicting beliefs and values about reconciliation, but also about Indigenous peoples and cultures, Australia’s history and certainly about race, racism and whiteness. Teachers expressed a diverse understanding of the term reconciliation but also an overall lack of awareness of it’s history in Australia and original purpose, and its inclusion in the curriculum and teaching standards. Teachers also seemed to express little awareness of their role in developing the skills required to engage in reconciliation, not knowing what they are themselves beyond ‘being kind’ and ‘respectful’. As such, as was stated, as well as evident in the type of symbols (Chapter 4), it was most common for teachers to focus on the celebratory aspect of learning about culture, and the distance positioning of the history. As a result in many instances classrooms and possibly at least one of the schools had arrived at what I term ‘settled reconciliation’.

Having now discussed the first two levels of the Schein (1990, 1996) and Ortner (1973) frameworks, in Chapter 6 I explore their final level, assumptions and schemas.

Chapter 6: Unconscious frames of everyday reconciliation

I guess the best summary about our approaches is we would always err on the side of protecting the children, being safe with our messaging so not to be political, that if there's any question that it might cause any harm we don't do it cause it's going to happen later anyway, so let's just leave it to a bit later.

(Non-Indigenous male executive)

This relatively short statement by one of the executive teachers shared during an interview reveals a range of strong assumptions that influenced everyday reconciliation in both schools. For example, the 'protection of children' assumes an innocence about children and childhood, as well as a suggestion that children are coming to school as blank slates, and that they are inactive recipients of messages rather than already interacting, contributing and (re)constructing everyday reconciliation. The statement also reveals assumptions that approaches being undertaken at school are and should be apolitical (assuming 'neutral') so that they are safe to all children. This implies that all children experience everyday reconciliation the same way, which can be assumed as being the 'majority Anglo-Australian way'. The statement also suggests an awareness that approaches do have the potential to become political, specifically anything Indigenous beyond 'culture' is political and that political in this field is not safe and can cause harm to children. Such assumptions, about children, about how children engage with reconciliation and racialised spaces, about preferred types of approaches, as well as the very notion of neutral or non-political messages, contributed to how and why everyday reconciliation was (re)constructed the way it was in Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary.

In Chapter 4, I shared how reconciliation was constructed in the two schools through observable symbols and artefacts, and in Chapter 5, I focused on the beliefs and values surrounding reconciliation and associated concepts. This chapter is an exploration of the unconscious frames, assumptions (Schein 1990) and schemas (Ortner 1973) of how and why everyday reconciliation was (re)constructed in both the schools the way it was. Throughout the chapter, four key assumptions are discussed: assumptions about the 'Aboriginal problem'; assumptions about approaches to reconciliation; assumptions about education and schooling; and finally, assumptions about childhood and children, and in particular their readiness to engage in reconciliation. Both Schein and Ortner suggest assumptions and key schemas are often in contradiction to the articulated beliefs and values and summarising symbols on

display. This becomes particularly evident in this chapter. In the previous two chapters I demonstrated that teachers and the two schools expressed and displayed a strong commitment to 'reconciliation' through the embedding of Indigenous cultures (for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students), as well as a commitment to improving education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, what emerges throughout this chapter is that the assumptions are deeply driven by colonial storytelling 'regime of truths'.

Before proceeding, it is important to provide further explanation of the concept of assumptions and schemas. In Chapter 1, I explored how Bourdieu provides a framework for understanding the interplay between the structures of society and how they are then interpreted and reproduced by individuals, policies and institutions, and at times resisted, through the concept of habitus, field and capital. Through material, discursive and affective forces, they become normalised, making sense to us as objectified truths. As Walter (2014) explains, such frames that are often considered 'as innate or natural individual leanings [that] are in actuality unconscious transmitted standpoints derived from external social forces' (Walter 2014: 46). For example, as Behrendt (2016: 9) explains of colonial storytelling, 'these stories don't appear in a vacuum; they meander into our value systems and our institutions'.

Building on this concept of objectified truths, Foucault's theoretical framework of the active interplay between discourse, knowledge and power is also useful for understanding assumptions. Foucault (1988) suggests that discourse is how a particular topic is spoken about. Discourse presents 'knowledge' about a topic, as well as sets the boundaries of what is allowed and what is not allowed to be spoken about regarding a particular topic, revealing how knowledge is then intrinsically linked to power (Hall 2001; Moreton-Robinson 2011; Rigney 1999). This knowledge is then constructed into practice, and as noted previously it is not important as to what it is or whether it is 'true' or not, it is how it is then enacted that is important, as it organises and regulates the structures of regulating and maintaining power. This interaction thus becomes a 'regime of truth' (Hall 2001).

Foucault (1988) demonstrates how and why particular discourses surrounding reconciliation and Indigenous Education, as well as associated topics of Indigenous peoples and cultures, Australian history as well as race, racism and whiteness are supported, whilst others are not. Thus, also demonstrating a 'politics of official knowledge', which Apple (1993: 1) argues 'embodies conflict over what some regard as simply neutral descriptions of the world and what others regard as elite conceptions that empower some groups while disempowering others'. Battiste suggests that such truths 'tend to acculturate and conscript different kinds of

knowledge into their own existing categories for what can be known, how knowledge can be organised and what forms of knowledge are legitimate and credible' (in Coleman 2012: 142). Applying decolonising CRT (Moodie 2018) to everyday reconciliation then suggests that many assumptions, beliefs and values and symbols of everyday reconciliation are embedded with the ongoing futurity of the 'West' and the settler colonial state, whilst maintaining subordination and Othering of First Nations peoples, cultures and histories.

Before exploring particular assumptions, it is important to return to the aim of this thesis and how this is located in the broader Indigenous Education policy objectives. The aim of the study of Everyday Reconciliation was not to specifically address Indigenous Education outcomes for Indigenous students. These are often reduced to neoliberal measurements of education success including enrolment, student attendance, academic performance, retention, completion and qualification 'based on assumptions of shared understanding of educational success' (Fogarty et al. 2015; Wilson 2016: 67). The aim was to explore how all children are engaged in everyday reconciliation. In Chapter 1, I noted the relationship between reconciliation in education and the broader milieu of Indigenous Education and that one of the challenges in Indigenous Education has been the confusion in the literature and policies to differentiate between educational performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledges, histories and the contemporary, for all students within mainstream education (Vass 2012; Wilson 2016). As Wilson (2016) notes in her own thesis which focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their cultural learning at school on Gumbaynggirr Country in New South Wales, 'such learning cannot be separated from the wider milieu of Indigenous education' (Wilson 2016: 57). She goes on to demonstrate three contradictory aims of Indigenous education (improving outcomes for Indigenous learners; culture for Indigenous students; and culture for non-Indigenous students). This (con)fusion becomes even more obvious in this chapter.

Assumptions about the 'Aboriginal Problem' within Indigenous Education policy and public discourse

Since the arrival of European colonisers and settlers in the 18th century, Indigenous Education and policy making in general has maintained a legacy dominated by 'colonial, political, discriminatory and racist discourses' (Bodkin-Andrews and Craven 2016; Gray and Beresford 2008; Wilson 2016). Within this discourse, Australia's policy process is defined by policy makers and politicians articulating a 'problem' and then finding a solution (Aitken 2009, 2013).

Drawing on the work of Foucault's notion of governmentality, which focuses on how society is governed by the way policy problems are problematised, Baachi (2009: 252) suggests that 'every policy constitutes a problematisation and in effect, we are governed through these problematisations rather than through policies'. Through a governmentality lens, it becomes clear how the racialised and racist problematising of 'the Aboriginal problem' has been and continues to be the way policies that aim to address social and economic inequities and inequalities simply perpetuate the same 'problem' but also are used as a way for the Government to continue to develop policies to 'control' the problem (Howard-Wagner 2015, 2018; Jordan and Fowkes 2016; Rowse 2009, 2012; Sullivan 2008). Aitken (2009, 2013) argues that this approach has existed since the 1800s and continues to be the same way the 'Aboriginal problem' is defined in policy as well as in the public discourse now.

The problem definition had not altered, just the solution. Hasluck changed the rhetoric of assimilation but the policy remained constant (McGregor 1999). Even with the introduction of self determination, there was no evidence of a reassessment of the problem. The basic premise, that the interests of the Aboriginal population are in direct opposition to the best interests of the dominant society, still hold. Aboriginal economic community development cannot realistically make substantive change in Aboriginal wellbeing until the 'problem' is redefined and the interests of both groups are aligned or, ideally, are understood as interdependent. (Aitken, 2009: 22)

Although Aitken (2009) is focused on economic development, such a premise can be applied to other Indigenous policy areas such as education (Fogarty et al. 2018b; Maxwell et al. 2018; Moreton-Robinson 2016; Patrick and Moodie 2016). As has been noted by many scholars of Indigenous Education, Australian education policy has become so preoccupied with a deficit approach to defining the 'problem' that it fails to consider whether the way we problematise Indigenous people and Indigenous Education is actually the problem (Aitken 2009; Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016; Fogarty et al. 2015; Fforde et al. 2013; Gorringer and Spillman 2006; Vass 2012). As such, this cycle of disadvantage is maintained because of the power of Euro-Australian policy processes and approaches to define 'Indigeneity' as a catalogue of deficits that needs to be addressed (Aitken 2009, cited in Aitken and Wareham 2017). As Sana Nakata (2018: 113) explains 'with each generation, the problem of what to do with these people returns, and with each generation the problem appears more and more impossible to "solve"'

This 'deficit approach' is embedded in legacies of colonial and imperial history (Beresford 2012; Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016; Shields et al. 2005) and was used to justify imperial pursuits

(Mills 1997) including a 'logic of elimination' (Moodie 2018; Wolfe 2006). Within the education system, 'Indigenous education policies were built on assumptions of inferiority and damage, with the project of formal schooling functioning as an instrument of infrastructure for the development of the liberal (Anglo-Australian) subject' (Moodie 2018: 39; Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernandez 2013). As noted by Beresford (2012:119), history 'has left a tragic legacy to the educational outcomes and opportunities of Aboriginal young people. Generations of racist-inspired policies produced intergenerational underachievement and alienation'.

However, this is not of the past, and approaches of defining the 'Aboriginal problem' continues to be used today to justify inequalities rather than the impacts of systemic and structural racism and ongoing colonisation. Gorski (2008) argues that the deficit approach, coupled with the ongoing neoliberalism and neoconservatism has led to needing to 'fix' the deficient people or groups, in this case, Indigenous Australians. It becomes part of the colonial storytelling of firstly problematising and then determining the solutions. Within the education system, it means assimilation into an education system that historically did and continues to oppress (Battiste 1998; Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016). Drawing on their earlier work, as Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016: 784) attest, institutionalised racism and lifelong inequalities that exist for Indigenous Australians 'can often be perpetuated within the very education systems that should act as one of the strongest tools to redress such inequalities'.

This assumption about the 'Aboriginal problem', was deeply evident in both schools in the way the teachers spoke of Aboriginal people generally, as well as students: 'And I never ask the families. There's so much other things going on for the families' or as commented by one of the teachers in front of her class, 'the Government is trying to fix the problem'. Such an approach silences the potential of the 'Aboriginal Problem' being the structures and systems that continue to perpetuate a cultural deficit discourse about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples rather than socioeconomic deficits being framed as the accumulated and intergenerational disadvantages resulting from past and continued colonialism (Walter and Anderson 2013). Thus, as noted by Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016: 786), 'it becomes apparent that the insidious effects of epistemological racism still plagues the Indigenous Australian educational research agenda'.

Having explored the 'problem', the following 'assumption' focuses on 'culture' being the silver bullet to fix the problem.

Assumptions about Reconciliation

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the predominant ‘type’ of symbols coupled with the beliefs and values regarding everyday reconciliation was the learning about and displaying of Indigenous ‘culture’. Embedded in this is an underlying assumption that learning about ‘culture’ is the silver bullet for ‘reconciliation’, both for educating Australia as well as responding to Indigenous children and young peoples’ education outcomes. That is, increasing an understanding of Indigenous ‘culture’ will increase respect towards Indigenous Australia (Gunstone 2006), and for Indigenous children and young people, investment in ‘cultural identity and cultural pride’ will overcome Indigenous ‘disadvantage’ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Culture is the answer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Both nationally and in other settler colonial states, lower rates of academic success for First Nation students has been explained in terms of cultural deficits (Fforde et al. 2013; Gorringe 2015; Kanu 2011; Maxwell et al. 2017; Schick and St Denis 2005). As noted above, from the outset of colonisation, assumptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intellectual and cultural inferiority formed the foundation of educational practices, policies and research (Nakata 2007a; Rigney 1999). Such assumptions were embedded in European views of cultural superiority over First Nation ways of seeing, doing and being and have been maintained. Within schooling and education, as Battiste (1998: 23) attests ‘schools and curriculum texts have maintained the legacy of cultural and linguistic imperialism’. However, since the 1970s, with the refocus in education to respond to disadvantage, (re)investment in ‘culture’ has now become the solution to the systematic colonial approaches that led to educational disadvantage. As noted by St Denis, ‘culture’ is seen ‘as the solution to systemic problems resulting from the colonialism and racism [the government] had perpetrated against Aboriginal people’ (St Denis 2004: 37).

However, other reviews on Indigenous Education in Australia exploring theories, policies and approaches since the 1960s also reveal multiplicity, changing, contradictory theories and practices that have all focused on culture as a way to understand the disparity between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students’ education outcomes. Wilson’s (2016)

review of theories and approaches of Indigenous Education revealed four key categories: cultural deficit, difference and disadvantage; different learning styles; the psychological impact of self-esteem or self-concept on the motivation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and neoliberalism. Wilson (2016: 82) notes that such approaches in the main have failed to engage with 'beliefs about, attitudes towards, and treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'.

Wilson's (2016) categories were all evident amongst the practices and the beliefs and values expressed by teachers in the study of Everyday Reconciliation, revealing that although Wilson approached the literature and evidence from a historical perspective, the legacy of all such prior approaches seem to have persisted in practice. As an example of deficit discourse, teachers spoke of Aboriginal families having so much going on and that celebrating identity is not a priority; or did not supporting my request to invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to be part of the research project. With regards to Indigenous students having different learning styles, a number of teachers from both schools had undergone training in Yunkaporta's 8-ways learning (Yunkaporta 2009) in an attempt to know how to teach Aboriginal students, or requested a toolkit in order to know how to teach Aboriginal children (including remote children). Building self-esteem and self-concept was evident in the assumption that the culture clubs offered to Indigenous children was 'the least we could do to build their culture'. Finally, there was also a strong discourse of parity in literacy (in particular being an indicator of achieving reconciliation. As predicted by Wilson and others (Maxwell et al. 2018; Moodie and Patrick 2017; Walter and Butler 2013), there were very few approaches, or discussions about social justice and decolonising (and exploring aspects of whiteness or settler colonialism) at either of the schools.

St Denis (2011: 178) argues in her work in Canadian schools, 'culturally-based solutions can inadvertently contribute to further problems'. This is supported by scholars both in Australia and abroad who argue such an approach perpetuates the imagined subordinated position of inferiority (Maxwell; Lowe and Yunkaporta; Moodie and Patrick). The focus on 'culture' fails to acknowledge or address embedded systemic, political and societal factors (Lingard et al. 2012; Sensoy 2010). Furthermore, perceived educational deficits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are placed on their families, homes and cultures, taking less account of the effects of attitudes predominant in classroom interactions and embedded in education systems (Fogarty et al. 2018; Vass 2012; Wilson 2016).

Maxwell et al. (2017) highlight that this assumption of culture being the silver bullet is evident in the Australian Curriculum documents, which problematise the underachievement of Indigenous students due to not 'seeing themselves' in the curriculum – and the curriculum itself then becomes the solution (Maxwell et al. 2017: 171). However, how the curriculum itself then constructs Indigenous peoples and cultures (and then how schools and teachers also construct Indigenous peoples and cultures) is deeply embedded in a deficit discourse. What emerges within this assumption that culture is the silver bullet for both Indigenous students and for non-Indigenous students is a paradox of 'culture'. As Maxwell et al. (2017: 171) suggest,

The paradoxical representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (deficit) and cultures (desirable, but only to the extent that it does not interfere with schooling) suggests that there is a need for educators, and the public, to be wary of a curriculum initiative which purports to be a solution to historical and contemporary failings of the education system, while being firmly rooted in the very same racialised belief system of previous curriculum iterations.

This paradox potentially becomes embodied and re-constructed in the classroom for example where teachers are required to complete a personal learning plan for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children built on historical assumptions of the impact of being Aboriginal on their learning, whilst simultaneously celebrate Indigenous 'culture' in the classroom so that they can build self-esteem.

Culture is the answer for non-Indigenous students

Culture is also considered the silver bullet for non-Indigenous children's engagement in reconciliation. Drawing from the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA 2008) and Australian Curriculum, reconciliation is problematised as the lack of knowledge and understanding by non-Indigenous peoples about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's histories and cultures and the lack of 'culture' of Aboriginal students. However, the reduction of reconciliation to a predominant [superficial] celebration of Indigenous Australia (to build self-esteem and to build respect), often defined within colonial storytelling of what is Indigenous culture (in the singular), has resulted in not only the continuation of the 'othering' of Indigenous Australians as an 'authentic' Other. As already mentioned, in doing so it silences systematic and structural colonisation and racism and discrimination. Reconciliation under these conditions ultimately perpetuates and privileges whiteness (Schick and St Denis 2005). As noted by St Denis (2007: 1086), 'Instead of doing anti-racist education that explores why and how race matters,

education can end up doing cross-cultural awareness training that often has the effect of encouraging the belief that the cultural difference of the Aboriginal “Other” is the problem’. As indicated above in the discussion about the ‘Aboriginal problem’, and throughout Chapters 4 and 5, this was the dominant approach in everyday reconciliation.

Returning to Maddison’s (2017) framework of reconciliation discussed in Chapter 1, that reconciliation should be considered at the constitutional, institutional and relational level. It could be argued that both symbols and beliefs and values about reconciliation were at the relational level and institutional level. However, failure to engage with the concepts of ‘constitutional reconciliation’ – which Maddison argues includes settlements and agreements, constitutional design and reform, and citizenship and national identity – led to a silencing and absence in the majority of teachers’ discourse and discursive practice on this essential aspect of reconciliation. As Moodie and Patrick (2017: 451) argue, ‘building an education system that dismantles rather than reinforces historical barriers to equality (Lange 2015) requires acknowledgment of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the colonial settler state and attendant issues of sovereignty and dispossession’.

Moodie and Patrick (2017), in their interview-based research with 12 teacher educators on the Australian Teacher Standards 1.4 and 2.4, determined that majority of teachers understood the Teaching Standards to be about ‘cultural content’. The three participants who did engage with the historical, socio-economic and political conditions that affect Indigenous peoples as being critical for engaging with the standards had had experience in sociology or the sociology of education. In the study of Everyday Reconciliation, all but two teachers had been a teacher their entire career: some had been teaching over 20 years (one for 39 years), the same number had been teaching for less than five years, and three had been teaching for 15 years. The few teachers who did engage beyond culture were both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous (although it is important to note that not all Aboriginal educators expressed a focus beyond culture), were both male and female. All those who were non-Indigenous were all Anglo-Australian, and they were evenly split across the generations from 1980s, 1970s and 1960s. One of the teachers was an Aboriginal teacher, one had had a range of careers prior to education (and had experience in both sociology of education, social justice activism, and training in philosophy of children), one had spent time during their teaching degree in remote Aboriginal communities in Queensland communities to which they had returned and worked, and one had worked in the public service. Although all of these teachers also subscribed to the importance of teaching ‘culture’, they also actively engaged in exploring to some extent aspects of history and

contemporary social structures, as well as a post-structural and or sociological approach to engaging in Indigenous studies.

Moodie and Patrick (2017: 451) conclude with the limitations and the risk of focusing on 'culture', 'reconciliation' and 'respect' that:

Requiring more culture or more respect as the solution to educational disparity serves simply to reinvent the settler grammars that present a version of the indigene which can only justify her subordinate position.

Although this section has predominantly focused on culture more generally, it is important to briefly acknowledge that the learning of 'culture' is underpinned by a broader exploration of what constitutes 'Indigenous knowledges' (Battiste 1998; Nakata 2002; Petrovic and Mitchell 2018; Rigney 1999). As Nakata explains of the complexities of Indigenous knowledge,

The whole area of Indigenous knowledge is a contentious one. From what constitutes 'indigenous' to whose interests are being served by the documentation of such knowledge there lies a string of contradictions, of sectorial interests, of local and global politics, of ignorance, and of hope for the future. Like colonization, the Indigenous Knowledge enterprise seems to have everything and nothing to do with us (Nakata 2002: 281).

Having now established assumptions of the Aboriginal Problem and reconciliation, the following section focuses on assumptions about schooling.

Assumptions about Schooling

In the opening statement to this chapter, the executive mentioned a number of times that approaches to everyday reconciliation needing to be 'apolitical'. A number of other teachers from both schools expressed this during discussions or focus groups, 'I actively search for apolitical resources', and also demonstrated it in their approaches within the classroom. However, schooling is not apolitical nor neutral, rather 'a state organised or regulated institution of intentional instruction' (Levinson et al. 1996: 1). In Chapter 1, I noted how such intentional instruction is the imparting of a society's ideologies and ethos, values, goals, myths and narratives of the state to the next generation (Apple 1993; Bekerman and Zembylas 2012; Bordieu 1973; Durkeim 2002). Furthermore, school settings are critical in creating and re-creating the nation's 'collective' experiences, including collective grief and mourning (such as

acknowledged on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day) or collective pride (such as through Harmony Day, and often Reconciliation Week), which are central to developing a group or nation's identity (Bekerman and Zembylas 2012). Thus, the education system and schools are critical socialisation agents of nation-building and in contrast to the above statement, not apolitical. As eloquently explained by Carspecken and Apple (1992: 509),

Education does not stand alone, a neutral instrumentality somehow above the ideological conflicts of the society. Rather, it is deeply implicated in the formation of the unequal cultural, economic, and political relations that dominate our society...in which dominance is reproduced and contested, in which hegemony is partly formed and partly fractured in the creation of the common sense of the people.

Extending this, it is important to acknowledge that another recognised purpose of 'formal' education is as the main determinant of productivity at the national level, with an individual's own education levels contributing 'positively' to both the individual and the nation. It is critical to note that the current context of the education system in Australia and other Western nations (England, the United States) seems to be on a fast trajectory of neo-liberal (and neo-conservative) education processes (Apple 2016; Fogarty et al. 2017; Vass 2012). As Fogarty et al.(2017:3) outlines 'At the heart of this paradigm shift is a restructuring of educational apparatus and purpose to fulfil neo-liberal ideals of marketisation, commodification and development whereby education becomes solely a function of the economic'. As a result, we see a shift in the role of education being about a common good and 'transforming society' to a process for future workers, individual and societal economic prosperity. As part of this process, it has led to the development of 'metrics' to measure the productivity of educational institutions, educational products as well as stratified groups and individuals. As Walter (2010) and others (Fogarty et al.2017; Sullivan 2008) have demonstrated, such metrics are socially constructed ways of measuring educational progress, however, they become embedded within the discourse and are recreated as the way we see the world.

Within this neoliberal and neoconservative education process, a particular version of cultural diversity within the realm of individualism has emerged. This version of cultural diversity is where all Australians have the right to express and share their individual cultural heritage, however, they must maintain commitment to a 'white' mainstream Australia (Hage 2012; Moran 2004). It is important to acknowledge that a 'white' Australia has been at the centre of Australia since colonisation, entrenched in the Australian constitution since 1901, and further embedded in the 'White Australian policy'. The explicit sentiments and legal rejection of both

Indigenous peoples, and particular migrant groups in Australia led a monocultural phase – ‘which invoked cultural uniformity; the assimilation, whitening, and homogenization of its population’ (Howard-Wagner 2015: 94). However, the post-colonial endeavour from the 1970 to the 1990s, marked by the removal of the White Australian Policy and the implementation of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* was a movement to develop a new diverse identity, that of multiculturalism – which invoked ‘cultural diversity, a politics of recognition and inclusive practices towards migrants’ (Howard-Wagner 2015: 94). However, the celebrations of diversity and the national and international image of Australia as tolerant, harmonious and multicultural hid and continues to hide the daily experiences of whiteness and racism, structural, epistemically and interpersonally for both Indigenous Australians and new Australian migrants.

Bringing this discussion back into everyday reconciliation, as the Melbourne Declaration suggests, ‘a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, and respect for others’ (MCEETYA 2008: 5). Thus despite the inclusion of the wording in the Melbourne Declaration ‘the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship’ (MCEETYA 2008: 4), its direct association with developing skills to engage in a globalised market is likely to be driven from an individualist–economic position rather than a transformative social agenda of diversity and inclusion (Reid 2001; Toner 2011).

Thus, despite the inclusion of the term reconciliation, alongside the terms ‘respect’ and ‘recognition’ in the Melbourne Declaration and Australian Curriculum, two sets of competing priorities emerge. The first is the tension within the priority of liberal democratic societies espousing both cultural diversity and social cohesion. Second, the tension within the priority of neoliberal focus on economic prosperity ‘for’ all, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and the engagement and promotion of cultural diversity (including different ontologies and epistemologies). These overarching two sets of priorities present ambiguity, contradictions, tensions and paradoxes within the broader education system that schools, teachers and students are exposed to and attempt to navigate. With regards to the competing priority of cultural diversity and social cohesion, Bhabha (1994) highlights the ongoing structures and processes of colonisation into the contemporary has led to a tension between the creation of cultural diversity and a containment of cultural difference. He explains that ‘although there is always entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always also a corresponding containment of it’ (Rutherford 1990:

208). Thus, the narratives that engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are purposively created in order not to challenge white futurity and the settler colonial state (Behrendt 2016; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Moodie 2018; Nakata 2018). Within the Australian education system, as previously mentioned, Moodie and Patrick (2017) explicitly note this tension in the exploration of the teaching standards as a form of 'settler grammars'. Such a tension was evident in the way both schools engaged in everyday reconciliation through the celebration of particular Indigenous culture(s), however not addressing the settler-colonial structures, such as the playing of the version of the Australian national anthem whilst appropriating the distinct sounds of the Yidarkí, discussed in Chapter 4.

Having now explored colonial constructs of the Aboriginal Problem, reconciliation as culture, and schooling, this final assumption centres around assumptions about childhood and children in general, and how their readiness to engage in reconciliation was constructed by teachers.

Assumptions about children

In the opening statement of this chapter, the executive teacher's comments revealed strong assumptions about children, in particular their 'innocence' and the importance of maintaining this innocence, as well as being 'blank slates'. Such assumptions seem to be strongly embedded in a framing and discourse of childhood as a developmental period of 'becoming' adult (Qvortrup 1994). This seems to be reflective of the ongoing 18th century enlightenment social and historical construct of childhood (Lovell 2018). According to Sana Nakata (2015), children within this construct of childhood are viewed as the sinner or non-innocent; the innocent; or the blank slate. Viewing children as innocent and childhood as a time of innocence draws on the work of the philosopher Rousseau (1993), who maintained that children should be protected from the sins and sinners of the adult world. Children viewed as having blank slates and childhood being a period to educate children so that they 'grow into a good, liberal, adult citizen' is embedded in the philosophy of Locke (cited in Nakata 2015: 49). As demonstrated in the opening statement, in the main, teachers and executives constructed children as both innocent and as being a blank slate. However, it is important to note that for some teachers, the way they constructed Indigenous children was as the sinner (such as 'if all Aboriginal children were like that one') against the perceived generalised non-Indigenous 'norm'.

Extending this dominant assumption of the innocence of childhood and the importance of maintaining children's innocence, how teachers then constructed children's readiness to

engage with reconciliation is deeply embedded in a discourse of maintaining this innocence. As a result, any perceived 'confrontational' aspects of reconciliation that would challenge that innocence, particularly racism and (to a lesser extent) historical and (but definitely) contemporary atrocities and experiences are actively overlooked. For example, overwhelmingly, teachers from both schools suggested that racism was taught (at a later age than 8–10 years) and that it was essential to promote positive messages about Indigenous cultures. As noted by a number of teachers, children don't see race, and thus discussions of racism should occur much later.

With regards to the younger kids I think that racism is taught and it's not inherent in kids and if you nurture that and prevent that, then you can have kids who will say 'Why is it even a problem because I have best friends who are from a different country'. (Non-Indigenous Teacher, female)

I think in the upper primary school [10–12 year olds] you definitely can have those discussions and that's the time when they do start to ask a lot of questions and in order to answer those questions that needs to come with discussions and perspectives of those around them. There's no points only the teachers saying this is our opinion that they will either believe it or they won't. They need to have discussion with their peers so they can have their opinions and prior experience of all their peers. I'm sure a lot of these kids have experienced racism before and that is really sad but with that experience comes really valid opinions that can help with those kind of discussions. So the kids are really confused about why people in the past did all these things. (Non-Indigenous teacher, female)

Such an approach is very much in line with egalitarian, colourblind messages about race and racism, and supported by other studies (Walton 2014), as has been discussed previously. However, as will be demonstrated in the Chapters 6 and 7, children aged 8–10 were engaged in talk about racism and racist talk, in contrast to the above assumption by teachers that it starts later.

The way teachers did respond to racism, when they were aware of it, was also then driven from the same assumption – that children don't understand what they are saying – thus reducing

racist talk to being 'unkind'. As noted by Connolly (1998) 20 years ago with regards to assumptions about children aged 5–6 years and their constructs of racism,

It is only when we come to set aside our taken for granted assumptions about young children once and for all that we can more fully understand the nature of racism in their lives and develop strategies in order to counter it (Connolly 1998: 195).

These assumptions of childhood and children's innocence, coupled with assumptions about 'the Aboriginal problem', and 'settled reconciliation' as a brief rejection of the past colonial ways and a celebration of a particular Indigenous culture, and the 'apolitical role of schooling', clearly demonstrates how despite teachers' good intent and commitment to reconciliation, their approaches and beliefs and values that were so deeply embedded in colonial storytelling, maintained and perpetuated the structures of the 'silent apartheid'.

Conclusion

On my last day in the field as I was waiting in the staffroom to say goodbye to the teachers, John walked in carrying end of school year presents he has received from his class. As I thanked him for his involvement in the study he responded 'I am really looking forward to your findings. They are really going to help me teach Aboriginal kids next year when I go to my remote community'. John was mentioned in the previous chapter – he had strongly expressed his opinion about his ancestors being more 'developed' than Aboriginal people and was also committed in finding out how 'his' Aboriginal students learned. His assumption that the research findings would to some extent be turned into a toolkit for teachers to know how to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had been mentioned a number of times throughout the year, within focus groups, informal interviews, and now in passing. At the time I was particularly concerned about whether the assumption that the research findings of Everyday Reconciliation would be transferable to teachers in a remote Aboriginal setting. The study was based in an urban setting, where the majority of children were not Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students.

However, I came to realise through presentations, providing feedback to parents and educators, and meeting with the advisory group and with teachers, that revealing the very assumptions throughout this chapter has the potential to lead to the development of a possible toolkit. As anti-racist theorists and practitioners suggest, it is through revealing the assumptions that we can then begin to develop strategies of change (DiAngelo and Sensoy

2010; Fogarty and Dodson 2015; Gorski 2008; Moodie and Patrick 2017; Zembylas 2005, 2007; Yoon 2012). As Zembylas (2007: 457-458) argues,

In engaging with these assumptions, to analyse and challenge emotion norms in education, for example, means to reveal their historicity and contingency that have come to define the limits and possibilities of teachers and students' understandings of themselves, individually and collectively (Zembylas 2005). By doing so, it is to disturb, destabilise, and subvert these rules, to identify some of the weak points and lines of fracture where new affective connections (as counter-hegemonic) might make a difference.

Extending this into settler-colonial frames, Moodie and Patrick (2017) in their exploration of 'settler grammars' (Calderon 2014) amongst teacher educators in their understanding of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards, strongly argue for increased focus on colonial discourses and how they shape policy and practice:

In order to interrupt these settler grammars and implement the intent of the Standards, teacher educators and teacher candidates require a more sophisticated sociological understanding of (a) the colonial discourses woven through Indigenous education and (b) how these discourses shape and are reinforced by policy and practice (Moodie and Patrick 2017: 443).

However, in addition to these suggestions, what has been revealed in this chapter, is a need to disrupt multiple assumptions not only about the Aboriginal problem or reconciliation, but also about schooling and education, as well as about childhood and children, particularly in relation to the acquisition and (re)constructions of race, racism and whiteness and children's contribution, both in maintaining and in disrupting, 'everyday reconciliation'. As the school year progressed, I raised with teachers the empirical evidence about children's early development and acquisition of prejudice and stereotypes and their capacity for 'appropriating, reworking and reproducing discourses on race' (Connolly 1998: 195). The ongoing request for additional information, including requests for academic research papers on this evidence, both from teachers and Directorate staff highlights the importance of making visible these assumptions as part of teacher training. It is in the finding of processes to disrupt these assumptions within policy and practice about reconciliation, about Indigenous peoples and cultures, about schooling, and about children that has the potential for engagement in reconciliation as a transformative process rather than being settled reconciliation. Thus,

returning to John's request for a toolkit, the assumptions that have been revealed in this chapter could provide the starting point for a 'toolkit' for engaging with everyday reconciliation, possibly even in remote settings.

In concluding not only this chapter, but also Part Two of the thesis, Sana Nakata (2018) has a powerful explanation of both the construct of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as the 'problem' and how they can also be engaged to resolve it, and I offer it in its entirety.

The problem-object we have created of Indigenous Australian children across our nation's history has, and remains, a racialised one. We are made sense of as the remnants of a displaced peoples, once inhuman, then child-like, and now dysfunctional, who can never claim a place in the future without destabilising the existing order of things. That's a significant problem to redress, but my claim is that you counter it by understanding that our contemporary political landscape is still characterised by the legacy of these outdated ideas. And we resist and challenge that legacy by centring Indigenous Australian children – by making sure that in debates about Australia's democratic future we allow Indigenous Australian children to present as more than simply a problem to be solved, but rather as the very people who will grow up and renew this nation. To do so will set in course an important counter-narrative: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up. They are not just problem-objects to be known, but can possess knowledge about our democratic condition and can imagine things for our country's democratic future (Sana Nakata 2018: 113).

This chapter brings to a close Part Two: Celebrating Reconciliation, Silencing Racism – messages children receive. Throughout the past three chapters I have engaged in Schein (1990) and Ortner (1973) frameworks to reveal the diverse messages children were exposed to at the artefact or summarising level; the beliefs and values and metaphors; and finally unveiling the assumptions that were influencing the previous two levels. Part 2 of the thesis has strongly argued that through the dominant celebratory practices of colonial storytelling, the two schools are maintaining the structures of the 'silent apartheid'. Part 2 has also demonstrated the affordance of studying everyday reconciliation through interdisciplinary ethnographic approaches. Such an approach offers a multi-layered, nuanced exploration of the interplay between reconciliation, Indigenous peoples and cultures, Australia's history, as well as how reconciliation explicitly and implicitly interacts with race and racism and normative practices

of whiteness. The approach also enabled the revealing of contradictions between the practices, beliefs and values, and assumptions of reconciliation, as well as some of the limitations of existing frameworks of reconciliation to how it is (re)constructed in the everyday. It could be argued that many of the approaches being undertaken in the two schools may not be 'reconciliatory' according to theoretical frameworks of reconciliation. However, what this reveals is the limitations of such theories to the everyday practices of reconciliation in schools – in policies, curriculum, resources, school culture, and in pedagogical practices.

In Part Three of the thesis, I respond directly to the assumptions about children and childhood, and particularly the assumptions about their readiness to engage in reconciliation and associated topics, by focusing on how the 52 children in the study (re)constructed everyday reconciliation, race, racism and whiteness.

Part 3: Silencing Reconciliation, Celebrating Racism

Introduction to Part 3: Silencing Reconciliation, Celebrating Racism

ME What is reconciliation?

Sam I've never heard of it.

Daniel Me either.

Reid Dad says sometimes it's good stuff and sometimes it is bad stuff like you know people make bad choices.

ME Who are the people he's talking about?

Reid The people that are making the decisions for the public and that.

.....

ME Does anything happen at school for reconciliation?

Reid Yes sort of.

Daniel No we don't do anything we just celebrate. That sort of thing.

Sam We eat ice creams. Don't we have a sausage sizzle that day? Hey I think we do. We don't have anything going on but we just have sausages and hotdogs.

As has been discussed throughout the thesis, the research focus for everyday reconciliation was 'reconciliation'. Yet, as demonstrated by this dialogue that occurred during a focus group I had with four boys at Red Gum Primary School, this was not a concept that was necessarily known and, if it was known, may not have been a topic of interest for the children participating in the project. Reid identifies himself and culture as being Aboriginal; he and both his parents were born in Australia. Daniel is non-Indigenous; he and one of his parents were born in Australia, his other parent was born in Tonga, his culture is Tongan and Indonesian. Sam is non-Indigenous; he and one of his parents were born in Australia, the other parent in Papua New Guinea and his culture is Dutch. As with all children in the study, they were between 8-10 years of age. In the earlier part of the conversation, when I asked the boys if they had heard the term reconciliation, Reid was the only boy who had heard of the term. In fact, of all the children I

spoke to at Red Gum Primary throughout the year, Reid remained the only child who had heard of the term, and as indicated in this dialogue, it was from his parents not the school. Yet, later in the focus group when I asked whether the school did anything for reconciliation, the other children stated that it was celebrated, even though it had not been. Given the high number of other national days that were acknowledged, commemorated and celebrated at both schools, it seems unsurprising that the mere mention of the day invoked a suggestion of 'celebration'.

In contrast, children who attended Acacia Primary spoke of reconciliation in four ways: the majority of children either did not know what the term meant although they acknowledged that they had heard it; some children said that they did Indigenous things on Reconciliation Week and Sorry Day, 'like we did in the hall'; a few children suggested it meant kindness; whilst a few others suggested it meant saying sorry, which was specifically in relation to the British coming. Yet, even those who acknowledged Reconciliation Week, understanding of its purpose was not clear, as demonstrated by one of many discussions where children expressed confusion between the different celebratory and commemorative national days.

ME Have you heard of reconciliation week?

All Yes

L I think we learnt about it I think it was last year

ME Have you heard of NAIDOC week?

B Yes. It is about if you come from another country and what kind of person are you

ME What's Harmony Day?

B It's for cancer. Harmony Day is for cancer and it's also for all the people who died in the war.

E Aren't you talking about Pink Ribbon Day

In response to the little awareness children expressed in relation to the term reconciliation, which at Red Gum Primary was almost an overwhelming silence, Chapters 7 and 8 do not focus on reconciliation per se, rather they focus on what children expressed as their interest in the topic or that they spoke most about during focus groups – race, racism and whiteness and Indigenous identity and culture. Such an approach responds to the call embedded in

researching with children that enables the right of children to determine what is of interest to them.

Up until now this thesis has focused on the study of Everyday Reconciliation (Part 1) and the everyday messages children were exposed to at the two schools (Part 2). Part 1 explored some the complexities in studying everyday reconciliation. It also explored the affordance of undertaking ethnographic school studies to explore everyday reconciliation in order to reveal how children are 'embedded within social and cultural contexts and the relationship between child and context is transactional' (Tudge and Hogan 2016: 105), but particularly so in education settings and how they engage in ethnic-racial socialisation (Priest et al. 2014; Walton et al. 2014). Part 2 focused on the symbols, the beliefs and values, and the assumptions of reconciliation and associated topics (Indigenous peoples and cultures, Australian history, children and education, race, racism and whiteness) that children were exposed to through affect, material and discursive assemblages such as teacher's talk and interactions, text books, YouTube clips, excursions to museums, songs at assemblies and schools events on an everyday basis. I demonstrated that in the main, reconciliation in both schools continued to perpetuate and privilege and power of whiteness, by celebrating particular aspects of Indigenous culture(s) through colonial storytelling (Behrendt 2016) and silence critical concepts of diversity, voice, agency, sovereignty and race, racism and whiteness. As such the structures of the 'silent apartheid' (Rose 2015) was maintained, through the emergence of settled reconciliation.

In Part 3: Silencing reconciliation, celebrating racism, the thesis changes momentum and the purpose is to engage more critically with children's perspectives. The following two chapters contributes to the substantial evidence that children are 'active in the construction of their own lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live' (James and Prout 1990: 9) and contribute to existing evidence in relation to how children are social actors acquiring, developing, and redeveloping ethnic or racial-based intergroup relations (Barley 2014; Boutte et al. 2011; Connolly 1998, 2002; Herron 2017; Priest et al. 2014; Walton et al. 2014). Chapter 7 focuses on how children constructed race, racialisation and racism, which became foundational for understanding the intersect between their understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures. In the main, children reduced racism to being an individual pathology perpetuated by 'white' people towards dark skinned people (and Aboriginal) people. Despite a rejection to engaging in racist talk, many children's talk about Indigenous peoples and cultures exposed a strong racialised deficit discourse and whiteness. This included children who are first or second generation Australians, at times sharing their own experiences of racism,

revealing the perpetuation of a cultural hierarchy. Chapter 8 explores ambiguities in children's articulation of Indigenous peoples and cultures and histories: tensions of past (uncivilised) and present (becoming civilised); colourblindness (we are all equal) and difference (Aboriginal people aren't treated the same); specialness (othering) and normalcy (sameness). Chapter 8 also provides glimpses of how children destabilise and disrupt colonial storytelling and the 'silent apartheid'. Using examples of how children challenged the assumptions, engaged in racial and historical literacy, and cultural humility, this section not only provides a potential to reframe reconciliation in education, it adds to the increasing evidence about children's role and agency in social transformation, in changing the world they live in now and in the future. Finally, Chapter 9 concludes the thesis, returning to the ACT Education Directorate's workshop discussed in Chapter 2 as a framework to progress everyday reconciliation.

Children's understanding of 'culture'

Before I begin Chapter 7, there are some critical concepts regarding children's understanding of 'culture' that needs to be explored in order to contextualise how children then spoke about Indigenous peoples and cultures. Culture has been deemed one of the most complicated words in the English language (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952). Within academia varying disciplines offer different framings for the concept of culture and identity. Anthropologists may focus on practices, languages, values and beliefs; sociologists may focus on the social interactions within and between roles and rules, self and society; and psychologists tend to focus on human behaviours and attitudes (see Martin 2017). Further to this, epistemological and ontological interpretations and expressions may be just as varied.

Research within the predominant Western literature exploring children's understandings of culture and identity has predominantly taken a developmental approach, with the dominant theory being Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory, in which he suggests one's identity is shaped through one's membership to a particular group. He explains,

that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (Tajfel 1978: 63).

Social Identity Theory remains not only central to self-concept, but also, in exploring the categorisation of groups, and the development, acquisition and maintaining of stereotypes and prejudice between and within groups (Keenan 2018). Expanding this, the small but strong

theoretical and empirical literature on how children understand and embody culture and racial identity (Barley 2014; Connolly 1998; Herron 2017), suggests that neither are fixed nor static, monolithic nor stable. As noted by Schick and St Denis (2005: 298), 'racial identities are sets of multifaceted relations produced through social class, ethnicity, language, geographic location, history, politics and so forth'. Martin (2017), in discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and cultures, although possibly has relevance for all identities and cultures, suggest they 'occur both because of and in spite of the social, physical, economic, historical and geographic contexts in which people live and work' (Martin 2017: 82).

Taking this premise of the importance of context, the following is an overview of how children in the study of Everyday Reconciliation defined themselves, on one particular day, when they completed their demographic survey (see Appendix C) at the beginning of each focus group. This occurred in front of an adult who is non-Indigenous, who for some children may have been considered white whilst other children may not have agreed, and amongst peers of similar or different 'cultures' or 'racial identities'.

Children and (re)constructions of identity and culture

As the other children in the class began literacy groups, the three girls take a pencil and walk alongside me, Jenny telling me that she does three dance classes each week, I can't hear what the other two are saying to each other however they are deep in conversation. As I set up the technology for the focus group, the girls begin to complete their demographic survey, chatting along the way about their answers.

Jenny arrives at the question of culture and states 'I don't have a culture'. I repeat it back to her 'You don't have a culture?' and she responds, 'No, I'm not Aboriginal or not Torres Strait. My mum and dad are not Christians only my grandparents are Christian.' I ask the other two how they answered the culture question and Sienna says matter of factly 'I'm Australian'. Jenny looks at me and asks whether she can also write that and whether being Australian is a culture. Drawing from the definition included on the demographic survey, I suggest that culture includes how we behave, what food we might eat, or what languages we might speak and that we can have more than one, however I am cut off by Jenny who confidently declares 'that's like Harmony Day – where we celebrate other people's cultures'.

Tahani looks at me apologetically and says 'I don't know what I am'. Jenny asks her whether she was born in Australia because if she was she can say that she is Australian. Sienna contributes that she also speaks New Zealand sometimes, to which I ask – is that English or Māori? 'I don't know? They aren't different words. They have accents in New Zealand'.

Tahani states 'I speak three languages – Arabic but I don't know the other one.' Later on in the focus group Tahani remembers she also speaks Dinka, and I scribble it down to look up later – a Southern Sudanese language.

During the second focus group I have with Jenny, she tells me that she has learnt enough of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – 'we are where we need to be' (presumably she means against an academic criteria). She would really like to learn more about her own family and history.

What culture are you?

I had initially thought that the completion of the demographic survey (see Appendix C) would be a relatively quick, quiet activity, however, as indicated in the above narrative, it became apparent that discussions surrounding the question of 'What culture are you?' revealed how the child positioned themselves in relation to others (I'm not Aboriginal, I'm not Christian). When a child would ask 'what is culture', I would offer for anyone in the group to explain, or give an example or describe it first. In most groups at least one child would attempt to define it, often just reading from the definition provided on the survey. I overlayed this with a suggestion that some people say that we have many cultures, such as the culture of our family, or the school culture, where others often suggest that it is where one may have been born, or the language they speak, or their family's heritage.

In summary, some children were unable to define their culture and even after a discussion with their peers and myself, commented 'I don't know' on the survey. This was the case for both children from an Anglo-Australian background as well as those born, or their parents born overseas.

The majority of (visually Anglo-Australian) children used diverse terms to define their culture as being 'Australian', 'mostly Australian', 'Aussie', 'Skip', 'normal', 'peach coloured'. The

majority of these children were unaware where one or both of their parents were born (noting that some of the children made comments to not knowing one of their parents at all).

Children who had one or both parents born overseas or they themselves were born overseas, at times defined their culture as multi-ethnic: 'half Australian, half Iraqi'; 'half Pakistani/half Australian'; 'Japanese-Australian'. Other children did not include Australian as their culture, rather they were Dutch or Indian or Pakistani. One child was very clear in defining himself as 'not-Australian only an Australian citizen'. He and his family had migrated from the Philippines to Australia three years ago.

Identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

In developing the demographic survey, I was conscious of the potential for such a survey to continue to perpetuate the limiting approach of reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to a tick-box on a form and continue to engage with the colonial and racist historical and contemporary discourses surrounding identification (Fredericks 2013; Gorringer et al. 2011; Martin 2017; Paradies 2006). Initially, Social Darwinism influenced definitions of Aboriginality based on blood quantum, and percentages. 'Half-castes' and lighter skinned Aboriginal children were considered to be more assimilable, experiencing both denial of Aboriginality as well as being afflicted with discriminatory laws and practices. As already demonstrated in Part 2 of the thesis, these constructs of Aboriginality have continued into the contemporary discourse. During the 1990s, policy changes within the Australian Government led to a common law definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity that is acknowledged, although not always accepted, for administrative purposes and by the Aboriginal community (Martin 2017).

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he [or she] lives (New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee 2011: 8, cited in Martin 2018: 81).

I spoke at length with the research Advisory Group as well as Aboriginal educators regarding the benefits of including a tick-box, both for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as well as in perpetuating a message about Indigenous identity being reduced to a tick-box for non-Indigenous students who would be reading the survey. We also discussed the potential of including a space to include language group or clan or 'mob', however, also discussed that

there are likely to be a number of children who may not know this. In the end, I decided to go ahead with a standard tick-box, 'Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?' (yes, no, both).

According to the demographic surveys, there were eight children in the study who 'ticked' that they identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (six of whom identified as Aboriginal, two of whom identified as both). Six of the eight children also identified their culture as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or both under culture. One of the children defined his culture as being his language group, and during a conversation shared with his peers that he is also Indonesian, Maltese, French and Italian²⁷ and that both his parents are Aboriginal (as will be discussed in Chapter 7). One girl identified as Aboriginal and without being asked explained that her step-father is an Aboriginal man, going on to define her culture as being Samoan (and did not include her culture as being Aboriginal). Only one girl who had identified as being Aboriginal defined her culture as being multi-cultures, namely Australian, Samoan and Aboriginal, however, this was not the general response – no other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children wrote their culture as being 'Australian'. Not all the children who had ticked the box were recognised by teachers as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students (which emerged when the teachers told me who was Indigenous). Furthermore, there were an additional three children from both schools who shared that their parent or grandparent were Aboriginal. This highlighted the diversity in children's own engagement with talking about their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Island identity, culture and heritage.

The potential and limitations of understanding identity and culture from the demographic surveys

Given the increasing body of research on children's construct of culture being dependent on context (Christou and Spyrou 2017; Konstantoni et al. 2017), but also the attempts that I have made to not contribute to binaries, I question how valuable a tick-box or one word response to an open ended question is on a demographic survey to determine one's 'culture'. I think that all that can be derived from the data from the demographic surveys is how diverse children's interpretation and understanding of the concept of culture is in relation to themselves. Thus, despite my original expectations that the demographic survey would provide a 'demographic picture' of children's cultures and whether a child identified as an Aboriginal and/or Torres

²⁷ These have been changed to protect the identity of this child.

Strait Islander person, such a survey seemed to raise even more questions about how children identified themselves and the importance of understanding such responses in context rather than from a survey.

Overall, however, the demographic survey offered some insight into how children were not very familiar with discussions about reflecting on their own 'culture'. This was evident in some of the children's responses to wanting to learn more about their own culture at school (notably, this was mentioned by Anglo-Australian children) rather than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Throughout the following two chapters, I include the children's culture, as defined by themselves, whether they identified on the demographic survey as being Indigenous or not, where their parents were born, as well as noting if any of the children acknowledged whether they had family members who were Aboriginal, including mothers and grandparents.

One final point before beginning Chapter 7. I faced writing Chapters 7 and 8 with trepidation and caution due to what seemed to be a risk of writing in an accusatory tone or the 'labelling' of children. Furthermore, I was conscious that throughout the fieldwork my presence and children's awareness of my interest in understanding their perspectives specifically about Indigenous peoples and cultures may have magnified how and what children thought and shared. Connolly (2002) suggests in his work that explored how children in Northern Ireland discussed 'the Troubles', that 'it is clear that while some children may hold prejudiced views, these do not form a constant and ever-present aspect of their lives' (2002: 60). Also, as Harris (2013) notes of undertaking research on diversity, 'to enquire into the [intercultural] mix is to make their routine social experience of diversity exotic, potentially problematic and an object of surveillance and management (Harris 2013: 42, cited in Herron 2017). In response, I was drawn to the call for researchers to consider the limitations of claiming authenticity in children's voice, and to engage more with contradictions and ambiguities (Mazzai 2008; Mazzai and Jackson 2012; Spyrou 2017).

Spyrou (2017) argues that ambiguities and contradictions in children's voice should not make children's perspectives 'less real, meaningful and convincing but should instead offer an opportunity for exploring the complex and messy character of children's worlds and the processes that produce their voices', just as was demonstrated in their identifying of 'culture' on a demographic survey. The approach also calls on us to consider children's voice as performative as it enables not just what is said but how it is said and under which conditions it is said demonstrating the importance of understanding context (Christou and Spyrou 2017;

Connolly 1998; Herron 2017; Spyrou 2017). Taking this approach, the children's dialogues in Chapters 7 and 8 draw from focus groups as well as during discussions I had in class-time, and should be considered as performative – particularly in relation to children performing to me on a topic in which I have expressed an interest. However, noting this, as I became a fixed feature in the classroom and playground, I was also able to explore children's performance at different levels through their interactions in the classroom, playground, school excursions, and assemblies. As in Part 2, throughout Chapters 7 and 8 I include, at times, long narratives and excerpts from focus groups to honour children's perspectives through how they themselves spoke.

Chapter 7 – ‘Shhh. You can’t say that’: Children’s talk of racism and racist talk

Throughout the data collection, analysis and writing of this thesis, ‘racism’ emerged strongly as a theme, including the deafening sound of its silence. In Chapter 1, I detailed recent scholarship on race and racism as a form of capital alongside Bourdieu’s (1984) cultural capital, social capital and economic capital, as well as an emerging field of literature that critiques the predominant theoretical and public discourse that has reduced racism to ‘individualised perceptions and direct interpersonal interactions’ (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017: 180; Bonilla-Silva 2014). These critiques call for attention to how epistemic, institutionalised and structural racism manifests, as well as how vicarious racism (that is the experience of one’s family or community) is experienced (Becares et al. 2015; Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017). As Bodkin-Andrews et al. suggest, without this expansion, any attempt to address racism has the potential to simply perpetuate racism: ‘attempts to combat racism may become limited to Western derived anti-racist discourses that will only further ‘other’ and silence Indigenous perspectives on racism’ (2017: 183).

Understanding the term ‘racism’ in relation to Indigenous Australian identities and cultures and how it functions within education is an important foundation for exploring everyday reconciliation. In Part 2, the dominant (re)construction of everyday reconciliation celebrated a colonial construct of the Indigenous other, silencing everyday experiences of race, racism and whiteness. This positions the majority of acts of everyday reconciliation as ‘acts of racism’ and locates everyday reconciliation theoretically in a particular research agenda. It is important to note, however, that such approaches were not how the majority of teachers, classrooms practices, school culture and policies expressed understandings and responses to racism. Just like reconciliation, discussions on racism only emerged through direct questioning of teachers, and even then, there was an overwhelming discourse of silence (Bonilla-Silva 2014; MacDonald and Reynolds 2017; Walton et al. 2014), reducing it to the individual pathology (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017). This silence was also evident in very few teachers actively linking any relationship between any form of racism and reconciliation.

In contrast to the silencing by teachers, children were far from silent about ‘racism’ or using racism in talk. Talk about racism as well as racism in talk emerged freely in relation to discussions about Indigenous peoples and cultures. Understanding how children spoke about, enacted and embodied race, racism and whiteness in talk within the context of their school

environment provides further context to the following chapter which focuses on children's discourse about Indigenous peoples and cultures. This chapter draws from Walton et al. (2014) conceptual lens of exploring 'everyday racism' in primary schools in Melbourne by firstly exploring children's discourse about what is racism, and secondly exploring how they engaged in racism in their talk. It's important to note that focusing on the spoken 'word' of racism does not diminish the more expansive definition of racism, and as noted by Wetherell and Potter 'words are central to that process but racism is made manifest, too, through physical violence, through material disadvantage, and through differences in opportunities and power' (1992: 62; cited in Herron 2017: 136). However, understanding how racism is talked about is critical as through social discourse we understand how racism is 'instituted, solidified, changed, created and reproduced in social formations' (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 3, cited in Herron 2017: 136). Such an approach to understanding what is understood as racism and racism in talk demonstrates how flexible and interchangeable expressions of racism were for the children in the study.

In Herron's (2017) thesis on racism and conviviality in young people's lives, she provides a similar chapter where she 'delves deeply into racism's complex manifestation, contours of appropriateness, and possible impacts' in a multi-ethnic, low socio-economic Melbourne high school. Herron (2017) concluded that conventional norms of racism do not necessarily match up with the complex norms of peer sociality of the multi-ethnic youth in her study, where peers engaged in what Herron has coined 'perverse cosmopolitanism'. Perverse cosmopolitanism 'makes visible and aids interrogation of the complex, uneven forms of racialisation that were often intricately linked with a cosmopolitan ethos, intimate knowledge of culturally diverse peers and investments in intercultural mixity' (Herron 2017: 43), in other words the common definitions of racism weren't always how 'racism' was intertwined within friendships and social relations amongst the youth. What is of critical importance in Herron's study to this chapter and Chapter 8 is that perverse cosmopolitanism did not apply to Aboriginal people or peers, suggesting a different set of rules of othering and objectifying and racialising Indigenous peoples and cultures.

As will be 'unpacked' during this chapter, the majority of conversations in which racism was raised were entangled with the mentioning of Indigenous peoples and cultures. I acknowledge the high possibility of children's mentioning of Indigenous peoples and cultures due to their awareness of my interest in the topic as well as some of the scenarios focusing specifically on Indigenous peoples and cultures. Having said that, during ethnographic encounters that occurred outside the focus groups where I was not an obvious spectator to children's talk, they

engaged in similar discourse about the links between racism, unfair treatment, blackness, whiteness, and Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Section 1: Talk about racism

During the development of focus group scenarios (see Appendix D) and questions, I was conscious not to include the term 'racism'. Despite this, in every focus group the word was mentioned, highlighting children's awareness of 'a' concept, but also enabling the opportunity for me to ask the children about their understanding of what they understood of the word. The following section focuses on how children spoke about 'racism' starting with a vignette that includes Byron, Elias and Larissa ç. According to their demographic surveys, Byron describes himself as non-Indigenous, culture – Australian; he and both his parents were both born in Australia. Elias is non-Indigenous, culture – not Australian, just Australian citizen; he and both his parents were born in the Philippines. Larissa identifies as Indigenous, culture – Australian, Samoan, Aboriginal; she was born in Australia, father born in New Zealand, mother born in Australia. This conversation occurred at the beginning of a focus group in Term 2, Red Gum Primary.

The weather is cool inside and out and we are sitting in the corner of an empty classroom. It's the first time I have met with these three children. I start by showing them the recording pen and explaining that this is how I record the focus group. They are fascinated and I agree to let them listen to the recording once we finish the focus group. Byron is sitting on top of the table next to me, legs crossed and he's peering over the survey watching me scribble on the pad to check whether the recording pen is working. He's in awe of the pen and blurts out 'it's black'. Elias, sitting on a chair on the other side to me, oblivious to what Byron is referring to automatically jerks his arm up and points to Byron without even taking his eyes off the survey, calls out 'that's racist!' Byron explains that the pen writes in black. Elias repeats that it's still racist and so I ask whether calling a pen black is racist and the conversation unravels:

B Yes it's actually racist to call something black. If you call someone black that's racist that really racist.

E I'm not black I'm kind of Brown.

ME If someone calls you Brown is that racist?

B No only black and white is racist. I would be fine with that if someone calls me white.

ME What do you mean by black?

B You are really black (pointing to his skin, which compared to his two peers and myself is a lot fairer)

ME You mean your skin colour?

L No, it's also about your country it's referring to your country and your background.

E What's background?

L Your culture and stuff.

B It's not just about skin colour.

ME Can you be black but not have black skin?

B Yes it's like when I look at myself when I pull my shorts up, I'm fully white up here and I'm fully dark down here. That's racist (and all three laugh). I think I'm half black and half white.

E That's racist.

B Not if you are saying it to yourself.

ME What if you say it to a friend?

B If you say that they've got dark skin, that's racist.

E What about sexist?

ME What do you mean?

Byron dramatically covers his ears and through gritted teeth and looking at me with a smirk and raised eyebrow that suggests that he does want to hear it but is confused about how far they should go possibly given my presence in this discussion and says 'don't say it don't say it'. Larissa in a sing song voice jumps in and says that it's about a boy and a girl – 'you know', through giggles between Byron and herself. Elias rejects this matter of factly and explains to them that that's not it – 'Sexist is like saying you can't do soccer to a girl. Sexist is saying to a girl you can't do something because you're a girl

or you can't do something because you are a boy. Remember we learnt that'. Both Byron and Larissa shake their heads. Interested to know where they learnt it, I ask Elias and he thinks about it for a moment and says Miss M. I then ask 'What about racism – where have you learnt about racism?' Elias is quicker to respond to this question and says that he heard it from Mr R once. 'He said don't talk about race'. The discussion then is broken with Byron piping in that he learnt about it years ago, 'I learnt it when I was like 10'. The other two crack up laughing as Elias reminds Byron that he's only 8! They joke around with each other about how funny Byron is. To try and bring us back to the discussion I ask the children what they know about the word Aboriginal? Byron automatically responds that it's about skin colour. I extend this by asking what colour skin do Aboriginal people have?

At this stage Byron stretches out his legs and loudly says 'Aaah', as if he has had an epiphany, more to himself than to the rest of us, 'So that's why I am white up here' pulling his shorts further up revealing a tan mark. He tells us that he's 'a quarter Aboriginal' and whilst pointing to his lower legs explains that 'this is the part I am Aboriginal'. Elias doesn't seem to dispute this but in an interested tone asks 'How are you Aboriginal?' (emphasis is on the 'are' not 'you'). To which Byron tells us that his Grandad is Aboriginal. Elias' response is 'So how did you become white?'. Larissa explains that 'Aboriginal people can be different like white or brown'. The discussion ends with Elias saying to Byron, not necessarily apologetically, 'I said something racist to you once, I called you white'. At the time, I didn't check whether Elias had thought calling Byron white was racist due to Byron's announcement that his was 'quarter Aboriginal' and therefore Elias now considered Byron 'black' or whether the calling of him 'white' was racist based on the beginning of the discussion that using the words 'black and white' was racist. (Vignette 1)

This quick, at times humorous, banter that occurred at the beginning of this focus group amongst three peers, none of whom ever played with each other in the playground (and were chosen as the teacher suggested these three would work well together in a group), offered such a strong example of the complexities surrounding how children are navigating the concept of racism in their everyday lives, including in relation to the intricacies of understanding their own identity as well as Indigenous peoples and cultures (which may be part of their own identity). Elias and Byron's interpretation of describing something or someone black or white

as being racist reflects a common confusion between racialisation and racism (Walton et al. 2013b). Elias' quick positioning to say he is not black he is brown engages with a hierarchy of colouring as well as the possibility that Elias is differentiating himself from the existing socially constructed hierarchy. Larissa's extension of blackness being beyond skin colour to also be about one's culture and background is reflected in the literature on 'new racism' (Barker 1981). The joking banter, at times almost uncomfortable, about saying or doing something that's 'racist' reflecting that it's linked to morally negative behaviour. Elias and Byron's exploration of a set of possible rules and boundaries of who is allowed to say it or not (Herron 2017; Walton et al. 2013b), as well as how teachers are responding to this in the classroom (Priest et al. 2016). Finally, Byron's own reflections about his Aboriginal identity and being fair, and determining the 'percentage' can be both linked to the historical and contemporary racialised policies and politics of assimilation, the stolen generation and a public interest and obsession regarding 'Indigeneity' and being 'black enough'. All of these aspects of children's negotiation of racism is not necessarily new and have emerged in other qualitative and longer term ethnographic studies of early childhood, primary school and high school children (Barley 2014; Connelly 1998; Herron 2017; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014). However, the contribution that I aim to make here is the explicit link to children's construction and understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Using Byron, Larissa, and Elias' discussion with additional vignettes, the following section provides further analysis into the patterning of children's talk of racism that were common at Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary.

Racism is Black and White

During a geography inquiry class, I was sitting with two boys whilst they were brainstorming together what questions they were interested in researching as part of a geography inquiry project on Africa. Reid wrote down that he would like to know whether all people in Africa are black to which Daniel said very quietly that you can't ask that question because its racist. The teacher was standing over this dialogue and walked briskly away.
(Vignette 2)

Layne and Delta (both Indigenous, all parents and themselves born in Australia, and their culture is Aboriginal) were discussing who were other Aboriginal children at their school and were disagreeing whether Shane was Aboriginal. Layne mentions that Shane has got light skin but he is still Aboriginal. Delta argues that he's not Aboriginal because he doesn't go to the

club and states 'He is not Aboriginal. He's fully white'. Layne immediately responds with a very loud 'sshhhhh', with her eyes expanding and states 'that's racist'. I ask why that's racist, and Layne thinks about it by saying 'ummmm'. I ask whether they have heard someone say that before? To which Layne says Yes, she's heard it from students (not teachers) a few times.
(Vignette 3)

As was evident in all three vignettes, children often linked the labelling of someone, or even something (a pen), 'black' or 'white' as being racist. Such discourse expresses a confusion between racialisation and racism, where the describing of something or someone as being black or white (or other race-based characteristics) is automatically associated with racism (Walton et al. 2013). To clarify, racialisation refers to the process that racial characteristics become meaningful in different settings (Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Frankenberg 1993). According to the Talking Cultures study undertaken in four Melbourne primary schools exploring how children spoke about race and racism, researchers (Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2013b; Walton 2014) found that the mere mention of the colours of black and white was considered 'racist' due to the 'ambiguities and contextual specificities that frame race-based speech and behaviour' (Priest et al 2016: 809). Another paper using the same study detailed how children who had themselves experienced racism were 'often quick to identify something as racist if there was mention of someone's skin colour' (Priest et al. 2016: 819), however, I did not find the same, children who shared their own experiences of racism were not necessarily quicker to associate mention of black or white as being racism, rather most children did.

The labelling of the words 'black' and 'white' as being racist, however, warrants unpacking as to what was considered 'black' and 'white' to children of Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary, because the crude calling of someone or something black or white can take on meaning depending on its use and by whom. Thus, more accurately it is important to understand the discourses of blackness and whiteness amongst children before simply suggesting that any mention of the word black and white is incorrectly used as a term of racism.

For children from both schools, the most dominant use of the term white was in defining British people who came on the First Fleet, those who took over the lands and did awful things to Aboriginal people. For some children they suggested that white was a label used in the past to describe people based on their skin colour, but now the term is considered racist (as mentioned in the first vignette). For both Anglo-Australian and non Anglo-Australian children, white was also associated with being 'Australian', which was in contrast to people who are

black or brown as being Indigenous. In such discussions there was no mention of other ethnic or cultural groups. And for some children, white was acknowledged as being the preferred skin colour. There was no mention that white was a 'culture', unlike black or blackness being described as being beyond skin and heritage, as indicated by Larissa in the Vignette 1. Despite a pattern of white people being the perpetrators of unfair treatment towards dark skinned people, discourse of whiteness permeated the voices of children throughout the focus groups. I have engaged with this notion of 'white' being associated with Australian identity in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, and will discuss further below.

'Black' was predominantly associated with Indigenous people at the time of colonisation. This past tense use of the term included descriptors from 'brave' to 'poor' (not an economic status). Positive descriptors in the contemporary was reserved predominantly to Indigenous people being the First Australians who tried to fight the colonisers. Black was also synonymous with black skin, dark skin and sometime brown skin. The term black was also used as a general term to describe non-white people, not just Indigenous, often grouping diverse non-white people together such as Syrian refugees and Aboriginal people, expressing the homogenising of racial or ethnic groups that is different to one's own. It's important to note, however, not all children who homogenised 'black' people were 'white', Anglo-Australian or 'non-black' and may have been perceived as being in the same generic outgroup by others that they themselves were depicting. The term black was also used to describe people who are the recipients of unfair treatment (predominantly by white people). This emerged particularly in discussions surrounding one of the scenarios in which a black woman or man was sitting alone on a bus and why the children thought that was the case: 'because black people are treated differently than others'. There was some mention that black people are scary, violent, and have no education and behave the way they do because of how they 'were' treated. Being black extended black from skin colour to culture, as described by Larissa in the above vignette, unlike being white not being a culture. Additional exploration of how blackness was incorporated into children's talk is also explored in more detail in the following section as well as in the following chapter.

In a critical ethnographic study of how children engaged in discourses of whiteness and blackness, Miller (2015) explored the everyday life of her three children for nine months: at home with the family, peers, relatives; attending hobbies and social events; schoolwork that was sent home – offering particular insight into how the 'mundane spaces of everyday life' (2015:139) perpetuated discourses of whiteness and blackness. Her findings revealed that the normalisation of whiteness through over-representation, omission and re-appropriation (the

perpetuating of white norms) sustained systematic oppression and degradation of blackness (Miller 2015: 142). As reflected above, my study supported very similar discourses about whiteness and blackness, however, unlike the children in Miller's study, who identified as being white, discourses of whiteness and blackness were perpetuated by ethnically diverse children who would not necessarily have defined themselves as 'white' nor 'black' if I had explicitly asked them on their demographic survey.

At Red Gum Primary, there was also some sentiment of what Connolly (1998) and Herron (2017) suggested of blackness (and more specifically Aboriginal peoples) having 'cultural capital' amongst children. Both Connolly and Herron explored the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality in low income communities and found that blackness was linked to being 'street-wise' (Connolly 1998: 48) or children wanting connection to black people through jokes about 'nigger-besties' (Herron 2017: 157). There were a small number of children at Red Gum Primary who seemed to express a similar pride in living close to Aboriginal peers that they get to see all the time, or having friendships with Aboriginal peers, at times competing with who had been friends with certain Aboriginal children the longest, in contrast to their connection and length of friendship to other friends was never discussed. In Acacia Primary, although very few children had friendships with Aboriginal children, there were similar sentiments towards the IEO and even towards ascribing cultural capital to the school in the perception that children knew more than other children because they go to what they perceived as being an 'Aboriginal school'.

During a focus group that I held with Reid, Daniel, Sam (who I introduced in the Introduction to Part 3)²⁸, and Tom (non-Indigenous, he and his parents were born in Australia and his culture is 'skip')²⁹, I asked what the boys understood by the term Aboriginal. The initial response includes a description about Aboriginal students being go-getters, as described by Reid, but supported by the other boys when they provided names of peers who are like that.

²⁸ As a reminder, Reid identifies himself and culture as being Aboriginal, he and both his parents were born in Australia; Daniel is non-Indigenous, he and one of his parents were born in Australia, his other parent was born in Tonga, his culture is Tongan and Indonesian; Sam is non-Indigenous, he and one of his parents were born in Australia, the other parent in Papua New Guinea and his culture is Dutch.

²⁹ The term 'skip' is slang for Anglo-Australian. When Tom had originally completed his demographic survey, his use of the term 'skip' brought back a flood of memories of my own high school days at a highly ethnically diverse girl's school, as I hadn't heard the term 'skip' since then. What I recall of the term was that it was given to and worn proudly by the group of Anglo-Australian girls that predominantly had blond hair and blue eyes, and growing up next to the beach, they were often the 'surfer chicks' or at the very least wore surf-brand clothes. I interpreted Tom's own description of being a skip well beyond being 'Australian' – the use of the word skip raised sentiments of being a 'real Australian', and as what one of the Acacia Primary teachers, and echoed by some of the non-Anglo Australian children in her class labelled an 'Aussie Aussie Aussie Oi Oi Oi' Australian.

Like, Aboriginals they act...someone or some are like, outside they're really, they're really just one...you know, they thrive you know get out there...they are like those kind of people...

The same sense of coolness was highlighted in the second focus group that I held with the same boys, a couple of months later, where Reid distances himself from a suggestion that Daniel and Reid are the same colour.

With no connection to what we are talking about, Tom states that Daniel and Reid are the same colour. We all look at the two boys. There are similarities, however, Reid is very quick to say no. Tom confirms he isn't trying to be rude or anything by making this observation. I ask why is that rude? Ignoring me, Sam pipes in and says that Tahani is darker (introduced in the Introduction to Part 3). Reid seems stuck on trying to highlight his difference between himself and Daniel.

'No offence but I am different. See look I am "kaboosh" darker than Daniel'. As he says "kaboosh" he hits himself on his chest with his fingertips, making somewhat of a power salute towards himself ending the display by keeping his hands in front of his chest, palms facing towards himself, thumbs pointing upwards. The other boys watch on.

Tom makes a comment about Tahani's skin colour that I miss, but in the same breath agrees with Reid that he is 'Kaboosh'. Sam is really concerned about what Tom has said and points to my pen and reminds Tom that I am recording. To which Tom responds that he doesn't care, it's what Joe said (another boy in the same class). Reid also jumps in and puts his hand up to stop him telling him assertively 'No no no don't say it'. This is a very different 'don't say it' to how Byron says it in the first vignette regarding 'sexism'.

Tom admits that it's a racist joke. Sam interjects again by changing the subject. 'Tahani doesn't talk much. Same as Lara they're both quiet'. What's of interest here is Lara is very fair, possibly trying to defuse anything racialised towards Tahani by suggesting Tahani's quiet disposition has nothing to do with her skin colour. Reid continues to shift the conversation further away and suggests that 'Maybe they're loud when they're at home.' I never hear Tom's racist joke. (Vignette 4)

This dialogue not only highlights a ‘coolness’ connected to being Aboriginal as well as knowing Reid, but also raises another aspect of talk about racism, which was an anxiety linked to saying anything racist. The concern expressed by Reid and Sam that I was recording has emerged in other studies where researchers have attempted to predict whether the presence of knowledge of anti-racism influences children’s discourse on racism and prejudice, in some ways referring to socially-desirable responses from study participants (Monteiro, de França and Rodrigues 2009). Monteiro et al. (2009) explored whether the difference between 6–7 year olds and 9–10 year olds in responding to when there was the presence of an ‘anti-racist’ norm (which was in the form of a white researcher in the room during the controlled activities). The study authors concluded that children aged 9–10 expressed racial prejudice under particular conditions. However, Reid and Sam’s concerns may not have been necessarily that I was ‘white’, rather I was an adult and was there to talk about Indigenous peoples and cultures. The children in this focus group were very aware that my mother was born in Singapore and had dark skin and that my children’s first language wasn’t English. Noting this, there were a high number of children who despite my presence still engaged in racialised talk. There are a number of reasons this may have occurred, however, on analysing the data, it could be argued that the silencing and unawareness of whiteness was influential. This will be demonstrated below in Part 2 of this chapter.

Extending one of the arguments I was making previously regarding cultural capital, not all children at Red Gum Primary had positive associations with blackness. For some children blackness was strongly linked to special treatment due to the perceived ‘special treatment’ the Indigenous children received at their school, firstly by attending Indigenous clubs during class-time as well as the perception that all children are learning a lot about Indigenous culture in class (compared to their own culture). Both of these beliefs reflect similar findings of Pederson and colleagues’ (2000, 2006) research on adult attitudes towards Indigenous people in relation to ‘false beliefs’. In two separate studies, Pedersen et al. (2000, 2006) determined that adults who reported that they ‘saw’ Indigenous people receive special treatment in the form of Government handouts, education, the legal system, and housing were significantly more likely to have negative attitudes towards Indigenous Australians. That this attitude may already exist for children suggests the need for further exploration on how to engage with unpacking these assumptions with non-Indigenous children so that we understand the impacts in the playground now and the possibility of latent effects of such perceptions that can also emerge in the future. As expressed by one of the Indigenous parents from the region in discussing her

concerns of the implementation of activities only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at her child's school:

I know at my son's school [activities about Indigenous cultures] are only with the Aboriginal children. They don't do anything with the wider school. And so it kind of brings out that whole 'How come the Aboriginal children have the extra stuff while the white children don't get anything'. And this will turn into how come they get extra stuff and my children don't get anything. And that's why we get adults that they get a free car and get all these extra benefits from Centrelink. (Indigenous parent focus group, June 2016)

This notion of special treatment will be explored in more detail in the following chapter as one of the ambiguities and contradictions children expressed in contrast to Aboriginal people being 'normal'.

Noting this, Indigenous children highly valued the clubs (and 'special treatment') at Red Gum Primary as it created a place and space that they explored experiences, including those of racism, that may not have existed at other times and in other environments or even be exacerbated, at the school, as was discussed in detail in Chapter 4, as a symbol of resistance. What this raises is an awareness that there may be very different outcomes of activities and programs for participants and non-participants that may be perpetuating a discourse of 'false beliefs' leading to increased prejudicial attitudes.

Racism as an individualised pathology

Beyond the labelling of something 'black or white' being racist, racist acts were overwhelmingly identified as not including someone in a group based on skin colour or culture; saying something rude about someone's skin colour or culture; or one person thinking their skin colour or culture is better than another one. Children mentioned that it exists through saying something to someone, saying something about someone or a group, and in jokes. There were however mixed views as to whether it made a difference if the person was around to hear it, and was one of the reasons it would be important to know if a new student in the class was Aboriginal (which was one of the scenarios) in case you said a wrong joke. In the main, these examples are often termed as being 'old' racism (Pedersen and Walker 1997). As suggested by Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2017) such an approach fails to engage in more nuanced, new forms of understanding of racism, and may even be silencing other aspects of

racism (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017: 206; Bonilla-Silva 2014; Walton et al. 2014). Noting this, there were some forms of what may be termed ‘micro-aggressions’ where there is an appearance of saying something ‘positive’ however, the underlying message is negative, that appeared in children’s discourse that are discussed in the below section.

A strong aspect of Vignette 4 is the negative connotation and fear of being associated with saying something racist, as expressed by Sam and Reid’s active attempts to firstly stop Tom and then without luck, successfully changes the discussion. This was also reflected in Vignette 2 and Vignette 3, by Daniel’s attempt to almost quiet down Reid as well as by Layne doing the same to Delta by trying to quieten down their friends. Other children mentioned that they wouldn’t want to be considered racist. However, with Elias, his quick charge at Byron of saying something racist comes across more as a tease and an ‘egging on’ and in line with what Herron concluded that ‘racism was a very serious charge, which is likely why friends used this concept as fodder for daring, salacious teasing’ (Herron 2017: 140). This is supportive of a US-based study that explored 6–13 year olds’ reasoning on excluding peers, where the majority of children considered the exclusion of a child (e.g. from a party) due to gender and race was morally wrong, unfair and unjust (Killen et al. 2011).

The physical distancing from those who are making ‘racist’ comments seemed to be a display of the extent to which children viewed racism as being morally wrong. During a scenario discussion in a Acacia Primary focus group about how the class and individuals could make a new Aboriginal student feel welcome and respected in their class, Ava (non-Indigenous, her parents’ country of birth is unknown, she was born in Australia, culture is Australian) excitedly and loudly stated she ‘would just treat her like a normal person’, as if she had the right answer. Despite their close friendship in the classroom, in the playground, and what I had been told beyond the school gates, Rachel physically moved her chair and with an air of disdain and not even looking at Ava stated, ‘she [the new girl] is a normal person’, shaking her head. This had proceeded earlier comments made by Ava that she doesn’t want to be considered a racist but she can tell when someone is Aboriginal. The physical shift from Rachel could be seen as an explicit act of physically distancing herself from what she considered inappropriate or morally wrong attitudes of her friend.

In the second example of distancing oneself from racist talk, at Red Gum Primary, Archie (non-Indigenous, he and one parent were born in Bulgaria, and one parent born in Australia, culturally identified as half Bulgarian, half Australian) responded even more physically to a different scenario which asked what the children thought if their relative told them not to play

with children from different cultures. Archie stood up, almost violently slammed the chair into the desk and stormed to the other side of the room stating that he would not answer that question because it was 'so wrong'. At the end of discussing the scenario, Archie returned to the focus group and actively participated in all the other scenarios, which were all in relation to the treatment of different dark skinned people or Aboriginal people. At the end of the focus group I spoke with Archie to check in with him and whether he was 'feeling OK'. His response was that he loves the opportunity to talk about this stuff and can he come back tomorrow to do it again. What is interesting in this example is that Archie viewed the explicit act of not playing with someone due to culture as immoral and did not want to be involved in discussing it; however, the scenarios to do with skin colour or Aboriginal people specifically did not produce the same response. This seemed a similar approach to Ava's acknowledgement that something she is about to say is racist however goes ahead and says it about Aboriginal people.

In summarising this section, it seems unsurprising that children's talk about racist acts are reduced to individual pathological approaches given the messaging children received from teachers' beliefs and values about racism, how they dealt and would deal with it, and how it is constructed in the Directorate's policies, as detailed in Part 2 of the thesis.

A distinct hierarchy – from black to brown to white – also going beyond skin deep

As asserted by Elias in Vignette 1, his clarification that he was not black nor white could be considered as a differentiating based on skin tone – however, beyond this, it is also likely to be linked to the social construct aspect of a racialised hierarchy. Firstly, Elias is making a distinction of himself as not being white nor black to separate himself from the pre-conceived notions of what it is to be black or white in Australia, and as has been discussed previously, is often a synonym for Indigenous and non-Indigenous. As such, Elias possibly doesn't relate to either group. Elias doesn't consider himself Australian, just an Australian citizen.

Returning to the Talking Cultures project, Priest et al. (2014) describe the experience of a girl who identifies as being both Eritrean and Saudi Arabian identifying herself and being considered racially or culturally different in different contexts – at school she was noticeably lighter than her peers, whilst at her Arabic language school she was noticeably darker than her peers. Her attempts to negotiate the different spaces were explored through Washington's (1990) concept of 'brown racism'. Brown racism is racism constructed by minority group members who do not necessarily fit within a white-black dichotomy (in the case of

Washington and Priest et al, that particular descent was African). However, for the children in my study it was more to do with separating oneself from being Indigenous or Anglo-Australian. What is of further interest, is that being 'brown' wasn't considered racist, which for Elias also possibly meant that he was free from racism or possibly, even from being racialised as he was not black nor white. An inverted approach to brown racism may have also been at play with Reid, who was very quick to challenge Tom's suggestion that Daniel had the same skin colour as himself (see Vignette 4). In a way Reid was inverting the hierarchy (which in brown racism is about fairer skin and the affordances that comes with white power and privilege), by not accepting Daniel into his group, again highlighting that for some children, including Indigenous children, blackness came with a particular cultural capital.

Regardless of the reasoning behind Elias' differentiating of himself from being 'black' or 'white' (see Vignette 1) was an awareness of the racial hierarchies of Australia, the approach seemed to suggest that Elias was actively reproducing the racial hierarchies of Australia by positioning himself 'above' Indigenous peoples. The concept of racial or cultural hierarchies is anchored in a deep-seeded belief of cultural superiority of the English male, that emerged during the enlightenment period (Mills 1999). This hierarchy of 'colour' was explicit with other children from both schools, as discussed earlier, being 'white' was predominantly acknowledged as being superior. This adoption of re-constructing and embodying broader discourse is evident in other studies. In Barley's (2014) study in a multi-ethnic English primary school, where 98% of the students in the school identified as an ethnic minority to the British Anglo-celtic majority, Barley found that children took on the existing discourses of the community through their choice of friends and peers as well as the activities they partook in during free play in classrooms. Drawing on the previous work of Brown (2007), Barley clearly demonstrated how children aged 5-6 years old in her study 'absorbed social discourses of discrimination and hierarchies of inequality that are prominent, both overtly and covertly in wider society and incorporate these into their own identities and social interactions' (Barley 2014: 108), as well as brought with them existing experiences and awareness of experience of racialised social orders (Barley 2014: 106). This was further supported by Connolly's earlier work that also highlighted the ways children's discourses reflected broader societal racialised discourses (1998, 2002; Connolly et al. 2009).

‘Don’t talk about race’, or racialisation or racism

Embedded in a number of vignettes offered till now, was an aversion to not highlighting difference based on race and ethnicity, and the promotion of a colourmute (Pollock 2004), racelessnessness (Kempf 2012), or colourblind society (Bonilla-Silva 2014), as discussed in Chapter 1, and also again in Part 2. Sentiments of colourblindness, colourmute and racelessness discourse were prominent in the dialogues with many children, predominantly in relation to a question during the first half of the focus group regarding whether everyone was treated equally or fairly in Australia, to which the most common response was ‘yes, it doesn’t matter what culture we are, we are all the same’. Further to this focus on egalitarianism, there were strong perspectives amongst the children at Acacia Primary that made comments about equal treatment since Sorry Day ‘They got what they wanted and are now treated the same’, similar sentiments that echo the discourse of colourblindness that since America has had a black President America, the country is post-racial (Bonilla-Silva 2014).

These forms of racism are often referred to as ‘new racism’ (Barker 1981), which has emerged in response to the social unacceptance of blatant overt expressions of racism, and also with the rise of anti-discrimination laws. However, these newer forms of racism (at times noted as symbolic, adverse, modern and colourblind) maintain through their refusal to acknowledge the ongoing social and historical construct of ‘race’ (culture, ethnicity and religion) and how race is a form of capital that ‘produces disparities in resources, opportunities or benefits among particular racial or ethnic groups’. Thus, these newer forms of racism are more subtle, however also possibly more insidious.

As our discussions unravelled through scenarios that aimed to elicit their understanding of differential treatment based on race or culture, children were quick to respond that people with dark skin, Aboriginal people or different cultures (such as Muslims) were definitely treated differently. At times the awareness of differential treatment was mentioned by children at Red Gum Primary – that Aboriginal children (their peers) get special treatment as they attend clubs just for Aboriginal children during class time. Again, such sentiments reflect colourblind racism where (equity) programs are considered ‘racist’ in favour of Aboriginal people. In the Pedersen et al. (2006) study mentioned earlier in relation to ‘false beliefs’, a strong pattern emerged amongst study participants regarding ‘equity’, that there is a right for Indigenous Australians to have equality however, Indigenous people are perceived as wanting more ‘rights’. If children are perceiving that all are now equal as an initial perception, there is then no need for equity programs. As noted by Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2016) above, it makes it

very difficult then to address ongoing impacts of structural racism, and then perpetuates a deficit discourse and culture of victimhood.

As mentioned by Elias in Vignette 1, teachers from both schools were much more inclined to take a colourblind approach, rather than engaged in more nuanced discussions about race, racialisation and racism. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, there were a small number of teachers who did attempt to reject a colourblind approach, including one of the Acacia Primary teachers who consistently used the words 'black' and 'white' to describe people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians. The following vignette, however, highlights the discomfort this approach was for one of the children in the class.

I had noticed that this teacher often used the terms black and white to describe people, particularly in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. She mentioned the 'Cadigal' people who met Captain Arthur Phillip at the shores of Botany Bay, Eddie Mabo, and the remote Aboriginal children she showed the class via youtube or describing the children in the book 'When I was little, like you' (even though the author, Mary Malbunka, did not use the term). Often the teacher associated the word black with the word 'poor': the 'poor black people', 'poor things', 'the poor black children have no shoes' (the poor wasn't linked to economic status rather invoked a sense of pity); where white people were very 'mean'. It was interesting then that during a focus group, Aaron independently raised his disapproval towards the teacher regarding the labelling of people black and white. Aaron, was first generation born Australian, both his parents were originally from Southern Sudan, and he himself had very dark skin. 'She says white man or black person I just feel weird she should just say a person or somebody or black hair or white hair all blonde hair'. This comment remained with me for a long time given the challenges to colourmute and colourblind approaches. During a different discussion, Aaron shared his own experience with me and a few of his friends about being told by a peer on his birthday that 'All black people are going to hell'. One of his peers asked him how did it make him feel – one of the only times a friend or peer reacted by asking how their friend was feeling about an incident that was shared. Aaron responded that the kid was kept in and had to go to the Principal's office. I asked whether anyone spoke

to Aaron about this incident, to which he responded no and that he just spoke to his friends about it not the adults. (Vignette 5)

Aaron's request for his teacher to take a more colourmute approach was not necessarily linked to his belief that we are in a post-racialised society or that we are colourblind. Rather, as he himself stood out as one of the only very dark-skinned children at the school, his request was likely entwined with his own experience of being on the recipient end of such negative racist 'black' comments, as well as the reaction that he received from the teachers in relation to the racist comment. It also highlights one of the complexities of engaging in race, racialisation and racism in a classroom where there are children, their family or cultural group may have been racially stigmatised and how they respond to (different) classroom approaches that aim to engage in racism, prejudice and stereotype.

In their paper 'Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, and Racism? Risks and Benefits of Teaching Children About Intergroup Bias', Bigler and Wright (2014) advocate for the explicit teaching of intergroup bias to counter colourblind racial socialisation strategies (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Pahlke et al. 2012). However, they note a number of challenges in engaging with school and classroom processes when there are 'outgroup' (their term) children in the class, such as some of the complexities raised by Aaron and previously described previously in the language lesson, as well as during Behind the News (Chapter 4). One possible risk is that lessons may lead to stigmatised children (the author's term) to having an increased vulnerability to stereotype threat, which is when the awareness of a stereotype influences performance (e.g., in an academic test) or the outgroup adoption of the 'stereotype'. However, Bigler and Wright (2014) counter this by noting that mixed findings from child-based studies on stereotype threat (e.g. Ganley et al. 2013) suggest that awareness of this risk can be built into lessons to prevent it from occurring (Bigler and Wright 2014: 20). They also acknowledged the risk of lessons increasing different negative emotions amongst stigmatised and privileged children, such as guilt and defensiveness and anger and anxiety.

Hughes et al.'s (2007) US study highlighted that for African American children lessons about discrimination did not increase anger towards European Americans, and that guilt and defensiveness remained low for European American children. However, Bigler and Wright (2014) note that Hughes' study focused on the teaching of what they term 'mild' forms of stereotypes and prejudice (such as teasing and exclusion), and that the learning about more 'severe' forms of intergroup bias (such as lynching) may elicit more emotional reactions. Two points I wish to make here. Firstly, the use of the terms 'mild' and 'severe' is in itself

problematic as it perpetuates the discourse embedded within 'new' racism that silences more nuanced experiences of racism, discourse and actions that are still deeply embedded in a racialised history that maintain the structures of white privilege and power. The contemporary supposed 'mild' racism of teasing seems to still reflect biological superiority and playground exclusion, seems an extension of segregation, and is reflective of an ongoing and systemic celebration of 'severe' racism from the past. Secondly, however, despite this deeply problematic use of 'mild' and 'severe' language, the study does highlight a continued gap in the literature, both in Australia and internationally, that warrants greater understanding and exploration risks of and the benefits to different approaches to learning about racism, stereotypes and prejudice, and more specifically, epistemic, structural and institutional racism for both Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. This more context and nuanced understanding of approaches (for whom do they work and under which conditions) was also noted by Keenan (2018) in her international meta-analysis and systematic review of school based interventions that aimed to reduce prejudice or increase respect for diversity in 3–11 year olds between 1980 and 2017.

This section has highlighted how children speak about racism: that it's black and white, an individualised pathology, anachronistic, a hierarchy, and that it shouldn't be talked about. What was explicitly absent in the discourse was any discussion of social and economic disadvantage. The children's (and teacher's and school's) preoccupation of racism being reduced to not treating another person or group kindly based on skin colour or culture did not extend into the notion of how historical and ongoing processes of racism have impacted on structural disadvantage that exists for so many Indigenous Australians today. Rather, when the few children that did mention inequality, it was laden within a cultural deficit frame (as will be explored in the following section of the chapter). This seems to reveal the flipside of Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson's (2016) observation of the lack of connect between 'disadvantage' and historical and contemporary racism where interpretations and understandings of racism fail to engage with the racialised structures that have caused and perpetuated disadvantage. As they state:

...the emerging discourses focusing on the social, emotional, educational, and economic disadvantages identified for Australia's First Peoples (when compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts) are becoming increasingly dissociated with an understanding of the interplay between historical and current trends in racism (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016: 784).

Section 2: Racism in talk – ‘I’m not trying to be racist but’

This section focuses on how children constructed racism in their talk, to me or amongst friends, specifically in relation to Indigenous peoples and cultures. Three specific themes emerged in racism in talk: firstly, children’s own experiences of racism; secondly, racism through the unconsciousness of whiteness; and finally racism in talk within peer friendships. In discussing children’s own experience of racism, I set the backdrop to explore how a number of the children who themselves experienced racism perpetuated racist discourse towards Aboriginal peoples and cultures. The section on whiteness extends from the discussion that began in the above section – that despite an awareness of ‘whites’ perpetuating racism and a hierarchy of colour and culture, children engaged in discourses of whiteness, however, was not acknowledged by friends or peers as being ‘racist’. The last discussion of the chapter focuses on the interplay between friendships and racism in talk, where it can slip from jokes and humour to crossing the line. The chapter mainly draws from two groups of children, one from each school. In each group there are strong friendships which offered insight into how racism in talk is contextualised not only amongst peers, but also with friends.

The first focus group is with Fiona (non-Indigenous, herself and both parents born in England, culture is English), Mohammed (non-Indigenous, born in Australia, both parents born in India, culture is Muslim Indian), Tia (not Indigenous, born in England, both parents born in Philippines, culture is Filipino) and Rosie (not Indigenous, born in Australia, one parent born in Chile and one in Australia, culture is Chile and Australian). The first part of the vignette focuses on Mohammed and Tia’s sharing of their own experiences of racism. It then quickly shifts into a very complex discussion laden with whiteness discourse in response to a scenario about a fair-skinned Aboriginal girl attending the after-school dance class.

We are sitting in the open area just outside the classroom, whilst the other children are undertaking a revision class. It is obvious the three girls are friends, hanging out during class and lunchtime and as I am getting the surveys out of my bag, they talk about how much they will miss Fiona in a couple of weeks as she is leaving to go to another school. Throughout their jovial chat and completion of the survey, Mohammed sits next to me tapping his pencil loudly, rocking back and forward on the chair, not filling out the survey. At the other school I have been told by two guardians that their child is on the autism spectrum, I am not sure if this is at play here or if it’s a way of expressing his lack of interest in being in the focus group or even a literacy

challenge for him to complete the survey. In class, Mohammed is very reserved, keeping to himself, struggling at times to complete his work. Recalling this, I tell all the group that I will read out the questions on the survey and I am happy for them to write one letter answers (as I write down on my paper the full answer). Although this helps with the completion of the survey, Mohammed continues to rock and tap. I haven't seen him be disruptive at all in class so it does seem he doesn't want to be here and I mention again that if anyone doesn't want to be in the focus group, even if your parents have agreed, it's really fine. Mohammed doesn't leave and we begin. During the first few questions of the focus group, including 'what do you know about Indigenous cultures', 'what do you know about Australia's history', I fall short of getting an answer from Mohammed, however the other three fill the air excitedly, bouncing off each other, agreeing as they go. That's until we arrive at questions regarding how people are treated in Australia and Tia says that 'Muslims are treated differently, not specifically in Australia but like places where Muslims came from because people with different skin colour are treated differently, that's the big problem'.

For the first time Mohammed stops swinging on his chair, leans forward and adds, 'Yes because of being Muslim and in other countries people, you know, like the Brown people and the whities, they say get out of here, get out of this place and go to another place. The whities they're more mean because they think 'I'm white I must be, I must be right' so they kind of think that it's their rights'.

Rosie builds on Mohammed's idea and offers her view, 'I think that a while ago people, the white, no offence, but the white people treated the brown and black people differently. They put them out the back and they put them all out the front and they sometimes said no you can't go to our school or you can't go to our shop'. Fiona suggests that it all depends on the Government and what skin colour the Government is as to why people get treated differently, 'Let's say when there's a white person in, then the white skin people get more stuff and then they do more mean stuff to the Brown people. But American President Obama, so he's black, but he thinks that all skin colours should get treated fairly.'

I make the comment that Rosie suggested this happened a while ago and I ask whether treating people differently still happens? Tia states very calmly that it happens to her in her family. 'I have lighter skin and my family my family treat me differently sometimes. I come out of my bedroom and they say oh hey there white skin and then my mum and dad would say oh hey daughter we should go outside and see how white your skin is. And then they say how white my skin is and they want to become as white as me. I want to be the same colour as my family is, but I don't want them to treat me differently because of my skin colour.'

At this point Mohammed is leaning forward listening attentively and responds to Tia's remarks almost casually stating 'It's like when I went to Africa I went to Africa once. There were whitish and they were being mean to the brownish and the multicoloured. They were bossing my mum and my dad in that 'You are so bad. Go away. And he leant and touched me (pointing his finger into his chest) you go away you're not allowed in the shop. This is the white shop not your shop. Go home. They bullied and they hit my mum and dad.'

Rosie states that that's racist. And as I sat somewhat in shock the conversation shifts quickly away from this, as Fiona suggests that racism is also about culture and without specifically asking, she states 'Aboriginal people might get treated differently. They shouldn't, but they do'. Rosie suggests that they're treated like that 'because of their colour or because of how they eat and what they cook and maybe the way they live and the way they dress like...' She's cut off by Tia saying that 'Chinese people have beautiful dresses and fans and beautiful hats'. (Vignette 6)

Anachronistic racism

Another strong pattern that emerged with children was that black people, including Aboriginal people 'were' treated differently in the past, however in the main they are treated equally now. As described by Herron (2017) the youth in her study positioned racist acts in the past. This was very much the case for children at Red Gum Primary in particular, who predominantly mentioned colonisation, more specifically in relation to 'first contact' of the arrival of the First Fleet. This was unsurprising given the majority of the year's focus in the classroom centred

around the history curriculum unit of 'First Contact'. However, for a significant number of children at Acacia Primary, they had a strong awareness of more contemporary events and processes such as the National Apology, Eddie Mabo and 'Sorry Day'. This knowledge offered an opportunity to explore more contemporary notions of being treated differently. What is of particular interest, Acacia Primary children commonly associated these events as producing equality and that 'since Eddie Mabo they got what they wanted'; 'Since the apology they are treated equally'. Thus although not as 'anachronistic', racism was still position in the past (pre-Apology and Eddie Mabo).

Such a drawing of a line in the sand that 'they now are treated equally' reflects children's speak of a 'recovery phase' (Ahmed 2014; Schick 2011) as discussed in detail in Chapter 5. As Ahmed (2004) predicted, the acknowledgement of the past through public displays, coupled with a strong focus on the individual pathological approach to racism, has led to a concealment of the present. This also demonstrates how 'settled reconciliation' is being (re)constructed by children.

Children's experiences of racism

Before exploring the aspects of Tia's and Mohammed's experiences of racism (Vignette 6), I want to first briefly link this discussion back to the points I made in the previous section about how children talk about racism. Firstly, the children in this focus group like so many of their peers, interpreted racism being an act of negative treatment towards people because of their skin colour and culture. Again, like the majority of other children, they also expressed an awareness of 'white skin' being considered desirable and that white people are perpetrators of racism. Finally, there is an unconscious or conscious link between talk about racism and racist treatment of Indigenous peoples and cultures, mostly in the past, but also sometimes in the present. This is important, as it enables a discussion about these children in relation to their experiences of racism, as well as what ensues during the second half of the focus group.

Tia and Mohammed's sharing of their own experiences of racism was not uncommon. Children from both schools, independently and openly shared their own experiences of racism or experiences their families had underwent or that they had witnessed. For me these were mostly reflections made by children, where I could make the observation that during my year at both schools I only witnessed one incident at Red Gum Primary that was considered 'racism', which I describe in the opening narrative of Chapter 4.

The purpose of acknowledging children's sharing of their experiences is not to quantify experiences but to demonstrate that the way children spoke of their experiences of racism reflected the individual 'individualised perceptions and direct interpersonal interactions' (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2014). It is also to highlight that children's experience of racism did not negate their engagement in racism in talk about Indigenous peoples and cultures. In the Talking Cultures project in Melbourne, Priest et al. (2016) found 'heightened awareness among students from visible minority background who had experienced racism themselves'. However, children from Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary who had experienced racism didn't necessarily have a heightened awareness compared to children from Anglo-Australian backgrounds, however, what was evident was that experiences of racism didn't necessarily decrease children talk in racism about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

This is a particularly important point to make. As mentioned in Chapter 4 regarding a discussion about the impact of multiculturalism on reconciliation, St Denis' (2011) exploration of the limitations and problematic links between Indigenous peoples and new ethnic migrants in multicultural settler colonial states demonstrates the importance for focusing on 'people of color in settler formations are settlers on stolen lands...and historically may have been complicit with on-going land theft and colonial domination of Aboriginal peoples' (Lawrence and Dua 2005: 132). In the Statsny et al. (2016) Australian study that explored 'non-Indigenous' responsibility to engage through analysing discourse within focus groups, the authors also found that both Australian born and new migrants both maintained a discourse of 'us' and 'them'. The authors concluded 'the fact that the oppositional us-vs-them paradigm also had a strong presence amongst overseas born people – among who some were very recent immigrants – shows the adaptability and tenacity of such frameworks of reference' (Statsny et al. 2016: 175).

Halfway through the focus group with Fiona, Mohammed, Rosie, Tia, we are asked by the class teacher to go to the library with the rest of the class. We continue the focus group in this new space, which offers a shift in the focus group from direct open-ended questioning to the scenarios. One of the last scenarios I pose to the children is asking them to discuss that 'there is a new child in their sport's club who says that they are Aboriginal. You notice that the child has fair skin.' Until now the majority of responses from children in

both schools has been that skin colour doesn't matter, Aboriginal people can have all different skin colours (despite during other discussions the same children often expressed Aboriginal people have dark skin). However, Tia jumps in straight away and the dialogue unravels:

T You shouldn't be an Aboriginal because you should have brown skin if you want to be an Aboriginal.

F Do you think she might be lying? I think she might be lying because every Aboriginal person that I've ever seen on Youtube, they've got dark skin and dark hair, dark eyes. Maybe because she wants to impress everybody to make everyone go well 'she is Aboriginal she is so cool' (and she says this with a touch of sarcasm and the possibility of some envy, whilst swinging her shoulders and head to the same beat of her talk). And then they'll ask her about being Aboriginal. She might have an Aussie mum. (This last comment is delivered in a completely different tone, more with scorn that raises the groundwork to suggest she isn't 'full-Aboriginal')

T Maybe she is trying to be the centre of attention.

At this point Rosie is attempting to intercept and suggests that 'I think she can be an Aboriginal girl with white skin because...umm...I forgot'. This doesn't have much weight with Fiona and Tia and they continue with their own line of thoughts.

T Maybe she just wants to be like all the other people in the dance class that had white skin. She might even go to the store and put white powder on so that she could be the same as everybody else. My mum always says every time I come home after-school, 'I wish I could have the same skin as you'.

F Maybe she really wanted to do dancing and she can't find anywhere where the Aboriginal dances are and maybe she just really wants to be a white person.

As part of the discussion of each scenario, I ask what the children think their parents would say. Mohammed and Rosie suggested that their parents wouldn't care. Tia commented she wouldn't tell them. And Fiona suggested her dad would say not to believe the girl because she is probably lying. We

move onto the next scenario which is a man with dark skin is sitting on a bus and no one sits next to him. I ask the children why they think that might happen and immediately Fiona and Tia lead the conversation suggesting they wouldn't trust him because he looks suspicious. Fiona then states:

F I don't think we should give them any chances. But we should trust them if everyone accepts them.

For the first time since sharing his experience in South Africa, Mohammed looks down and quietly says 'I think that people could be nice to everybody and they shouldn't care about the cultures. I wish the whole world would be nice and that we can't have any wars. There can be a lot of cultures but people need to be together and be kind and not fight.' I don't move. Rosie and Tia also don't move. However, Fiona shrugs her shoulders and states much more loudly, 'I agree but I don't agree'. I am still focused on what Mohammed has shared, as is Rosie who still hasn't taken her eyes off him. However, by this point, Tia extends Fiona's dismissal of Mohammed's hope, returning us to the discussion about trust and Aboriginal people.

T So like, because like, you might want to give them a chance to see what it would be like to be nice to them. But also if you be nice to them they might think 'white people trust me so my plan will and can work'.

At that point the teacher calls everyone over as the library class has finished and it's now lunchtime. I sit there stunned, trying to grapple with what has just been said, the interaction and the energy that circulated the last few minutes of this group.

Unawareness of whiteness

Despite the previous acknowledgement that a racist act is driven by thinking that one's culture is better than another, Fiona and to some extent Tia both engaged in a strong discourse of whiteness. As discussed in previous chapters, whiteness is the privileging of white epistemology and structures, as well as the culture of silencing and normalising this white culture in order to maintain its privilege and power. Viewing it from this perspective highlights that anyone can engage in discourses of whiteness, as it is not a culture reserved for fair-skinned people, rather a mentality that privileges and normalises western (Eurocentric) ways of seeing, being and doing. For example, Isa, who was born in Pakistan (as were her parents)

and identified her culture as being Pakistani, also shared that she was treated differently because of her skin colour when she first came to the school. Yet she strongly expresses her belief that Aboriginal people don't have a good education, that they don't have a building to learn in and that 'ours is the right way'. Isa goes onto say that:

We keep upgrading our education. But then if you're Aboriginal and if you don't have any education you just don't get a job and you won't get money for your children when they grow up'. Isa expressed that Aboriginal people were mostly depressed because of being bullied and the past. Isa had detailed that people had been mean to her at school due to her skin colour and during discussions about people being treated differently explained in detail how Muslims are treated differently in Australian and in other countries.

What emerges in Isa's discourse is a strong perception of a Western notion of education being 'real' compared to Indigenous approaches to education not being 'real'. Furthermore, her use of the word 'we' and 'our' again raises notions of othering, in which she positions herself as being non-Indigenous in the Indigenous – non-Indigenous binary. Her attitudes towards Aboriginal people and their perceived lack of a 'real' education can be understood through the lens of the normalised Australian hierarchies of cultures that posits Anglo-Australian structures, including the current education system as the norm, despite Isa's own experience of racial stratification and racism.

Racism in talk – with and amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

This section focuses solely on racism in talk in relation to Indigenous children at Red Gum Primary and how racism was manifested and interpreted within friendships. One of the strongest friendship groups that existed within the study was Reid, Daniel, Sam and Tom. From the beginning of the year they were to be found before school hanging out, during classroom activities were often the first group formed, at lunchtime they would be seen together and by the end of the school year, they expressed disappointment that they wouldn't all be in the same class together in the following year. They talked about being friends since preschool. However, what was striking about the friendship between these four friends was how quick and unpredictable the banter and jokes about Aboriginal identit(ies) and culture(s) shifted from all four to children laughing and bouncing off each other to Reid being frustrated and at times expressing frustration, sadness, and anger. This was indicated in the following

dialogue, in which the boys are discussing the scenario about a new student in the class, and if he was Aboriginal where would he be from and what kind of questions would they like to ask? The dialogue shifts into Reid exploring his multi-ethnic-racial identities, which at times Tom's questioning of him being 'full or half Aboriginal' reflects a broader historical and social discourse and preoccupation with Indigenous identity. In this instance, this seems to be ignored by Reid and the discussion ends in laughter.

R But if he is Aboriginal I reckon he'd be from Queensland. I reckon because Queensland's more of a country. It's a country that has much more Aboriginal people.

D I've got one I've got one I would ask 'Are you more than just Aboriginal'.

ME What do you mean?

D Are you Indigenous and Aboriginal?

S Like are you an Islander.

R I've got another one what tribe are you from? Hey get this. I knew, I was definitely Italian. I knew I was Italian. I knew I was French. But I didn't know I was Maltese and Italian.

S Maltese and Italian are the same thing.

R And I am also Indonesian. I am Indonesian from my dad and are mostly everything from my dad so he's Italian and Maltese and Indonesian from my dad and I'm Islander and (clan³⁰) from my mum.

S So you're not full Aboriginal.

R Yeah I am full Aboriginal.

S But you can't be full if only one of your parents are Aboriginal.

R I'm Aboriginal from my dad too.

S But you didn't say that he was Aboriginal. So you're half Aboriginal and then you got all those other countries.

ME Does it really work like that?

³⁰ I have chosen to omit this in order to protect Reid's identity.

R I actually don't know what I am. My right arm is Italian my left arm is Maltese.

All children laugh including Reid.

As mentioned, Reid seemed to diffuse what I would have interpreted as racism in talk or even an attack on his multi-ethnic identities by Sam, eventually making light of the complexities and depths of having multi ethnic-racial identity as part of his Aboriginal identity. This approach however, could be viewed as an attack that reflects the broader discourse of and preoccupation with Indigenous identity, Indigeneity, Aboriginality, the 'Aborigine' (Foley 2000; Fredericks 2013; Gorringer et al. 2011). As mentioned in the introduction to Part 3, there is a long historical, political and social discourse surrounding quantum, full-bloods, half-castes, fair-skinned Aboriginality. Both teachers and Principals (Chapter 5) and children (as indicated above) continued to engage in this discourse. This was not an isolated mention, and this is further discussed in the opening section of the following chapter.

Returning to the above dialogue, at times Reid wasn't so forgiving with other slurs or embedded racialised and racist talk. Such as when Sam provides his definition of what is racism, which included the example of if you call an Aboriginal person a 'Nigger' that is racist. It didn't appear that it was the first time Reid had heard this from Sam, from the way Reid responded by shaking his head 'I am pretty sure that thing does not exist'. I am interested to know where Sam has heard this, and as I ask Reid jumps in and also asks 'Yeah where did you learn it – I hope you don't like go through a dictionary looking for words like that'.

Or during another occasion when the four friends were discussing a scenario that required children to discuss the exclusion of a boy from a dance group in a school talent show because one of the team members said he doesn't do real dance – only Aboriginal dance. Tom asks his friends whether they think the boy in the scenario has seen Aboriginal dancing?

Reid He probably hasn't seen it that's why he said it. He just doesn't think it's real. There are different types of Aboriginal dancing.

ME What different types of Aboriginal dancing are there?

Sam There's the dancing around the fire. And then there's dancing around with just undies on.

Sam, Tom, and Daniel thinks this is hilarious as they laugh very loudly. Reid starts to express annoyance and says 'They call them pants', almost through

gritted teeth. Sam responds that they look like undies. Reid getting louder and more determined states that they are pants again. Sam ignores Reid's tone and asks the other two boys 'How do you think they made them as they wouldn't have had cloth?'. Tom suggests maybe from dirt. And the three boys laugh again. Tom then adds maybe from wood or timber. And Sam says, 'Yeah you know like the paper tree'.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's awareness of racism in talk, but also in how it was experienced, was highlighted to me during one of the discussions at the Indigenous Club. The topic of the day was urban identity. An Elder had attended the first part of the group and shared her story of growing up on the Hollywood Reserve at Yass. The children had then read and discussed the poem 'Urban-igine' – a poem about the different expectations of being Indigenous in an urban setting, at times knowing one's Country, other times not knowing, being too black, not being black enough. A number of the children provided their own examples of what that has felt like to them. One of the children sitting at the front of the mat commented that they had never told anyone at their other school that they were Aboriginal because no one would have believed them as they are fair. Reid slowly but purposefully shuffles across the floor as the other child mentions this, put his arm around them and simply states that 'it's alright, we get it here'. The 'here' was the Indigenous Club, surrounded by Indigenous peers, and highlighted that the rules are different in here and out there, demonstrating the importance Indigenous children placed on these clubs as being culturally safe spaces. For some of the children, disrupting colonial narratives (de Finney 2015) may have only been occurring at these clubs.

The clubs may have also offered what Kidman et al. (2018) refer to as 'Indigenous everyday hope'. The authors draw on Bloch's 'docta spes' concept of educated or informed hope which supports individuals to act collectively in the interests of their own becoming (2018: 229). Focussing on Māori children, Kidman et al. (2018) argue that opportunities that provide First Nation children both with 'a counter response to settler-colonial education aims and a strategic framework for mobilising Indigenous ways of knowing and being' (2018: 228) can offer such everyday hope. Although Kidman et al. (2018) offer examples of a Māori led education system (which began during the 1980s) that have blended both 'indigenous political aspirations with grassroots pedagogical practice in the everyday lives of Māori children', what was occurring on a much smaller scale at Red Gum Primary, in the back room of the library every Monday afternoon during Term 3 and Term 4, led by Aboriginal teachers and parents, seemed to reflect this same process of Indigenous everyday hope.

The awareness and different rules amongst Indigenous only friends and other friends was further revealed to me during a discussion with Reid, Laine and Delta where they were talking about the club. In response to discussions with Indigenous parents about the importance of shared learning (that is both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students should do this together), as well as the original intent of the club being designed for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, I asked the students whether they would like their friends who aren't Aboriginal to attend. Delta commented that it 'sux' that they don't come, 'it kind of gets annoying'. This was interesting given that I had only ever observed Delta play with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children during lunchtime, or sit next to and be in group work with other Aboriginal peers during class. It was also mentioned to me in passing by one of her teachers about this group of girl friends only ever playing together, and that they also live together. However, Reid was quick to defend the club being Indigenous-only and stated firmly that he likes it without the other children. He repeated a number of times 'I just like it how it is with just the Aboriginal children. It's kind of fun that my friends have to do work and I get out of working. It's good that the other children are jealous that I get to have fun.' As mentioned earlier this was the flipside of some of the non-Indigenous children's perspective about Aboriginal children attending the club.

However, for Reid, it was more than just making other children jealous or being treated 'special', it was about a safe space. Especially when Reid stated 'I do like talking about my culture and telling my friends what not to say and what's rude and sometimes they go a little too far. There's Tom he is really racist and then there's Daniel who says really weird things. And Sam and Craig are alright. They go a little over with what they say'. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the clubs reflected both a focus on cultural identity and preparing the children for bias, offering an opportunity for re-storying (Corntassel et al.2009). They were potentially spaces that offered opportunities for 'everyday hope' for the Indigenous students to engage in 'different kinds of society and agency' (Kidman et al. 2018). From the perspective of the children who attended, this seemed to be deeply valued.

It raises the questions of how children navigate racism within friendships within an intercultural context, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, how they engage with challenging the embedded colonial-blind (not just colourblind) discourse. In an Aotearoa New Zealand study, Fozdar (2011) explored friendships between Pakeha (white New Zealanders) and Māori, where she found through interviews that friendships firstly don't prevent prejudice or intercultural understanding. In Herron's (2017) study, she determined that the youth in her study in the main had a playful, humorous quality, however at times this

slipped into the racist jabs being called out as being 'rude'. Herron (2017) explored the ambiguities and slipperiness of racism in talk amongst friends through humour, jokes, intent, irony which in some instances are starting to emerge in the literature as 'hipster racism', in which predominantly (not always) white and middle-class individuals feel they have the right to make tongue-in-cheek quips because they have 'black' friends and a supposed awareness of their power and privilege.

The embodiment of whiteness for the Aboriginal students in this research needs further attention. To offer an example, let's return to Chapter 5, where I presented the observation of the teacher not delivering a lesson on Aboriginal languages. Reid was often called upon to 'represent' Indigenous perspectives. Teachers spoke about him being great to ask because he knows so much and was happy to share. Reid invoked a sense of 'comfort' for the teachers, in that Reid's assumed connection to language and country did not require teachers to engage with 'any confrontational aspect of the Aboriginal presence' (Behrendt 2016: 167). Yet it was also Reid who raised concerns at home about the learning of Australia Day; his navigation and challenging of peers and friends with regards to what he perceived to be racism that reveals, despite his 'strong culture' as perceived by teachers, that he was also actively navigating the complexities of different manifestations of racism. It begs the question in response to the executive stating that 'the best summary about our approaches is we would always err on the side of protecting the children' (Chapter 6) – which children's safety is being protected?

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a glimpse into how children at Red Gum Primary and Acacia Primary understood and contextualised race, racialisation and racism through sophisticated, complex ways. It directly responds to the suggestion by Connolly (1998), as well as subsequent ethnographers (Barley 2014; Christou and Spyrou 2017; Herron 2017; Miller 2015; Walton et al. 2014;), that we need to continue to contextualise children's understanding of race and racism and how they incorporate it into their everyday lives in classrooms and the playground.

This chapter has demonstrated the need for caution in generalising the experiences and interpretations of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous children and young people and how they themselves navigate their experiences within the school gates. There is no single childhood – not a single Indigenous childhood nor a single non-Indigenous childhood and thus experiences cannot be simply reduced to a general experience. Not only are children's world generationalised between childhood and adulthood, the intersections of race, class, and

gender as well as intergenerational experience play out within schools (Christou and Spyrou 2017). Furthermore, drawing on his research with children in a multi-cultural London school, Connolly' (1998) expressed caution and concern emphasising that children inhabit different fields and one's identity and experience was just as fluid dependent on which field they were in at a particular moment. In a completely different context, de Feeney (2015) with her research with First Nation Canadian girls also acknowledged the same alert.

Extending this, there is no single experience of racism and how children engage with it. As noted by Herron (2017) with regards to understanding the complexities of how young people engaged in racist talk, what we as scholars ourselves may find to be an expression of racism may not be interpreted the same way by children, or all children. Her reflection that as an adult researcher we come with particular views about what may be considered racist, rang very true as I was navigating the writing of this chapter:

As an anti-racist scholar, I was alert to practices that may cause harm and perpetuate inequality. Yet, in conducting research with these students, my sensitivities were constantly challenged by the lack of malice in many of their exchanges, the implicit terms of (partial) agreement on which these were enacted, and how differently young people understood what is offensive and acceptable in the context of their social worlds. As exemplified in [this chapter] 'Racism in Talk', racialising 'jokes' between close friends tended to take unexpectedly complex, ironic and playful forms; students subverted and poked fun at circulating racist scripts and tropes that did not fit with a much more complex and convivial peer sociality. In doing so, they displayed affections and affiliations with friends from diverse backgrounds and hinted at the possibility of a hopeful youth sociality that dealt productively with difference (Herron 2017: 169).

Herron's reflection seems relevant to some of the experiences I observed at Red Gum and Acacia Primary, as has been demonstrated in the latter half of the chapter. However, as Herron herself acknowledged, there seemed to be different rules and boundaries about Othering and expressions of racism towards Indigenous peoples, peers and students than to other groups. She concludes that 'this differential racialising treatment has serious implications for how to tackle racism' (Herron 2017: 263). This chapter has demonstrated the need for scholars to continue to understand racism at multiple levels including the macro, structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal level as well as individual experiences and responses.

Finally, this chapter has focused on a number of children at both schools and I am cautious to suggest that they are reflective of all children at both the schools, or even beyond. Noting this however, similar ethnographic studies that were mentioned throughout this chapter that explored identity, cultural diversity and racism per se in different countries and with different age groups, reflect similar findings (Barley 2014; Connolly 1998; de Finney 2015; Herron 2017; Miller 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014).

Having set the context of children's discourses of race and racism and its interplay with their interpretation of Indigenous peoples and cultures, the following chapter extends some of the discussions that emerged in this chapter regarding the construction and understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures, and some of the ambiguities in relation to these (re)constructions.

Chapter 8: 'I love learning about Aboriginal cultures, as I love 'all historical stuff like dinosaurs' – Ambiguities and tensions in children's perspectives

It was my first focus group at Acacia Primary school and I was looking forward to listening to what the children had to say. I suspected what they would say would be different from the children at Red Gum Primary School due to all the visual symbols displayed throughout the school. The focus group was with Isa, Ram and Atid (who define themselves culturally as being Muslim from Pakistan, India and Thailand respectively, all of whom (and their parents) were born overseas). During the course of the 50 minute focus group, Ram mentioned that Aboriginal people go into caves and place their handprints on the wall and do drawings of people 'we don't know about'. The Island that Neville Bonner grew up on, up north in Tasmania was the most important Aboriginal place for hunting food in Australia 'for the Aboriginals'. There weren't many Aboriginal people left in Australia now, as the British navy had killed them all. He knew from the news that all Aboriginal people now lived in the North of Australia, 'where the schools are so bad and they torture Aboriginal people up there and that they go to prison'. Within a couple of minutes of this comment, he also said that he believed that everyone in Australia is treated equally and fairly. Isa responded to this and stated that after Eddie Mabo 'they all got what they wanted'. Yet, a couple of minutes later Ram mentions that Aboriginal people are treated differently because of their skin colour, their culture and because 'basically the British people think that their culture is better than Aboriginal culture, but, we are all equal'. He felt if [the British] saw the culture they would say 'wow that's amazing'. Ram loves learning about Aboriginal cultures, as he loves 'all historical stuff like dinosaurs'.

(Collation of focus group transcript and fieldnotes, Acacia Primary, Term 2)

I had made the assumption that children from Acacia Primary would have different perspectives from children attending Red Gum Primary. Looking back, I had based this on my initial observations regarding the vastly different 'amount' of symbols between the two schools,

as discussed in Chapter 4. The dialogue that emerged during this focus group, however, was very similar to the discussions I had with the other 49 children from both Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary. This suggests that the type of messages (predominantly colonial storytelling) which were similar in both schools, rather than the amount of messages, contributed to how children constructed and articulated their understanding about Indigenous peoples and cultures. In the main children positioned Indigenous Australians within a strong deficit discourse – including anachronistic positioning, the contemporary dystopian, and as an exotic romanticised ‘other’. However, this discourse was also embedded within tensions and contradictions, or ‘ambiguities’ that saw the same children within the same focus group jump between expressions of past and contemporary, colourblindness and difference, as well as othering and sameness.

In the Introduction to Part 3, I set the background for understanding children’s development of identity and culture and explored the terms children used to describe themselves. This is important background, as how one is socialised and understands another culture is inextricably linked to how one is socialised about themselves (Boutte et al. 2011). In Chapter 7, I explored how children spoke about race, racism and racialisation and how it was often linked to discussions about Indigenous peoples and cultures, also important foundations for this current chapter. This chapter focuses on how children from both schools spoke about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures and is divided into three sections. Section 1 focuses on the deficit discourse children expressed about Indigenous peoples and cultures through anachronistic positioning, contemporary dystopian or noble savage, and in doing so, demonstrates how children maintained the fixed and static colonial storytelling of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Section 2 of the chapter focuses on the ambiguities that I have loosely grouped into three categories: past (uncivilised) and contemporary (civilised); colourblindness and difference; and special (othering) and normal (sameness). The conclusion of the chapter provides some glimpses of critical hope in everyday reconciliation by offering examples of how some children unsettled and disrupted entrenched colonial storytelling about Indigenous peoples and cultures by expressing more critical, nuanced discussions about Indigenous peoples and cultures, as well as attempted to dismantle the normalisation of white power and privilege of epistemologies and ontologies.

Section 1: The ascribed Indigene

Indigenous, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person or Ngunnawal?

Firstly, I wish to briefly clarify which term children used in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. After the children completed the demographic surveys, I began the focus group asking if they had heard of the term Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or Indigenous. Children from both schools, those who identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, as well as those who did not, expressed a confusion about the terms. Noting this, often if the children had not heard of Aboriginal they were relieved to then hear the word Indigenous, or vice versa. The following are examples of the discussions held during three separate focus groups from both schools.

ME Do you know what is meant by the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander?

Elias I don't know

ME Have you heard of the term?

Elias No.

Byron I forgot about it. I know about it, but I can't think what it is.

ME What about Indigenous have you heard of that term?

Larissa I think Torres Strait Islander is different islands and people and language

Byron Aboriginal have different languages

ME Is there a difference between Torres Strait Islander people or Aboriginal people?

Ava I think the Torres Strait Islanders save the animals and the Aboriginal people eat them. I've actually really got no idea.

Rachel There are the Aboriginal people and Indigenous people.

ME If I say the word Indigenous what does that mean to you?

Tom *It means that you're Indigenous or not Indigenous. It is sort of confusing.*

Reid *I don't even know what it means.*

Sam *So basically you're saying or you can say are you Indigenous or are you not Indigenous.*

Daniel *I have heard of it I just never knew what it meant.*

Reid *I never understood it.*

ME *What about Aboriginal, have you heard of that?*

Sam *It's a person that has religions.*

Reid *I've heard it but I never really knew what it meant.*

Tom *But you are Aboriginal you should know what it means.*

Reid *I know that. I just don't. It doesn't mean that you know what it means.*

Extending the colonial construct labelling of 'Indigenous' or 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', I also asked what children understood of the term 'Ngunnawal'. Many children acknowledged they had heard the word but did not know what it meant (this was despite delivering fortnightly Acknowledgements of Country which explicitly acknowledged Ngunnawal people, or that an Acknowledgement to Ngunnawal Country was visually displayed in classrooms throughout the school). For example,

J *I think the Ngunnawal people are Torres Strait Islander people and they get called Ngunnawal not Torres Strait.*

Or this example from a child from the other school,

T *That's what the Indigenous Education Officer calls some Aboriginal people because she is one. So she's Ngunnawal.*

The IEO was not Ngunnawal and I had heard the IEO share with the children her country on several occasions. Once I had determined which term children knew, if any, this term was used throughout the focus group. It is important to note that during focus groups I did not ask directly what children understood by the term non-Indigenous when I asked whether they had heard of Indigenous or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples or cultures, possibly demonstrating my own unconsciousness (whiteness) during this early phase in the field.

However, the term 'non-Indigenous' did emerge freely in conversations, particularly as being the 'white' people, the British, or the Europeans, as was discussed in Chapter 7.

'Being' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Another discussion that emerged amongst children was what was understood in terms of 'being' Aboriginal. This included diverse examples from being born Aboriginal to blood quantum, as well as being First Australian. The following explores some of the children's suggestions of what 'being' Aboriginal means.

A small number of children suggested that you can become Aboriginal through marriage or learning, however, the overall majority of children from both schools were very clear in suggesting that you had to be born Aboriginal:

Your mum and dad have to be Aboriginal. Both parents don't have to be Aboriginal just one of them.

You can think or eat the same food. You can have the same ideas but you can't make yourself an Aboriginal.

There were also many discussions related to being 'full' or 'half' Aboriginal particularly in relation to teachers or IEOs at the schools.

ME Mala asked if Mr S is Aboriginal. Is he?

Lara He might be. Might be a little bit because he plays didgeridoo...So he might be. Maybe half.

Mala I think he is kind of Aboriginal.

Asif He might be Australian he's a human.

Children from both schools, although predominantly from Acacia Primary, expressed that Indigenous people are the First Australians.

They are kind of special they actually are the ones who actually found Australia. They were living in Australia but Captain Cook came and then he discovered Australia. The brown people were still here though.

Despite the different ways of describing what it means to 'be' Aboriginal, the most consistent discussion within the focus groups was in relation to children raising independently, very early

on during the focus group, a discussion about 'skin colour' – either that skin colour is associated with being Aboriginal, or in firm contrast stating that it did not relate to being Aboriginal. Given this was raised without me mentioning this, it may suggest an awareness that discussions relating to skin colour and being Aboriginal may be one that the children were familiar with or that it is possibly a contentious matter that children wanted to demonstrate a particular view.

ME How do you know if someone is an Aboriginal person?

*Ava They have dark skin. I know that doesn't mean they're
Aboriginal. They were a group and usually Aboriginal people
stay as a family, like in a group and they had really dark skin.*

Mia If they have dark skin it doesn't mean that they're Aboriginal.

Ava Yeah I know that, that's what I said before.

Mia You don't have to have dark skin to be Aboriginal.

*Ava You can just tell that they are. You can tell. But I don't think I
want to be a racist but I think you can tell.*

ME What makes somebody Aboriginal?

Byron Umm what skin colour are you.

ME So what colour skin do Aboriginal people have?...

Latifa ...Aboriginal people can be different like white or brown.

*You don't have to have dark skin. It doesn't mean that you're not Aboriginal.
It's the way, it's how are your parents brought you up. And if your parents
were Aboriginal or if one of your parents was Aboriginal. So it depends if your
parents Aboriginal that makes you or not Aboriginal.*

It is important to note that there are also likely to be cultural or epistemic nuances in describing 'being' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person (Kickett-Tucker 2008; Martin 2017), such as Reid's (who we met in Chapter 7) descriptions of being Aboriginal are about relatedness and stories, as demonstrated in this dialogue between him and Tom.

Reid ...It's aaah it's a type of ah something that can relate to someone. Ah that belongs to a person that ah belongs to the person that can relate to something something ah...ah (at this point Reid is seemingly frustrated about not being able to articulate what he is wanting to say, using both his hands to attempt to explain).

Tom Black.

Reid Yeah black. It could be a language or a person or a type of person... stories I guess

Tom Stories?

Reid Yeah stories.

Reid's attempt at describing the multi-faceted dimensions and diversity of being Aboriginal to him indicates a more nuanced, mosaic understanding of what it may be for him to be Aboriginal than the predominant ascribed construct being reduced to being born Aboriginal, quantums, skin colour, or being First Australian.

Finally, the following dialogue with Teresa, Ella and Isa was very common of children from both schools and was reflective of how the majority of children positioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and their cultures: as either a primitive historical people with a static culture, or with contemporary cultural deficits (as in not having a good education, or not civilised), or as the romanticised noble savage.

Ella I wouldn't know that the Indigenous Education Officer was Aboriginal if they didn't say.

Teresa I would.

ME How?

Ella But what if they didn't tell you? You wouldn't know.

Teresa I think they have chubby cheeks.

Ella Babies have chubby cheeks.

Indigo I wouldn't asked them.

Ella I wouldn't ask them because it is kind of racist if they're not because is rude if they are not and you think they are.

Indigo And they are scary yes they're scary if they're big.

Teresa Once I read that they attack others.

ME Are Aboriginal people scary?

Ella Yes if they're big

ME Are big people who aren't Aboriginal also scary?

Teresa It is kind of racist if you asked them and they weren't because some people believe that Aboriginal people have dark skin and all that and if you asked them and they had dark skin

Ella I think there aren't many Aboriginals as they've been thrown into prison.

Teresa I think it's because they keep getting killed.

ME Why is that?

Teresa Because you don't see many Aboriginal people on the street

ME Why do you think that they are being thrown into prison?

Ella Some get locked up some killed themselves.

Indigo Some get bullied.

Teresa I watch it on the news.

ME Which news do watch?

Teresa Channel 7, Prime, Win. And they show that they get locked up.

These three categories are also reflective of how Behrendt (2016) explored colonial storytelling of Indigenous identity, revealing a similarity between the broader construct of Indigeneity (Chapter 4) and how children in the study also constructed Indigenous peoples and cultures. The following section provides further exploration on the three constructs.

Anachronistic positioning

Although not explicitly demonstrated in the above dialogue, children from both schools were quick to position Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures as anachronistic (Fabian 2014) – within a distant, historical, homogenised (and stereotypical) 'primitive' context: 'they hunted'; 'they lit fires'; 'they lived in huts'; 'they lived in the desert'; 'they made boomerangs'; 'they played didgeridoo'.

This anachronistic, geographically remote positioning of Indigenous peoples and cultures in the past brings to the fore a focus on an ascribed Indigenous identity – or a stereotyped static, ‘authentic’ Indigenous identity, with little room for diversity. As has been discussed previously, extensive scholarship on representation of and about Indigenous identity (see Behrendt 2016; Fredericks 2013; Gorringer et al. 2011; Moreton-Robinson 2009; Paradies 2006) highlights that Indigenous identity is often generalised and presented by non-Indigenous Australians in the past. This was also demonstrated in detail in Chapter 4, such as the predominant focus at Red Gum Primary in the First Contact history unit. This anachronistic positioning is discussed in much more detail in the below section of past and contemporary.

Contemporary dystopian stereotypes

As can be interpreted from the above dialogue with Theresa, Ella and Isa, children also discussed Indigenous people within the contemporary, although this was mainly reduced to dystopian stereotypes. One of the scenarios that lent itself to a discussion about stereotypes occurred during the second round of focus groups, which I held during Term 4. The scenario was a new girl/boy was joining the class from Indonesia and the teacher had asked the children to make sure she/he felt respected and was made to feel welcome. After some discussion about how the children would do that (which I discuss in detail in the last section of this chapter), I then explained that the teacher invited the new student to stand at the front of the classroom and that the students could ask any question. Children responded that they would like to know ‘what language the new student speaks’, ‘how many children were in their family’, ‘whether they liked the new school’. The final question I asked in this scenario was ‘what would you like to know but wouldn’t ask?’. Responses included why did the family leave Indonesia, whether she missed her old school or Indonesia. The predominant reason the children offered as to why they wouldn’t ask such questions was that they would not want to make the new student feel uncomfortable or sad.

I then went through the same scenario again, however, instead of the girl being from Indonesia, I mentioned that the girl was an Aboriginal girl. We spoke about whether that would be a common practice by teachers to share whether a student was Aboriginal (with mixed responses) and whether it was important to do so (again with mixed responses, which is discussed below) and I then proceeded to ask the same questions as the earlier scenario – ‘what would you ask’ and ‘what would you like to know but wouldn’t you ask’. Although there were some children who stated that there would be no difference in the type of questions they

would ask or would not ask the two new students, a significant number of other children did share some strikingly different questions regarding what they wouldn't ask. These included:

I wouldn't ask if anyone in her family died

If their family were in any trouble in the past?

If you used to go to school because lots of Aboriginal people don't go to school

I wouldn't ask if she is homeless

I wouldn't ask if they have money

I wouldn't ask about his family in case they are all in jail

In contrast to the reasons given by children in the previous example, children did not suggest that not asking these questions was about making the new student feel sad, rather children suggested you just shouldn't ask those kinds of questions, which may suggest an awareness of 'socially acceptable' questioning. However, what it did reveal is that some children were already holding particular contemporary dystopian stereotypes, such as not going to school, being in trouble, having family members in jail, as well as assumptions about poverty and homelessness.

This discourse was not always hidden within responses to the questions the children 'wouldn't ask'. For example, in Chapter 7 I noted how Isa had expressed beliefs about Indigenous Australians not having a good education. Or as demonstrated in the below dialogue, which emerged during the same scenario discussed above (however, not in relation to what the children wouldn't ask).

ME If she's Indigenous where would [the new student] be from?

Ava From the Torres Strait.

Rachel She would be from Darwin.

Ava Yeah in Darwin there's lots of police walking around because of the Indigenous people. I don't know why but there's lots of police. The Indigenous people have been bullied their whole life so they do bad things.³¹

³¹ Later on in the focus group Ava shared that she had been in Darwin on a holiday.

ME Do all Indigenous people do bad things?

Ava Well there's lots of police and normally most of the time there's police around where there's Aboriginal people are because they do the wrong thing because of their past.

Rachel Sometimes they steal because they need the money. Sometimes they just do it because they expect every, everybody expects them to do it and say maybe they just do it because they're expected to.

ME Are there Aboriginal people who don't steal?

Rachel Some (sounding forlorn)

Some of the children articulated that Indigenous people did 'bad things' because of the 'past', suggesting some historical empathy for colonisation as an 'event' that occurred in the past and that has led to a behaviour in the contemporary. It is important to note that the two children in the dialogue above were in the same class as the teacher who I mentioned in Chapter 5, who had explained during an informal interview that she had addressed a class discussion (in a previous year) about Aboriginal people stealing by responding that 'we all have different value systems that we have come from'.

Romanticised Other – the noble savage

As the final example of how children spoke of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, amongst many children from both schools, there was a strong sentiment from both schools who expressed positive romanticised notions: 'they tell great stories'; 'they can play lots of cool instruments. The Bongos...and a didgeridoo'; 'one of the good qualities of Aboriginal people is when they tell entertaining dreamtime stories'; and

On television you can see documentaries on how they live, mainly you see them in the outback. Every culture has a different talent – people in the bush are really good at spears and if they are good they could start a business and sell spears.

One student commented, 'we love Aboriginal people they are our friends', despite acknowledging that the only Aboriginal person she knew was the IEO at the school.

Another example of generalising from the few Aboriginal peers or educators they knew included 'They would be good at singing because Reid is good at singing'. As noted previously,

the generalisation in the positive would seem encouraging, however, they remain problematic as it continues to bound Indigenous peoples and cultures to traditional stereotyped notions of authenticity (Behrendt 2016; Gorringer et al. 2011; Kinnane 2015; Langton 1993). Finally, such overt positive expressions towards Indigenous peoples and cultures support a discussion in Chapter 5, which drew on Rowse and Pertierra (n.d.) study with adult non-Indigenous Australians, that ‘affirming the Indigenous as valued’ was considered a key orthodoxy of reconciliation. Again, reflecting the way children spoke of Indigenous peoples and cultures reflected the way schools delivered messages about Indigenous peoples and cultures.

The following section explores how these ascribed identities were imbued within ambiguities and contradictions.

Section 2: Ambiguity and contradiction

Returning to the original narrative that opened this chapter, within a short time frame (50 minutes), the three children in the focus group expressed mixed messages, tensions, ambiguity, and at times paradoxes and contradictions about Indigenous peoples and cultures. This included anachronistic positioning of going into caves and being hunters and that the British has killed (all) Indigenous people to currently being tortured and going to prison, that all Australians are treated the same however, due to having dark skin they are treated differently. As noted, these contradictions were reflective of other focus groups from both schools. It is possible that some of the contradictions can be accounted for in terms of children’s understanding of space and time (such as the comment about Tasmania), as well as the complexities in relation to the very term ‘culture’, as discussed in the Introduction to Part 3 of the thesis. Other studies with children have also identified such ambiguities embedded in expressions of ‘other’ cultures and children’s interaction with diversity being context-dependent (Connolly 1998; Gebhard 2017; Hajisoteriou et al. 2017; Herron 2017). By focusing on ‘context’, a likely explanation of the ambiguities is also the way the two schools gave contradictory messages within everyday reconciliation, as demonstrated in detail in Part 2 of the thesis.

In the introduction to Part 3 of the thesis, I acknowledged the importance of engaging in ambiguity of children’s voice in order to demonstrate ‘the complex and messy character of children’s worlds and the processes that produce their voices’ (Spyrou 2017). In the Hajisoteriou et al. (2017) primary school based study in Cyprus, researchers interviewed 40 children aged 11–12 year olds about cultural diversity. The authors determined that children

spoke of diversity in three different ways: monoculturalism, where the attribution of various disadvantages are described as being due to cultural deficits (against a white norm); multiculturalism, where there is a celebration of diversity however, does not engage with structural changes or an awareness of the impact of cultural differences on everyday lives; and interculturalism, which social justice and equity values have the potential to mobilise social transformation. Through interculturalism, children demonstrated taking action to engage in dismantling the structures that perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation. Hajisoteriou et al. (2017) noted that the participant children predominantly displayed a monocultural and multicultural perspective, with very few children displaying an interculturalism perspective. These three approaches more generally have been discussed in detail throughout this thesis and as will be demonstrated, was very similar to how children in the study also discussed Indigenous peoples and cultures. However, what was of particular interest was the authors' acknowledgement of the children's fluidity of expressions between the three approaches.³²

Extending this, rather than determine an 'authentic' response of how children spoke of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures or attempt to categorise whether they expressed monoculturalism, multiculturalism or interculturalism, in the following section of the chapter I actively engage with three sets of ambiguities that emerged consistently in both schools. That is: past and contemporary; colourblindness and difference; and othering and sameness to demonstrate the complexities and messiness of everyday reconciliation. This is explored through vignettes from observations as well as transcripts from focus groups.

Past (uncivilised) and Contemporary (civilised)

On the bus returning from the excursion 'Early Contact' at the National Museum, I sat next to Elliot, (who defined his culture as Australian, whose parents and he were born in Australia). The full day excursion focused on learning about and 'celebrating' the technology of Indigenous Australians just prior to 'first contact' of European invaders – children had access to 'special' non-public rooms, undertook a worksheet to identify Indigenous tools and coloniser tools (which also included spears that had been made with glass spear heads to reflect the adaptation and influence of tools),

³² As an aside, noting the similar findings of Hajisoteriou et al. (2017) demonstrates that despite Australia being a settler-colonial context, findings from studies focusing on cultural diversity amongst school children undertaken in states of intractable conflict may have some relevance for the Australian context (such as Hajisoteriou et al. (2017) focus on Cyprus; Bar-Tal and Teichman in Israel (2005); Connolly in Northern Ireland (2002). This warrants further exploration however I do not have capacity to explore further in the thesis.

touched possum skins and coolamons (baby/produce carriers) and wore conflict attire. The children also watched a video that showed how technology has adapted and that it is still used today. After small talk about weekend sport and favourite sandwiches, I asked what he had learnt from the excursion. His response was that 'Indigenous ways are primitive'. I asked what he meant by that, to which he responded that 'the way they did things are obsolete'. I asked what he meant by that word, to which he responded casually that 'their ways have been taken over by more advanced technology'. As I looked around the bus, I notice that at least 10 of Sam's peers are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both, some of whom actively engage in 'those ways'. (Fieldnotes, Red Gum Primary, Term 3)

Anachronistic positioning

As was discussed in the previous section, children often positioned Indigenous people and culture in the past, or 'anachronistically'. Such findings reflect current critiques of the Australian school curricula which focuses on a 'colonial narrative' or perspective, and a constructed view of Indigeneity often focusing on cultures and customs from a traditional past or from remote Indigenous communities (Backhaus 2014: 64) as well as in child-focused studies. In a study undertaken with 37 Anglo-Australian children aged 3–5 years, MacNaughton and Davis (2001) describe these ideas as 'colonial understandings'. Their interview-based research with 37 Anglo-Australian children found that of those who had an understanding of Aboriginal Australian cultures (18 children), half of these children drew on understandings of Aboriginal people as living in the past and living in exotic and traditional ways. In order to counter a colonialist frame, MacNaughton and Davis (2001: 92) recommend 'avoid[ing] homogenising Indigenous Australians into a collective "they"' and 'avoid[ing] building knowledge of Indigenous Australians that always positions them as different to the centre'.

MacNaughton and Davis' (2001) above recommendation was directly counter to the ways in which Aboriginal people were usually discussed in classrooms at Red Gum and Acacia Primary, in both positive and negative terms (Chapter 4). References to Aboriginal people were almost always 'they' and 'them'. This was regardless of the fact that there were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and teachers at both schools. Furthermore, this maintaining of the binary of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, including through the persistent use of 'us' and 'them' in describing Indigenous Australians and cultures, fails to acknowledge multi-

experiences and identities within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, but also continues to contain Indigenous peoples to the position of 'Other', as demonstrated by the children.

Ambiguity about the contemporary

Despite this positioning and distancing, all children knew of at least one Aboriginal person (less so for Torres Strait Islander people); some were friends, peers, and teachers. Others were parents, grandparents, the brother's girlfriend. During the focus group, when children positioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the past, in order to explore whether the children also considered their peers or friends in such an anachronistic way, I extended this and asked whether the people they knew, such as the teacher, lived the way they had described. Some of the children took a long time contemplating whether this was the case.

ME *Where do Aboriginal people live?*

Suad *In the bushes*

ME *What about the children you know? Do they live in bushes?*

Suad *Um...no they don't live in bushes*

Civilised and non-civilised

Such expressions of disconnect between the past and the contemporary (Fredericks 2013) was also imbued with a strong discourse surrounding 'civilised' and 'non-civilised'. For example, the following dialogue had begun with a discussion about totems, where the three children in the focus group had explained that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 'had' totems and that they weren't allowed to kill their totem animal. They explained that during a class in the previous week they got to choose a totem like Aboriginal people 'had', even though 'we are not Aboriginal'. Wanting to know their understanding of whether they believed Indigenous people still have totems, I asked 'Is that what Indigenous people do now? Do they still have totems?'

Henry *I think so.*

Isa *They got more civilised because the English man made them.*

ME *What does civilise mean?*

- Isa* *Civilised means a lot of people. It's like Sydney is a civilised city.*
- ME* *Does that mean there are certain things that are different to not being civilised?*
- Isa* *It's like Sydney has the CBD and companies like Apple and post offices and they're important. And that is, that means Aboriginal people are still, some of them want to live their own culture.*
- ME* *Do you agree with that?*
- Pat* *I agree.*
- ME* *Do you think Aboriginal people have a different culture than other people in Australia?*
- Isa* *They kind of just live with their own culture.*
- ME* *What do you think Henry?*
- Henry* *I think they should have their own culture.*
- ME* *Can you have more than one culture? Can you have both the worlds you are describing?*
- Isa* *You can't just live in a civilised and non-civilised way.*
- Pat* *It doesn't work to be civilised and have your own culture.*

Another example of this tension is also evident in Aaron's (who we met in Chapter 7, he was born in Australia, however, both parents were born in Sudan) reflection that 'We should say thank you to the white man for making Australia, but we should say thank you to the Aboriginals for finding it'. Such sentiments reflect a discourse that colonisation and Western Civilisation was positive for Australia, that Australia has been made by 'white' man, although Aboriginal people did have a role in the nation prior to white man's arrival.

In the contemporary, but returning to the past

As a final example of the tension between past and contemporary, I offer a vignette from one of the only focus groups where children offered a more nuanced perspective of contemporary Indigenous peoples and cultures. The focus group was the Term 2 focus group with Reid, Sam, Tom and Daniel. During this focus group, the four boys predominantly spoke of Aboriginal people and cultures in the contemporary – they spoke of the students at the school, the

teachers, that Aboriginal students were leaders. They also spoke of watching NITV and having some good dance moves from Move it Mob Style, getting up to show me the moves.

Towards the end of the focus group the children asked if they could play a game. One of the children suggested to his peers that it had to be a game about Aboriginal things – and requested that I give them a role play. Nervous about not having role plays in my ethics approval, and the potential safety of what may emerge whilst having an Aboriginal boy in the group, I suggested they play a different game, and they quickly chose ‘celebrity heads’. Two of the children sat under the white board whilst the other two chose a famous name for the two that were ‘in’. The first round included two characters from Star Trek. Then one of the children suggested they had to choose famous Aboriginal people. After standing for a moment contemplating who to choose they decided they did not know any famous Aboriginal people, Sam states ‘There’s not that many Aboriginal people you can think of’.

They then decide to choose Aboriginal ‘things’. During the first round the children chose ‘spears’ (and although they were able to choose two different items, they decided to give the same item to both the children that were to guess). This is the guessing process.

Tom Am I a weapon? - Yes

Am I a spear? – Yes

Sam Am I a weapon?

Am I a boomerang – No

Am I a spear – Yes

During the second round of the game, the two words that were chosen were a ‘tribal member’ and ‘Reid’ (the boy in the group). The following is the guessing process. Note the children guessing are aware of what the other guesser is and don’t take it in obvious turns. Daniel has to guess ‘Reid’; Reid has to guess ‘Tribal Member’.

Daniel Am I a human? –Yes

Reid Do I fight? – Yes

Basically I meant, do I hunt food? – Yes

Do I have a spear? – Yes

Am I Aboriginal – yes

Daniel Am I an animal? No why would I ask that?

Ahhh am I a boy?

Am I tall? – Yes you are tall

Am I an adult? – No

How am I tall if I am a kid?

Reid Do I have ummm...

Sam There's no actual name in yours, it's just a thing. You'll never get it.

*(To Reid he says: 'You're a tribal member' (and to Daniel he says)
'You're Reid'.*

Walking over from the other side of the room, I ask, 'What's a tribal member?

Reid It's probably someone who hunts for food in the group?

Thus, despite earlier expressions of diversity within the contemporary, it seemed when faced with needing to provide a quick response to a question, the children, including Reid reverted to the anachronistic Indigenous symbols, or stereotypes, both in their choice of items and in their guesses – boomerang, spear, weapon, tribal member in the main.

In concluding this section, the anachronistic positioning, coupled with the binary of civilised and uncivilised, in time, space and place could be considered as a form of 'distancing' (Pollock 2017; Wise 2005). Pollock (2017) suggests that such distancing enables the 'them' to be considered fundamentally different 'types' of human beings, rather than complex, diverse individuals are attempting to thrive in a shared context. The notion of distancing also fits well with Wise's (2005) concept of an 'abstract other' as opposed to a known or concrete other. Developed from her ethnographic work of the everyday in a multicultural suburb of Western Sydney, Wise explored how Anglo-celtic elderly positioned the 'ethnic' other – either in the abstract or the concrete. Wise's construct seems to reflect similar ways children spoke about Indigenous peoples, initially responding in an abstract (anachronistic) form rather than in a concrete (known) form. Wise suggests that it is when there is shifting from the abstract form to the concrete form of 'other' that enables 'moments of intercultural exchange which can be described as micro moments of hope' (2005: 14).

However, the persistent location of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures in the abstract has been observed in other studies, comparing how children and young people speak of other peers of difference. In Herron's (2017) doctoral study mentioned in detail in

Chapter 7, for example she demonstrated that the treatment and talk of Aboriginal Australians, including peers, were vastly different to how youth engaged in social relations between students from diverse backgrounds, contributing to the literature that Indigenous Australians are experiencing Othering and racism in different ways to other 'stigmatised' groups.

Extending from this construct however, it seems unsurprising that children maintained this abstract positioning, as demonstrated throughout Part 2 of the thesis, where throughout the school year, children from both schools were exposed to lessons about Indigenous peoples in the main through anachronistic and distant positioning. The delivery of messages as well as the type of messages included black and white photos, visits to museums, the reading of texts by colonisers about Indigenous peoples. Such an approach is embedded within the Australian Curriculum history units not only maintains anachronistic positioning, but also reflects a strong developmental (chronological) approach to the teaching of history. Such an approach is critiqued by scholars (such as Rusen 2004) who argue that it leads to a Western ethnocentric view of development and civilisation. This seemed to be demonstrated by Elliot, Isa and Henry, as well as Aaron who suggested in different ways that Indigenous Australians were less developed or less civilised than Western, Anglo-Australian culture, which brought civilisation and modernity, both of which were deemed positive to Australia.

Colourblindness (sameness) and Difference (Othering)

The second set of ambiguities or contradiction that were expressed by children attending both schools was the constant movement between a colourblind perspective, reflected in a range of beliefs that we are all the same human race and that everybody is treated 'equal' simultaneously, that Indigenous Australians are 'different' to the Australian white-norm, and are (were) treated differently.

Colourblind tendencies

As has been discussed throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter 5, colourblindness is a perception that racism no longer exists, and fails to acknowledge the ongoing structural aspects of racism, where proponents strongly argue that race is not the influencing factor in social inequalities (Bonilla-Silva 2014). During scenarios that explored children's views about how they would respond if their aunt told them not to play with peers from different cultures,

the majority of children responded: 'Culture doesn't matter'; 'It doesn't matter what culture they are'; 'We are all the same human race'.

As discussed previously, the colourblind perspective is highly influenced by the normalisation of white culture to which all Others are considered different. Such an approach assimilates racial and ethnic groups into the 'white' mainstream, and in doing so 'enables and sustains the universality of whiteness as humanness' (Moreton-Robinson 2004: 83). This normalisation of Anglo-Australian culture was evident during conversations of culture during the completion of the demographic survey, such as Anglo-Australian children stating 'I am the "normal" culture'. However, it also emerged in other conversations as a benchmark for sameness and difference, as demonstrated in the following quote.

Some people they don't get treated as they should. They don't get treated the way they should be because they're Aboriginal and they get treated differently because they're Aboriginal. And they do different things to normal people like us. And Aboriginals also have different cultures and that means they eat different foods like Bush Tucker and stuff, which is really awful. (J, culture – normal, born and parents born in Australia, Red Gum Primary).

Against this normalised white culture, students expressed an awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures being different in a range of ways such as:

They live in different ways; They eat different food; They play different instruments.

Noting this, the way children spoke about the difference did not always illicit a negative tone, and as has been discussed previously, at times the difference was celebrated (albeit embedded in a celebratory romantic way).

Egalitarianism and diversity

The colourblind perspective also emerged strongly in both schools during discussions of equality, with many children suggesting that Indigenous Australians (and others) are treated equally, noting that in the past they were not treated the same. The following discussion occurred during the focus group with Ram, Atid and Isa (from the opening narrative).

ME How are people in Australia treated?

Isa Now we are all treated equally but before the Aboriginal people and their culture weren't treated equally because they weren't Australian.

ME So Aboriginal people are now treated equally?

Isa Not all. I would say most of them. I'm not sure. Some people are not fair and there are some who are not treated as well as the others.

ME Do you think it is because of a particular reason?

Isa Probably because of their religion. I'm not treated as fair as other people. Some people don't treat me well. They just look at me and they don't talk [to] me just because I have a birthmark and dark skin...Before the Aboriginal people were [not treated fairly] and now they just said sorry.

ME Who are they?

Isa The Australian people. But they want the Aboriginal culture to stay and they want to say sorry, although some people just don't.

ME So the Australian people want to say sorry to the Aboriginal because they were treated unfairly?

Isa But they are treated fairly now. Most of them.

Despite children suggesting that Indigenous Australians are treated equally now, it was clear some had a strong awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being discriminated against. This was predominantly being treated differently now compared to the past (as was discussed in the previous chapter that racism was anachronistic). However, there was also some strong awareness and examples from children's own self-observations within and beyond the school gate.

For example during a discussion in which children were asked to discuss the scenario in which a girl was excluded from a dance group by a peer in the school talent quest because she did Aboriginal dancing, Matilda retold that she has witnessed the same scenario in her own life, albeit a different ending to the scenario.

Pretty much I know someone just like this. It's not me she's a bit older than me and when I was little it's exactly the same scenario. That pretty much she said the other person wanted to dance with her but she said no you can't dance with me because she said that the other girl said she can do Aboriginal

dancing which she'd done for one year and then the other girl said pretty much maybe I can teach you.

Different treatment was often attributed to Indigenous Australians' skin colour. This became particularly evident during one of the scenarios in which I described a dark-skinned person sitting on the bus and asking the children why no one sat next to him, as discussed in the previous chapter.

They don't want to sit next to him because he has dark skin and some people don't like dark skin.

This in itself was also contradictory where, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the same children who spoke of skin colour not being an indicator of being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person then suggested during this scenario that Aboriginal people are treated badly because of their skin colour.

This tension between colourblindness and difference, particularly in relation to egalitarianism highlights the concerns about the colourblind approach as well as the settled reconciliation approach displayed in schools and classrooms (Chapter 5) – and does not reflect children's experience or attempts at understanding the contemporary non-settled reconciliation space that they themselves are aware is imbued with race, racism and whiteness.

Special and Normal

During Terms 3 and Terms 4, at 11:30am on Mondays a group of ten 8–10 year old children identifying as Aboriginal attend the 'club' to learn about both local traditional and Western medicine. The children would run out of their class at 11:30am, excited to leave their class (which was always numeracy lessons) as well as to be at the club, where they discussed topics ranging from ear-aches led by the local Aboriginal Medical Service, learning about local missions where a local Elder shared her stories, and engaging in confronting discussions about racism and urban-Aboriginal identity through the use of Aboriginal Artists and songwriters. On the way back they stop via the canteen to get an ice-block, loudly enjoying their ice-blocks on the way back to class. Still eating they are told by their classroom teacher to wait outside to finish their ice-blocks. I hear from one of their classmates, 'That's

not fair. Why do you get an ice-cream?’ The response is Because we are special.’ (Fieldnotes, Red Gum Primary, Term 4)

The third contradiction that became apparent in the children’s perspectives is the tension between Indigenous peoples being treated as special and being ‘normal’ (against a white Anglo-Australian norm). There were two distinct forms of specialness that emerged in the two schools. In the main, Red Gum Primary children spoke of a specialness in relation to special treatment. In contrast to children at Acacia Primary expressed more of a romanticised specialness.

Special Treatment

The expressions of ‘specialness’ at Red Gum Primary school tended to focus on children acknowledging that their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers and friends were being afforded special treatment in relation to the two clubs offered at the schools, highlighted in the narrative above. Some of the children viewed members of such clubs as ‘being lucky that they can go to those clubs’. Noting this, there were also children who explicitly suggested that the clubs were for the Aboriginal children and that the clubs were like sports clubs, so the children who were members were not necessarily being given ‘special’ treatment.

Another ‘specialness’ that emerged from the discussions with children from Red Gum Primary pertained to the perceived heightened focus placed on Indigenous cultures as expressed firstly in the celebration of ‘Indigenous’ days and secondly in relation to learning about Indigenous studies at school. For example, on asking students what they would like to learn more about next year in relation to Indigenous cultures and Australian history, these two girls stated that they had learnt enough about Indigenous cultures.

Lara I think I would like to learn more about my own family’s cultures. It’s still a good thing to learn about them [Aboriginal peoples and cultures] and we have learnt a lot about them and not just this year. (Culture – Australian, child and parents born in Australia)

Jenny I think it’s enough. I think we’ve learnt enough about them we’ve learnt up to where we need to be up to. (Culture – Australian, child and parents born in Australia)

Such expressions of specialness raised by children at Red Gum Primary seem highly problematic as they may be classified within a 'politics of resentment' (Schick 2014; Zembylas 2010). Politics of resentment emerged strongly in Australia during the 1990s when Pauline Hanson, an Australian politician, engaged with this discourse through her public resentment of Indigenous Australians (Rizvi 1998: 5). Furthermore, links have been made between increased negative attitudes towards Indigenous Australians by those who perceive Indigenous Australians to be in receipt of special treatment (Pederson et al. 2006), as was discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

However, although on one level this could be interpreted as an explicit display of resentment, what is of interest from a curriculum perspective as children enter into the middle years of primary school there is little attention given to diversity and one's own culture. Thus, it is possible that as teachers talk more of Indigenous cultures (albeit whether it is colonial storytelling or not) the focus on one's own culture decreases. As discussed in Chapter 1, given intercultural understanding requires the learning of both 'the other' as well as the learning of oneself and broader societal structures of power and privilege, such an approach may be contributing to the resentment as expressed by having 'learnt enough'.

First Australians

In contrast, to negative perceptions, the specialness expressed by a number of children attending Acacia Primary School focused more on romanticism, or as the exotic other. As mentioned earlier in the chapter with regards to how children defined 'being' Aboriginal, some of the children (from both schools but predominantly Acacia) commented that it is important to know who Indigenous peers are so they can be afforded positively different treatment:

[We should know who they are] because we are going to have to respect them extra more if we know.

They are special because they are the First People of Australia.

Being Normal

In challenging this Othering, or specialness, there was also a strong rhetoric of 'sameness', constructing Indigenous peoples by using the term 'normal' (against a white norm). One such

dialogue occurred during a focus group discussion at Acacia Primary in the scenario where a new Aboriginal child joins the class:

ME How could the class respect him?

Ava You know, the class should treat him like a normal person.

Rachel There's no such thing as 'normal'. He is a normal person.

This returns us yet again to the previous discussion regarding colourblindness and reveals that children's socialisation and understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures is also instilled within implicit and explicit messages within a normalised Australian culture.

Conclusion

There could be a range of reasons for the ambiguities and contradictions demonstrated in this chapter – such as children's development or performing to a researcher. However, taking context into consideration, given how everyday reconciliation was constructed in the schools (which was driven by assumptions that children are colourblind and innocent (Chapter 6), the creation of activities, classrooms and to some extent schools that reflected a 'settled reconciliation' (Chapter 5), and through the embedding of extensive colonial storytelling symbols (Chapter 4)), it seems likely that such mixed messages are influencing children's understanding and interpretations displayed in these ambiguities.

Furthermore, as discussed in detail in Chapter 8, by being silent on race, racism and whiteness, the approaches did not reflect children's lived experiences (Chapter 7). Everyday reconciliation seemed to fertilise and preserve existing power structures including hierarchies of colour and culture, that children then embodied. Both Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 has thus demonstrated how the schools are maintaining the structures of the 'silent apartheid', by acting as a 'promulgation' to the silence, creating ongoing ignorance which 'contributes to, sustains and then replicates itself as if it were a regenerate pandemic' (Rose 2015: 71). Rose's notion of 'replication' is a critical point to highlight here, as it not only demonstrates the significance of understanding how children re-constructed and contextualised everyday reconciliation in 2016.. However, this is also about the future.

As discussed in Chapter 1, although there is limited longitudinal evidence, there is still extensive evidence revealing the continuity between children's ethnic-racial socialisation and how it informs an adult's beliefs and attitudes (Bandura 1986; Hess and Torney 2005). Social

psychologists have established that early socialisation, with the acquisition of negative stereotypes and prejudice, has a lasting impact on the lives of society members in their adulthood. Thus, it would seem that in the main, everyday reconciliation at both schools may be causing more harm than good.

However, despite how discouraging this thesis has been until this point, throughout the year I spent in the two schools there were also a number of children, albeit a small number, who expressed a more nuanced understanding of culture, history, knowledge production, as well as the power and privileging of Western epistemology and ontology. As I conclude this chapter, I do not have capacity to engage in the theory nor analysis in detail; however, I do wish to include these examples to offer a glimpse of critical hope but also as a suggestion for further research.

The first example occurred with Asher. We met Asher in Chapter 7 when he became distressed about the scenario in which I asked how he (and his peers) would respond to their aunt telling them not to play with a peer because of her or his culture. Earlier in the same focus group, I had asked the children 'where would you go, or who would you ask if you wanted to know more about Indigenous peoples, cultures or history?'. This was a question that I asked in all focus groups to which the majority of children stated they would ask an Aboriginal person (as noted in Chapter 4). However, Asher suggested that he would not trust history books unless he knew who had written the book. Asher's response may demonstrate the importance of developing critical skills in racial and historical literacy rather than receiving historical content.

The second example was with Jenny (non-Indigenous, Australian, she and both parents born in Australia), Lara (non-Indigenous, Australian and English, she and both parents born in Australia) and Erin (non-Indigenous, Australian, she and both parents born in Australia). During the Term 4 focus group, in response to a question about what they would like to learn next year, Jenny and Lara had expressed concerns about the amount of celebrations Indigenous Australians were afforded, and had dismissively included Australia Day in the list (which they had also included NAIDOC Week and Harmony Day). They suggested there should be other days to celebrate the Irish culture, and that Jenny had hoped to learn more about her own heritage next year. Interested in understanding why Australia Day had been included as a day for Aboriginal people, I asked what is Australia Day?

Lara It's a day to celebrate Aboriginal people.

- Jenny To celebrate Aboriginal people coming to Australia.*
- ME The reason Australia Day is on 26 January is because that's the day Arthur Philip claimed Australia and the time the First Fleet had arrived.*
- Jenny No one ever told me that.*
- Lara I thought it was to do with the Aboriginals being in Australia first.*
- Erin I knew that.*
- Lara I thought it was something to do with the Aboriginals and the English but I didn't think it was to do with the first fleet.*
- ME Now that you know about the date do you think that should be celebrated on this date?*
- Lara Yes.*
- Erin Some Aboriginal people would find that offensive.*
- Lara But some celebrate them, the First Fleet coming.*
- Jenny No. It makes a difference knowing that.*
- Lara It's really just a lot of happiness and hanging out with your friends at barbecues.*
- Jenny If that's the day I think it should be changed.*

Such a discussion seems to reveal the importance of providing opportunities to open the dialogue to engage critically in the meaning of symbols. Not all three children agreed nor suggested a change in date, however the opportunity to discuss the meaning of the day enabled two of the children to consider the impact of the date on Indigenous Australians, demonstrating how these two children adapted historical empathy to the contemporary reality. What was of additional interest in this dialogue was the three girls were from the class that had watched the episode on Australia Day in *Behind the News* (Chapter 4)³³, in which I had noted there had been no opportunity to discuss the clip as a class.

The final example I share is an example of how one boy, Jasper, demonstrated cultural humility towards Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. This occurred during a focus group with

³³ I am not sure if they were in attendance during this activity.

Jasper (non-Indigenous, Australian, he and both parents born in Australia), Dylan (non-Indigenous, Australian, he and both parents born in Australia) and Ali (non-Indigenous, Australian Iraqi, born in Lybia and both parents born in Iraq). We were discussing the scenario that I had mentioned throughout this chapter about making a new Aboriginal student feel respected and welcomed. The most common response from children from both schools focused on inclusion into the class through: telling her the school rules, being kind and inviting her into their friendship circles and games. It was also common to hear that the class could organise a welcome party. This was also a suggestion made by Dylan – ‘we could throw him a party’.

In response to this, Jasper looked at Dylan and clearly stated:

We should do it his way. We should do it his way so that everybody knows how to do it his way. I would try his food...I would like to know what language he speaks because if he doesn't speak great English I could learn more about him by learning his language and then I could speak to him. And then I would try to teach him our language too and then we could be able to communicate with each other.

These few, but critical, glimpses of how children challenged the dominant structures of everyday reconciliation emerged freely during focus groups as well as during inquiry-based lessons. A child's migrant background did not seem to make a difference to why some children engaged and others did not in more critical and transformative approaches: some were Aboriginal, some identified as being Anglo-Australian, while others were born overseas. However, what did seem to emerge is a willingness, and at times a proactive call to be more engaged in the exploring and navigating the complexities rather than as a passive recipient of ‘settled reconciliation’.

It is through these glimpses of a more critical engagement in everyday reconciliation by children that I maintained a sense of hope whilst I was in the field and also during my writing. In the following chapter, I attempt to build on this, by ending the thesis with my own reflections of critical hope.

Chapter 9: Critical Hope – unsilencing the ‘silent apartheid’

In November 2017, I was invited by the ACT Directorate of Education and Training to deliver a workshop for all Principals and the senior executive staff using the findings of my research. I delivered the workshop on the last day of a three-day intense intercultural understanding process that had been delivered over a six-week period. The process had included a range of training strategies, including well-established intercultural understanding and decolonising processes to raise awareness of biased assumptions, deficit discourses and colonial storytelling embedded in Indigenous Education. This process had been identified in the Directorate’s *Reconciliation Action Plan 2016–2018* which had at its core to challenge unconscious biases and deficit discourses about Indigenous Education and Indigenous students and communities. However, the process was also about preparing school leadership to implement a new policy reform agenda within the Directorate which became known as ‘Cultural Integrity’. Cultural Integrity was the ACT’s response to the Gonski review (Gonski et al. 2011) into needs-based schools funding. Through extensive consultation, the Directorate redirected some of the annual funding for Aboriginal and Torres students away from individual student support to the school, to build a school environment more responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In preparing for the workshop I was exceptionally nervous, despite how much I enjoyed presenting. The nerves weren’t due to the validity of the results as by then I had engaged deeply with the data, explored the analyses, had discussed it with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and educators as well as my advisors and panel, and had presented it in different ways at a number of conferences. The data and analysis had a strong narrative of what was occurring in the two schools. I was nervous because I was becoming increasingly aware that such a workshop would challenge deeply held assumptions about how schools were constructing and engaging with ‘reconciliation’, and associated concepts of Indigenous peoples and cultures and histories, race, racism and whiteness. I was very aware that such a workshop had the potential to either raise white fragility (DiAngelo 2011; DiAngelo and Sensoy 2010; Eddo-Lodge 2017; Ferdinand et al. 2017) in which teachers would be defensive or in contrast freeze participants through white guilt or shame (Spanierman and Cabrera 2015). I was also cognisant that how I delivered the workshop – the style, tone and affect I drew on (Zembylas and Papamichael 2017) – would be just as critical as what I was saying.

The workshop that I developed was based on the structure of this thesis. I began with my Acknowledgement of Country in which I engaged with a long standing First Nation peoples' cultural protocol as well as used it to position myself as a non-Indigenous researcher, a parent, and professional from a social policy background, to ensure the participants were aware of my standpoints, connections (and responsibilities) and biases, just as I did in Chapter 2. I then explained the affordances (and limitations) of undertaking qualitative, ethnographic education research that aimed to explore context and the everyday of students and teachers, as was detailed in Chapter 3. I also provided a brief overview of reconciliation, the history and theory, and how reconciliation is constructed in national education policies. This overview included Mark Rose's (2015) concept of how the education system perpetuates a 'silent apartheid' and Larissa Behrendt's (2016) construct of colonial storytelling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, reflecting some of the key points of Chapter 1.

The next phase of the workshop began with an explanation of Schein (1990) and Ortner's (1973) model of analysing school culture as I did in the Introduction to Part 2 of the thesis. The participants were then asked to consider in small groups how their own schools currently engage with reconciliation – was it at the 'artefact', 'beliefs and values' or 'assumptions' level – the face, place or space level – and why they thought they focused on that particular aspect?

I then shared some of my observations of the symbols of reconciliation in the schools through narratives, quotes and material from Acacia Primary and Red Gum Primary. These demonstrated that in the main symbols were reflective of colonial storytelling (Behrendt 2016) or inappropriate by-products which maintain the 'silent apartheid' (Rose 2015). I also highlighted that symbols are interpreted differently by different actors. I demonstrated how some teachers, classrooms and one of the schools in particular reflected a 'settled reconciliation' that celebrated Indigenous culture [sic] and silenced race, racism and whiteness. I then shared some of the unconscious frames that were informing the practice of everyday reconciliation – the Aboriginal problem and how policy solutions responded to this perceived 'problem'; that reconciliation had been reduced to the celebration of Indigenous culture; the rhetoric of schooling being apolitical; and that children and childhood is a time of racial innocence and should be maintained.

The final phase of the workshop challenged this last assumption, and I revealed the children's discourse, as I did in Part 3 of the thesis – how they had very little awareness or understanding of reconciliation per se, however, actively engaged in (re)constructing race, racism and whiteness and expressed ambiguities and tensions when talking about Indigenous peoples and

cultures. These ambiguities were about the past and the contemporary; similarities and differences; and othering and sameness and reflected the messages they were receiving in the school gates. The workshop finished with offering critical hope through the perspectives of children as I did in the conclusion of Chapter 8.

On the last slide, I made four recommendations:

- Challenge assumptions about what you perceive the ‘problem’ to be
- Challenge assumptions about reconciliation being only learning ‘about’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture(s) and history(ies)
- Challenge assumptions that schools are apolitical and are not sites of intense cultural politics
- Challenge where children are at and what they see, hear and know, and what they want to know.

This was an attempt to keep the conversation going; to actively engage in transformative reconciliation and disrupt settled reconciliation. Some Principals and early childhood centre directors invited me to present to their staff. One senior executive suggested that all teachers should read my thesis.

The workshop also coincided with the launch of the ACT Directorate’s Cultural Integrity Policy Reforms. Throughout my PhD, I had been involved in the Cultural Integrity process on the periphery and have observed its early phase of implementation. In a media article, the Chief Executive Officer of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, Julie Tongs (who was one of the women on the panel in the Preamble of the thesis) raised a concern about Cultural Integrity by suggesting that.

Indigenous students’ results wouldn’t improve until issues with racism and bullying were addressed. She questioned how the outcomes of the cultural integrity policy would be monitored. An Education Directorate spokeswoman said the finance team could access schools’ financial records any time, but ‘schools are primarily accountable for the outcomes achieved by their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’.

Ms Tongs said: ‘I think a lot more needs to be done.’

‘It’s easy to throw those words around, but what does that actually mean. (Baker 2018)

It is far too early to determine whether the approach the Directorate has taken will address Julie Tongs' pertinent concerns about racism and bullying, or whether it will maintain a celebratory approach to Indigenous culture(s), in doing so risking the creation of schools that reflect 'settled reconciliation'. As has been demonstrated in this thesis, the detrimental impact of settled reconciliation closes the dialogue to engaging with diverse Indigenous experiences, agency, the contemporary, as well as ongoing settler-colonialism including assimilation, racism and whiteness in place of white comfort. I am hopeful of this policy being able to disrupt the void of 'settled reconciliation', however, I am cautious and drawn to the Sensoy et al. (2010) suggestion of intercultural understanding approaches,

Whatever its name, it refers to the same response to diversity: a superficial additive study of culture and culturally rooted differences and inequities (Sensoy et al. 2010: 2).

Noting this caution, it is important to reaffirm that I did not seek to apply or define a 'prescriptive' definition or theory of reconciliation or provide an analysis whether approaches were 'reconciliation' as per a specific theoretical framework or how 'reconciliation' in schools may be improved. As such I do not have a list of recommendations and measures for reconciliation. What I did set out was to explore three key questions:

- How reconciliation is (re)constructed in primary schools?
- What are the messages 8-10 year old children of diverse cultural, ethnic and migrant backgrounds exposed to in relation to reconciliation?
- How do children interpret, understand, embody and (re)construct these messages?

What the research and the thesis itself revealed is the need for reconciliation in schools to be contextual and multifaceted. This is not new and contributes to increasing literature of school programs that aim to either increase respect for diversity or decrease prejudice (Keenan 2018). However, if I was to provide a list of recommendations, they would begin with addressing the assumptions about the 'Aboriginal problem', about reconciliation, about schooling and about children and childhood, as detailed in Chapter 6. It would also intrinsically be about unpacking assumptions about race, racism and whiteness – how it is manifested and embodied in schools and policies. Engagement with these colonial assumptions may be the very process that will shift those in a state of settled reconciliation to return to an active dialogue that destabilises and re-shifts existing white power structures and norms, and un-silencing the 'silent apartheid'.

In engaging with these assumptions, to analyse and challenge emotion norms in education, for example, means to reveal their historicity and contingency that have come to define the limits and possibilities of teachers and students' understandings of themselves, individually and collectively (Zembylas 2005). By doing so, it is to disturb, destabilise, and subvert these rules, to identify some of the weak points and lines of fracture where new affective connections (as counter-hegemonic) might make a difference (Zembylas 2007: 457-458). Social transformation, or specifically transformative reconciliation will occur by finding ways to disrupt these assumptions and key schemas of reconciliation.

Implications of Everyday Reconciliation for future research considerations

Everyday Reconciliation has opened the possibility for further research. It would be positive to explore whether the delivery of workshops using the narratives and findings of this thesis influences teachers' short term and longer term approaches to everyday reconciliation. In addition, it would be opportunistic to return to the same two schools within the next few years to explore how the recent policy reform of Cultural Integrity has impacted on everyday reconciliation. It would also be interesting to follow some of the children in the study to explore their navigation of everyday reconciliation into high school and beyond, or to attempt again to re-engage with their families to understand everyday reconciliation in different contexts for the same children. To this, engaging in a more child-led study in which they determined the interest, questions and data collection and analysis would also bridge some of the challenges I faced in interpreting how and under which conditions children were expressing their perspectives. Given the investment in 'reconciliation' by organisations, industry and government, predominantly through RAPs, the study of everyday reconciliation, and in particular the concept of 'settled reconciliation' could be explored beyond schools. As such, research into the complexities and experiences of everyday reconciliation in other settings may also be valuable.

In addition, the methodological contribution this thesis has made also creates opportunities for further research into the study of everyday reconciliation, everyday racism and everyday whiteness. Through the multi-disciplinary, iterative approach and employment of ethnographic methodology throughout the thesis, data collection, analysis and write-up, challenges and complexities of studying everyday reconciliation were revealed: from ethics (Chapter 3), to navigating the cultural interface of being a non-Indigenous scholar (Chapter 2),

to not labelling participants (Part 2 and Part 3), to definitional and theoretical limitations of reconciliation (Part 2) and racism (Part 3), to finding ways to engage with children's voice (Part 3). Further engagement in these complexities and challenges have relevance for future scholarship in Australia, and in other countries in relation to the study of everyday reconciliation, but also, everyday multiculturalism, everyday racism and everyday whiteness. However, the development of the conceptual tool 'settled reconciliation' and its emergence through different layers of discursive, material and affective assemblages does enable a platform to further the study and understanding of some of these complexities and contradictions that exist in the everyday.

However, my first commitment for the next phase of Everyday Reconciliation is to return to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and educators in the study and through further discussions regarding the findings from this research, for the parents and educators to determine the next research questions and approaches.

Finding glimpses of critical hope

As I come to the end of my PhD, which was just as much about uncovering the good intent of reconciliation in two primary schools as it was about my own journey, the question I keep returning to is how do I continue to turn my moral outrage into action? During the last months of writing this thesis, this chapter proved to be one of the most difficult to write, as I always knew the thesis needed to end on critical hope, as according to Freire (1997), this is an 'ontological need'.

However, there have been so many moments, even just these past few months, that have made the maintaining of critical hope more and more difficult – the rejection of the Uluru Statement of the Heart; the appointment of the 'Special Envoy'; the near-passing of a motion in Parliament that supported white supremacy and neo-Nazis under the movement 'it is OK to be white'; the newly appointed Racial Discrimination Commissioner suggesting that Australia is not a racist country; or even the announcement of \$500 million funding for a refurbishment of the War Memorial, in which none of the funds will be reserved for the critical storying of the Frontier Wars. This was coupled with more localised stories of teachers in the ACT dressing up in black-face during Book Week, or of Aboriginal parents who have attended my presentations who shared with me that their children attend or attended schools (not just in the ACT) that reflected the schools I spoke about. At times these moments infuriated me, distressed me, made me feel sick, and at times silenced hope.

According to Duncan-Andrade (2009), there are three interdependent components of critical hope: material hope, Socratic hope and audacious hope. Duncan-Andrade draws on Tupac Shakur's (1999) use of the metaphor of roses growing through cracks in concrete to explain critical hope. On reading this metaphor I was transported back to walking through the doors of Red Gum Primary and its concreting of Ngunnawal Country – yet up the back, there were established gum trees and boys from different cultures learnt of yidarkis. Material hope acknowledges that there is concrete representing a perceived solid foundation of structures and systems, but there are always 'cracks in the concrete' (Duncan-Andrade 2009: 186) creating a sense of control. Socratic hope refers to courage to keep pushing through those cracks. And audacious hope is the solidarity of sharing in others' suffering which enables other roses to bloom (Duncan-Andrade 2009: 186).

There were certainly cracks in the concrete of everyday reconciliation that enable critical hope to grow. They were the requests for additional focus groups by teachers during fieldwork to continue their unveiling of assumptions. They were evident in the courage children demonstrated who face racism at multiple levels on a daily basis and still show up and challenge their friends. They are the children who see and acknowledge different ontologies and epistemologies, even when they don't know what the words mean, as well as the ones who ask to go on Sorry Walks. They are the invitations by a Principal or a senior policy maker to deliver a workshop on the study of Everyday Reconciliation as a professional learning opportunity for their staff.

I wish to end with one last narrative about Noah, my nine year old, and his Principal, Mr T as I keep returning to this as a moment of critical hope, one that revels cracks in the concrete, courage and solidarity.

At dinner one evening, we were discussing the different media and political responses to Harper Nielson, the nine year old girl in Queensland, who was suspended from school for not standing during the national anthem, as a sign of solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Siganto 2018). As I was tucking Noah into bed, he asked if he could write an email to his Principal, Mr T, asking him what would happen if he also chose to sit down during the anthem. Noah's email stated that he did not want to disrespect Mr T or the school but really didn't agree with the anthem. Mr T emailed him back, asking for him to come into school with me for a meeting, and noted in the email that he was definitely not in trouble.

Just prior to entering the staffroom, I asked Noah if he knew what he was going to say and he said no. We walked in and Mr T asked Noah and I to take a seat and began by saying to Noah that he suspects that Noah is nervous coming into the Principal's office but he shouldn't be. He said to Noah that he is very proud of him for standing up for what he believed in, that he was courageous and he wished he had had that courage at nine. He then asked Noah to explain a little more about his email. Noah responded that he didn't agree with the words of the national anthem and that he finds them offensive and really wrong. 'We know that it's not true but why do we have to sing it?' He also told Mr T that we should all be talking about the words in class so everyone can learn what they really mean. Mr T looked at Noah and said, 'Noah I support you in whatever you choose to do. I also disagree with the words however I am finding this really tricky because it's my job to keep everyone happy and I know there won't be people here who will be happy if I choose not to play the anthem'.

Since this meeting, Noah continues to stand during the anthem, however, refuses to sing the words. Every fortnight, as the anthem plays during assemblies, looking around the children in the hall, Noah physically stands the strongest, not moving an inch in defiance to this racist anthem, and in solidarity with First Nation Australians. I suspect in the future he may choose to sit down, however, for now this is what he feels most comfortable doing in a place that he knows is one that is filled with discomfort. He has his heart set on a school leadership role and wants to make stopping the playing of the National Anthem at his school his priority. As for Mr T., he continues to unpack assumptions but also is courageous in determining which cracks he should pursue to create sustainable change and take the school with him – at the moment it might not be the anthem, but it has been a privilege to have delivered workshops on my thesis to his staff as a starting point.

For me, Noah and Mr T's navigation of the anthem demonstrates the ongoing journey of everyday reconciliation – not one that moves to settled reconciliation, rather continues to unpack assumptions, ambiguities and contradictions.

As clichés have it, this PhD has really been the beginning. The work of un-silencing everyday reconciliation continues with disseminating the research in different ways. Ways that engender change by using the narratives to create a space for dialogue that raises awareness of how everyday reconciliation and its accompanying concepts of Indigenous peoples and

cultures, Australian history and race, racism and whiteness exists in affective, material and discursive assemblages. I am hopeful that it will continue to build the evidence and practice of turning everyday reconciliation into transformative reconciliation, regardless of its name. Most importantly, it may contribute, even just a little, to the hope instilled in the words of the Uluru Statement from the Heart:

The coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

Postscript

For my pre-submission seminar, I sought to find an innovative way to tell the story of Everyday Reconciliation and chose the medium of digital storytelling.

The link to the three minute video is:

<https://vimeo.com/301726726>

Password: everydayreconciliation

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Legislation

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989
- Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991
- Native Title Act 1993
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Appendices

- Appendix A Ethics Approval
- Appendix B Information Sheets and Consent Forms
- Appendix C Demographic Surveys
- Appendix D Focus Group Questions and Scenarios

Appendix A

Ethics Approvals

1. Ethics Approval ANU
2. Ethics Approval Education Directorate

21st December 2015

Ms Talia Avrahamzon,

Protocol: 2015/687

How and what children learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and people, and reconciliation

I am pleased to advise you that your Human Ethics application received approval by the Chair of the HREC on 21 December 2015.

For your information:

1. Under the NHMRC/AVCC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research we are required to follow up research that we have approved. Once a year (or sooner for short projects) we shall request a brief report on any ethical issues which may have arisen during your research or whether it proceeded according to the plan outlined in the above protocol.
2. Please notify the committee of any changes to your protocol in the course of your research, and when you complete or cease working on the project.
3. Please notify the Committee immediately if any unforeseen events occur that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the research work.
4. Please advise the HREC if you receive any complaints about the research work.
5. The validity of the current approval is five years' maximum from the date shown approved. For longer projects you are required to seek renewed approval from the Committee.

All the best with your research,

Gavin

Mr Gavin Whitehouse

Research Ethics Officer

Research Integrity & Compliance,

Research Services,

Ground Floor, Chancelry 10B

Ellery Crescent,

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Ms Talia Avrahamzon
ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods
Beryl Rawson Building #13
ACTON ACT 2601

Dear Ms Avrahamzon

Approval of research proposal

Thank you for your application to conduct the proposed research titled How and what children learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and people and reconciliation. I am pleased to inform you that the Education and Training Directorate (the Directorate) has approved your research.

Please note the following conditions regarding your proposed research project: ● research in the school(s) must be concluded by 16 December 2016 ● as your Public Liability Insurance will expire before the project is due to be completed, you are required to provide the Directorate with a scanned copy of new certificate. ● any publication or provision of your research must not enable the identification of any student, school or system. Data for the ACT must not be identifiable ● any changes in the methodology, scope and timeframe of the project require approval from the Directorate ● names of schools that participated in the research project must be provided to the Directorate at the completion of research/data collection in schools ● within one month of completing your research, you are required to forward to the Directorate electronic and hard copies of your research (paper/report/thesis). The electronic copy should be sent to DETResearch@act.gov.au and the hard copy mailed to:

Senior Manager
Data Management
Planning and Performance Branch
Education and Training Directorate
ACT Government
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

- research reports received as per the preceding conditions are placed in an online library accessible internally to all Directorate staff in order to inform policy and program development and evaluation through research in public schools.

The Directorate approves research in all public schools. You may now directly approach the principals of [REDACTED] School and [REDACTED] School, with a copy of this approval

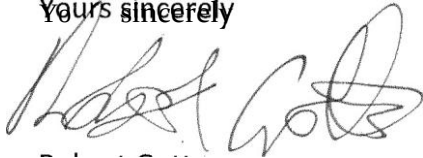
letter, for permission to carry out your research. It will be at the discretion of the principal as to whether your research can proceed at their site.

Any information that you obtain as part of research or data collection must be treated in accordance with the requirements of the Privacy Act 1988.

If you require any information about this letter and/or the research application process, please contact Mr Phill Nean on 620 59189 or at Phill.Nean@act.gov.au

Best wishes for your research.

~~Yours sincerely~~

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Gotts', written over the crossed-out text 'Yours sincerely'.

Robert Gotts
Director
Planning and Performance
January 2016

Appendix B

Letters of Information and Consent Forms

1. Children
2. Educators

Children Information Sheet

Project: How and what Australian children in Year 3 and Year 4 learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) history, culture and people, and reconciliation.

Dear Year 3 and Year 4

My name is Talia Avrahamzon and I would like to invite you to be part of a project I am doing at the Australian National University. Your school, your class and your parents or carers are part of the project and I would like you to be involved because you have important information to share.

This is an information sheet about the project that you can keep.

What is the project?

The project is how children learn about Indigenous history, culture and people, and reconciliation. It is happening in two schools in the Australian Capital Territory during 2016.

Do I have to participate?

You will be asked if you will like to join the project. If you start but then don't want to be involved anymore you can stop being part of the project whenever you like.

What will I have to do?

If you join the project I will meet with you and a few of your friends during class-time to have a discussion about what you all know about Indigenous history, culture and people and reconciliation. This is called a focus group. You will be part of a focus group three times in 2016. Some of the questions I will ask will be:

- Do you have friends who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians?
- What do you know about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures?
- What is good or not so good about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures?

In the group there will be no right or wrong answers to the questions and it is ok if you don't agree with your friends. At the beginning of the focus group we will decide on some rules for the focus group. We will have rules about how to be respectful to our different ideas and answers. We will have a rule about being respectful to other people outside the group. We will also have a rule about not talking about our answers outside of the focus group.

Only the other people in the group will know your answers and if you would like, you will be able to choose a pseudonym, false name for the project so that when I write your answers no one will know they are your answers.

I will also be sitting in your class to watch and write about how you learn about Indigenous history, culture and people and reconciliation and will be coming to school events such as NAIDOC Week.

Will I feel worried or scared being part of the project?

You probably won't feel worried or scared during the groups but if you do we will stop the group. At school, you can talk with me, your teacher or the school counsellor about how you are feeling. In your classroom there will be two boxes : an Ideas Box and a Feelings Box. You will be able to write whether you like the project, whether the project makes you scared or worried, or how you think the project could be better and we will try and make those changes.

If you would like to talk with someone about how you are feeling because of the project that is not at the school, you can call the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service (AHS) on 6284 6222.

Who will know my answers?

Only your friends and myself will know your answers and I will try and keep this a secret. If you would like, you will be able to choose a pseudonym, which is a fake name, so that no one knows it was your answer when I write up all the answers in a project report.

The information that you provide, called data, will be kept safe at the Australian National University for five years.

Why we would like you to join the project?

We think that it is important for children to be involved in projects that are about children.

Did anyone check this project before it started?

This project has been checked by a committee called the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about how I am doing this research, you can contact:

Ethics Manager

The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The Australian National University

Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427

Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

If you have questions about the project I will be in your class to answer any questions or you can put the question in the boxes. You can send me an email talía.avrahamzon@anu.edu.au or my phone number is 0405624764. You can also talk to my teacher at the University, Dr Naomi Priest by sending her an email naomi.priest@anu.edu.au or calling her phone 6125 4849.

Thank you for your interest in this research project.

Name: Talia Avrahamzon

Title: Student Researcher

Phone: 0405624764

Date: _____

ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT for Children

How and what Australian children in Year 3 and Year 4 learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) history, culture and people, and reconciliation.

I have read to you the Information Sheet about the research project. Was this information clear? Do you have any questions about the project?

Do you agree to participate in this project? (Record the answer as Yes/No)

- Do you agree to be observed in your class? (Record the answer as Yes/No)
- Do you agree to participate in a focus group? (Record the answer as Yes/No)
- Do you agree for the focus group to be audio-recorded? (Record the answer as Yes/No)
-

When I prepare the research results, I will be using false names, known as pseudonyms, for your school, teachers, parents/caregivers and for other children. This means you will be given a false name. If you choose to use your real name, your parents/carers also need to agree.

- Would you like to be referred to using a pseudonym (false name)? (Record Yes/No)
-

Teacher Information Sheet

Project: How and what Australian children in Year 3 and Year 4 learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) history, culture and people, and reconciliation.

Dear Teachers

My name is Talia Avrahamzon and I am a PhD student at the Centre for Social Research and Methods at the Australian National University (ANU). I am being supervised by Dr Naomi Priest, also at the Centre for Social Research and Methods. Your school is participating in my PhD research project and Dr Priest and I would like to invite you to participate in this project because you have valuable experience and knowledge to share.

As required by the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 Chapter 2.2: General Requirements for Consent; the following information has been provided to assist you in making an informed, voluntary decision to participate in the research project.

The purpose and methods of research

This project aims to understand how teachers and parents deliver messages about Indigenous history, culture and people, and reconciliation with children, and then how children understand those messages.

The research will take place in two ACT schools during 2016. This will include talking to children in Years 3 and 4, their parents or carers, and teachers through focus groups and interviews; and observing their classroom activities and school events such as Reconciliation Action Week and NAIDOC Week.

Voluntary or involuntary participation and any alternatives to participation

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your participation at any time.

Any payments or other incentives for participation

You will not be paid to participate in the study. There is also no cost to participate in the study. You will be given a \$20 gift voucher to thank you for your time.

Duration of research and demands on participants, e.g. if research will be repeated over a number of periods, such as months or years

All teachers at your school will be asked to participate in one focus group during 2016 to discuss what messages you deliver to children about Indigenous history, culture and people and reconciliation. There will be between 6 to 8 teachers in each focus group and they will last between 60 to 90 minutes.

Teachers of Year 3 and Year 4 will be invited to nominate their class to participate in the observation component of the study. We will observe activities in one Year 3 and Year 4 classroom and at events such as Reconciliation Action Week to learn more about how children learn about reconciliation. We will make handwritten notes about these observations. No identifying information about the teacher or children will be recorded in these notes.

Children in Year 3 and Year 4 in the study will be asked to participate in three focus groups throughout 2016 and will be asked about their understanding of these topics. There will be between 3 to 6 children in each focus group to allow all children to contribute to the questions. Focus group will last between 45 to 60 minutes and be held during school hours. Children's focus groups may be based on existing groups, such as literacy groups or peer support groups.

School staff, such as principals, who have additional roles related to the teaching of Indigenous history, culture and people, and reconciliation will be invited to participate in an interview to gain an understanding of the broader influences on the teaching of Indigenous history, culture and people, and reconciliation at the school. These will last between 30 to 40 minutes and will occur in a private room at the school or a location chosen by the person being interviewed.

Risks, (harm, discomfort and inconvenience) implications, and potential benefits to participants

The risks of being involved in this research study are minor. However, it is possible that you may feel uncomfortable talking about certain topics related to Indigenous history, culture and people and reconciliation. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to and may withdraw consent to participate if you feel uncomfortable at any time.

Focus Groups will be conducted on school premises and in accordance with the school's duty

of care and will be conducted by two researchers. During focus groups, participants will be engaged in setting the values of the group, which are likely to include respecting different views, confidentiality, and feeling comfortable. Risk management will be at the direction of the school principal.

Please see below for counseling services should you become distressed and require assistance.

Provision of services to participants adversely affected by research and who will pay for those services

Lifeline – (ph. 131411) is available to the general public who need assistance with individual or family counselling.

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service (ph. 6284 6222) offers counselling services, and is bulk billed during opening hours. <http://www.winnunga.org.au/>

Right to withdraw from further participation at any stage and any implications thereof, and the possibility to withdraw data

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary. During your participation, you can refuse to answer a question. You may, without negative consequences, decline to take part or withdraw from the research without providing an explanation at any time until work is prepared for publication. If you do withdraw from the study, you can opt to have your data included, however if you decide not to, your data will be destroyed and not used. However, if you are part of a focus group, isolating and destroying your individual contributions may be impossible given the group nature of the discussion. Your decision to participate or withdraw from the study will not have any effect on your employment or relationship with the researcher or the school.

What are participants expected or required to do

All Teachers

If you agree to be involved we will ask you to attend one focus group discussion with other teachers at your school. The kind of questions we will ask include:

- How important do you think it is to teach children about Australia's Indigenous history, culture and people (including events such as frontier wars, stolen generation)?
- How do you do this in your classroom? How comfortable do you feel doing this?
- How important do you think it is to teach children about reconciliation?

Year 3 and Year 4 Teachers

As well as focus groups, we will also be observing classroom activities in one Year 3 and one Year 4 class to find out more about how children learn about Indigenous history, culture and people, and reconciliation. We will make handwritten notes about these observations.

Key informants

We will be doing interviews with school staff, to gain an understanding of the broader influences on the teaching of Indigenous history, culture and people, and reconciliation. You will be identified by the Principal or other staff because of your role in the school, however, your agreement to participate in an interview is voluntary and will be confidential.

Any audio-visual recording of research activities and confidentiality of these recordings

Pending consent from participants focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed word for word for analysis. If you wish you can read transcripts of the recording before final analysis. All material will be kept in a locked cabinet at the University, and during the collection phase, in a locked box and only the student researcher will have access to the recordings. All participants, including the schools will be given pseudonyms (a false name).

Confidentiality and privacy protection, e.g. will research results identify individual participants: schools, students and teachers

We intend to protect your confidentiality of your responses to the extent allowed by law. However, given the small size of the focus group, it is possible that other participants will be able to identify you. Your name and contact details will be kept in a password-protected computer file separate from any data that you give us. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know how to contact you to provide you with the final report. In the final report, quotes given by teachers will not include your name or any identifying information. In the final report, you will be referred to by a pseudonym (a false name).

The data will be kept securely in the Australian National University for five years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

Dissemination or publication of research results / Provision of research results, findings or reports to participants

Once this project has been completed we will produce a brief summary of the key findings to report back to the school. The results will also be presented at academic conferences or published in research journals.

Reports of research findings, including the thesis, peer reviewed publications and conference presentations will be written in 2017. The school and Department of Education and Training will receive a report of themed data, with no identifying information of the class, or participants.

Amounts and sources of funding for research

There is no source of funding for this research.

Financial, commercial or other interests of researchers, sponsors or institutions and declarations thereof

There are no financial, commercial or other interests of researchers, sponsors or institutions beyond the main aim of the study.

Any expected benefits to the wider community

The process and the findings have the potential to benefit schools (those involved in the study and other schools), teachers, parents and children by increasing understanding about ways in which Australian primary children are learning and interpreting Indigenous history, culture and people, as well as reconciliation. It is expected that this research is likely to contribute to future work in developing and / or identifying intercultural exchange policies and programs for children and schools specifically towards Indigenous people, a field where currently little evidence exists. There is little information in Australia about the messages children receive and interpret about Indigenous history, culture and people and reconciliation efforts aimed at children.

For your school, the benefits include providing an opportunity for the school to reflect on whether the messages being delivered are being received as intended, and to implement changes if the results may be negative. For the children participating in focus groups, being involved in the project provides an opportunity to learn about research processes.

Contact details of the researchers

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please contact either:

PhD Student Researcher: Talia Avrahamzon

Centre / University: Centre for Social Research and Methods (AusCen), Australian National University

Email: talia.avrahamzon@anu.edu.au

Phone Number: 0405624764

Supervisor: Dr Naomi Priest

Centre / University: Centre for Social Research and Methods (AusCen), Australian National University

Email: naomi.priest@anu.edu.au

Phone Number: 02 6125 4849

Complaints lodgement (dispute resolution) and handling process

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager

The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The Australian National University

Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427

Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Any other relevant information including research-specific information

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the reply paid envelope provided (no stamp needed) or returning it to your school. We will then contact you to arrange a time for the focus group.

Thank you for your interest in this research project. Please feel free to contact the researchers if you would like to discuss further.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely

Name: Talia Avrahamzon and Dr Naomi Priest

Title: Student Researcher and Student Supervisor

Phone: 0405624764 or 02 6125 4849

Date: 16 February 2016

WRITTEN CONSENT for Year 3 and Year 4 Teachers

How and what Australian children in Year 3 and Year 4 learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) history, culture and people, and reconciliation.

I have read and understood the Information Sheet you have given me about the research project, and I have had any questions and concerns about the project (listed here

addressed to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the project.

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to the focus group being audio-recorded

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree for my class _____ to be observed

YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to be identified in the following way within research outputs:

Pseudonym

YES ☐ NO ☐

Signature:.....

Email:.....

Appendix C

Children Demographic Survey

Project Title: How and what children learn about Indigenous history, culture and people and reconciliation.

PARTICIPANT ID:	
Date completed:	
1	What school do you go to?
2	Are you a boy or a girl? ☐ Boy ☐ Girl ☐ Other
3	How old are you?
4	What year are you in at school?
5	What country were you born in?
6	What country was your mother born in?
7	What country was your father born in?
8	What language or languages do you speak at home?

9	Do you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander? ☐ Yes ☐ No
10	What is your religion? _____
11	What is your culture? _____
<i>Culture can be about skin colour, language, accent or the country someone is born in. When we say 'culture' in these questions we mean any of these things.</i>	
12	How many brothers or sisters do you have? _____
13	What position are you in the family? _____

Appendix D

Children Focus Group Questions

1. Do you have friends who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children or people?
2. What do you know about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures?
3. What is good / not so good about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures?
4. What do you know about Australian history? What do you know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history?
5. What do you know about reconciliation? What do you think reconciliation is or should be?
6. Where/ to whom do you go to find out about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture?
7. If you wanted to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history / cultures where would you go?
8. Are some places or people easy to ask/get information from? Hard to get information from?
9. How do you think people in Australia are treated? Are all people treated the same? Is anyone treated differently? What do you think about that?
10. Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people treated the same as other people in Australia? Why do you think this is the case? What do you think about that?

Focus Group Scenarios Term 2

Scenario 1: At the community centre where you play basketball a few times a week, one of your teammates Alex says that he is an Aboriginal kid. You are confused because he has very fair skin and light coloured hair. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?

Scenario 2: One Saturday morning you and your Mum/Dad decide to go to the city. When you are on the bus it becomes obvious that nobody will sit beside the dark-skinned man. You wonder why this is happening. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?

Scenario 3: During a weekend with your cousins your aunty tells you that you should only be friends with children from your own cultural group because others cannot be trusted. You are confused about this and want to know why. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say? If you were with friends, what would they say to you?

Scenario 4: In school you have a discussion in class about different cultures. Another child says their parents told them that we shouldn't be talking about different cultures or giving people special treatment because of who they are or where they come from and that we are all part of the same human race and we are equal. You are confused and want to know if that is true. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?

Scenario 5: After the Sorry Day March your neighbour comments that we have nothing to be sorry for, that we did nothing wrong, that whatever happened happened a long time ago. You are confused because everyone in the school participated in the walk. What do you think your parents would say? What would your teacher say?

Focus Group Scenarios Term 4

1A. Your teacher comes into your class and tells you all that a new student, Sam, will be joining your class next week. The teacher mentions that Sam is from Indonesia. She says to the class that she expects you to make her/him feel very welcomed and respected.

- When there is a new student – is this usually what happens?
- Is it important to know someone's culture or background?
- How do you think Sam would be feeling on this day?
- If you find it difficult to understand her, what would you do?
- How would you make Sam feel welcome?
- How would you make Sam feel respected?
- What do you think the class should do to make her/him feel welcome and respected?
- What would you like to ask Sam?
- What wouldn't you ask? Why?

1B. Now let's pretend that Sam isn't from Indonesia, and that you are told that Sam is an Aboriginal girl/boy.

Use a different name – ie now let's pretend there is a new student Jo who is Aboriginal...

- Are you usually told whether a student is Aboriginal or not?
- Do you think it's important to know whether Jo is Aboriginal or not?
- Where do you think Jo is from?
- What languages do you think Jo speaks?
- If you find it difficult to understand her, what would you do?
- How would you make Jo feel welcome?
- How would you make Jo feel respected?
- What could your class do to make Jo feel welcome and respected?
- What would you like to ask Jo?
- What wouldn't you ask? Why?

3. You are preparing a dance for a school talent show. Jesse approaches you to join your group. Your other friend says to Jessie 'no she can't join because she doesn't know how to dance the way you all know'. Jesse tells you that she is in an Aboriginal dance group and has been learning for a long time. Your friend says Aboriginal dancing isn't real dancing.

- How do you think Jesse feels?
- What is Aboriginal dance?
- Why do you think your friend doesn't think Aboriginal dancing is real?
- Who gets to decide what is real dancing and what isn't?
- Do you think that Jesse should be allowed to join?
- Do you think people who dance other traditional dances such as Irish dancing, Bollywood dancing would be told that their dancing isn't real dancing?
