



Talking culture? Egalitarianism, color-blindness and racism in Australian elementary schools



Jessica Walton^{a,f,*}, Naomi Priest^a, Emma Kowal^b, Fiona White^c, Katie Brickwood^d, Brandi Fox^e, Yin Paradies^f

^a McCaughey Centre, Melbourne School of Global and Population Health, University of Melbourne, 207 Bouverie St, Parkville, VIC, 3010, Australia

^b School of Social and Political Sciences, John Medley Building, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, 3010, Australia

^c School of Psychology, Faculty of Science, Brennan MacCallum Building, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, 2006, Australia

^d The Graduate School of Humanities and Social Studies, Old Arts Building, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, 3010, Australia

^e Centre for Research in Education Futures and Innovation, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC, 3125, Australia

^f Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC, 3125, Australia

HIGHLIGHTS

- We focus on egalitarianism as an ethnic-racial socialization message.
- We examine egalitarian messages in relation to types of color-blind approaches.
- We discuss implications of different egalitarian approaches for teacher practice.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16 July 2013

Received in revised form

10 January 2014

Accepted 13 January 2014

Keywords:

Egalitarianism

Ethnic-racial socialization

Color-blindness

Racism

Schools

ABSTRACT

This study examines egalitarianism as an ethnic-racial socialization message used by teachers with 8–12 year old children in four socio-demographically diverse elementary schools in Melbourne, Australia. The three main types of egalitarian messages identified are i) procedural-justice color-blindness, ii) distributive-justice color-blindness and iii) colormuteness, and each is explored in relation to how teachers talk to children about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and racism. We conclude that teacher confidence and capability, and to a lesser degree, school context, influenced the types of egalitarian messages used about diversity and the extent to which teachers had explicit and critical discussions about racism.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Schools are powerful sites of socialization through which children learn about cultural diversity and understand their own cultural identity and sense of belonging in a multicultural society. These processes are known in the literature as 'ethnic-racial socialization'. Teachers and school communities are key transmitters of information about racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity (Thomas & Kearney, 2008) and greatly influence students' beliefs

and attitudes regarding race and difference (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999; Paluck & Green, 2009; Smith, Atkins, & Connell, 2003). Elementary school children in particular are highly receptive to teacher influences as they develop their own perspectives and, in diverse school environments, adapt to regular interaction with children from different backgrounds (Killen, Rutland, & Ruck, 2011).

Despite the socializing influence of schools, within ethnic-racial socialization research, reviews indicate that most studies to date have focused on parents as the primary socializing agent (Hughes, Rodriguez, & Smith, 2006). There is less research considering teachers as socializing agents or how messages from different socializing agents (e.g. parents and teachers) interact to influence children's attitudes and behaviors toward racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. Additionally, egalitarianism as an ethnic-racial socialization message has also been under-researched

* Corresponding author. Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, VIC, 3125, Australia. Tel.: +61 3 9241 7004.

E-mail address: jessica.walton@deakin.edu.au (J. Walton).

compared to other messages such as preparation for bias and promotion of mistrust (Hughes et al., 2006). Comparatively, there has been significant educational research conducted on how racism and cultural diversity are discussed in schools with consistent findings that demonstrate a strong tendency for teachers to take “color-blind” approaches where racial and cultural differences are considered not to be present or are disregarded (Kempf, 2012; Pollock, 2004). However, little is known about how these color-blind approaches interact with ethnic-racial socialization messages, such as egalitarianism, within a school context.

1.1. Research aims and questions

The study reported here addresses these gaps in the literature by considering nuances of egalitarianism as both a complex theoretical concept and as an ethnic-racial socialization message used with children in elementary school contexts. The research questions framing the overall study included: (1) What explicit and implicit ethnic-racial socialization messages do parents and teachers use to teach children about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and racism?; and (2) How do children understand racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and the messages they receive? Here, we focus only on messages used by teachers pertaining to egalitarianism and color-blindness.

2. Theoretical approaches and key concepts

In this section, we provide a brief overview of ethnic-racial socialization and, in particular, egalitarian messages that adults use with children. We then consider egalitarianism as it has been defined in a broader context, primarily as (1) a belief that humans hold equal value; and (2) an approach toward a social condition of equality (Arneson, 2013). Expanding on the second definition of egalitarianism, we introduce two dominant approaches toward equity – procedural-justice egalitarianism and distributive-justice egalitarianism. We consider these approaches in terms of how they are used to discuss racial, ethnic and cultural diversity and the extent to which they address racism. Racism refers to a social phenomenon that perpetuates avoidable and unfair inequalities in society (Walton, Priest, & Paradies, 2013a).

Often, egalitarianism is associated only with the first definition, a condition of equality. As a result, egalitarianism is sometimes considered to be conceptually identical to color-blindness in which equality is also assumed (i.e., everyone is equal) along with an added normative dimension that we should therefore be ‘blind’ to ethnic or racial (i.e., ‘color’) differences. However, egalitarianism cannot simply be equated to color-blindness. We argue that a more nuanced approach to egalitarianism, as an ethnic-racial socialization message, is necessary. To illustrate this, we explore three approaches to color-blindness (Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009; Pollock, 2004) as they relate to types of egalitarian messages: color-muteness; procedural-justice color-blindness; and distributive-justice color-blindness. These messages are discussed in relation to the egalitarian messages teachers used with children to talk about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and racism. In the sections below, we outline key debates and our understanding of ethnic-racial socialization, egalitarianism, and color-blindness.

2.1. Ethnic-racial socialization

Ethnic-racial socialization encompasses the implicit (e.g. non-verbal) and explicit (e.g. verbal) processes by which messages about the meaning and significance of race, ethnicity and culture;

ethnic-racial and cultural group membership; and inter/intra-group interactions are transmitted to children by parents, extended family, peers and community members (Hughes et al., 2006; Lesane-Brown, 2006; Neblett, White, & Ford, 2008). Hughes et al. (2006) identified four main types of ethnic-racial socialization messages used with children: preparation for bias, promotion of mistrust, cultural socialization and egalitarianism. With a limited focus on egalitarianism in any population to date, most ethnic-racial socialization literature focuses on minority groups, predominantly African American populations (Hughes et al., 2006). Less is known about ethnic-racial socialization messages within majority families.

2.2. Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism, in its broadest sense, refers to (1) a belief that humans have equal value and as such are inherently equal, and (2) an approach toward socially equitable conditions, such as income, wealth, resources and capabilities (Arneson, 2013). The second definition is of greater interest here and has provoked debate in terms of the kind of equality being advocated, its value and aims, who it is for and on what conditions (see Arneson, 2013; Sen, 1979; Temkin, 1993). This article focuses on two key approaches to achieving equity, namely procedural- vs. distributive-justice (see Deutsch, 1975; Elford, 2012). A procedural-justice approach asserts that people must always be treated equally to achieve equity whereas a distributive-justice approach asserts that sometimes people must be treated unequally to achieve equity. In other words, a procedural-justice approach focuses on equal processes (e.g. meritocracy) while a distributive-justice approach focuses on equal outcomes (e.g. affirmative action policies) (Knowles et al., 2009). As we argue below, egalitarianism is often associated with a procedural-justice approach – treating everyone the same – an approach that is equivalent or close to color-blindness. However, as we explore in this article, egalitarianism as it is understood and used in ethnic-racial socialization messages can take a distributive-justice approach where difference is recognized and accounted for.

2.3. Color-blindness

In contrast with a distributive-justice approach to equity, color-blindness as an approach to issues of ethnic-racial diversity centers on the premise “that racial group membership and race-based differences should not be taken into account when decisions are made, impressions are formed and behaviors are enacted” (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012, p. 205). That is, everybody should be “judged as individual human beings – without regard to race or ethnicity” (Ryan, Gee, & Laflamme, 2006, p. 618). Some argue that such an approach is adopted when one fears being considered racist and is uncertain whether discussing racial/ethnic differences is appropriate (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008). Color-blindness as a means of preventing racism assumes that if individuals or institutions do not take race into account, they cannot be racially biased (Apfelbaum et al., 2012).

Color-blindness is linked to the idea of a post-racial society in which race does not matter and racism is a thing of the past (Appiah & Gutmann, 1996; Cho, 2009; Ono, 2010). This approach is critiqued for failing to recognize social inequality and thus supporting the ‘status quo’ of dominant social structures (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2010). It is also critiqued on the basis that, despite any claims to color-blindness, people do see racial differences when perceiving others, beginning in the first 12 months of life (Apfelbaum et al., 2012). Yet, a number of studies indicate that many individuals avoid acknowledging these observed differences within social interactions in an effort to appear unbiased, and that

this is a common approach used by teachers and parents with elementary school children (Apfelbaum et al., 2012; Apfelbaum, Pauker, & Ambady, 2008).

A growing body of empirical studies shows that a color-blind approach can reinforce prejudices (Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al., 2008; Plaut, 2010; Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Ryan, Hunt, Weilble, Peterson, & Casas, 2007; Ullucci & Battey, 2011; Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009). A recent review found that, while color-blind and multicultural ideologies variously impact on intergroup relations depending on a range of contextual and individual factors, multicultural ideology is more likely to result in equitable outcomes due to the recognition of difference (Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013). For example, predominantly White elementary school children aged 10–11 years old were less likely to identify instances of racial difference after exposure to color-blind ideology compared to younger children aged 8–9 years old (Apfelbaum, Pauker, et al., 2008). Children that did not acknowledge racial differences, which tended to be older children, were also more likely to endorse stereotypes. Such evidence casts doubt on the benefits of color-blindness for individuals or societies (Apfelbaum et al., 2012).

2.4. Egalitarianism and color-blindness as ethnic-racial socialization messages

As demonstrated in the discussion above, there has been significant research on the concept of egalitarianism including intersections with color-blindness, individualism, and meritocracy (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Pollock, 2004; Ullucci & Battey, 2011) and post-racialism (Lentin, 2008; Leonardo, 2011). However, while the multidimensional nature of egalitarianism has been identified within the wider literature (as discussed in Section 2.2), this concept and its manifestations has yet to comprehensively be defined and operationalized within the context of ethnic-racial socialization.

As it has been discussed in the ethnic-racial socialization literature, an egalitarianism approach seeks to minimize difference and focus on individual qualities and skills needed to succeed in mainstream society (Hughes et al., 2006). As a result, egalitarianism can easily be equated to color-blindness. However, minimizing difference is not the same as failing to see difference, and as such, egalitarian messages are not conceptually synonymous with color-blindness (Barr & Neville, 2008). Similarly, Hughes et al. (2006) distinguish egalitarianism and silence about race, linking the latter to color-blindness. However, below we argue that, while important, this distinction is rarely utilized in practice, with egalitarianism often associated *only* with “silence about race” (Hughes et al., 2006).

An alternative concept to color-blindness that is useful here is “colormuteness” (Pollock, 2004). To be colormute is to elide discussion of racial and ethnic differences (Castagno, 2008). While ethnic-racial differences might be recognized and discussed to some extent, in colormute discussions, implicit and explicit approaches are used to avoid talking about race (Pollock, 2004) so as to emphasize sameness over difference. In this way, “colormuteness” is similar to “silence about race” (Hughes et al., 2006). A colormute approach is not only “silent” about race; it also limits discussion about race, particularly in ways that would seek to understand how it is socially meaningful. Similarities and distinctions between colormuteness and color-blindness have rarely been explored in practice and thus not well articulated in current literature. Related to these two concepts is “racelessness”, which also serves to elide the social relevance of race and is seen by some teachers as a progressive form of anti-racist pedagogy (Kempf, 2012). As discussed below in classroom examples at Lynvale Primary School (LPS) (one of the sites of this research), a teacher may

help children to recognize racial differences but avoid discussing their social significance by choosing to focus on similarities between people rather than differences.

Procedural-justice color-blindness is not only colormute, it also precludes any recognition of racial differences in the interest of achieving equity (e.g. Aveling, 2007; Moon, Jung, Bang, Kwon, & In, 2009). Furthermore, although shown to be a counter-productive approach (Plaut et al., 2009), procedural-justice color-blindness is considered by some to be a *means* toward achieving social equity by treating everyone equally (i.e., the same) regardless of their differences (Knowles et al., 2009). As we will discuss, this approach was seen at High Flats Primary School (HFPS), where some teachers believed it was best to avoid talk about race at all and at Clarewood Primary School (CPS), where teachers used stereotypes to talk about cultural differences without discussing racism. Conversely, a distributive-justice color-blind approach views color-blindness as an ideal rather than a current reality. Rather than a society based on racially inflected life choices and “the fundamental plurality of racial groups” (Paradies, 2005, p. 5), this ‘ideal’ is one in which race either does not affect life opportunities and outcomes (Knowles et al., 2009) or does not exist at all (Appiah & Gutmann, 1996; Cho, 2009; Lentin, 2008; Leonardo, 2011; Ono, 2010). Therefore, within a distributive-justice color-blind approach there is recognition that it is sometimes necessary to treat certain groups unequally in order to address social inequalities, thus recognizing ethnic-racial differences insofar as this can achieve more equitable outcomes. As we explore below, this is illustrated by teachers at another research site, Middleburn Primary School (MPS), who explicitly talked about race and racism while expressing the desire for everyone to be equal.

This article explores the relationship between egalitarianism and color-blindness in the context of ethnic-racial socialization. We use concepts of “procedural- and distributive-justice color-blindness” (Knowles et al., 2009) and “colormuteness” (Pollock, 2004) to understand how teachers use egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization messages to talk to students about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. As discussed in our findings, teachers used one or more of these approaches. Some teachers attempted to take a distributive-justice approach, although their success largely depended on their competency and confidence to do so.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and methods

Research was conducted in four elementary (known in Australia as primary) schools across metropolitan Melbourne, Australia with eight to twelve year old children. In consultation with a stakeholder reference group consisting of key policy and decision makers working in the areas of multiculturalism and education, four schools were chosen purposively in order to include a range of levels of cultural diversity, socioeconomic status, geographical areas, and classroom engagement with multicultural issues. These schools were chosen with the intention of observing different types of ethnic-racial socialization messages. Schools were recruited through initial contact with the school principal. With the principal’s support, information sessions were held during staff meetings to discuss the project in order to recruit Grade 3–6 teachers who focused on cultural diversity in their curriculum units. These teachers and their students were then invited to participate in the study.

Although the study included students, parents, teachers, and key school informants, this article focuses on student and teacher data. All participants were provided with separate project information statements and consent forms. Students were also required to have parental consent to participate. Separate student and teacher focus

groups were conducted with a total of 67 Grade 3–6 students and 27 teachers in order to examine and compare student reports of ethnic-racial socialization messages and strategies with teacher reports of messages and strategies used with children (Refer to Table 1). The semi-structured focus group schedule focused on cultural identity, awareness of cultural diversity and ethnic-racial socialization messages and strategies used to teach children about cultural diversity. In the second part of the focus groups, students and teachers were asked to respond to the same set of scenarios in order to understand ethnic-racial socialization messages and strategies teachers and parents might use with children in different situations. Teachers were asked to discuss how they would react to each scenario, and as a comparison students were asked to discuss how they thought their teachers might respond. The focus group schedule and scenarios are provided in the Appendix.

Short-term classroom observations were conducted by at least two researchers in each school for a total of 45 hours across all four schools. Each school was visited five to nine times over a one-month period. A field notes guide was used to document verbal and non-verbal interactions between teachers and students and amongst students. Observations were of classroom lessons that explicitly focused on learning about culture in order to gather explicit and implicit ethnic-racial socialization messages. Twenty individual key informant interviews were conducted with school staff in leadership roles such as the Principal in order to gain a broader understanding of the school and community context. Ethics approval was received from the University of Melbourne [HREC #1238446] and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Research Department [2011_001164].

3.2. Analysis

Data from the interviews were thematically coded using NVivo software, which drew on pre-determined categories (e.g. established types of ethnic-racial socialization messages) as well as codes developed inductively. Comparative analysis was used to determine patterns within and across schools. All names and identifying details of schools and individuals have been changed to ensure anonymity of participants. Due to the distinct cultural make-up of some of the schools, identifying information such as specific geographic location and individual teacher background including age, cultural background and length of time employed at the school have been omitted. All teachers and key school informants discussed their ethnic-racial background and all except one were White European Australians, which includes Anglo-Celtic¹ backgrounds.

4. School context

Four elementary/primary schools located within 40 km of Melbourne city center were involved in the research (Lynvale Primary School-LPS, High Flats Primary School-HFPS, Middleburn Primary School-MPS, Clarewood Primary School-CPS). School and community racial, ethnic and cultural demographics were varied, with two schools having a majority Anglo-Celtic Australian population with less visible cultural diversity (HFPS and LPS), one school with a significant Anglo-Celtic population but with a majority of students from minority backgrounds (CPS) and one school with a majority Horn of African and North African population (MPS). The types of ethnic-racial socialization messages varied across contexts,

Table 1
Focus group participants by school and sex.

School	Students (n = 67)	Teachers (n = 27)
Middleburn Primary School (MPS)	Grade 3/4	2 males 1 male 2 females 6 females
	Grade 5	4 males 4 females
	Grade 6	4 males 2 females
Clarewood Primary School (CPS)	Grade 3	3 males 4 females 1 male 6 females
	Grade 5	1 male 1 female
	Grade 6	2 males 6 females
High Flats Primary School (HFPS)	Grade 4	7 males 1 male 7 females 4 females
Lynvale Primary School (LPS)	Grade 5/6	10 males 2 males 8 females 6 females

with teachers in schools with higher proportions of students from minority backgrounds tending to focus more on preparation for bias messages with an emphasis on racism than those from schools with a majority Anglo-Celtic Australian population. A range of egalitarianism messages were used to varying degrees in all four schools, and were used more commonly in schools with majority Anglo-Celtic Australian populations. Although the full study analyzed a broader range of ethnic-racial socialization messages, in this article we focus on egalitarian messages.

5. Findings: examining egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization in school settings

The following discussion draws on classroom observations and quotes from student and teacher focus groups to provide descriptive analyses of egalitarian ethnic-racial socialization messages used in four different schools in Melbourne, Australia. A comparative analysis of teachers' approaches toward racial, ethnic and cultural diversity provides insight into how egalitarian messages are used in relation to color-blindness, recognition of racial, ethnic and cultural differences, and social equality and inequality. By highlighting complexities within the data, key themes emerge that form, and are informed by, theory (Kondo, 1990). Drawing on existing theoretical perspectives on egalitarianism and color-blindness, the analysis of data furthers our understanding of these concepts as they relate to ethnic-racial socialization. In particular, we highlight the conceptual complexity of egalitarianism as it is enacted in classroom discussions.

5.1. Colormuteness

Lynvale Primary School (LPS) is a small outer suburban government school with under 100 students and is predominantly middle-class Anglo-Celtic Australian without a strong religious affiliation. Only 11% of students have a language background other than English. In the school entrance, children's artwork and an Australian flag were displayed. At the time, there were no displays or posters reflecting cultural diversity. Two Grades 5/6 classrooms (Class A and B) were each observed on five occasions for a total of nine hours. There were three female teachers and one male teacher, all with White European Australian backgrounds.

While the students were encouraged to see difference in order to understand that difference is normal and that everyone has equal value regardless of race, ethnicity or culture, students were not engaged further to think more deeply about the differences they noticed or how difference matters in contemporary society. The following observations illustrate a particular focus on

¹ Anglo-Celtic is a term commonly associated with Australians whose ancestors were born in the British Isles. The term is viewed as more inclusive of Britain's Celtic heritage than Anglo-Saxon.

egalitarianism characterized by the recognition of racial, ethnic and cultural differences and an emphasis on equal value based on shared humanity while remaining “colormute” to the social meaning of those differences. These kinds of egalitarian messages are supported by teacher and student focus group discussions.

During classroom observations, teachers encouraged students to recognize and learn about racial and cultural differences but primarily as a way to attribute equal value and status to those differences. As one of the teachers explained, “We are all from the same race, we should all be treated equal but for us to be treated equal we need to understand one another. And the only way we can do that is by giving you an extra bit of knowledge” (LPS, Teacher FG, 3/14/12). Thus, even though teachers used egalitarian messages to focus on how everyone is the same and should therefore be valued and treated the same, teachers did not espouse strongly color-blind views either because they still talked about differences. There was also some recognition of unequal status in discussions of the “White Australia Policy” (Immigration Restriction Act 1901–1973) and the “Stolen Generations”, when teachers asked the children, “Why did they [White people] think they [Aboriginal people] were lesser people?” (LPS, Class A, 2/29/12).

While Class A tended to focus on cultural differences such as holidays and food, another Grade 5/6 class also discussed differences in skin color (LPS, Class B, 3/6/12). Students understood that people could be friends regardless of their cultural background or skin color. However, most teacher-led discussions did not help students understand the social construction and significance of racial differences and instead were characterized by colormuteness or what Mazzei (2008) calls “racially inhabited silence”, which “limits if not negates an open dialog regarding race and culture” (p. 1129). Similar to egalitarian messages focused on sameness in Class A, discussions of skin color in Class B were limited to environmental explanations for skin pigment variation.

There were a few exceptions when teachers in Class B discussed challenges that immigrants face when settling in Australia and the hardships asylum seekers experience (LPS, Class B, 2/29/12). Recalling a previous lesson that focused on experiences of Vietnamese asylum seekers and immigrants, a few of the students raised the issue of racism. The teachers responded to the students’ comments by discussing reasons why certain groups of people in the past had not been made to feel welcome in Australia, such as Greek, Italian and Vietnamese people (LPS, Class B, 2/29/12). However, the teacher did not discuss the broader historical context of racism (e.g. the White Australia Policy) or talk about the role of specific ethnic-racial groups in perpetrating racism (such as Anglo-Celtic Australians) in a contemporary context. As a result, racism was constructed as something that happened in the past.

The approach teachers took toward racial, ethnic and cultural diversity during classroom observations was supported in the student focus groups:

They [teachers] may say it is okay to speak about it, to learn other cultures, but we should all be treated the same. (LPS, Student FG 2, 3/8/12)

Could be a person who is just like your friend but just in a different skin color. But it is the exact same person. It is just different skins. (LPS, Student FG 1, 3/8/12)

There is nothing wrong with having a different culture just because you have darker skin than everybody else. (LPS, Student FG 1, 3/8/12)

All of the students in these focus groups were from Anglo-Celtic or White European backgrounds. The students’ comments imply that they understood it was appropriate to talk about how everyone is the same because of egalitarian messages received from their

teachers, and that everyone is human regardless of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, they also unreflectively viewed ‘difference’ in relation to Anglo-Celtic Australia, thus missing an opportunity to reflect on their own whiteness (Mazzei, 2008) to understand the historical and contemporary role of White dominance on race relations.

In addition to teacher confidence and capability, another factor that may have influenced the decision to be ‘colormute’ about certain topics was lack of broader support in the community. Some of the teachers at LPS explained that even if they might feel confident and understand the importance of discussing racism, or including curriculum content about cultural and religious diversity, they occasionally received negative feedback from parents who did not feel it was necessary. They gave an example of a parent who removed her child from the classroom because she did not agree with discussing Ramadan, even though it was part of a cultural diversity resource the teachers were using. Lisa explained, “Some parents don’t see religion as a kind of culture and that is difficult for us as teachers to keep people happy” (LPS Teacher FG, 3/14/12). Conversely, Matt gave an example of a teacher who was supportive that they were teaching about the “Stolen Generations”, a period in Australia (late 1800s–1970s) when Aboriginal children were systematically and forcibly removed from their families by the Australian government and church missions to assimilate them into White Australian culture (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007). He said, the parent came to the school just to tell them “how she was so rapt [glad] that schools were finally talking about things they were talking about at home you know, the Stolen Generation, and other festivals that cultures celebrate” (LPS Teacher FG, 3/14/12).

5.2. Procedural-justice color-blindness

High Flats Primary School (HFPS) is a large inner suburban multi-campus independent school with the majority of students from mid- to high socioeconomic backgrounds. There is a high percentage of Australian-born students who only speak English with 20% of students who have a language background other than English including students with Indian and Chinese backgrounds. The school prides itself on its inclusive values toward cultural diversity and its International Baccalaureate education program that focuses on a holistic and global approach toward teaching and learning. As one teacher said, “It’s just a part of what defines us as a school environment and what we do. We’re inclusive of everybody in everything we do” (HFPS, Teacher FG, 11/24/11).

Classroom observations took place during a five-day unit on Aboriginal culture that featured sessions with Susan, an Aboriginal elder. Students discussed the colonization of Aboriginal lands and the differences between Aboriginal culture and British culture. As Susan told stories about the European colonization of her traditional lands (as witnessed by her father in the early 20th century), the students were encouraged to think about situations from Aboriginal and European perspectives (HFPS, Classroom observation, 10/18/12). This focus on perspective-taking and empathy is reflective of the overall school values and a curriculum focus on developing students’ interpersonal skills.

In focus groups, teachers felt that students generally reflected these values in their everyday behavior. For instance, teachers approvingly discussed how most students were aware of cultural differences, but did not take these into account when choosing their friends:

I don’t think it’s at the forefront of their mind in terms of who they play with and who they don’t play with. I don’t think it comes into consideration. (HFPS, Teacher FG, 11/24/11)

Just because they don't look like they're Aboriginal or anything it doesn't matter and it doesn't matter if they're Aboriginal or not, it shouldn't impact on whether you're friends with them or not. (HFPS, Teacher FG, 11/24/11)

However, in a striking exception to this, teachers noted that students from "Asian" backgrounds did not mix with people from different cultural backgrounds. One teacher suggested that this might be due to a lack of opportunity to interact with students from other cultural backgrounds outside the school (related in one instance to a parent not speaking English), leading them to "stick together" when at school (HFPS, Teacher FG, 11/24/11). Interestingly, the teachers did not suggest that other students could also make an effort to interact more with the Asian Australian students rather than assuming the Asian Australian students were intentionally keeping themselves apart from other students.

The teachers guessed at reasons why the Asian Australian students seemed to 'keep to themselves' but were unsure. Based on findings from two student focus groups, reluctance from some of the Chinese Australian students to be friends with students from other cultural backgrounds could partly be explained by some of the other students' attitudes toward them. For example, when the students were asked to respond to a cultural scenario in which they are learning about Chinese culture and express that they would like to be Chinese to their parents or teachers, one of the students said:

Student: If I said I want to be Chinese, personally I wouldn't want to be Chinese.

Researcher: How come?

Student: Because I think it's just something with Chinese, I think that they all look the same and I don't want to look the same as somebody else, it would be a bit freaky and being like [Matt, another student with a Chinese background present in the focus group]. (HFPS, Student FG 1, 11/17/11)

This "othering" attitude demonstrates common stereotypes of Chinese people as comprising of people from one culture, despite China being a large multicultural country with many different religious beliefs.

Other racist behaviors were also observed in the classroom when a few students laughed at and mimicked an Aboriginal language they heard while watching a video during their Aboriginal Studies unit (HFPS, Classroom Observations 10/18/11). Despite being told by teachers to be respectful, they continued to imitate the language in a mocking manner. This also happened on another occasion when a few students were observed making fun of "Asian language" by saying, "ching, chong, chang" (HFPS, Classroom Observations, 10/20/11).

Despite these observations and student comments, teachers maintained that their students did not consider racial, ethnic or cultural differences when interacting with each other. Similar to LPS, racial and ethnic diversity primarily was acknowledged in order to demonstrate that it is acceptable to notice difference but to focus more on how everyone is fundamentally the same. While students were encouraged to think about people's experiences from different perspectives as in the Aboriginal Studies Unit, racism was not discussed. By taking a position of "racelessness" as a "strategic anti-racist stance" (Kempf, 2012, p. 263), race and racism are represented as outdated concepts relegated to the past. Any occurrences of racism are treated as abhorrent manifestations of a past that need to immediately be denounced rather than working to understand racism as a systematic problem. Even though "racelessness" might be seen as a progressive form of anti-racist pedagogy, it "is in many ways a normative rather than positive

attempt at understanding, defining and indeed acting up issues of race and racism in education" (Kempf, 2012, p. 248).

By taking an egalitarian approach focused primarily on sameness, issues of racism and other types of discrimination occurring in the present, and even between students, were rarely explored. Discrimination and oppression was discussed in relation to European colonization, but not seen as relevant to the classroom. The approach taken by teachers at HFPS was closely aligned with a procedural-justice color-blind approach. Racism and social inequalities were seen as anomalies relegated to the past or explained by other reasons such as language barriers, and "insular" communities (HFPS, Teacher FG, 11/24/11). Any 'unnecessary' attention to difference also ran counter to the school's image of promoting an inclusive environment. As a result, despite official interest in diversity, race and racism were silenced in classroom discussions and any tensions between students from different ethnic-racial groups were seen as a failure to 'mix'.

Compared to HFPS, Clarewood Primary School (CPS) also took a procedural-justice color-blindness approach to cultural diversity. Similar to comments from teachers at LPS and HFPS, there was a denial of the social significance of race and racism, even when racial issues were raised in the classroom or when students were racist towards each other. However, instead of taking a pedagogical position of "racelessness", cultural differences were highlighted in overtly 'othering' ways. CPS is a larger outer suburban school with under 400 students and is comprised of students with Anglo-Celtic, European, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander and African cultural backgrounds, about half of whom can speak a language other than English. Of those from minority backgrounds, most of those in the classrooms that were observed have refugee backgrounds and were first and second generation migrants.² The majority of students were from a low socioeconomic background.

Even though the student demographic was completely different to LPS and HFPS with a more visibly diverse student population, the teachers used a similar procedural-justice color-blind approach that focused on equal value and status (e.g. "we're all humans"), thus justifying equal treatment while maintaining silence about race and racism. Interestingly, teachers were not color-blind to the fact that students tended to group themselves by racial or ethnic group in the classroom. They also discussed examples of racism between students. However, rather than attributing these tensions to reasons why students might segregate themselves, they were described as isolated incidents. One teacher commented, "I've noticed that, which is not really very nice, but it's not cruel. They're not actually saying anything it just sort of happens and you wonder how that happens" (CPS Teacher FG, 9/12/11). Castagno (2008) also found that a similar silencing or colormute approach was used across two demographically distinct schools where similar discourses predominated. As discussed later, this contrasts with teachers at MPS who were well aware that their students experience racism in the wider community and are perpetrators of racism toward other students perceived to be different to them, and openly discussed racism in the classroom as a planned part of the lesson. They still used an egalitarian approach that emphasized commonalities and a shared humanity, but they acknowledged that while they wished everyone could be treated the same, this clearly was not always the case.

During the CPS teacher focus group, teachers stated they were aware of students' racism toward each other and could also understand some of the difficulties faced by students with refugee backgrounds. Teachers recognized that they needed more

² First-generation refers to people born overseas who then migrate to another country.

professional development to have a better understanding of their students' diverse cultural backgrounds and the experiences of trauma that many of their students and families had experienced as refugees from war-torn countries (CPS, Teacher FG, 9/12/11). However, in the observed classes for the Cultural Studies unit, the focus of observation at CPS, the topic of racism was not discussed. Challenges that students from migrant and refugee backgrounds and their families might experience in Australia were also not addressed. While the intention of the unit was to celebrate and learn about other cultures, the lesson content focused on stereotypical representations of different cultures in comparison to a stereotypical Anglo-Celtic Australian "ocker"³ culture.

Classroom observations of students in Grades 3–6 took place in the school library where the Cultural Studies sessions were held and taught by one Anglo-Celtic Australian teacher, Gayle. Displayed around the library were posters of countries covered in the Cultural Studies unit over the previous three terms. Posters of Japan, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea presented stereotypical cultural representations of each country. For example, for Japan, there were images of a kimono, sumo wrestling and information on tsunamis. Next to the Papua New Guinea poster, there was a sign that said, "Our PNG tribal masks" with pictures of masks the children had drawn and decorated.

Throughout the classroom discussions, difference was highlighted in a way that mainly "othered" and "exoticized" other cultures, including some of the students who were singled out as being representative of the country where they or their parents were born. For instance, Gayle had the following conversation with one of the Indian Australian students:

Gayle – Were you born in Australia?

Grade 4 student – No, I have been here for four and a half years.

Gayle – Do you eat Indian food every night?

Grade 4 student – Not every night. (CPS Classroom Observation, Grade 4, 11/8/11)

For the rest of the class, the student did not make eye contact with Gayle. This conversation targeted the student as "exotic" and stereotyped her identity. The assumptions underlying this conversation are predicated on an "assumed isomorphism of space, place, and culture" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 7). Culture is viewed as something bound by time, geographical space and national boundaries, people who derive from a particular place as also adhering to that particular cultural representation.

For one of the Grade 6 classes, the topic was Australian slang (CPS Classroom Observation, Grade 6, 11/14/11). In introducing the topic, Gayle described Australian slang as, "That colorful language we speak in Australia that seems to baffle other people". She then asked, "Who are other people?" A student replied, "Asian people. People from other countries who come here". This statement was not challenged thus implying that it was acceptable to see people who look "Asian" as not being "Australian".

5.3. *Distributive-justice color-blindness*

Middleburn Primary School (MPS) is a small inner city school with under 100 students mainly from low to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. 92% of students speak a language other than English.

At the front of the school there was a welcome sign translated into community languages including Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish, Mandarin, Somali and Turkish. There was another sign that clearly stated the schools' values of being a welcoming, diverse and community focused school. Just inside the school, a large poster was displayed reiterating the core school values of achievement, respect, relationships and diversity. There were also community event advertisements posted on a notice board and a picture of student council representatives all from minority ethnic-racial backgrounds. These prominent displays supported and reinforced the school's commitment to the values it promoted.

Most of the students had North African (Sudan, Egypt) or Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia) backgrounds with only a few students with Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian or Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. Nearly all students could speak a language other than English. In focus groups students identified themselves as Muslims, with teachers also commenting that the majority of students at the school were Muslim. In terms of friendship groups, teachers explained that most students predominantly socialized with other students from African Muslim backgrounds, both in, and outside of school. They said that many live in the same housing flats, some are related to each other and also attend the same religious school on weekends (MPS, Teacher FG, 9/22/11). As a result, teachers felt that students did not often have opportunities to interact with people from social or cultural backgrounds very different to their own. Teachers cited multiple occasions when they had informal conversations as well as classroom discussions with students about racial, cultural and religious diversity. As one teacher explained, "I think particularly because there is very little interaction in their daily lives. Speaking with us is one of the few opportunities they get to actually nut these sort of things out" (MPS, Teacher FG, 9/22/11). In contrast with other schools where voluntary segregation among students was downplayed or dismissed, MPS teachers reflected on the reasons for this and discussed it with other teachers.

This open approach to discussing issues extended to discussions of race and racism in both the Grades 3/4 class and the Grades 5/6 class. Due to the students' minority status in Australia, "difference" was a part of their everyday lives. As a result, classroom discussions moved beyond noticing difference to understanding how difference matters in different social settings, such as during experiences of racism. Teachers were more closely aligned with a distributive-justice color-blindness approach, which resulted in egalitarian messages that emphasized equal value and recognizing similarities while also examining racism to understand why some people are treated unfairly in ways that perpetuate inequalities.

Classroom observations were conducted in two classes on seven occasions for a total of seven hours. The following analysis focuses on observations from one teacher's class with students in Grades 3 and 4. At the start of the lesson, Andrew had "Racism" written on the board as students entered the room (MPS, Class A, 11/15/11). Upon seeing the word, one student called out, "Some people have different colored skin", which prompted other students to respond by saying, "That's racist" (MPS, Class A, 11/15/11). The teacher explained that pointing out that people have different skin colors is not racist because it is a valid observation, demonstrating an explicit denial of color-blindness. Students' confusion around whether all race-talk is racist is similar to findings among African American adolescents in the United States who recognized that race does matter but at the same time felt it was not good to emphasize race because it could contribute to racism (Winkler, 2010). Winkler (2010) argues that this ambivalence could be reflective of their experience of everyday racism conflicting with messages from wider society, which say race does not matter. This also relates to Pollock's (2004) argument that being colormute by

³ "Ocker" refers to Australians with an exaggerated broad Australian accent who use Australian slang, often either affectionately or derogatorily associated with people from a working-class background.

“deleting race words can actually *make race matter more*” by perpetuating rather than explicitly addressing structural racial inequalities (p. 3).

Following this conversation, the teacher continued by introducing racism as the main focus of the lesson. He said, “You know how we have been doing equals in maths, do you think people are equal?” to which the children responded with “No” (MPS, Class A, 11/15/11). He then continued the discussion by asking the children to consider what is and is not racism. By having these in-depth conversations and immediately drawing students’ attention to the fact that not everyone is treated equally in society, the teacher made it safe to talk about difference at a deeper level. Rather than being colormute, the teacher, in a position of authority, allowed and enabled students to discuss racism in the classroom environment.

During a subsequent lesson the following week, the teacher focused on understanding cultural diversity (MPS, Class A, 12/6/12). On the board, the teacher wrote, “What is your culture?” with seven covered circles, each revealing a word to describe someone’s culture: food, religion, race, language, family, clothes and holidays. After a short discussion, the teacher commented, “I believe in only one race, the human race. I wish everyone would think like that”. While this may seem to disregard the social significance of difference, in the context of previous classroom discussions that explicitly talked about racial and cultural differences and social inequalities, this statement indicates an aspiration toward color-blindness. This supports a distributive-justice approach to diversity, which sees color-blindness as an ideal rather than a current reality (Knowles et al., 2009). After making this statement, the teacher continued to direct the students to think about how people might be different from each other in order to understand how people do not have to be the same.

The teacher then asked students to think about how they might be the same as other students. At first, one of the students described physical similarities, when he said “Our appearance” and the teacher responded with “Yes, we all have two eyes”. Other students added, “We all have bones” and “We are all humans” (MPS, Class A, 12/6/12). A few also mentioned their religion since most students are Muslim. They focused on their religion as something that made them the same but in a focus group, they also used their religion to explain how they were different from other people and that differences can sometimes be used to hurt people’s feelings (MPS, Grades 3 and 4 student FG, 12/19/11). Thus, these students understood that people share both similarities and differences, but that some differences could be used to hurt others.

6. Discussion

“The problem is not rooted in seeing or noticing difference but in how difference is made to matter”

Theodorou (2011, p. 504)

This article aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of egalitarianism as a key ethnic-racial socialization message. As illustrated by the above quote, rather than deciding between seeing difference or not seeing difference, talking about race or being silent about race, we argue for a more sensitive approach to understanding when and how differences are “made to matter” (Theodorou, 2011, p. 504). By examining the interplay between egalitarian messages and color-blindness in four different school contexts, we demonstrate how varieties of egalitarianism are used among elementary school students in classroom settings. Key contextual factors partly explain this variance including the composition of student’s racial, ethnic and cultural identities in the

classroom, teachers’ racial, ethnic and cultural identity, student experiences of cultural diversity/racism and social class, teachers’ personal and professional capacity to discuss cultural diversity and racism, and school culture and policy.

Three main types of egalitarian messages were identified in the data. These types also corresponded with different orientations to racial, ethnic and cultural diversity including procedural-justice color-blindness, distributive-justice color-blindness and colormuteness. While there was some variation in orientations to racial, ethnic and cultural diversity within each school, there were also consistent patterns. An egalitarian approach with a distributive-justice color-blind orientation (e.g. MPS) tended to focus on a shared humanity, while recognizing individual racial, ethnic and cultural differences and engaging with complex social issues such as racism to promote social equality. Having recognized social inequalities, this approach advocated the necessity of inequitable treatment to achieve equality and sameness. Teachers and students at MPS recognized that while everyone is human and share much in common, there are also racial, ethnic and cultural differences that affect how people are treated. Compared to teachers at the other schools, these teachers encouraged open critical discussions of race and racism among their students. This approach is likely to be more effective in addressing racism. Key to addressing racism is recognizing both disadvantage and advantage in terms of how these are unfairly distributed across different racial, ethnic, cultural groups in society. A distributive-justice egalitarian approach supports anti-racism strategies by recognizing existing social inequalities and taking differentiated measures to achieve social equality.

An egalitarian approach with a procedural-justice color-blind orientation tended to focus on a shared humanity while actively discounting the contemporary relevance of racial, ethnic and cultural differences. If differences were recognized, they tended to be celebrated in ways that potentially could further stereotypes about cultural ‘otherness’ (Sleeter & Grant, 2009), as in the case of CPS. If race-based social inequalities are discussed, they were often relegated to the past as something that is no longer relevant, aligning with a belief in a post-racial society (Cho, 2009) and taking a position of “racelessness” (e.g. HFPS) (Kempf, 2012). During the CPS classroom discussions, difference was framed by procedural-justice color-blindness. Difference only mattered insofar as everyone could be presented as ‘equal’. At the same time, teachers actively ‘othered’ non-White students. This perpetuated unequal divisions amongst the students and potentially exacerbated students’ experiences of racism. Similarly, the HFPS procedural-justice approach discounted the social significance of race by taking a racelessness position, thus allowing students’ racist attitudes to continue unchallenged without deeper critical engagement about those issues.

Finally, an egalitarian approach with a colormute orientation tended to focus on a shared humanity while remaining silent about race and racism (e.g. LPS). As opposed to the procedural-justice color-blind approach, this approach may still acknowledge and discuss racial, ethnic and cultural differences but tends to favor ‘safe’ and ‘comfortable’ discussions of difference which do not disrupt or challenge the status quo. In line with Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, and Powers-Costello (2011, p. 335) we suggest that this was due to limited confidence rather than an “unwillingness” to broach these topics and driven by a lack of knowledge and teaching capacity rather than motivation or intention (Hollingworth, 2009; Skerett, 2011; Walton, Priest, & Paradies, 2013b). As with LPS, there was ample opportunity to discuss issues in more depth but for the most part teachers were less confident discussing issues of social equity, racism and why racial inequalities exist in the present-day. However, as Castagno (2008) points out, while most teachers “wanted all of their students to learn and be successful”, teacher silencing and silence about race

contribute to and are reflective of the “systems of power and structures of privilege and oppression [that] are played out at a local level” (p. 317). Furthermore, it is possible that in schools with White teachers and a majority of White students, color-muteness is perpetuated by the desire of teachers to appear unprejudiced (Apfelbaum, Pauker, et al., 2008).

In addition to teacher confidence and professional capability, school context may have also had an effect on the different egalitarian approaches taken by teachers across the four schools. While it is difficult to disentangle teachers' individual beliefs from broader school and community factors, certain factors appeared to influence the types of messages used and the depth of discussion on topics such as racism. These factors include student demographics, students' experiences with racism and racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, and broader school support to discuss racism. In schools with a majority White student population such as LPS and HFPS, racism and issues relating to race and social inequalities were not considered topics that needed to explicitly be addressed in the classroom. Even though it is important for both majority and minority students to have a critical understanding of race and racism, there was less imperative to discuss these with students. Furthermore, as expressed by teachers at HFPS, strong procedural color-blind beliefs reflected by school values meant that talking about racial, ethnic or cultural differences was seen as unnecessary. Even though CPS had a culturally diverse student population, the teachers were less confident and skilled discussing racism compared to teachers at MPS. MPS's geographic and demographic context likely influenced how relevant teachers felt these topics were in their classrooms, especially given the school's inner city location in a culturally diverse area and the fact that nearly all of their students were from minority groups who often talked about their experiences of racism. In addition, MPS may have attracted teachers with a personal and political interest in racism and equity, and therefore a pre-existing distributive-justice approach to issues of race and diversity. While there is certainly overlap between school context (e.g. curriculum and school values) and teachers' personal and pedagogical approaches to talking about diversity and racism, future research should include a more in-depth understanding of the extent to which the school and broader community environment impacts on these different egalitarian approaches.

This tension between recognizing cultural diversity and silence about race within egalitarian messages may be explained by contradictions within the dominant discourse about multicultural diversity in Australia, which on the one hand recognizes and celebrates difference but on the other hand denies the significance of difference in relation to racism, discrimination and social inequalities (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). When considered from a critical race theoretical perspective (Decuir & Dixon, 2004), the dominance of a White normative framework serves to normalize White cultural practices and values as a “natural” state of living in the world by which “different” cultural and racial “others” are compared and judged (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). In this context, difference is subsumed by a dominant White paradigm, which focuses on everyone being the same, and should therefore all be treated equally (i.e., as White). This position supports findings by Knowles et al. (2009) that the approach one takes toward diversity and social equity is mediated by the extent to which it threatens the dominant group's claim to power in society. We have demonstrated that these normative cultural practices exist in Australian classrooms, and provide preliminary evidence that the dominant White paradigm likely is transmitted through both individual teacher approaches and values, as well as school context and pedagogical practice.

These findings build on international research, which has reported similar experiences of color-blindness and White normativity in teacher practice, despite the prevalence of racism in

schools (Gillborn, 1995; Kempf, 2012). This research also supports findings in intercultural and multicultural education that a critical approach to cultural diversity and an explicit focus on racism is crucial for dispelling stereotypes, reducing prejudice and promoting positive attitudes toward cultural diversity (Sleeter & Grant, 2009; Zirkel, 2008; Walton et al., 2013b). Further research is needed that examines egalitarian messages in different institutional, social and cultural contexts to understand how difference is made to matter and the impacts these approaches have on students. Finally, although we follow terminology utilized in existing scholarship, we note that the terms ‘blind’ and ‘mute’ create negative connotations with such forms of disability, potentially exacerbating stereotyping and discrimination against those who are differently-abled. As such, future scholarship should explore potential alternatives such as “racially inhabited silence” (Mazzei, 2008), “racelessness” (Kempf, 2012) and color-invisibility.

7. Implications for teacher practice

Echoing studies focused on children (Levy et al., 2005), anti-racism reviews highlight the need for nuanced emphasis on both commonality and difference (Pedersen, Walker, Paradies, & Guerin, 2011; White & Abu-Rayya, 2012). As such, there is a need for explicit discussions of cultural diversity and racism for all students – majority and minority – including those in both more homogenous and culturally diverse schools/communities. Importantly, teachers need to be supported to have these discussions by having on-going professional development opportunities that help them to think about their own privilege with a critical understanding of whiteness. Preferably, this would be offered in pre-service teaching programs, and as argued in this article, these explicit conversations need to begin with students from an early age. This is important for all teachers, but particularly for White teachers who may not have questioned a position of White normativity, especially when their students are likely to be from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. As Mazzei (2008) argues, “if White teachers continue to effectively deny or fail to see their whiteness as raced, then they will continue to see students of colour as ‘Other’ and respond to them from that perception – i.e., they are raced, I am not” (p. 1129). Even if teachers think they are supporting cultural diversity, if discussed in ways that objectify people from different cultures, as in the CPS examples, then their efforts inadvertently may reinforce prejudice.

Our research suggests that a distributive-justice approach to egalitarianism is likely to be the most effective way of promoting acceptance of, and respect for, racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity; fostering positive intergroup contact; and reducing racism and prejudice. This needs to be supported across the school, by school leadership, school staff and the broader community, not only at the classroom level (Walton et al., 2013b). Importantly, even when classroom discussions take a distributive-justice egalitarian approach, a once-off curriculum unit is unlikely to have a significant impact if this is not reinforced across the curriculum and in school policy (Walton et al., 2013b). Additionally, open discussions with parents and the school council about these issues would help garner long-term support. Based on the comments from some of the teachers at LPS, lack of parent support could impact on the extent to which they explored difficult topics in the classroom.

Finally, schools would benefit from conducting an audit of policy and practice in terms of what the school currently does to address racism and promote intercultural understanding to identify strengths and gaps (Walton et al., 2012). For example: Does the school have signage that supports positive and diverse representations of cultural diversity? Does the school have an anti-racism policy? Do school resources such as textbooks support a

contemporary understanding of cultural diversity? Overall, while local school and community contexts influence how children learn about cultural diversity and racism, it benefits students in all schools to explicitly discuss and engage with these issues in order to address ethnic-racial and cultural prejudices, develop positive attitudes toward people from different backgrounds and promote intercultural understanding.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Priest was supported by an NHMRC Postdoctoral Research Fellowship [628897]; and by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation. This project was funded by a Victorian Health Promotion Foundation Innovation Grant.

Appendix

Student Focus Group Schedule

First

1. Introductions: names, cultural background
2. Are there any things that are good about being from your culture?
3. Are there any things are not so good about being from your culture?

Second:

1. Where do you go to find out information about your **own** culture?
2. Where is it easy to get information? Where is it hard?

Third

1. Where do you go to find out information about **other** cultures?
2. Where is it easy to get information? Where is it hard?

Scenarios

Now we have some stories about things that have happened to different children. We'll read them out and then ask you some questions about them.

- First imagine that you are talking to your **mum or dad**, or perhaps your aunty or uncle or a grandparent about these things and you ask them to explain them to you. What do you think your parent would tell you?
- Then, imagine you are talking to your **teacher** about these stories. What do you think your teacher would tell you?
 1. After spending time with Lee on a project at school you start thinking about how interesting Chinese culture is. You begin to wish you were Chinese instead of your own culture. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?
 2. At the community centre where you play basketball, one of your teammates Alex says that he is Aboriginal. You are confused because he has very fair skin and blond hair. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?
 3. At lunchtime at school you hear some children talking a different language that you have never heard before and don't understand. You wonder why they were speaking that "funny" language. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?
 4. In school you have a discussion in class about different cultures. One of your classmates says that we shouldn't talk about different cultures and that everyone should be treated

the same. What do you think your mum/dad would say to you? What would your teacher say?

5. One Saturday morning you and your Mum/Dad decide to go to the Victoria Market. When you are on the tram 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?
6. 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?

Teacher Focus Group Schedule

1. How many children in your classroom have friends from and of racial, ethnic, cultural or religious groups?
 - At school? In the wider community?
 - What cultures do these friends come from?
2. How important do you think it is that students have **friends** from **different** cultural groups?
3. How important do you think it is to teach or talk to students about **their own** cultural group?
 - What do you think the role of the school is to teach or talk to students about their own cultural background?
4. How important is this to you is it to teach or talk to students about **different** cultural groups?
 - What do you think the role of the school is to teach or talk to students about their different cultural groups?

Scenarios

- How would you respond?
- At the time?
- Later?
 1. After school you're speaking with a student from your classroom and they start telling you about how interesting Chinese culture is. They then tell you that they wish they were Chinese instead of their own culture.
 2. During class, one of your students comes to you and says he is confused and has some questions. Last night one of his teammates at basketball told him that he was Aboriginal. Your student is wondering how this can be because his teammate has very fair skin and light colored hair.
 3. One of your students approaches you and tells you that he/she has heard some other kids speaking a different language at lunchtime that day. Your student asks you why those kids were speaking that "funny" language.
 4. After a class discussion, one of your students comes to your desk and tells you that they believe we shouldn't talk about different cultures and that everyone should be treated the same.
 5. On a class excursion that involves riding a tram with your students, it becomes obvious that nobody will sit beside a dark-skinned man with an empty seat next to him.
 6. After school, a student comes to you and says their aunty has told them only to be friends with children from their own cultural group because others cannot be trusted. The student seems confused and asks you what he/she should do.

References

- Aboud, F. E., & Fenwick, V. (1999). Exploring and evaluating school-based interventions to reduce prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues, 55*, 767–786.

- Apfelbaum, E. P., Norton, M. I., & Sommers, S. R. (2012). Racial color-blindness: emergence, practice and implications. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21, 205–209.
- Apfelbaum, E. P., Pauker, K., & Ambady, N. (2008). Learning (not) to talk about race: when older children underperform in social categorization. *Developmental Psychology*, 44, 1513–1518.
- Apfelbaum, E. P., Pauker, K., Sommers, S. R., & Ambady, N. (2010). In blind pursuit of racial equality? *Psychological Science*, 21, 1587–1592.
- Apfelbaum, E. P., Sommers, S. R., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Seeing race and seeming racist? Evaluating strategic colorblindness in social interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95, 918–932.
- Appiah, K. A., & Gutmann, A. (1996). *Color conscious: The political morality of race*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Arenson, R. (2013). Egalitarianism. In E. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Summer Ed.). Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/egalitarianism/>.
- Aveling, N. (2007). Anti-racism in schools: a question of leadership? *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 28(1), 69–85.
- Barr, S. C., & Neville, H. A. (2008). Examination of the link between parental racial socialization message and racial ideology among Black college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 34, 131–155.
- Bell, J. M., & Hartmann, D. (2007). Diversity in everyday discourse: the cultural ambiguities and consequences of 'hippy talk'. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 895–914.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2010). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Plymouth Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Boutte, G. S., Lopez-Robertson, J., & Powers-Costello, E. (2011). Moving beyond colorblindness in early childhood classrooms. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(5), 335–342.
- Castagno, A. E. (2008). 'I don't want to hear that!': legitimating whiteness through silence in schools. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39, 314–333.
- Cho, S. (2009). Post-racialism. *Law Review*, 94, 1589–1649.
- Decuir, J. T., & Dixon, A. D. (2004). 'So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there': using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33, 26–31.
- Deutsch, M. (1975). Equity, equality, and need: what determines which value will be used as the basis of distributive justice? *Journal of Social Issues*, 31, 137–149.
- DiAngelo, R., & Sensoy, O. (2010). "OK, I get it! Now tell me how to do it!": why we can't just tell you how to do critical multicultural education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 12(2), 97–102.
- Elford, G. (2012). Equality of status and distributive equality. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 46, 353–367.
- Gillborn, D. (1995). *Racism and antiracism in real schools*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. (1992). Beyond "culture": space, identity, and the politics of difference. *Cultural Anthropology*, 7(1), 6–23.
- Hollingsworth, L. (2009). Complicated conversations: exploring race and ideology in an elementary classroom. *Urban Education*, 44(1), 30–58.
- Hughes, D., Rodriguez, J., & Smith, E. P. (2006). Parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices: a review of research and directions for future study. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(5), 747–770.
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. (1997). *Bringing them home: report of the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*. Canberra, ACT: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.
- Kempf, A. (2012). Colour-blind praxis in Havana: interrogating Cuban teacher discourses of race and racelessness. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 16(2), 246–267.
- Killen, M., Rutland, A., & Ruck, M. D. (2011). Promoting equity, tolerance, and justice in childhood. *Social Policy Report*, 25(4), 1–25.
- Knowles, E. D., Lowery, B. S., Hogan, C. M., & Chow, R. M. (2009). On the malleability of ideology: motivated construals of color blindness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(4), 857–869.
- Kondo, D. K. (1990). *Crafting selves: Power, gender, and discourses of identity in a Japanese workplace*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lentin, A. (2008). After anti-racism? *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11(3), 311–331.
- Leonardo, Z. (2011). After the glow: race ambivalence and other educational prognoses. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43(6), 675–698.
- Lesane-Brown, C. L. (2006). A review of race socialization within Black families. *Developmental Review*, 26, 400–426.
- Levy, S. R., West, T. L., Bigler, R. S., Karafantis, D. M., Ramirez, L., & Velilla, E. (2005). Messages about the uniqueness and similarities of people: Impact on U.S. Black and Latino youth. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 26(6), 714–733.
- Mazzei, L. A. (2008). Silence speaks: whiteness revealed in the absence of voice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 1125–1136.
- Moon, S., Jung, J., Bang, Y. S., Kwon, K. Y., & In, Y. S. (2009). "I don't see color; I only see children!": a study of teachers' color-blindness for Asian students/family. *US-China Education Review*, 6(8), 80–84.
- Neblett, E. W., White, R. L., & Ford, K. R. (2008). Patterns of racial socialization and psychological adjustment: can parental communications about race reduce the impact of racial discrimination? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18(3), 477–515.
- Ono, K. A. (2010). Post-racism: a theory of the "post-" as political strategy. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 34, 227–233.
- Paluck, E. L., & Green, D. P. (2009). Prejudice reduction: what works? A review and assessment of research and practice. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 339–367.
- Paradies, Y. (2005). Anti-racism and Indigenous Australians. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 5, 1–28.
- Pedersen, A., Walker, I., Paradies, Y., & Guerin, B. (2011). How to cook rice: a review of ingredients for teaching anti-prejudice. *Australian Psychologist*, 46(1), 55–63.
- Plaut, V. C. (2010). Diversity science: why and how difference makes a difference. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21, 77–99.
- Plaut, V. C., Thomas, K. M., & Goren, M. J. (2009). Is multiculturalism or color blindness better for minorities? *Psychological Science*, 20(4), 444–445.
- Pollock, M. (2004). *Colormute: Race talk dilemmas in an American high school*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Ryan, A. M., Gee, G. C., & Laflamme, D. F. (2006). The association between self-reported discrimination, physical health and blood pressure: findings from African Americans, Black immigrants, and Latino immigrants in New Hampshire. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor & Underserved*, 17, 116–132.
- Ryan, C. S., Hunt, J. S., Weible, J. A., Peterson, C. R., & Casas, J. F. (2007). Multicultural and colorblind ideology, stereotypes, and ethnocentrism among Black and White Americans. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 10(4), 617–637.
- Sasaki, S. J., & Vorauer, J. D. (2013). Ignoring versus exploring differences between groups: effects of salient color-blindness and multiculturalism on intergroup attitudes and behavior. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 7(4), 246–259.
- Sen, A. (1979, May). *Equality of what? Paper presented at Tanner lectures on human values*. Stanford University. Retrieved from <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~ston0235/3302/readings/sen.pdf>.
- Skerrett, A. (2011). English teachers' racial literacy knowledge and practice. *Race, Ethnicity & Education*, 14(3), 313–330.
- Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (2009). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class and gender* (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Smith, E. P., Atkins, J., & Connell, C. M. (2003). Family, school, and community factors and relationships to racial-ethnic attitudes and academic achievement. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 32, 159–173.
- Temkin, L. S. (1993). *Inequality*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Theodorou, E. (2011). 'Children at our school are integrated. No one sticks out': Greek-Cypriot teachers' perceptions of integration of immigrant children in Cyprus. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24(4), 501–520.
- Thomas, S., & Kearney, J. (2008). Teachers working in culturally diverse classrooms: implications for the development of professional standards and for teacher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 36(2), 105–120.
- Ullucci, K., & Battey, D. (2011). Exposing color blindness/grounding color consciousness: challenges for teacher education. *Urban Education*, 46(6), 1195–1225.
- Vorauer, J. D., Gagnon, A., & Sasaki, S. J. (2009). Salient intergroup ideology and intergroup interaction. *Psychological Science*, 20(7), 838–845.
- Walton, J., Paradies, Y., Priest, N., Waters, E., Wertheim, E., Freeman, E., et al. (2012). *Evaluation of the intercultural understanding field trial*. Melbourne, VIC: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- Walton, J., Priest, N., & Paradies, Y. (2013a). 'It depends how you're saying it': the complexities of everyday racism. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 7(1), 74–90.
- Walton, J., Priest, N., & Paradies, Y. (2013b). Identifying and developing effective approaches to foster intercultural understanding in schools. *Intercultural Education*, 24(3), 181–194.
- White, F. A., & Abu-Rayya, H. M. (2012). A dual identity-electronic contact (DIEC) experiment promoting short- and long-term intergroup harmony. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(3), 597–608.
- Winkler, E. N. (2010). "I learn being black from everywhere I go": color blindness, travel, and the formation of racial attitudes among African American adolescents. *Sociological Studies of Children & Youth*, 13, 423–453.
- Zirkel, S. (2008). The influence of multicultural educational practices on student outcomes and intergroup relations. *Teachers College Record*, 110, 1147–1181.