

**Productive disruptions? Responding to racism  
and diversity in the workplace through anti-racism  
practice within local government in Australia**

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## Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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January, 2016

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## Abstract

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Racism is too commonplace within workplaces and can undermine the benefits of workplace diversity. Racism has particular force when it is systemic or embedded, a phenomenon known as institutional racism. Despite its prevalence, there has been limited theoretical and empirical focus on institutional racism and how to address it through effective anti-racism practice. Challenging racism is also increasingly entangled with addressing the tensions of diversity. When not well managed, workplace diversity can exacerbate racial tension and lead to conflict and negative work outcomes.

The aim of this research was to study the nature of and responses to institutional racism and diversity within workplace/employment contexts. A further aim was to understand the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity and anti-racism practice. These aims were investigated through the implementation of a workplace diversity and anti-racism intervention within two local government organisations in Victoria, Australia. Using a design of case study and ethnographic research, multiple methods of data collection and analysis were employed, including 18 months of participant-observation, 20 key-informant interviews and analyses of workplace surveys ( $n = 403$ ;  $n = 366$ ) and organisational documents.

This study contributes to literature on institutional racism, workplace diversity and anti-racism and brings together understanding of these interlinked concepts in an organisational level analysis and in the context of Australian local government for the first time. It reveals the importance of context, culture, structure and agency in understanding institutional racism, diversity and anti-racism practice. In particular, Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture was adapted to categorise how racism and support for diversity and anti-racism co-existed at different levels of organisational culture within local government, including signage and symbols in the physical environment, as well as practices and ceremonies that acknowledged diverse groups. The study also applied Ahmed's (2006) notion of non-performative anti-racism (i.e. gaps between performative commitments and practice) and 'followed around' commitments to diversity and anti-racism in order to examine the extent to which statements had translated into action.

Findings of this study support other research on the benefits of workplace diversity, including enhanced organisational effectiveness, increased debate and creativity, and opportunities for social bonding. However, there were also challenges to diversity, including racism and tensions regarding the accommodation of cultural difference. In the workplace, racism occurred at both the interpersonal and institutional level and was manifest through prejudiced attitudes and behaviours as well as organisational structures, policies, practices and cultures. More subtly, racism was expressed as discomfort with diversity and resistance to the accommodation of difference, pointing to the racialised nature of place and structures of power and privilege. In terms of anti-racism practice, this study found that commitments to anti-racism were both performative and non-performative (Ahmed, 2006). Generally, there was a preference for 'softer' anti-racism strategies, while 'harder' structural level interventions, such as significantly altering recruitment practices, were met with resistance. Anti-racism was also non-performative, where observation of verbal support for a positive discrimination policy revealed gaps between statements of commitment and practice. However, the presence of diversity and anti-racism intervention had the potential to disrupt racism and alleviate resistance to institutional change. In particular, visible commitment by organisational leaders and other change agents helped to drive and sustain change, while workplace cultures that valued diversity established accountabilities around stated commitments.

These findings, including differences between the case study sites, underscore the importance of context, culture, structure and agency in understanding institutional racism and adopting workplace diversity and anti-racism approaches that build on local, contextual factors. These contextual factors can generate different and changeable outcomes and create the potential for distinct possibilities over space and time. Diversity and anti-racism co-exist with institutional racism. Despite its structural and universal drives, racism can be disrupted by the presence of diversity in the workplace and inclusive workplace structures, cultures, policies and practices that support and sustain normative commitments to diversity and anti-racism.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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Racism is commonplace in workplaces and can be linked with a number of negative social, economic and health outcomes (J. Cunningham & Paradies, 2013; Deitch et al., 2003; Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999; Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, 2009). Racism also has the potential to undermine the economic and social benefits of workforce diversity (Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Triana et al., 2015). Racism has particular force when it is systemic or embedded, a phenomenon referred to as institutional racism. Much research and practice has focused on understanding how racism operates at the individual and group level (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). While it is necessary to understand and challenge individual attitudes and behaviours, there is also a need to change the broader discourse and structures of society that keep racial inequalities intact (Essed, 1991; Omi & Winant, 1994; Paradies, 2006b). On the whole, the concept of institutional racism has been poorly defined, where current definitions neglect the role of intention and human agency in favour of structural factors (Berard, 2008; Feagin & Feagin, 1986). Additionally, emerging empirical studies (Came, 2014; Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007) have shown that institutional racism is contextual and is likely to present differently across a range of settings (e.g. public health, employment, justice and policing, education etc.). Therefore, a key goal of this thesis was to broaden the knowledge of institutional racism within workplace and employment settings.

Alongside the importance of studying institutional racism, there is a need for further research and theory on anti-racism. There is general agreement that anti-racism is not well conceptualised, where there has been a lack of attention to both anti-racism theory and practice (Babacan, 2007; O'Brien, 2009; Paradies, 2015). There is also a need to develop and test appropriate anti-racism strategies, where research has shown that anti-racism activity has generally been under-researched and poorly evaluated (Paluck & Green, 2009; Pedersen, Walker, Paradies, & Guerin, 2011). By contrast, there is now a substantial body of literature in the area of diversity management, including increasing research on the effectiveness of diversity strategies, such as training (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008; Dobbin, Schrage, & Kalev, 2015; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Kalinoski et al., 2013). Studies in organisational behaviour and human resource

management have also emphasised the importance of organisational culture, structures and policies, alongside the role of leaders, managers and other change agents in supporting diversity and influencing cultural change (Cox, 1993; Davies et al., 2000; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Schein, 2004).

There is increasing recognition of the role of organisational culture in workforce diversity intervention (Bazzoli et al., 2004; Schein, 1996; Scott et al., 2003), however there has been less understanding of these dynamics within 'real-life' workplace settings (Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Fine, 1996; Wrench, 2005). Drawing on Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture and using ethnographic research methods, this study seeks to respond to this knowledge gap by examining how support for/resistance to diversity and anti-racism manifest at different levels of organisational culture. Taking a more critical stance, Ahmed (2006, 2012) has revealed gaps between performative commitments to diversity and actual practice. In this thesis, I take up Ahmed's (2006, p. 105; 2012) proposition to 'follow' organisational commitments to diversity and anti-racism 'around' and check whether such commitments 'do' what they say they will do.

Challenging racism has become increasingly entangled with addressing the tensions of diversity (Berman & Paradies, 2010). While there is now well-established evidence of the benefits of workforce diversity, such as including productivity, innovation, enhanced team dynamics and organisational performance and social bonding, when not well managed, diversity can lead to conflict and negative work outcomes (Adler, 1997; Cox et al., 1991; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Roberson & Kulick, 2007). Of particular relevance to this study is evidence that racism has the potential to undermine the benefits of workplace diversity (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Triana et al., 2015). As in broader social contexts, there is an urgent need to address tensions regarding the accommodation of difference, including the sense of 'loss' among dominant cultural groups when faced with increasing diversity (Forrest & Dunn, 2006b; Hage, 1998; Mansouri & Ebanda de B'éri, 2014). As this thesis will examine, such tensions and anxieties also manifest in workplace contexts, such as through discomfort with diversity and overt and subtle forms of racism and resistance. However, despite these challenges, a starting point for this thesis is the assumption that workplace diversity is a productive disruption of exclusive cultural norms that might stifle change. I argue that anti-racism intervention provides an avenue through which



the tensions associated with diversity can be worked through and transformed, and thus leads to enhanced organisational outcomes.

Finally, this research is situated in the context of supporting workforce diversity and addressing racism within local government in Australia. While local government in Australia is playing an important and increasing role in the local implementation of multiculturalism and settlement policy, there is also a strong case for local council workforces to be more representative of the diverse communities they serve (Mansouri & Strong, 2007; Pagonis, 2013; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). In the context of changing community demographics, a more systemic approach to workforce diversity in local government offers the possibility of a stronger alignment with principles of representative bureaucracy (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997).

## **1.1 Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to study the nature of and responses to institutional racism and diversity within workplace/employment contexts. A further aim is to understand the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity and anti-racism practice. These aims are investigated through the implementation of a workplace diversity and anti-racism intervention aimed at supporting diversity and addressing racism within local government organisations in Victoria, Australia. Alongside this overarching aim, the project included three more specific objectives, as follows:

### **1. How does institutional racism manifest within workplace/employment contexts?**

To address this objective, Chapter 2 identifies key theories on race, racism and prejudice across a range of disciplines. I examine the changing nature of race and racism and consider how racism operates in relation to ideology, power and privilege (Essed, 2001) (Essed, 2001; R. Miles, 1989; Paradies, 2006b). Chapter 2 also investigates the concept of institutional racism, including critiques about how institutional racism has commonly been defined and neglected attention to the role of human agency (Berard, 2008; R. Miles, 1989). I also examine the contextual nature of institutional racism and its increasing application within a range of institutional settings (Ahmed, 2012; Came, 2014; Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007). A review of interdisciplinary literature in Chapter 4 provides further insight into the nature and impacts of workplace racism. Specifically, I

discuss how workplace racism manifests at both the interpersonal and institutional level and in subtle and overt forms.

Empirically, Chapter 6 investigates experiences of racism through analysis of workplace surveys and interviews conducted with council employees at two local councils in Victoria. Chapter 7 deepens the inquiry by examining how racism operates consciously and unconsciously, such as through underlying assumptions about dominant cultural values and norms. Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 examine tensions between structural barriers and the role of human agents in initiating and influencing change. Specifically, Chapter 8 considers the example of recruitment as a key employment barrier for members of minority groups. Chapter 9 turns to the role of individual agents, including leaders, managers and diversity champions, who can play both a supportive and inhibitive role in workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention.

## **2. What are the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity within local government in Australia?**

Alongside understanding institutional forms of racism, this thesis is also concerned with studying the perceived benefits and challenges of workplace diversity. To meet this objective, Chapter 2 introduces the concept of diversity and its articulation within multicultural policy and discourse. This includes discussions on organisations accommodating diversity and its potential and limitations as an anti-racism practice (Berman & Paradies, 2010; Castles, Cope, & Kalantzis, 1988). Literature outlined in Chapter 4 is more specific to workplace contexts and examines increasing trends towards diversity management discourse and practice, often instead of anti-racism programs.

Empirically, Chapter 6 draws on interview data to examine how council employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire articulate the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity within local government settings. In this chapter and subsequent chapters, racism and tensions about cultural difference are presented as key challenges to the successful incorporation of workforce diversity. Nonetheless, in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I provide examples of how challenges to diversity can be worked through and overcome, such as through changes to individual attitudes and dominant cultural norms,

leading to enhanced levels of productivity and innovation and the incorporation of new forms of social bonding.

### **3. What are the advantages and challenges of workplace anti-racism?**

The final objective of this thesis is to examine the advantages and challenges of workplace anti-racism. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical outline of anti-racism, including its heterogeneity and application within grassroots social movements and increasingly, the adoption of state-based forms of anti-racism (Bonnett, 2000; Lentin, 2008). I discuss dilemmas arising from versions of anti-racism authored by the state, while at the same time examining the potential for anti-racism to come out of the margins (Gilroy, 1992) and enter ‘mainstream’ institutional structures. In Chapters 2 and 4, other barriers to anti-racism practice are outlined, including the lack of mainstream support for anti-racism and its politically complex and confronting nature.

Empirically, Chapter 7 examines the role of organisational culture in anti-racism intervention. Schein’s (2004) model of organisational culture is applied to understand the impact of workplace on anti-racism initiatives. This organisational culture is perceptible in cultural artifacts (such as language, the physical environment, ceremonies) and how such forms and practices may serve to create a welcoming environment for diverse groups<sup>1</sup>. Chapter 7 also examines the role of organisational philosophies and values in supporting workforce diversity/anti-racism, including consideration of the racialised nature of space and the existence of dominant cultural norms as a challenge to anti-racism (Delaney, 2002; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Chapters 8 and 9 examine other challenges to confronting of institutional anti-racism, including the extent to which statements of commitment to anti-racism lead to action (Ahmed, 2006, 2012), and the role of organisational leaders, managers and diversity champions in creating buy-in for diversity issues, and influencing and embedding cultural change.

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<sup>1</sup> Given contention over terms such as ‘diverse groups’ where there is an assumption that ‘diverse’ refers only to people from ‘non-white’ backgrounds (discussed in Chapter 7), in this thesis I alternative between different terms, including diverse groups/communities, minority-group/majority-group members/backgrounds, and dominant/subordinate groups.

## 1.2 Context for the Study

I undertook this study as a PhD student involved in a program called *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*<sup>2</sup>. This broader program was aimed at supporting diversity and addressing racism across multiple settings (e.g. workplaces, schools, retail and whole-of-community settings) and using a range of evidence-based strategies (e.g. training and organisational assessments through to social marketing campaigns). It was implemented over a four-year period in two local government areas<sup>3</sup> in Victoria, Australia.

Two councils, Stoneway City Council<sup>4</sup>, located in an outer-metropolitan area of Melbourne and Corrington Shire<sup>5</sup>, located in regional Victoria, were funded to implement the program in partnership with stakeholders across a range of sectors. These sectors included public health, local government, education, research, media and the wider community. The program also sought to work at local level, which aligns with research that indicates racism and racist attitudes vary in relation to place (Bonnett, 1996; Dunn & McDonald, 2001; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000), thereby necessitating the targeting of anti-racism strategies at the local level (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004; Forrest & Dunn, 2007a).

Responding to racism in areas where it occurs is consistent with research that has also found local racism to be more prevalent in particular settings, including in public places, workplaces, education and schools (Forrest & Dunn, 2007b). *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* also had a strong evaluation component and aimed to build evidence and empirical support for ‘what works’<sup>6</sup> in the implementation of diversity and anti-racism initiatives. As discussed above, this approach responds to research which has shown that anti-racism activity has been poorly evaluated, with a lack of tools and resources available to guide appropriate action (Paluck & Green, 2009; Pedersen et al., 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>3</sup> In Australia, a local government area is defined as a geographical area that is the responsibility of an elected local government council.

<sup>4</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>5</sup> A pseudonym.

<sup>6</sup> The notion of ‘what works’ or evidence-based policy implementation is a common policy catchphrase used within a range of settings and also a term I heard consistently in my research field site.

Consistent with the aims of this study, my research focused on the implementation of the program within the workplace settings at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Primarily, I observed the process of implementing a Workplace Diversity and Anti-racism Assessment Tool (herein Workplace Assessment Tool) within the two councils. I also analysed workplace surveys collected through the program evaluation and examined other themes that had relevance to my research aims and objectives through the broader program evaluation and implementation. My involvement in the program and the methods used in this study are discussed in Chapter 5.

To provide further context, it is important to note that the focus of this study, and some aspects of the program itself, was on local government organisations as workplaces rather than as service providers (Paradies et al., 2009; Trener, Franklin, & Paradies, 2010). Therefore, this study is situated in the context of workplace practices that aim to achieve fairness and diversity among employees, including human resources practices, such as recruitment, remuneration and promotion practices and organisational culture and cultural change. For those involved in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*, this approach was commonly described as a conceptual shift in that it involved a different way of working with the community (i.e. in contrast to traditional roles in service delivery). However, as will be discussed in this thesis, and particularly in Chapter 6, there are important intersections between these various roles, where enhanced workforce diversity can lead to improved service delivery to diverse communities.

### **1.3 Professional and Personal Background**

The questions that I ask in this thesis have also been present in my own work as an individual committed to social change. These questions are what led me to be involved in a program working alongside others committed to anti-racist<sup>7</sup> goals. This journey has involved varying degrees of conceptual shifts, and can be best described as a process of unpacking my own racialised identity. I have questioned whether it was necessary to provide my own personal and professional background, whether this was the place to do it, for what purpose and to whom I would be describing it. I put myself in the narrative here not because it is the main story I wish to tell, but with the intention of

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<sup>7</sup> While I use the term ‘anti-racist’ here (and ‘anti-racism’ elsewhere), this was not the preferred terminology used for *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Spaces*. See Chapter 7 for more on the use of language and terminology.

making my role and background more visible as a white person engaged in anti-racism activity.

Like others, I am part of and benefit from the same forms and practices that I critique (Land, 2012; Probyn, 2004). While concepts of racial identity are fluid, changing and politically complex (Back & Solomos, 2000; Gilroy, 1991; Paradies, 2006a), as scholars from both white and non-white backgrounds have pointed out, white people's engagement in anti-racism and solidarity struggles can be particularly fraught (Cowlshaw, 2004; Land, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Many white people, like myself, do not have a lived experience of racism (Gilroy, 1991) and indeed, due to its privileging effects, often benefit from racism and racist practices (Paradies, 2005)<sup>8</sup>. Came (2012, p. 30) puts this well when she says that a commitment to anti-racism 'involves being self-reflective enough to know that the 'personal is political''. This provides an important case for making white racial identities more explicit, which is not generally something that 'white' people are used to doing<sup>9</sup>. It is because of these tensions, and my commitment to reflexive anti-racism practice, that I provide my own personal and professional background here.

My ancestors were migrants from Ireland and Britain, who settled in Australia more than five generations ago in rural areas in northern Victoria and poor, working class parts of Melbourne. Whilst my family is now middle-class, it was not always so, with my father making his way through education on a succession of scholarships, supplemented by work in a biscuit factory. The starting point for my involvement in 'social justice' was in high school when my politics teacher revealed to me the untold history of Aboriginal<sup>10</sup> injustice in Australia. This was in stark contrast to everything I had learnt up until this point. The story I knew was about explorers, settlers and missionaries, along with the usual counter narratives of convicts and bushrangers. Only two pages of my Australian history book showed pictures of Aboriginal 'natives' frozen in time. Like

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<sup>8</sup> I am conscious that declarations of whiteness and confessional tales can work to reinforce racism and white privilege, while doing little to change broader social and institutional discourses and practices (Ahmed, 2004; Bonnett, 1996). On the other hand, and as Cowlshaw (2004, p. 64) has pointed out, 'all racial identities need to be recognised, not *just* as a limit or privilege but *also* as sources of particular insight and the only place from which real engagement can begin.'

<sup>9</sup> Rather, as Paradies (2006a, p. 3) has suggested in the context of Indigenous identity, Indigenous people are 'often required to publicly confess our intimate subjectivities' in order to challenge prevailing stereotypes. White subjects on the other hand, due to the normative nature white identity (Frankenberg, 1993), usually do not experience the same kinds of interrogation.

<sup>10</sup> As there are different preferences regarding terminology for referring to Aboriginal people, in this thesis, I alternate between Aboriginal, Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous.

others, this experience confirmed a feeling that there was something I had not been told (Reynolds, 1999). As I made my way through university, it was the ‘Indigenous’ subjects that I gravitated towards. I was fortunate to have Aboriginal educators<sup>11</sup>, who took my sense of not knowing to even greater depths. The emotions that accompanied my learning were anger, sadness, guilt and shame.

During this time, I also had the opportunity to gain work experience through a public affairs internship. I sought placement at an Aboriginal organisation, wanting to immerse myself in the issues. From the handful of letters I sent out, only one organisation got back to me. ANTaR (Australians Working for Land Justice and Reconciliation) Victoria<sup>12</sup> was not exactly ‘Aboriginal’, but consisted of other white people like me, wanting to *do* something. Probably at the time this did not fit with my imagined ideals of ‘helping the Aboriginal cause’, although it is clear to me now it was exactly where I needed to be. Rather than directly involving myself in Indigenous struggles, first I needed to educate myself. At ANTaR, I had found a place where I could talk freely about the issues and my confusion around what I could do to ‘help’.

Years later, I was employed by ANTaR and worked on a funded ‘reconciliation’ project. As a non-profit organisation, the injection of resources helped to progress our work of supporting Indigenous campaigns, lobbying governments, and continuing community education among the non-Indigenous community, many of whom had become mobilised in the ‘reconciliation movement’<sup>13</sup> but whose interest was beginning to wane. Towards the end of this project, and after a slow but steady engagement with the Indigenous community in Victoria, it seemed for the first time that we could articulate our role as (predominately) white people working in this space. Our role, at least initially, was not to be overly involved in Indigenous campaigns (unless we were

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<sup>11</sup> In particular, I would like to acknowledge Wayne Atkinson, Marcia Langton and Gary Foley who influenced my thinking during my time at university.

<sup>12</sup> As per ANTaR Victoria’s website ([www.antarvictoria.org.au](http://www.antarvictoria.org.au)), ANTaR is an independent, national network of mainly non-Indigenous organisations and individuals working in support of justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. ANTaR Victoria is a state subsidiary of ANTaR and has gone through several name changes, beginning as DON’T (Defenders of Native Title). At nearly every AGM, there are debates over the name, particularly in response to Aboriginal concerns about native title not delivering land justice. As an organisation already struggling for public recognition, the acronym ANTaR has remained, however the reference to native title has been dropped with the by-line for ANTaR Victoria now *Working for Land Justice and Reconciliation*.

<sup>13</sup> In Chapter 3, I outline aspects of the reconciliation process in Australia in more detail.

specifically asked to), but to inform and raise awareness within the non-Indigenous community (i.e. create awareness and address racism within the ‘white’ community)<sup>14</sup>.

My professional involvement since this formative time has included more direct work on Indigenous programs. Primarily I worked on a government funded Indigenous education and leadership program. Consistent with what I had learnt at ANTaR, I saw myself as an intermediary, in the background rather than in the foreground. Though at times, I was confronted by my whiteness and even wondered what it was I was doing there<sup>15</sup>. On some level, I still needed to confront issues of racism more deeply, which became the starting point for my scholarly involvement in anti-racism.

While I provide my own background here, this thesis is about other people’s stories. In particular, this thesis is an ethnographic study of the process of change within institutional systems and seeks to understand why some things change and others remain stuck (Ahmed, 2012). In particular, this thesis asks key questions about how diversity and racism, inclusion and exclusion, privilege and disadvantage function, both consciously and unconsciously, overtly and subtly within organisational systems.

## 1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is made up of ten chapters, as outlined below. The first five chapters provide context to the study and engage with key literature and theory that have informed this research, including my methodological approach. Following this, the empirical findings of the research are presented in four chapters. The final chapter draws together the findings of the study and discusses implications for further research.

**Chapter 2** locates the study theoretically by introducing and critically engaging with theoretical concepts of racism, institutional racism, anti-racism and diversity. I discuss how racism operates in relation to: ideology, power and privilege at the individual level; collective group practices and processes; and within social and institutional structures, practices and discourses. I also consider anti-racism theory and practice, with a focus on state versus grassroots forms of anti-racism and the political complexity of anti-racism practice. Finally, this chapter considers the concept of diversity and its articulation

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<sup>14</sup> According to Land (2012, p. 139), the case for white people to work among their own people has a ‘long genealogy’ within Black consciousness/Black Power movements and their allies.

<sup>15</sup> See also Kowal (2007, p. 37) who has asked, ‘what the hell are we white people actually doing here??’



within multicultural policy and discourse, including tensions associated with accommodating diversity and the limitations of multiculturalism as an anti-racism policy.

**Chapter 3** orients the study to the Australian context. I outline the national policy context for understanding diversity, racism and anti-racism in Australia and show how a history of racism and exclusion has developed alongside support for diversity and some forms of Indigenous recognition. This chapter also considers support for diversity and anti-racism at the local level. It examines the changing role of local government in Australia and elsewhere and outlines increasing support for diversity and anti-racism at the local level. Finally, this chapter engages with research on the nature of attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism in Australia, with a focus on workplace contexts. I examine key groups who are affected by racism in Australia and the nature of labour market discrimination and disadvantage.

**Chapter 4** reviews literature on racism and diversity in workplace/employment settings. It considers how racism manifests at the interpersonal versus institutional level and in overt, subtle, direct and indirect forms. I provide evidence on the impact of workplace racism, including to individuals, organisations and society as a whole. This chapter also critically engages with the concept of managing diversity in the workplace and key dilemmas that arise in diversity practice. This includes analysis of the 'business case' for diversity in the workplace, including the increasingly acknowledged role of context and a need to move beyond traditional economic arguments for diversity. This chapter examines strategies to support workplace diversity and anti-racism, with a focus on systemic intervention. Finally, I review literatures on the role of organisational culture in organisational change and present Schein's (2004) schema of organisational culture as a key framework applied in this research.

**Chapter 5** justifies the philosophical approach and methods used in this study. The research design included case study research and ethnography, with participant observation and semi-structured interviews as the main methods of data collection. I discuss the strengths and challenges of the research methods and key ethical issues and power dynamics that emerged during the research process. This chapter also outlines the process of data analysis, including analysis of fieldnotes, interviews and secondary analysis of workplace surveys and organisational documents. Finally, this chapter

demonstrates trustworthiness and authenticity of the project and how it established the validity and reliability of the research.

**Chapters 6-9** make up the empirical part of the thesis. **Chapter 6** sets the scene and introduces the case study sites of Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. This chapter provides context to the study through analysis of workplace surveys conducted with council employees. I analyse demographic data collected through the surveys with Census data to consider the extent to which council workforces were representative of local community demographics. Key survey themes that have relevance for this study included employee perceptions of: organisational commitments to diversity; equal access to opportunities and decision-making in council; anti-discrimination policies and practices; attitudes towards diversity; and, experiences of racism. Along with survey data, this chapter draws on interviews with council employees to examine the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity in local government in Australia.

**Chapter 7** focuses on the role of organisational culture in workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. I apply Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture and other literature, from fields such as cultural competency and critical race studies (Ahmed, 2006, 2012) to examine how organisational culture manifests at different levels, including organisational cultural artifacts, espoused values and beliefs and underlying assumptions. To illustrate these issues, I draw on ethnographic observations of discussions about the role of language, the physical environment and other organisational practices (such as ceremonies and events) that aim to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for members of diverse groups. I also analyse the nature of commitments to diversity and how workforce diversity values are articulated and espoused at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Finally, this chapter considers the racialised nature of space as revealed in contestations over accommodating diversity in the workplace.

**Chapter 8** examines the role of structure in workplace diversity, racism and anti-racism intervention. It investigates the nature of employment barriers, particularly in the area of recruitment, for job applicants from minority-group backgrounds at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. This chapter also draws on observations of council

employee discussions of strategies to address employment barriers at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire.

**Chapter 9** focuses on the role of agents in supporting and/or resisting organisational change at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Specifically, I examine the role of organisational leaders and managers in creating buy-in for diversity issues, making statements of commitment to diversity visible and influencing cultural change. This chapter also considers the role of other diversity champions and change agents who are commonly in diversity-related roles and in close proximity to diversity communities (Ahmed et al., 2006). Finally, this chapter examines the process of creating broader support for workforce diversity and anti-racism through creating ownership among other organisational members.

**Chapter 10** draws together the findings of this research. I discuss how the aims and objectives of the study were met and identify key contributions of the research, including furthering understanding of the benefits and challenges of diversity in the workplace; the nature of institutional racism in workplace/employment contexts; the advantages and challenges of workplace anti-racism. Chapter 10 also includes a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research methodology and implications of the research for further studies, including the importance of context, culture, structure and agency in workplace diversity and anti-racism practice.

# Chapter 2

## Theoretical Underpinnings

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### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes and critically engages with theoretical ideas about racism, anti-racism and diversity. Scholarly understandings of these concepts originate from a range of disciplines, including, sociology, psychology, human geography and critical discourse studies, among others. I argue that in understanding and addressing complex issues such as racism, there is a need for interdisciplinary study, where new insights can be gleaned through combining varying theoretical perspectives. Specifically, I chart the historical origins of racism and racialised discourse within different theoretical traditions and show how these origins have informed contemporary discourses and understandings of racism. I also consider how racism operates in relation to ideology, power and privilege.

As this thesis is concerned with systemic issues, this chapter examines the concept of institutional racism. Specifically, this chapter considers how institutional racism has commonly been defined and key critiques of these definitions. This includes debates regarding the role of intention versus the effects of institutional racism alongside unresolved tensions between the structural bases of inequality and disadvantage and the role of individual agency. This section also examines the contextual nature of institutional racism, where there is increasing evidence that institutional racism manifests differently within distinct contexts.

Next, this chapter engages with anti-racism. Again, this includes an examination of the historical origins of anti-racism and how these origins have informed contemporary debates. Just as theorists have discussed the changing nature of racism and racist discourse, anti-racism is also diverse. Consistent with the heterogeneity of anti-racism and the aims of this study, I analyse forms of anti-racism that have arisen out of grassroots movements versus those that have been developed and/or endorsed by the state. In the context of lack of widespread support for anti-racist projects (Gilroy, 2002), I examine whether different understandings of anti-racism can be better integrated, noting the political complexity of this task.

Diversity is the final concept discussed in this chapter. Diversity can be conceptualised and studied at the macro, meso and micro-level within the social sciences, with important intersections between these different levels of analysis. This chapter introduces diversity at the macro-level through attention to multicultural policy and ideology. I examine multiculturalism as the key mechanism for managing diversity within western, liberal societies and discuss tensions in relation to the accommodation of cultural difference. I then discuss the limits and potential of multiculturalism as an anti-racism policy, including critiques about the extent to which multicultural policy has addressed racism and other forms of structural inequality.

## **2.2 Theorising Racism**

### **The need for an interdisciplinary approach**

Racism has variously been defined in relation to beliefs, attitudes, behaviours or practices that give rise to avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources and opportunities across different groups in society on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture or religion (J. M. Jones, 1997; R. Miles, 1989; Paradies, 2006b; Paradies et al., 2009). Although a distinct phenomenon, religious discrimination is included in this definition due to the increasing conflation of race, ethnicity, culture and religion within contemporary forms of racism (Paradies et al., 2009). Racism is just one form of oppression (Paradies, 2006b), where individuals may experience multiple discriminations, such as on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, age and class, among social and cultural distinctions. Racism and discrimination (and oppression more broadly) is also intrinsically linked to privilege, where as well as disadvantaging minority groups in society, racism also results in certain groups (e.g. whites) accruing privilege and unfair opportunities (Berman & Paradies, 2010).

Racism occurs on a number of levels in society. These have broadly been defined as internalised racism (i.e. the incorporation of racist attitudes, beliefs or ideologies into one's worldview), interpersonal racism (interactions between individuals) and institutional or systemic racism (production, control and access to labour, material and symbolic resources within a society) (Berman & Paradies, 2010; J. M. Jones, 1997; Paradies, 2005). In general, disciplines such as psychology have focused on understanding how racism operates at the individual and group level. The bulk of this work is concerned with understanding

prejudicial attitudes and behaviours (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998).

At the macro-level, sociologists, political scientists and critical theorists have long debated concepts of race and racism by considering how racism operates within the structures of society, social discourse and power relations (Essed, 1991; Gilroy, 1991; Goldberg, 1993; R. Miles, 1989; Omi & Winant, 1994). There have also been important efforts towards integration of micro and macro understandings of racism (Essed, 1991; Omi & Winant, 1994; Winant, 2000). Geographers have shown how place is important in the construction of race and racism and have thus highlighted contextual variation in the nature of racism and racist attitudes (Bonnett, 1996; Dunn & McDonald, 2001). By analysing the nature of racist discourse and language, critical discourse studies have also provided important insight into the processes and meaning within and behind racist language and social interactions (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; van Dijk, 1992, 2000; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). On the whole, contributions across a range of disciplines underscore the importance of interdisciplinary study of racism (Nelson, 2012).

### **The historical origins of race, racism and prejudice**

Race has been defined as a process of signification and classification, traditionally based on certain phenotypical features such as skin colour, but attributed with meaning according to cultural, social and historical processes (R. Miles, 1989; Winant, 2000). Although prefigured by earlier doctrines of ethnocentrism and colonialism and more ancient concepts such as civilisation, barbarity, citizenship, slavery and exclusion, Winant (2000, p. 172) has argued that the concept of race is 'essentially a modern one'.

Specifically, race was located at the biological level throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century through conceptions of racial hierarchies of superiority and inferiority as influenced by social Darwinism. According to Winant (2000), increasingly complex labour dynamics and the resurgence of anti-colonial movements led to more sophisticated understandings of race throughout the inter-war period. In particular, Winant (2000) cites the early and important sociological work of Du Bois (1903), who wrote from the experience of black people, and provided evidence on racial identity formation and racial dualism, shown lucidly through his conception of the 'veil', defined as double-race consciousness experienced by black people.

A number of scholars have suggested that the events of the Second World War, and its aftermath of large-scale migration across the world, significantly changed scholarly understandings of race and political responses to racism. While race as a biological category remains contested within contemporary debates (Omi & Winant, 1994), during the post-war period, the biological categorisation of race came under increasing attack (Back & Solomos, 2000; Winant, 2000). During this time, scholars showed how race was socially constructed (Banton, 1967; R. Park, 1950) and sought to deconstruct race as a biological category (Banton, 1967; Rex, 1983). Others critiqued the concept of race and argued that the object of analysis should be racism rather than race (Back & Solomos, 2000). For instance, R. Miles (1989), drawing heavily on the work of post-colonial theorist Fanon (1967), defined racialisation as a process of categorisation of 'Other' in relation to the 'Self', arguing that expressions of racism functioned in a dialectical relationship and ideology of inclusion and exclusion.

During this time, psychologists also made important contributions to understandings of racial prejudice. For instance, Allport (1954, p. 6) defined prejudice as a 'feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience', thus locating prejudice primarily at the individual level of emotion. In contrast to other psychological work at the time, Blumer (1958) proposed that race prejudice functioned in relation to group position rather than individual feelings, theorising that group based racial identity provided a framework for racial prejudice. Specifically, Blumer (1958, p. 5) argued that racial prejudice occurred through a collective process of group identification that resulted in a 'sense of social position' among dominant groups.

Racial prejudice could also be characterised by the presence of four key feelings among groups: a feeling of superiority; a feeling of distinctiveness towards subordinate groups; claims to proprietary and other advantages and privileges; as well as fear and suspicion of subordinate groups (Blumer, 1958, p. 4). He also argued that collective racial identification and prejudice were reinforced through debates and events that mobilise public sentiment and increase notions of 'threat' (Blumer, 1958, p. 6). These factors operate alongside privilege and power among particular individuals and groups who, through a process of self-interest, work to retain or further their position and advantage within society. Though not widely recognised, Blumer's (1958) hypothesis on collective

group processes is an early and successful attempt to integrate micro and macro processes in understandings of racism prejudice and continues to inform understandings of racism and racial prejudice today.

### **The changing nature of racism and racist discourses**

Historical scholarly debates have informed contemporary understandings of race and racism in a number of ways. In particular, there is consensus that rather than being a singular and static phenomenon, racism and racialised discourses are constantly changing (Gilroy, 1991; Goldberg, 1993; Jayasuriya, 2002; Omi & Winant, 1994). Contemporary theorists have focused on shifts from 'old' or more blatant forms of racism to its proliferation into 'new' and subtler forms. There is now global recognition that new forms of racism, of which denial of racism plays a key role, persist within social and political discourse and the structures of society (Goldberg, 1993; Jayasuriya, 2002; Leach, 2005; R. Miles, 1989; Omi & Winant, 1994; Pettigrew, 1989). Indeed, many scholars have linked such denial with the rejection of old conceptions of race, where racism, along with the language of racism and its discursive functions (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001; Essed, 1991; van Dijk, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) had become 'morally reprehensible and politically unacceptable' (R. Miles, 1989, p. 49).

Goldberg (1993) contends that denial of racism has led to a failure to take the issue of race seriously, where racism has been reduced to 'pre-modern' prejudices that occurred in the past and has largely been confined to individuals. This has led not only to denial about the extent and impact of racialised histories but has been accompanied by increasing normalisation of racist thinking and articulation within modern societies (Goldberg, 1993; van Dijk, 1992). As discussed in this thesis, challenging new forms of racism therefore relies on challenging denial and what is seen as 'normal', including attitudes, behaviours and structural mechanisms that unfairly disadvantage/advantage members of particular racial/ethnic groups.

Scholars also suggest that in contrast to 'old-fashioned' prejudice (Duckitt, 1992; Fiske, 1998; Sears, 1988), 'new' racism 'is more covert in form and seeks to exclude racialised groups on the basis of cultural difference' (Jayasuriya, 2002, p. 40). Similarly, Gilroy (Gilroy, 1991) has argued that old paradigms of differentiation on the basis of racial



hierarchy have been replaced with fixed notions of culture and identity, mobilising particularly around national identity.

Leach (2005, p. 441) has provided a contrary view, arguing that ‘new racism’ and related practices of denial are ‘likely to be as old as democracy itself’. Additionally, he says that arbitrary distinctions between ‘old-fashioned’ and ‘new’ prejudice, particularly within social psychology, have detracted scholars from developing improved conceptualisations of past and present forms of racism, such as more focus on local and global forms of racism. Leach (2005) provides a compelling case for increased focus on the contextual bases of racism, an argument I also consider in this thesis. However, it is also important to continue to articulate and debate how racism manifests in ‘new’<sup>16</sup> ways in order to counter ongoing denial of racism in contemporary society.

### **The role of ideology, power and privilege in racism**

The role of ideology or belief has been well established in conceptualisations of racism, both at micro and macro levels. Psychologists have long considered the role of emotions, attitudes and bias based on racial identity and group membership such as through in-group and out-group bias (Blumer, 1958; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These biases can manifest as attitudes or beliefs (e.g. negative and inaccurate stereotypes, as well as negative emotions (e.g. fear and hatred), as well as behaviours and practices that result in prejudice and unfair treatment (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999). As noted, seminal work by Blumer (1958) has demonstrated how group-based identity manifests in prejudice and is reinforced by structures and processes, thus introducing a macro component to micro analyses.

Sociologists generally lean more towards a structural approach when considering the role of ideology in racism. For instance, R. Miles (1989) has defined racism as an ideology that functions as a process of exclusion and oppression, which masks structural and economic inequalities between different class-based groups in capitalist societies (Back & Solomos, 2000). This view is somewhat contradictory, as R. Miles (1989) has also argued that racism should be defined exclusively as an ideology. However, his suggestion that it is more difficult to identify something as racist the further it is

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<sup>16</sup> Even though as Leach (2005) has argued, this may not in fact be a ‘new’ phenomenon.

removed from the presence of racist beliefs and intentions (i.e. ideology) underplays the role of other factors, that could be unconscious and structural in nature.

Essed (1991, p. 2) also defines racism as an ideology, but says that ‘racism is more than structure and ideology’. In her three-fold definition, racism is defined as: an ideology, due to the social construction and meaning attributed to the concept of race; as structure, because dominance exists and is reproduced by the system that defines rules, laws and regulations and controls access to and allocation of resources; and as a process, because these ideologies and structures do not exist outside of the everyday practices and discourses through which they are created and reproduced (Essed, 1991, pp. 43-44). Importantly, this definition includes the role of ideology but goes further by linking the ideological basis of racism to its manifestation and reproduction in routine systems and practices within society.

Racism also needs to be understood in relation to power. Arendt (1973, p. 143) has defined power as ‘the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together’. Essed (1991) has utilised this definition of power to show how relations between different groups can be understood in terms of power dynamics (i.e. where dominant versus subordinate group members have relatively more or relatively less power). For those in the dominant group, this manifests as a sense of security by virtue of group-membership, including an assumption that other group members feel the same. This in turn empowers members of dominant groups in their actions and beliefs vis-a-vis subordinate groups.

Essed (1991) has also engaged with Arendt’s (1970) conception of power to consider the role of racist ideologies within group power dynamics, arguing that ideology provides the binding ingredient in practices between different actors and situations. In the context of racism this means that in order ‘to keep the group intact it is necessary to cultivate ideologies supporting the idea of innate group differences based on “race” or “ethnicity”’, where it then becomes ‘necessary to keep alive a permanent sense of “us” (dominant group) as opposed to “them” (dominated groups)’ (Essed, 1991, p. 41). Taken together, individuals are empowered by a sense of group membership, wherein ideology also functions to rationalise existing inequalities and determine and endorse

future actions by dominant group members. This view is not dissimilar to psychological research on the role of intergroup bias (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999; Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010) as well as Blumer's (1958) work on maintenance of group status and advantage. This literature is discussed further in Chapter 4 in workplace contexts.

Essed (1991) has also linked the systemic nature of racism to underlying power dynamics. Here, she draws on Lukes' (1974) notion of conflictual power. Haugaard (2002) says there are three main approaches to conceptualising power within the social sciences. These include: power 'over' (conflictual power); power 'to' (consensual power); and power as a component of reality. Power 'over' is the ability of an actor to prevail over another despite resistance, while power 'to' is the generalised ability of an actor to make something happen. Conflictual approaches to power are focused on the nature of social relations, while consensual approaches relate more to material or social action. Power as a component of reality is more contextual and holds that power is important in determining who actors are, what it is they want to 'make...happen' and/or their interests and who they want to influence (Paradies, 2006b, p. 145).

According to Lukes (1974, p. 34), power, as traditionally understood, must involve a conflict of interest, where 'A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests'. However, Lukes (1974, p. 22) has also suggested that power can operate in the absence of 'actual, observable conflict'. Drawing on Lukes, Essed (1991) explains that exercising power over other people affects them, through action or inaction, in a manner contrary to their interests, whether those in power or those who are being affected by it are aware of it or not. In the context of racism, Essed (1991, p. 41) infers that dominant group members often control without there being any actual conflict or disagreement, where it is though 'the pattern of the organization of the system as a whole that dominance is reproduced'. Put another way, dominant group members can dominate without necessarily being aware of how the system is structured according to their interests (Essed, 1991). As discussed further in Section 2.3 below, this provides insight into the systemic nature of racism.

The role of power and privilege in analyses of racism is, however, complex. Sawrikar and Katz (2010, p. 81) have examined the role of ideology and power in racism and focus on two of the most common definitions of racism within sociological literature: that 'racism = prejudice + power' and that 'racism = white supremacy'. They note that

the first definition is useful because it shows how individual beliefs and actions are shaped by broader socio-cultural factors, thus helping to mobilise both individuals and institutions in taking responsibility for racism (Sawrikar & Katz, 2010). However, the authors argue that it is problematic to have too much focus on the unequal distribution of power between racial groups, particularly when it draws attention away from individual responsibilities to address prejudice (Sawrikar & Katz, 2010).

The second argument is useful in showing how many white people and institutions continue to engage in practices that benefit white people and power structures (Sawrikar & Katz, 2010; van Dijk, 1991). However, the authors conclude that while the above definitions are useful in highlighting the pervasiveness of racism and the inequitable distribution of social power, this approach can also be disempowering for all racial groups who strive for racial equality and thus absolving them from a responsibility to address racism (Sawrikar & Katz, 2010). These factors are discussed further in Section 2.3 in considering definitions of institutional racism.

### **Understanding privilege**

A key critique made by scholars of race and racism, alongside feminist scholars, is lack of attention to the privileging effects of racism and other forms of oppression among dominant groups (P. H. Collins, 1991; hooks, 1990; Paradies, 2006b). Rather, it is commonly the case that ‘only the *oppressive* effects of racism for subordinate racial groups are considered’ (Paradies, 2006b, p. 146, original emphasis). McIntosh (1990) has defined privilege as specific conditions (such as access to opportunities, resources or power) that work systematically to empower certain groups (e.g. dominant racial/ethnic groups such as white people).

Frankenberg’s (1993) seminal work on the invisibility of whiteness showed how the operation of white privilege and identity is often unrecognised and unexplored, which is in itself an effect of dominance. Although the study of white privilege has, importantly, been taken up by whites, it is also worth remembering that it is non-whites who initiated whiteness studies (Land, 2012; Seidman, 2012), including early work by scholars such as Du Bois (1903), Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965). Later work by black feminist scholars such as hooks (1990) and P. H. Collins (1991) also showed how the bulk of feminist work excluded the perspectives of black women and was therefore complicit in the production of racism.

More recently, Ahmed (2004) has said that the work of black feminists ‘reminds us of exactly why studying whiteness is necessary for anti-racism’. However, Ahmed (2004) has argued that the starting point for critical studies of whiteness should be engagement with this genealogy rather than later work on representations of whiteness or, ‘how white people experience their whiteness’. To clarify, Ahmed (2004) is not saying this later work is unimportant, but suggests that such work should continue to be informed by earlier genealogies<sup>17</sup>. Conversely, there have also been important critiques regarding the limitations of standpoint theory. For example, Warren and Sue (2011, p. 48) have written that, ‘it is frequently assumed that an individual’s structural position produces particular knowledge and insights that are inaccessible to persons in different locations’. Their comparative analysis suggests that many non-whites in Latin America, as with whites in the United States, have low levels of racial literacy. Thus in over-emphasising racial positioning, anti-racists can actually, ‘contribute to the low racial literacy of whites by failing to dispel the myth of standpoint epistemologies’ (Warren & Sue, 2011, p. 48).

Other scholars have similarly critiqued theories of white privilege. Blum (2008) has offered a mild critique of white privilege, saying that too much focus on white privilege can neglect understanding of the contextual nature of racial disparity (i.e. in health versus education versus wealth) and downplay different histories and current experiences of racial groups, thus failing to recognise difference within racial groups. Further, and similarly to Sawrikar and Katz (2010), Blum (2008, p. 319) has argued that a focus on white privilege is politically narrow as it fails to recognise how white people<sup>18</sup> ‘can contribute meaningfully to the cause of racial justice’. Other scholars have also cautioned against attributions of racism only to ‘white’ people, where it is recognized that ‘privilege/oppression can be perpetrated by members of any social group’ (Back & Solomos, 2000; Paradies, 2006b, p. 146; Sawrikar & Katz, 2010). Such approaches run the risk of portraying a ‘we–them’ conception of difference (Gosine, 2002, p. 96) as well as creating alienation among white people (Hollinsworth, 2006; Von Bergen, Soper, & Foster, 2002). As discussed further in Chapter 9, it is important to engage dominant group members in addressing racism and in taking ownership for anti-racism activity.

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<sup>17</sup> Others have similarly discussed the difficulties of being ‘a white critic of whiteness’ (Land, 2012; Probyn, 2007, p. 37).

<sup>18</sup> It is important here how the category of ‘white’ is defined. Kowal et al. (2013, p. 317) have defined ‘white anti-racists’ as not just people who have white skin, but ‘the broader group of antiracists who identify with, and benefit from, racialised societal structures that privilege those white skin and/or other axes of advantage such as wealth and education’. This definition highlights important intersections between race and class and inherent complexities of essentialist categories of whiteness.

## **Privilege, power and responsibility**

In light of theoretical complexities discussed above, it is useful to consider how privilege operates in relation to power. Paradies (2006b) has defined privilege as the dialectical opposite of oppression and identifies two dimensions across which oppression and privilege operate in relation to power. This includes the potential for power to decrease or increase in an absolute sense as a consequence of privilege and oppression, as well as to have a relative effect in either lessening or enhancing existing power imbalances. For example, because dominant racial groups have more relative power than subordinate groups, absolute increases in power for dominant racial groups would have a relative effect of enhancing existing power imbalances. Paradies (2006b) has argued that this would be a form of racism in general and have privileging effects for the dominant group. Conversely, absolute increases in power among subordinate groups would reduce existing power imbalances and would therefore be a form of anti-racism in particular and anti-privilege in general. The same effects apply if power is decreased in either direction. The key point made is that due to existing power imbalances, increases or decreases in power have a relative, privileging/anti-privileging or oppressing/anti-oppressing effect for members of dominant and subordinate groups (Paradies, 2006b).

In considering the relationship between power and privilege, the role of responsibility ought to be emphasised. Citing Lukes (1974), Essed (1991, p.42) has linked responsibility to power, saying that: the exercise of power is related to responsibility when (a) such an exercise involves the assumption that the exerciser(s) could have acted differently, and (b) where, if unaware of the consequences of their action or inaction, they could have found out about them. In the context of racism, this becomes important because it recognises ‘the attribution of responsibility not only for action but also for inaction’ (Essed, 1991, p. 42). Similarly, Paradies’ (2006b) conceptualisation of racism as ‘unfair and avoidable’ underscores Essed’s (1991) point that not acting, or passive tolerance of racism, also involves an exercise of power. This approach relates to Frankenberg’s (1993) argument about the normative nature of whiteness, where due to its privileging effects, white people have generally seen racism as something that does not involve them. This attests to the importance of gaining widespread ownership for anti-racism and diversity initiatives, as discussed in Chapter 9.

As with other concepts discussed so far, the nature of power is also contextual. For instance, scholars have argued that racism and the degree of power and responsibility associated with it varies in relation to the *location* of power within structural relations and respective of individual roles in society, including gender and class (Essed, 1991). Importantly, Essed (1991, p. 43) has argued that racist practices undertaken by people with more power will invariably have a greater impact than those undertaken by individuals with less power, saying that: ‘the more access to power in the system, the more consequences racist practices of agents have. The more access agents have to knowledge about the nature of domination, the more responsible they are for the outcomes of their practices’. Similarly, Paradies (2006b) has called for a more nuanced understanding of power within (anti)privilege/oppression or (anti)racism analyses, whereby power differentials between racial groups may exist in various directions and across multiple levels, which in turn affects the overall impact of racism and racist practices within various situations. Understanding the location of power in analyses of racism and establishing responsibility for anti-racism action has important implications for this study. For instance, in Chapter 9, I discuss the role of senior leaders and managers in both supporting and resisting anti-racism in the workplace.

### **Intersections between race, gender and class**

Finally, it is important to recognise the intersecting nature of different forms of oppression, such as discrimination based on gender and class. Importantly, feminist theory has revealed how the bulk of research on race and racism has been gender biased, which has widened the scope of analysis to show how racism is connected with other forms of oppression (Back & Solomos, 2000). Further, scholars have critiqued the limitations of feminist theory in dealing with issues of race, such as through exclusion of the perspectives of black women (P. H. Collins, 1991; hooks, 1990). Other scholars have identified important intersections between race and class (Cohen, 1995; R. Miles, 1989; Rex, 1983). These analyses have burgeoned into increasing study of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Nash, 2008). As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, there were important intersections between race, racism and gender in this study.

### **2.3 Defining and Theorising Institutional Racism**

Institutional racism, also called systemic racism, is another term that requires conceptualisation for this study. Institutional racism is complex and has been a subject

of debate within the social sciences for some time (Blauner, 1972; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1968; Feagin & Feagin, 1986; J. M. Jones, 1997; Wellman, 1977; J. Williams, 1985)<sup>19</sup>. The term was introduced by Black power activists Carmichael and Hamilton (1968, p. 4), who were among the first scholars to distinguish between different forms of racism, saying that: ‘racism is both overt and covert. It takes two, closely related forms: individual whites acting against individual blacks, and acts by the total white community against the black community. We call these individual racism and institutional racism’. Carmichael and Hamilton (1968) defined institutional racism as subtler and less identifiable than acts of individual racism, but just as harmful. The authors provided examples of high rates of infant mortality and substandard housing as demonstrative of institutional racism. Importantly, this early definition helped to highlight the embedded nature of racism in society. Moreover, during a time when ‘old’ concepts of racism were being increasingly discredited, it provided an important explanation for the persistence of disadvantage and inequality by positioning racism as a structural phenomenon.

More recently, J. M. Jones (1997, p. 438) has defined institutional racism as:

those established laws, customs, and practices which systematically reflect and produce racial inequalities...If racist consequences accrue to institutional laws, customs, or practices, the institution is racist whether or not the individuals maintaining those practices have racist intentions. Institutional racism can be either overt or covert...and either intentional or unintentional.

Central to the above definition is locating racism within established institutional structures in society such as laws, customs and practices. Here, it is the ‘institution’ that is racist regardless of whether individuals maintaining institutional practices have racist intentions or not. Further, these effects can take the form of overt or covert, intentional or unintentional racism. Taking a similar approach, Griffith et al. (2010, p. 368) have defined institutional racism as, ‘a systematic set of patterns, procedures, practices, and policies that operate within institutions so as to consistently penalize, disadvantage, and exploit individuals who are members of non-white groups’. This definition also focuses on institutional procedures, practices and policies with particular emphasis on their negative and systematic impact among ‘non-white’ groups.

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<sup>19</sup> See Williams (2004) and Berard (2013) for literature reviews on institutional racism.



Another commonly cited definition of institutional racism, which has had widespread application in the United Kingdom, is provided by Macpherson (1999), who was the Coroner investigating the racially motivated death of black, male teenager Stephen Lawrence<sup>20</sup>. In his report, Macpherson (1999, para 6.34) found that the actions of police handling the case were a combination of incompetence, institutional racism and leadership failure and defined institutional racism as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

In the above definition, institutional racism is positioned as a 'collective' failure and related to institutional inadequacies in service delivery on the basis of race, culture and ethnicity. Institutional racism is also said to operate through processes, attitudes and behaviour that is reflective of unwitting prejudice and racism, working to disadvantage people from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Macpherson (1999) report was influential in initiating several legislative and policy changes in the United Kingdom. For example, changes to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 placed a new duty on public bodies, including local government, to address discrimination and promote racial equality, such as through workforce planning and training.

Several years on from the enquiry, scholars and practitioners have questioned the effectiveness of these measures (Ahmed, 2006; Bennetto, 2009; Foster, Newburn, & Souhami, 2005; Rollock, 2009). This includes critiques regarding how the concept has been defined and its usage as a rhetorical device (Ahmed, 2006; Gillborn, 2006; Kyriakides, 2008) alongside complexities in the application of institutional racism within practice based settings (Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007; Murji, 2010), issues I discuss further below.

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<sup>20</sup> After years of campaigning by his parents, an inquiry was held into his death.

## **Narrow definitions of institutional racism**

Similarly to critiques regarding the role of power and privilege in conceptualisations of racism (discussed above), it has been suggested that institutional racism has been narrowly defined as a 'black' and 'white' issue (Berard, 2008; R. Miles, 1989). For example, R. Miles (1989, p. 55) has argued that simplistic definitions of racism as the sum of white privilege and power neglects power asymmetries that exist within the white population, where racism is a more complex phenomenon 'expressed within a structure of class differentiation and exploitation'. Notwithstanding the pervasiveness of racism and continuing inequality among non-white populations (Sawrikar & Katz, 2010), scholars have suggested that confining institutional racism as something that *all* 'white' people do to cause disadvantage among 'black' people neglects a range of other structural factors, including the role of agency (Berard, 2008; R. Miles, 1989).

Like R. Miles (1989), Berard (2008) is concerned with essentialist conceptions of institutional racism as a phenomenon attributed only to white people as a unified group and/or power structure<sup>21</sup>. Berard (2008, p. 735) argues that along with being defined as largely unconscious and unintentional, institutional racism has commonly been 'attributed to dominant groups, social institutions or society in general, rather than to individuals'<sup>22</sup>. Tensions between structure and agency in understandings of institutional racism are discussed further below.

## **Intentionality versus effects of racism**

Scholars have also considered whether intention or the effects of racism are more salient in conceptualising racism (R. Miles, 1989; Paradies, 2006b). For example, R. Miles (1989) has argued that institutional racism has been conflated to include all processes, whether intentional or not, that result in the exclusion of subordinate groups. He says that this blurs interactions between 'belief and action, and between intentionality and unintentionality'<sup>23</sup>, complexities that create problems in defining

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<sup>21</sup> Such arguments are however not new. For example, Williams' (1985, p. 323) earlier review of literature asserted that institutional racism had become a "catch all phrase" used to describe all situations where racial discrimination is present.

<sup>22</sup> According to Berard (2008, p. 735, original emphasis), this shift represents a need to respond to new forms of racism as well as '*new* explanations of *continuing* racial disadvantage'.

<sup>23</sup> Rather, R. Miles (1989) has argued that these interactions are more complex, where beliefs may not give rise to actions and actions are not necessarily consistent with beliefs. Moreover, actions can produce unintended outcomes, regardless of their intention (R. Miles, 1989).

racism, where there is no clear way to determine if particular beliefs or actions, whether intentional or not, produce racist outcomes (R. Miles, 1989, p. 61).

Paradies (2006b) has also considered the relationship between racism and intentionality, and importantly, links intentionality not only to racism but also to privilege. He draws on actor network theory to show how actors as entities that exist within social networks (which along with humans, consist of machines, animals and matter in general) can be both acted upon and can act upon other entities. Paradies (2006b) links this to privilege/oppression in the sense that any actors can be implicated, including non-human actors such as laws and institutions. Thus, privilege/oppression (and therefore racism) ‘does not depend on the intention of actors, but instead is concerned with the social effects of their actions’ (Paradies, 2006b, p. 147). While ‘intention’ is still important in establishing responsibility and/or reparation for privileging/oppressive acts, defining privilege/oppression only in relation to intentional acts, ‘fails to recognize that oppression is systemic in society and is unwittingly and unconsciously (re-) produced by many actors who have no racist intentions whatsoever’ (Paradies, 2006b, p. 147). The importance of acknowledging that racism can be both unconscious and systemic in nature is discussed further below.

Nonetheless, a key critique of institutional racism is that it has commonly been conceptualised *only* in relation to its effects or consequences (Berard, 2008; Blauner, 1972; Feagin & Feagin, 1986; R. Miles, 1989). For instance, scholars have argued that while racism may be a factor in ongoing disadvantage, it cannot be applied routinely to every situation as the reason why racial inequalities exist (Berard, 2008; Blauner, 1972). Moreover, while the structural basis of inequality and disadvantage should be acknowledged, Berard (2008) has argued that current theories of institutional racism lack empirical evidence of the processes and mechanisms that cause disadvantage among minority group members. As discussed below and in Chapters 8 and 9, there is a need for more integration of the role of structure versus agency in understandings of racism.

Similarly, R. Miles (1989) has argued that in order to identify racism as an exclusive phenomenon, you need to be able to demonstrate that the consequences are exclusive. Therefore, he says that cases of institutional racism are difficult to prove because you need to be able to demonstrate that discrimination is happening against one particular

group, but *not* happening against another, which is ultimately more difficult to substantiate (R. Miles, 1989). Although it is undeniable that institutional racism is difficult to prove, conclusions that institutional racism can only be substantiated through the presence of racist beliefs or intentions are problematic. Alongside arguments outlined above in relation to social network theory (Paradies, 2006b), there is also increasing recognition that racial discrimination can operate unconsciously, such as in legal contexts. For instance, Hunyor (2003) has written that in Australian jurisdictions, as in England, it has now been established that a complainant does not have to prove that a respondent had an intention to discriminate, thus showing acceptability within the courts that discrimination can be unconscious<sup>24</sup>.

Useful here are distinctions between direct and indirect forms of racism (Paradies et al., 2009), particularly as they have been applied to institutional discrimination (Feagin & Feagin, 1986). Direct discrimination includes actions that are prescribed by organisations or the community which have intentionally differential or negative effects for minority groups (Feagin & Feagin, 1986). Conversely, indirect discrimination refers to practices that still have negative differential effects but are, ‘carried out, with no prejudice or not intent to harm lying immediately behind them’ (Feagin & Feagin, 1986, p. 31). Importantly, Feagin and Feagin (1986) also locate negative differential effects in organisational or community prescribed norms and practice (that may or may not be conscious). This idea links to Paradies’ (2006b) emphasis on the role of privilege *and* oppression in the formation of racist social structures. As discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8, this demonstrates the importance of organisational culture, values and norms, along with policies and practices, in shaping organisational responses to diversity and racism.

In unravelling the causes of racism from its effects, it is also useful to distinguish between concepts of disadvantage, inequality and (anti)racism (Berman & Paradies, 2010). In doing this, Berman and Paradies (2010) make a distinction between concepts

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<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, according to Hunyor (2003), there are still considerable difficulties in proving cases of discrimination, where some degree of casual connection between the act and a complaint of racism must be shown. The burden of proof in establishing that an employment decision was made on the grounds of race also rests on the complainant, which means that ‘in the absence of a clear statement of bias or expression of a discriminatory intention, there may be no direct evidence to support an allegation of discrimination’ (Hunyor, 2003, p. 537). In other words, a complainant must rely on circumstantial inferences such as eliminating all other reasons for the decision other than race, which follows from reasoning made by R. Miles (1989).

of inequality and inequity. Inequality can be understood simply as ‘the condition of being unequal’ and while it often points to an inequitable situation, is not necessarily the same as inequity (Berman & Paradies, 2010, p. 215). Rather, the authors argue that there are three main types of inequalities, including those that are: (i) unavoidable; (ii) avoidable but freely chosen or accepted; and (iii) avoidable and imposed or not accepted (i.e. unfair) (Berman & Paradies, 2010, p. 215). Among these different types, they argue that only the third type of inequality can be considered to be an inequity. This is because not all differences in outcomes among different racial/ethnic groups are a form of disadvantage because some are unavoidable or not amenable to change and others are freely chosen or accepted. Conversely, only equality that is either unavoidable or avoidable but freely chosen or accepted can be considered equitable (Berman & Paradies, 2010). While there are complexities in disentangling these concepts, where ‘avoidability, amenability to change and freedom of choice are both complex and fraught’, Berman and Paradies (2010, p. 216) provide a useful analytical framework to study the mechanisms of racism, as well as where anti-racism efforts ought to be focused. These distinctions have important implications for anti-racism theory and practice, as discussed in Section 2.4 below.

### **Increasing application of institutional racism**

Recently, there has been increasing understanding of institutional racism following its application after the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and changes to the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 in the United Kingdom. Since then, scholars have analysed how institutional racism was defined in Macpherson’s (1999) report and its application within public institutions (Gillborn, 2006; Holdaway & O’Neill, 2007; Kyriakides, 2008). For example, Kyriakides (2008, p. 603) has argued that the final definition used in the report needed to be responsive to campaigners’ demands and facilitate trust with the community, without undermining the police as an institution and its ‘capacity to confer trust’. He says that these contradictory terms of reference meant that more weight was given to ‘unwittingness’ rather than intention in the final conceptualisation of institutional racism (Kyriakides, 2008).

Holdaway and O’Neill’s (2007) study into how police officers interpreted institutional racism following the Macpherson (1999) report provides useful insight into the increasing application of institutional racism in practice-based settings. For example,

when asked to provide examples of institutional racism, black police officials were more likely to discuss covert racism and their personal experiences of racism in the workforce rather than institutional racism, which is commonly understood in relation to differential police outcomes and inadequacies in service delivery. Holdaway and O'Neill (2007) also found that strong anti-discriminatory norms had promoted less tolerance towards racism, leading to increased reporting of racism and a reduction in its overt forms. However, this had created other dilemmas, such as 'driving overt racism underground,' where racism found expression in more private spaces where police officers felt 'safe' to express racist views (Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007, p. 402). This commonly included settings outside of the organisation (such as in patrol vehicles and during after work drinks) where officers were outside of earshot of managers and black professionals. Importantly, Holdaway and O'Neill's (2007) study reveals tensions between structural factors and human agency, where the latter aspect was deemed more relevant in practice-based understandings of institutional racism.

### **Structure versus agency**

Tensions between emphasising structural factors versus the role of human agency within social phenomenon have long been a concern of sociologists (Giddens, 1984; Hays, 1994). Most notably, Giddens (1984) has critiqued structuralist theory as failing to recognise that structural forms are actively produced and reproduced by human agents. Similarly, in the context of training for health professionals working with Indigenous people in Australia, Kowal and Paradies (2005, p. 1351) observed a tendency for participants to attribute 'structural attributions for Indigenous ill-health,' while exhibiting 'discomfort around explanations that stressed agency'. Rather, participants were more likely to 'blame the system, and were reluctant to nominate Indigenous people's choices or actions as a cause of their ill-health' (Kowal & Paradies, 2005, p. 1351).

Berard (2008) also provides a compelling case for more consideration of human agency within structural phenomenon such as institutional racism. He argues that current theories of institutional racism have neglected the ideological, or social-psychological, basis of racism even though notions of ideology or belief are consistent within definitions of racism. Berard (2008, p. 740) has proposed that discrimination is 'a mindful phenomenon' (i.e. where the ability to judge or discriminate is an activity of the

human mind) and suggests that racism cannot be solely attributed to institutions, as they do not have a mind of their own. Rather, it is the 'attitudes, beliefs, priorities and considerations' of people who make up institutions, particularly decision makers, that makes it possible for institutions to be understood as racist (Berard, 2008, p. 740). While Berard (2008) makes an important point about the need for more emphasis on the role of individuals in understanding institutional racism, this argument neglects how racism operates as a systematic phenomenon and therefore can exist within organisational processes and practices regardless of human agents (Paradies, 2006b).

In light of these issues, Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism provides a useful integration of macro and micro sociological theory. Essed (1991) contends that a major problem with current conceptions of racism is too much distinction between individual and institutional level racism. Rather, she argues that institutional racism has been narrowly defined in terms of structural relations in society, which neglects the impact of ideology. Conversely, individual racism has also been narrowly defined as it implies that individuals are not influenced by group power dynamics and structures, thus placing 'the individual outside the institution, thereby severing rules, regulations, and procedures from the people who make and enact them' (Essed, 1991, p. 36). Another important contribution made by Essed (1991, p. 38) is that racism is interwoven within the fabric of social systems and 'continually construed in everyday life'. Convincingly, Essed (1991, p. 3) argues that while racism has commonly been conceptualised as an individual level problem, its prevalence and everyday occurrence in the attitudes, behaviours, and practices that make up social systems also highlights its 'systemic nature'. She is particularly critical of traditional sociological approaches that describe macro-level processes and structures as independent of daily life, where institutions and structures are positioned above mundane activities and experiences (Essed, 1991). Therefore, Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism shows how macro social structures are produced and reproduced within micro, everyday interactions.

Essed (1991) also cites Giddens' (1981) definition of a system as the way in which social relations between individuals and groups are organised as social practices. At the macro level, racism can thus be seen as a system of structural and historical inequalities and processes that are created and reproduced through routine, everyday practices, while at the micro level, specific practices can only be evaluated in terms of racism if they are

consistent with existing macro structures of racial inequality. The role of individual agency therefore becomes important in the sense that the *structures* of racism cannot exist independently of agents (i.e. ‘they are made by agents’) (Essed, 1991, p. 39). On the other hand, specific practices can be identified as racist only when they contribute to existing inequalities (i.e. ‘they activate existing structural racial inequalities in the system’) (Essed, 1991, p. 39). This view is similar to Paradies et al.’s (2009) conceptualisation of racism as avoidable and unfair, implications discussed further in Section 2.4 below in relation to anti-racism.

### **Institutional whiteness**

Given concerns discussed above about narrow definitions of institutional racism (i.e. with substantial focus on ‘white people’ as a unified group and/or power structure (Berard, 2008)), it is more useful to consider how institutional racism operates in relation to power and privilege generally (Hollinsworth, 2006; Paradies, 2005). Ahmed (2012, p. 33) has illuminated these issues through her use of the term ‘institutional whiteness’. Citing Puwar (2004), Ahmed (2012, p. 33) has considered how diversity has come to represent the inclusion of those who ‘look different’. For institutions, diversity becomes something that is ‘added’ on and therefore ‘confirms the whiteness of what is already in place’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 33). Institutional whiteness, as with whiteness generally, can be described as something that is habitual and often goes unnoticed, at least to ‘those who inhabit it or those who get so used to its inhabitance’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 35). In this way, institutional norms, which include rules and standards of conduct, can become somatic norms in that they take on the form of white bodies and white surroundings<sup>25</sup>.

Another feature of institutional whiteness is the way in which social relations exist through ‘the reproduction of likeness’ (Ahmed, 2012, p. 38). Essed (2005) found a similar phenomenon operating in the context of ‘cloning’, saying that in the context of both race and gender, there is a tendency towards ‘sameness’ through routine practices and processes that privilege familiar categories and routes of power. Both scholars have shown how ‘likeness’ is reproduced within organisations through dominant modes of power and normalised practices and processes (Ahmed, 2012; Essed, 2005). As

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<sup>25</sup> Here, Ahmed (2012) has given the example of statues and buildings, which commonly represent and are named after white (usually male) people.



discussed further below, when these effects act to privilege certain racial/ethnic groups and disadvantage others, such practices could be described as institutional racism.

### **Contextual nature of institutional racism**

As with racism generally (Dunn & McDonald, 2001), institutional racism is also contextual, where there is emerging research on how institutional racism varies across a range of institutional settings. Key examples include studies of institutional racism in public health (Came, 2014), policing (Bennetto, 2009; Berard, 2008; Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007) and education and skills settings (Ahmed, 2012; Gillborn, 2006). In her study of institutional racism in policing, Berman (2008, paras 1-3) has said that institutional racism is 'always and everywhere a different phenomenon' and urges for attention to addressing the 'specifics of particular institutions as part of a broader ecological approach to addressing ethno-racial discrimination'.

Similarly, Came (2014) has examined sites of institutional racism in public health settings and in the context of Maori and non-Maori relations in New Zealand. Specifically, she has identified five specific sites of institutional racism within public health policy, namely: majoritarian decision making; the misuse of evidence; deficiencies in cultural competencies and consultation; processes; and the impact of Crown filters. Came (2014) argues that these factors work together to exclude the viewpoints, representativeness and autonomy of Maori within state public health policy and are thus demonstrative of institutional racism. Came's (2014) comprehensive study, along with studies in other contexts (discussed above) has provided needed empirical evidence of the workings of institutional racism within particular settings. While there are likely consistencies between different institutional contexts, a key task of this thesis is to highlight these contextual nuances, with a focus on how institutional racism manifests in workplace/employment settings.

### **Defining institutional racism**

Lastly, to complete this section, and utilising key understandings of institutional racism discussed so far, institutional racism can be defined as the influence of attitudes, behaviours, cultures, practices, requirements, conditions, policies or processes that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources and opportunities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture and/or religion (Paradies et al., 2009). This

definition integrates interpersonal bases of racism (Berard, 2008) and adds a new dimension, the role of organisational culture, in current conceptualisations of institutional racism. The influence of organisational culture is discussed in Chapter 7.

## **2.4 Theorising Anti-Racism**

Like concepts of racism and institutional racism, anti-racism is also complex and contested, though has generally received less theoretical and practice-based attention (Babacan, 2007; Paradies, 2015). Anti-racism is also multifaceted, wherein different forms of anti-racism operate within different understandings of racism (Bonnett, 2000; Gilroy, 1991; Lentin, 2008; O'Brien, 2009). In light of this heterogeneity, and consistent with the aims of this study, this section focuses on forms of anti-racism that have arisen out of grassroots movements versus those that have been developed and endorsed by the state. As shown, different approaches to anti-racism and other political complexities mean that anti-racism practice is often encumbered by the tensions and paradoxes of working within racialised contexts (Kowal et al., 2013). Before turning to these issues, this section begins by tracing the origins of anti-racism and outlining how these origins have informed contemporary analysis.

### **Anti-racism origins and implications for contemporary analysis**

Scholars have traced the origins of anti-racism to the twentieth century, although the language of anti-racism only gained regular usage in the 1960s, along with other forms of emancipatory discourse, such as the feminist movement and gay rights (Bonnett, 2000). Anti-racism emerged as a 'western' concept in French thought and was intimately linked with post-colonial projects (Bonnett, 2000; Taguieff, 2001). On the other hand, anti-racism developed alongside western traditions of egalitarianism and tolerance, which were based on racist ideology<sup>26</sup>, thus making it 'an exclusive and inclusive tradition, both racist and anti-racist in its production' (Bonnett, 2000, p. 12).

Non-white scholars and decolonisation movements have also significantly shaped understandings of anti-racism. As noted above, Du Bois' (1903) early conception of a 'double consciousness' among black people helped to establish the notion of a positive

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<sup>26</sup> For example, early post-colonial discourse positioned principles of 'liberation, emancipation and resistance' as 'gifts of 'civilisation', to be thankfully received by more 'primitive' cultures' (Bonnett, 2000, pp. 11-12). Therefore, rather than being anti-racist, these ideals formed part of the continuing colonial narrative.

black identity and how black people negotiated ‘their way through the violence of white racism’ (Bonnett, 2000, p. 34). Along with Du Bois (1903), Fanon (1963, 1967) and Memmi (1965) are also recognised as instrumental anti-colonial theorists who inspired civil rights and black consciousness movements through writings on decolonisation and the impact of racism on the psyche of both the oppressed and the oppressor (Ponniah, 2012).

The origins of anti-racism continue to have relevance for contemporary analysis. For instance, contemporary non-white scholars have highlighted inconsistencies within anti-racist scholarship and practice (P. H. Collins, 1991; hooks, 1990; Lawrence & Dua, 2005). As noted in Section 2.2 above, scholars such as hooks (1990) and P. H. Collins (1991) have criticised feminist scholars for omitting the contributions of black women, which they say reflects an unwillingness to challenge the dominant paradigms inherent in their work. Similarly, Indigenous scholars have expressed concerns about the exclusion of Aboriginal perspectives from anti-racism debates (Amadahy & Lawrence, 2009). Similarly, within western discourse, Bonnett (2000, p. 18) asserts that it has been difficult to disentangle anti-racism from ideals of equality and tolerance, as based on European values and ‘the yardstick’ against which all things must be measured. As discussed further below, this has implications for anti-racist practice, wherein discursive mechanisms and statements of commitment underpinned by liberal values, can work to present an image that anti-racist goals have been achieved despite a lack of anti-racism action (Ahmed, 2006).

### **The heterogeneity of anti-racism**

The somewhat ambiguous origins of anti-racism could also account for its heterogeneity with contemporary discourse and practice. Bonnett (2000, p. 4) has provided a minimal definition of anti-racism as ‘those forms of thought and/or practice that seek to confront, eradicate and/or ameliorate racism’. However, rather than being merely the inverse of racism, Bonnett (2000) has argued that different forms of anti-racism operate according to varying conceptions of racism<sup>27</sup>. For instance, Bonnett (2000, p. 3) has

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<sup>27</sup> Bonnett (2000, pp. 4-5) has provided several reasons why people might object to racism, including the notion that racism: is *socially disruptive* (i.e. undermining of positive community relations and social cohesion); *foreign* (i.e. a problem that exists in ‘other’ nations and communities but not at ‘home’); *sustains the ruling class* (i.e. linked with class-based, structural inequalities; *hinders the progress of ‘our community’* (i.e. a barrier to full social and economic participation); is an *intellectual error* (i.e. linked with out-dated discourses of ‘race’ as a scientific category); *distorts and erases people’s identities* (i.e. contributes to the

argued that ‘two camps’ have competed for control over the use of anti-racism: radical politics, on the one hand; and the state as a strategy for control, on the other. In this dichotomy, radical politics has used the language of resistance and struggle in the fight against racism and other forms of oppression. Conversely, within state-based versions, anti-racism has traditionally emerged as a policy framework for ‘social cohesion’; that is to deal with the perceived negative effects of cultural diversity<sup>28</sup>.

Gilroy (1991) has distinguished between different forms of anti-racism, including anti-fascism (i.e. anti-racism in response to extreme forms of racism), grassroots anti-racism (i.e. community-level anti-racism) and municipal anti-racism (i.e. state-based anti-racism). While some forms of anti-racism are aligned with fundamental values and principles of ‘western’ democratic societies, anti-racism has also arisen as a popular movement and intellectual discourse that has sought to counter the authoritarianism of the state (Lentin, 2008). On the other hand, such forms of ‘anti-politics’ need not be radical or ‘purposely against the state’ but can be ‘anchored in civil society’ (Lentin, 2008, p. 312), such as through collective anti-racism movements. As discussed below, different approaches to anti-racism create tensions about what form of anti-racism are best placed to deal with racism, which is also complex and manifests in different forms.

### **Tensions between grassroots and state-based anti-racism**

Given this study is situated in the context of local government, tensions between grassroots and state-based anti-racism are particularly relevant. As discussed in Section 2.2, the post-war period brought about significant changes in race relations, culminating in collective civil rights/anti-racism movements and decolonisation processes in America and across the world (Bonnett, 2000; Winant, 2000). As Winant (2000) has suggested, large-scale efforts to counter racism led to sweeping reforms and changes, many of which have been developed by or supported by the state (e.g. anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, as well as affirmative action programs). Similarly, Bonnett (2000, p. 46) has written that increasing opprobrium against racism meant that ‘legitimate forms of political or economic governance could not be seen to condone racial inequality’. However, despite its development in grassroots movements,

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racialisation process); and is *anti-egalitarian and socially unjust* (i.e. beliefs that all people should have the same access to rights, resources and opportunities).

<sup>28</sup> For example, state-sanctioned anti-racism relies on a definition of racism as ‘socially disruptive’ and therefore employs anti-racism as a way of creating a more ‘peaceful’ and ‘tolerant’ society (Bonnett, 2000, pp. 4-5).

it has also been argued that anti-racism has lost its 'contestatory function' through its co-option 'by states' (Lentin, 2008, p. 312; Winant, 2000). Lentin (2008, p. 312) has asserted that what has emerged on the ground is both a struggle 'against the institutionalized racism of the state, but also for the freedom of organizations in civil society to determine the terms of the anti-racist agenda'.

Other scholars suggest that in some contexts, opposition to racism has become a rhetorical device that can be linked to a need for political legitimacy (Ahmed, 2006; Bonnett, 1996; Kyriakides, 2008). For instance, Kyriakides (2008) has argued that state-sponsored anti-racism has evolved as a form of emotional governance in response to migratory changes and the perceived risk of social disharmony between racialised groups. Similarly, Gilroy (2012) has maintained that anti-racism has become a policy tool for managing potentially disruptive social relations and restoring social cohesion. Despite a tendency for anti-racism to be used by states as a way to promote social cohesion, the relationship between different forms of anti-racism is not clear-cut. Rather, as Bonnett (2000, p. 47) has said, 'anti-racism of the powerful tends to be initiated by factors that are not completely in their control'. This includes pressure for change advanced by the struggles of oppressed groups and collective social movements, where such movements continue to inform and shape government policy (Lentin, 2008; Lopez, 2000). Indeed, it is clear that large-scale equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policy and legislative changes (noted above) would not have occurred without grassroots activism and social movements. Such developments demonstrate the ability (and I would argue the *necessity*) of actors outside the formal policy process to influence change, it is also important to consider the limitations of these actions once they enter the political realm. As Lentin (2008, p. 317, original emphasis) maintains, 'it is *who* is listened to and *what* is done with the information gleaned from consultations with anti-racists that affect the state-initiated anti-racism which often has large budgets and high political stakes'. In other words, institutional forms of anti-racism, despite being well-intended and developed out of grassroots anti-racism movements, may become lost within the mechanics of government bureaucracy and highly charged political environments. As discussed in Chapters 8 and 9, anti-racism activity in local government can be similarly constrained by a range of bureaucratic processes and practices.

Related to these issues are tensions between those who see the state as a legitimate actor in anti-racism activity and those for whom this poses more of a dilemma (Kyriakides, 2008). According to Lentin (2008, p. 317), some anti-racists prefer to be completely autonomous in order to avoid the risk of co-option by the state, while others prefer to collaborate, attempting to change things 'from the inside'. However, this can create different kinds of dilemmas. For instance, Gilroy (1992) has argued that when state based anti-racism agendas first emerged, the employment of black and minority professionals to advance state based anti-racism goals created divisions between those working within and outside the state.

Lentin (2008) says that these tensions can also affect those working outside of the state, such as community based organisations, who may rely on government funding and feel pressured to present a neutral political stance, even though they maintain more radical discourses internally<sup>29</sup>. Rather, given the complex nature of racism in society, there is a need for multiple and reinforcing anti-racism strategies that work both within and between the community and the state (Babacan, 2007; Gilroy, 2002; Paradies et al., 2009). As discussed in Chapter 9, in this thesis, diversity practitioners faced similar dilemmas about how to maintain close proximity to diversity communities (Ahmed, Hunter, Kilic, Swan, & Turner, 2006) and challenge dominant cultural norms, whilst working within the constraints of large bureaucracies such as local government.

Alongside these theoretical debates, there are increasing studies into the translation of grassroots anti-racism agendas into state-based forms. As discussed above, recent developments in the United Kingdom have led to mandatory requirements for public bodies to develop race equality plans and policies (Ahmed, 2006; Creegan, Colgan, Charlesworth, & Robinson, 2003; Gillborn, 2006; Hussain & Ishaq, 2008). Despite these duties being 'a major step forward' in racial equality, some scholars have argued that institutions readily shifted language and policy to show support for racial equality but have been less forthcoming on action (Ahmed, 2006; Gillborn, 2006, p. 16).

In the context of the education sector, Gillborn (2006, p. 15) has suggested that there has been a tendency to, 'support the illusion that something meaningful has actually changed in the way that public services are delivered. The language has changed but not

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<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Lentin (2008, p. 317) has argued that these dilemmas are rarely taken into account by radical critiques, where such organisations are criticised for not being overly political or 'selling out'.

the reality of race inequality'. Similarly, Ahmed (2006, pp. 108-109) has argued that requirements to develop race equality plans and policies 'quickly got translated into being good at race equality'. In their study of the implementation of race equality plans in Scottish local councils, Hussain and Ishaq (2008) found that while many councils had initiated race awareness training programs and incorporated aspects of race equality into existing policy, the composition of the workforce was not reflective of the ethnic minority community in the workforce. There was also a lack of clear policies and procedures on addressing racial harassment in the workplace (Hussain & Ishaq, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 6, these findings are relevant to this study, where local council workforces, were generally not representative of diversity in the community.

On the whole, and despite tensions between grassroots anti-racism and forms of anti-racism that have been developed or supported by the state, there is also the potential to work within social systems to support anti-racist goals. As Paradies (2005, p. 2) citing Gilroy (2002) points out, while 'social systems must be shaken' for transformation change to occur, it is also important to not 'turn our back on the state'. Following from this, a key task of this thesis is to consider what might be required to support anti-racist goals while working within the confines and boundaries of the state.

### **Barriers to anti-racism policy and practice**

In understanding how anti-racism can best be supported, including in organisational and state-based forms, it is pertinent to consider current barriers to anti-racism policy and practice. In general, anti-racism activity, particularly at the highest levels of social structure and power, has been thwarted by a significant lack of political will and financial support required to redress historical forms of racism and the persistence of racially based exclusions and inequalities (Gilroy, 1992; Noon, 2010; Paradies, 2005; Winant, 2000). Gilroy (1992, p. 52) has argued that in the context of the 'highly charged politics of national identity,' discussions about race and culture have become increasingly marginalised. This has led to increased sidelining of radical and community level anti-racism, including a lack of funding and political support.

Along with attacks on anti-racism from the right, Gilroy (1992) argues that support for anti-racism has not been helped by ambiguities and inconsistencies within community/grassroots level anti-racism. This includes a tendency for individuals and

organisations to marginalise themselves by over-identifying the struggle against racism with the activities of extremist groups. Importantly, this means that racism continues to be seen predominately as an individual-level problem and independent of broader social, political and economic structures. At the political level, racism thus becomes a problem that is often located ‘on the surface of other things’ and can easily be resolved by using the right ‘ideological tools’ while leaving the basic structure of society and the economy unchanged (Gilroy, 1992, p. 52). This provides a strong case for examining forms anti-racism that work at the institutional level. In Chapter 4, I discuss workforce diversity and anti-racism strategies that facilitate organisational change. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 then deal directly with the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool.

Another barrier to contemporary anti-racism activity includes a perceived inability to respond to new forms of racism (Gilroy, 1992; Nelson, 2013). Nelson (2013, pp. 89-90) has argued that denial of racism, as a key feature of contemporary racism, has reduced ‘the scope for local anti-racism’. Rather, denial of racism allows racist attitudes and behaviours within public discourse to go unchallenged and therefore functions ‘to protect and defend white privilege’ (Nelson, 2013, p. 91). Conversely, individuals who belong to groups that are commonly targeted by racism may also downplay or deny racism as a form of self-protection and a desire to potentially avoid harmful or traumatic experiences (Biddle, Howlett, Hunter, & Paradies, 2013; Nelson, 2013). On the whole, denial of racism can work against anti-racist goals and narrow the scope for anti-racism ‘as a legitimate, necessary activity’ (Nelson, 2014, p. 4). Therefore, anti-racism practice and discourse must respond to contemporary forms of racism, including denial. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 9, inclusive organisational cultures, practices and policies as well as strong organisational leaders, managers and other change agents help to support anti-discriminatory norms and play an important role in countering denial and encouraging courageous conversations about race and racism.

### **The politically complex and confronting nature of anti-racism**

In many ways, the issues discussed so far highlight the politically complex and confronting nature of anti-racism. As with concepts of race and racism, anti-racism is similarly imbued with identity politics (Du Bois, 1903; Gilroy, 1991; Winant, 2000). For instance, anti-racism and decolonisation projects are often confronting because they usually involve a process of ‘reckoning with complicity’ in the social and economic



structures that commonly benefit dominant cultural groups (Came, 2012; C. P. Jones, 2003; Land, 2015).

As established in social psychological literature<sup>30</sup>, confronting racism is likely to provoke strong, negative emotions such as ‘discomfort, distress, guilt, fear, anxiety, inaction and withdrawal’ (Kowal et al., 2013, p. 319). In particular, anti-racism interventions (e.g. training) which must necessarily examine racial identities and white privilege (McIntosh, 1990), also run the risk of reifying white racial identities as ‘inherently racist and incapable of being antiracist’ (Kowal et al., 2013, p. 322). Moreover, a failure to address negative emotions evoked in anti-racism training can lead to increased prejudice and disengagement from anti-racism practice (Dovidio et al., 2010; Kowal et al., 2013; Utsey, Ponterotto, & Porter, 2008).

In response to these issues, scholars have stressed the importance of reflexive anti-racism and diversity practice, which recognises the tensions and political complexities of working within racialised contexts (Kowal et al., 2013; Land, 2012; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). As discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9, a commitment to reflexive practice is important in working through tensions associated with workforce diversity and anti-racism, including active and passive forms of resistance.

The confronting nature of anti-racism, and its often necessary radical articulations, has also raised concerns about the extent to which it is able to gain widespread support within ‘mainstream’ settings and discourses. According to Gilroy (1992), part of the issue includes a lack of clarity around terminology and language, where anti-racism movements have been unable to harness political language, including the use of images and cultural symbols, that are necessary to maintain momentum. Similarly, Lentin (2008) has said that the prefix ‘anti’ is associated with subversion and asks why such negativity surrounds anti-racism. She responds that anti-racism as a form of dissonance politics is confronting in that it ‘holds institutions that are fundamental to “our” self-perception as citizens of liberal-democratic western nations up to scrutiny’ (Lentin, 2008, p. 311). As discussed in the next chapter and in Chapter 8, managing diversity has emerged as an attractive alternative to anti-racism, due to its more ‘inclusive’ language and focus.

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<sup>30</sup> See Kowal et al. (2013) for a recent review of anti-racism practice.

Conversely, recent shifts in language and practice have been critiqued for detracting from anti-racism and affirmative action agendas (Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005).

### **Equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome**

According to Bonnett (2000, p. 8), tensions between sameness and difference are one of the ‘continuous threads’ within anti-racism debates. Broadly speaking, universalism (i.e. sameness) is more concerned with universal values and beliefs, while relativism (i.e. difference) views truth as a relative and subjective concept. In the context of race and racial equality, relativism supports recognition and maintenance of cultural difference, while universalist discourses assume that all people are equal and should therefore be afforded the same rights and opportunities (Bonnett, 2000). However, it is evident that both categories have the potential to become essentialising. For instance, too much focus on cultural difference can create fixed notions of particular racial/ethnic groups and reinforce racial categorising and the (re)production of racism, such as through the exoticisation and appropriation of ‘cultural’ identity (Said, 1978) and essentialised notions of identity within racial/ethnic groups (Bonnett, 2000; Gilroy, 1992; Paradies, 2006a). On the other hand, strictly universalist approaches are similarly limiting in assuming that all people have the same rights and opportunities. This perspective commonly leads to a ‘color-blind’ approach (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), which can deny realities that most people, due to the effects of privilege/oppression across a range of dimensions (e.g. race, class and gender), do not have the same access to opportunities, and therefore, special measures are needed to create a level playing field (Noon, 2010; Paradies, 2005).

Given these complexities, it is useful to return to distinctions made by Berman and Paradies (2010) between disadvantage, disparity and (anti)racism, where, in the context of different kinds of inequalities, equity (i.e. inequality that is avoidable and unfair) is most salient. Anti-racism can then be conceptualised as ‘the endeavour to create equality of opportunity (which implies *equity* of outcome) rather than equality of outcome *per se*’ (Berman and Paradies, 2010, p. 218). Specifically, the authors suggest that equality of opportunity is a more appropriate focus for anti-racist praxis because it ‘respects agency (i.e. choice) while opposing injustice’ (Berman and Paradies, 2010, p. 219). Noon (2010) has made a similar argument for re-instating the importance of policy initiatives (such as positive discrimination) that aim to create equality of opportunity. As discussed further

in Chapters 8 and 10, establishing anti-racism as an activity to support equality of opportunity rather than outcome helps to avoid some of the backlash effects commonly associated with anti-racism.

## **2.5 Diversity**

Diversity is the final concept that requires conceptualisation for this study. Diversity is a broad concept that can be attributed to a range of characteristics, including, among others, gender, sexual orientation, age and disability. Despite these important intersections, this study is focused on racial, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Alongside these differing types of human diversity, diversity can also be studied at the macro (e.g. national, societal, global), meso (e.g. formal organisation, community, state) and micro (e.g. personal, neighbourhood, citizenry) level of analysis within the social sciences (Blalock 1979; Pringle & Ryan, 2015). The focus of this study on institutional settings (i.e. the workplace) within a local government context suggests attention to meso and micro level diversity analysis. Chapter 3 considers both meso and micro-level approaches to diversity by reviewing literature on the role of local government in supporting diversity, social cohesion and anti-racism. Chapter 4 deals more explicitly with meso-level approaches to diversity by engaging with mainly human resource and organisational literature on managing diversity in the workplace. However, given there are important intersections between different levels of diversity analysis, this chapter introduces diversity as a macro-level concept. This includes a discussion of multicultural policy and ideology and its ability to accommodate difference within liberal, democratic nations. Following on from this, I then discuss the limits and potential of multiculturalism as an anti-racism policy.

### **The accommodation of difference within multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism has emerged as the key policy and ideological mechanism for managing diversity within western, liberal societies. There is a large and varied body of literature on diversity and its articulation within multicultural policy (Kymlicka, 1995, 2012; Portes, 1998; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011). A central concern of multiculturalism, as it has emerged in most western nations, is how to accommodate difference while maintaining liberal ideals of democracy, citizenship and individual rights (Hage, 2008; Kowal, 2008; Kymlicka, 1995). Hage (2008, p. 489) has argued that ‘multicultural realities’ are both plural and contested in many western countries, clustering around a set of ideologies,

policies and practices that have emerged out of the interaction between dominant culture values and norms and increasing realities of cultural diversity. As will be discussed further in the next chapter on the Australian context, multiculturalism(s) are also locally and historically specific. Kymlicka (1995) has proposed that collective, group rights (such as those held by specific ethnic groups) can and ought be accommodated in so far as they do not impinge on individual rights and democratic citizenship. Kymlicka (1995) has distinguished between three types of group rights that have particular salience within western-societies: the rights of indigenous groups, who have a unique status as first peoples and rights to self-determination; the rights of some minority and/or disadvantaged groups (e.g. African Americans and refugees) who should be afforded special representative rights (such as affirmative action policies) to redress historical oppression and disadvantage; and poly-ethnic rights, which include exclusions to accommodate difference (e.g. religious difference). Kymlicka (1995) places more onus on poly-ethnic groups, who have come to the state voluntarily, to integrate into the norms of their host countries.

There are varying positions regarding the degree to which new immigrants should integrate into dominant cultural norms (Knight, 2004; Ramadan, 2004). Knight (2004, p. 191) has raised important critiques regarding principles of self-determination affecting new immigrants, where he asserts that, 'the claims and distinctiveness of ethnic groups could evidently be better secured' if such groups had more autonomy within the nation state. For instance, religious exemptions from existing legal requirements might be more readily protected if ethnic minorities were already in 'possession of such rights' (Knight, 2004, p. 191). Knight (2004) has also questioned the rights of subsequent generations of immigrants, who have not made such 'choices' regarding integration. He proposes that the assignment of different criteria of rights to national and immigration groups is inequalitarian, particularly to subsequent generations who continue to be disadvantaged by cultural conditions.

Ramadan (2004, p. 5) has made an alternative point in relation to western Muslims, articulating the possibility of inter-cultural connectedness over preoccupation with minority distinctiveness. In particular, Ramadan (2004, p. 5) has acknowledged the adaptive nature of Islamic traditions, saying that:

While our fellow-citizens speak of this “integration” of Muslims “among us,” the question for the Muslims presents itself differently: their universal principles teach them that wherever the law respects their integrity and their freedom of conscience and worship, they are at home.

While not downplaying the struggles many Muslims in the West face, including rising Islamophobia, discrimination and anti-Islamic sentiment (discussed in Chapter 3), Ramadan (2004, p. 7) urges Muslims to become ‘watchful and participating citizens’ and to demand the ‘rights to equality with others’. This includes fighting against ‘all kinds of discrimination and injustice’ and establishing ‘partnerships beyond their own community and what concerns themselves alone’ (Ramadan, 2004, p. 7). Similarly, other individuals and groups have long advocated the importance of consciousness-raising movements in the fight against all kinds of oppression and inequality in society<sup>31</sup>, including among the oppressor, along with the oppressed (e.g. Fannon, 1967).

Accommodating indigenous people within forms of liberal multiculturalism poses particular difficulties and challenges (Kowal, 2008; Povinelli, 2002). Despite assertions that multiculturalism is not an exclusive ideology (Kymlicka, 1995), many have critiqued its ability to effectively incorporate indigenous rights and claims, where multiculturalism has commonly been perceived as an ideology and policy framework for ‘ethnic’ communities (Dandy, 2009; Hage, 2003, 2008; Povinelli, 2002; van Krieken, 2012). Hage (2008) has argued that incorporating indigenous cultures within multicultural frameworks masks colonial power relations and histories of dispossession. Further, he says that despite its ‘anti-colonial’ stance, multiculturalism has been much better at incorporating ‘cultural groupings that can make claims *to* the state,’ rather than cultural groupings that have ‘political claims *on* the state’ (Hage, 2008, p. 497, original emphasis).

Kowal (2015, p. 10) has studied how ‘encounters with radically different Indigenous ways of life,’ alongside the ingrained nature of oppressive colonial relations, have posed dilemmas for white anti-racists working to improve the health and social status of Indigenous people in Australia. She has argued that the promises of liberal multiculturalism have been unable to address the realities of cultural difference and government inefficiencies, which in turn have failed to address persistent inequalities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

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<sup>31</sup> For instance, this was the leading ideology advocated by civil-rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.

Povinelli (2002, p. 12) has said that liberal institutions and regulatory ideals have only provided partial recognition, in so far as they do not undermine the structure and ideology of state laws and institutions. This poses dilemmas of ‘capturing real justice in real discourse and narrative time’ where ‘Australian history is littered with instances in which a moral sensibility of just action was retrospectively seen as a merely prejudicial reaction’ (Povinelli, 2002, p. 12). This raises key questions about ‘the ways people actually experience the regulatory ideals of liberal life’ (Povinelli, 2002, p. 12). Similarly, others have long recognised the juxtaposition of the ‘rhetoric of rights and commitment’ versus ‘the lived experience of peoples,’ where partial forms of recognition have, in many instances, been ineffective in providing substantive justice and redressing ongoing forms of disadvantage and inequality (Dodson, 1994, p. 66; Foley, 1997). These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter on the Australian context, as well as in Chapter 7 in relation to the role of symbolic support for diversity and gaps between statements of commitment to diversity and anti-racism practice.

### **The limits and potentials of multiculturalism as an anti-racism policy**

A number of scholars have suggested that multiculturalism is limited as an anti-racist policy (Castles et al., 1988; Hage, 2008; Jayasuriya, 2002). For instance, Jayasuriya (2002, p. 43) has argued that one of the major barriers in dealing with new expressions of racism are constructions of multiculturalist discourses that ‘officially deny racism, while espousing liberal values of tolerance and equality’. Similarly, in the Australian context, Castles et al. (1988) have questioned whether multiculturalism has been able to change the dominant structures in society. The authors argue that multiculturalism has been progressive in that it has attempted to define the nation in less nationalistic and ethnocentric terms. However, they say that multiculturalism can also be regressive in that it often ‘trivializes more serious social issues of inequality, founded in socio-economic structures, gender relations and structural racism’ (Castles et al., 1988, p. 13). Indeed, a key critique of multiculturalism is over-emphasising the promotion of social harmony and celebrating diversity (Hage, 1998).

There have, however, been important counter arguments to this critique (Kymlicka, 2012; T. A. Richardson, 2010). For example, Kymlicka (2012, p. 1) has disputed conceptions of multiculturalism as ‘the uncritical celebration of diversity’ at the expense

of addressing societal problems. He argues that rather than being in retreat and a 'failed' policy (as has been suggested from conservative critics in particular), there is evidence that multicultural policies have persisted and had a number of positive effects, including in relation to integration. On the whole, Kymlicka (2012) has argued that multicultural integration remains a vital option for western democracy, although the extent to which it succeeds or fails is dependant on several factors. These factors include, amongst others: positioning multiculturalism as a shared commitment to human rights, rather than an issue of 'state security'; including a diversity of immigrant groups within multicultural policy; and a focus on maximising social and economic contributions among new immigrant groups (Kymlika, 2012, pp. 22-24). The latter point is particularly relevant to this study. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 8, there is a need to remove systemic barriers to socio-economic participation in order to harness the benefits of diversity.

Another concern about current articulations of multicultural policy is a general lack of focus on addressing racism. For example, Berman and Paradies (2010) have argued that anti-racism has become marginalised within narrow conceptualisations of multiculturalism. The authors highlight distinctions between multicultural and anti-racism policy, where the former seeks to support diversity and address forms of disadvantage among racial/ethnic groups by focusing on social and economic participation, while the latter is focused on changing attitudes, behaviours, policies and practices within mainstream processes and structures (Berman & Paradies, 2010). These two goals are, however, not mutually exclusive, where anti-racism can be re-oriented within multicultural policy (Berman & Paradies, 2010). This is important because multicultural policies that fail to address racism can unintentionally lead towards 'victim-blaming' and render invisible the underlying racist beliefs and practices of the majority (Berman & Paradies, 2010, p. 220). Similarly, Babacan (2007) has argued that there are key ideological differences between multiculturalism and anti-racism, where multiculturalism assumes that society is democratic and equal, while anti-racism acknowledges that power and resources are not equally distributed within society. As discussed in this thesis, this provides an important case for the inclusion of anti-racism activity alongside diversity policies and programs, including in workplace settings.

Alongside a need to re-orient anti-racism within diversity initiatives, there is also a need to address tensions arising from the accommodation of cultural difference within modern, democratic societies. For example, in the Australian context, scholars have asked how core 'Australian' values that have been traditionally defined in terms of dominant cultural (i.e. Anglo-Australian) values can be reshaped to meet the demands of cultural difference and losses of white privilege (Castles et al., 1988; Forrest & Dunn, 2006a; Hage, 1998). Hage (1998, p. 28) has described this as a sense of 'loss' among 'ordinary' Australians when faced with increasing cultural diversity. Elsewhere, Hage (2008) has argued that multicultural policies need to address this sense of loss and underlying fears among many Australians when faced with the realities of diversity and increasing socio-economic change. Similarly, others have argued that dominant groups in Australia, and elsewhere, are facing dilemmas about how to maintain their own sense of identity when their privileged status is under threat (Forrest & Dunn, 2006a; Johnson, 2002). As discussed in Chapters 6 and 9, these dilemmas are also evident within workplace contexts, thus indicating an important link between macro and meso-level diversity factors.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter has been to lay the theoretical foundations for this research through critical engagement with inter-disciplinary theory and literature in the area of racism, anti-racism and diversity.

Specifically, I have charted the origins of race and racism to demonstrate how understandings of these concepts have changed over time, such as through increased emphasis on the social construction of race and racialisation processes. From these origins, contemporary analysis has revealed consensus about the changing nature of racism, alongside a shift towards 'new' forms of racism, which are generally, although not always, more covert in form and mobilise around cultural versus biological distinctiveness.

This section has also examined how racism operates in relation to ideology, power and privilege. In the context of unequal power relations, this means that passive tolerance of racism is also an exercise of power (Essed, 1991), whereby, for instance, dominant cultural groups (e.g. whites) are commonly less burdened by racism and/or benefit from



its privileging effects (Frankenberg, 1993). Conversely, there are complexities in conceptualising racism as only a product of privilege and power, wherein too much focus on white privilege can undermine white peoples' involvement in social justice and neglect increasing levels of racial literacy among whites (Sawrikar & Katz, 2010; Warren & Sue, 2011) and intersections between race/ethnicity and gender and/or class (Back & Solomos, 2000; P. H. Collins, 1991). Despite these complexities, the persistence of racially based exclusions (Winant, 2000) provides a strong rationale for redressing historical and continuing forms of racism (Paradies, 2006b) through targeted anti-racism practice. As discussed in this thesis, this necessitates the importance of measures to redress disadvantage (e.g. positive discrimination) and provide equality of access and opportunity for minority groups, as well as educating majority groups about why these actions are needed (e.g. anti-racism training).

The second section of this chapter has examined the concept of institutional racism. Specifically, I have discussed how institutional racism has been narrowly defined (Berard, 2008; R. Miles, 1989). I have also outlined tensions between intention and effects in conceptualisations of institutional racism, and debates regarding structure versus agency. While scholars have shown how institutional racism can operate unintentionally and through non-human agents such as policies and practices (Essed, 1991; Paradies, 2006b), there is also a need for more attention to the role of human agency (Berard, 2008). Moreover, as with racism generally, institutional racism has also been conceptualised in relation to its privileging effects (Ahmed, 2012; Essed, 2005). Finally, analysis of literature on the increasing application of institutional racism (Came, 2014; Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007) has shown how institutional racism is contextual and likely to manifest differently across different institutional settings. As discussed further throughout this thesis, a key task of this study is to provide more insight into the role of structure, agency, culture and context in understandings of institutional racism.

Anti-racism is the third concept I have engaged with in this chapter. I have traced the origins of anti-racism and shown how these origins continue to inform contemporary analysis. I have also underscored the heterogeneity of anti-racism, wherein different forms of anti-racism operate within different definitions of racism. Consistent with the aims of this study, I have focused on forms of anti-racism that have developed out of community movements versus those that have been driven or endorsed by the state. As discussed, there are dilemmas arising from versions of anti-racism authored by the state

as well as issues about the ability of community level anti-racism to harness ‘mainstream’ support. Recognising the complexities on either side, my concern for this study is to see whether there is potential for anti-racism to come out of the margins (Gilroy, 1992) and become located within ‘mainstream’ institutional structures, without losing its more radical, and potentially transformative, function.

Finally, this chapter has examined the concept of diversity and its articulation within multicultural policy. Starting at the macro-level, I have focused on some of the tensions of diversity, such as accommodating difference within liberal, democratic nations. I have also discussed the limits and potential of multiculturalism as an anti-racism policy. Specifically, there is a need to re-orient anti-racism within multicultural policy (Berman & Paradies, 2010) and respond to new tensions around national identity and a sense of ‘loss’ among dominant culture groups in the face of increasing diversity (Forrest & Dunn, 2006a; Hage, 2008). While the focus on this chapter has been on macro-level diversity factors, there are important intersections between diversity, racism and anti-racism at different levels of observation and analysis. As will be shown in subsequent chapters, local government and workplaces are particular social contexts, where dominant cultural norms operate but can also be challenged and changed.

# Chapter 3

## Racism, Diversity and Anti-Racism in Australia

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### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of racism, anti-racism and support for diversity within the Australian context, with a particular focus on workplace/employment settings. Starting with macro-level factors, this chapter examines the national policy context for understanding diversity, racism and anti-racism in Australia. This includes analysis of the historical origins of colonisation and racism in Australia and significant policy changes following World War II, including bi-partisan support for multiculturalism and some recognition of Indigenous rights. I also examine recent policy trends including a retreat from principles of cultural maintenance, access and equity within multicultural and Indigenous policy, alongside important new developments in anti-racism policy.

The second section of this chapter examines support for diversity and anti-racism at the local level, which falls within the scope of both macro and micro-level diversity factors. Specifically, I consider the changing role of local government in Australia and review literature on the role of local government in developing locally specific policies in support of multiculturalism, social cohesion and anti-racism (Mansouri & Strong, 2007; Pagonis, 2013; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). This includes consideration of the potential and constraints on local government to play a greater role in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism.

The third section of this chapter engages with research and theory on attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism in Australia. As discussed in Chapter 2, there has been a rise in 'new' forms of racism in Australia, which scholars have linked to narrow conceptions of Australian national identity and culture (Castles et al., 1988; Dunn et al., 2004; Hage, 2008; Jayasuriya, 2002). As will be shown, while many Australians are supportive of cultural diversity, others continue to hold prejudiced views and false beliefs about minority groups (Dunn et al., 2004; Markus, 2014; Pedersen, Clarke, Dudgeon, & Griffiths, 2005).

This section also examines survey research on experiences of racism, where studies have shown that Indigenous Australians and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experience high levels of racism. Consistent with Australia's historical origins, the effects of colonisation, racism and exclusion can be linked to present-day inequalities and disadvantages for Indigenous people. Other groups, particularly people from non-English speaking backgrounds and those who are 'visibly different' (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007, p. 60) from the majority culture also experience persistent racism in Australia. Pursuant to the aims of this study, this section provides evidence of key settings where racism occurs, including in workplace/employment settings.

Finally, the last section of this chapter examines the nature of labour market discrimination in Australia. Key approaches to and tensions between labour market disadvantage and discrimination are outlined. I focus specifically on field studies, self-report data and studies that control for human capital attributes in order to differentiate between labour market disadvantage and discrimination.

### **3.2 Australian National Policy Context**

In Australia, as in other western countries, multiculturalism has emerged as the main ideological and policy framework to deal with increasing diversity. Multiculturalism has received bipartisan political support and many Australians are supportive of cultural diversity (Dunn et al., 2004; Markus & Dharmalingam, 2007). This is testament to the important place that multiculturalism has held in the policy process and in Australian society as a whole. However, Australia also represents a 'contradictory situation' where multiculturalism, as the dominant policy framework for managing diversity, has developed alongside the existence of racism (Forrest & Dunn, 2007a, p. 700; Hage, 1998, 2003; Jayasuriya, 2002; Vasta & Castles, 1996).

As in other settler-colonial contexts, Australia was founded on racist ideology and exclusionary practices. Some suggest that this historical and political context has created a lasting legacy of racism that Australian society is still struggling to disentangle itself from (Castles et al., 1988; Forrest & Dunn, 2007a; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2001). This section outlines the national policy context for understanding cultural diversity, racism and anti-racism in Australia.

## A history of racism and exclusion

Australia was colonised and settled by Britain in 1788 on the basis of *terra nullius*, a legal fiction (Langton, 2000) that violated international law at the time<sup>32</sup> and led to the dispossession of land and other extreme acts of violence, murder and massacre among Indigenous people in Australia. The institution of reserves, stations and missions, while established under the guise of ‘protection’ against settler atrocities, were based on racist ideology. According to Social Darwinist notions of racial hierarchy prevalent at the time (discussed in Chapter 2), Indigenous people were positioned as inferior to the British and a ‘dying race’ fated to extinction (Chesterman & Galligan, 1997).

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, various laws provided state governments with the power to control Aboriginal people and further restrict movement and strip rights in relation to residence, marriage, custody of children and control over personal property (Atwood & Markus, 1999). These developments were the first rumblings of assimilation and eventually led to a nation wide policy of assimilation, which culminated in the separation of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families<sup>33</sup>.

Immigrant populations, particularly people from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds<sup>34</sup>, have also faced a history of racism and exclusion in Australia. As early as the gold rush in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, there was growing resentment and violence towards Chinese and other Asian workers, leading to the establishment of the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* during Federation (Ferdinand, Kelaher, & Paradies, 2012; Zelinka, 1996). Commonly referred to as the ‘White Australia Policy’, this became the key policy and legislative mechanism to exclude and restrict the flow of immigrants from non-European countries. The White Australia Policy also placed requirements on immigrants already settled in Australia to ‘assimilate’ into dominant Anglo-Celtic language, culture and norms.

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<sup>32</sup> According to European international law during this period, there were only three ways that one country could take possession of another: if the country was uninhabited; through permission or purchase of land such as through signing a treaty; or by declaring invasion and conquest. In contrast to other colonised countries (such as the United States, Canada and New Zealand) Australia did not make treaties with its Indigenous people. Rather, Britain declared sovereignty on the basis of *terra nullius*, a land belonging to no one.

<sup>33</sup> Contrary to popular opinion, this policy continued well into the 1970s and continues to impact on the lives of many Indigenous people today (National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Although other Anglo-Celtic groups, such as Irish settlers, were also discriminated against in Australian settler society.

## Policy shifts following the Second World War

The period following the Second World War presented a major turning point in immigration policy. Australian government policy shifted to support large-scale migration and to address increasing industrialisation and concerns about low population growth (Castles et al., 1988; Jupp, 1996). However, despite increasing diversity, assimilation remained the leading ideology where it was assumed that new immigrants would quickly adapt to the ‘Australian way of life’ (Castles et al., 1988, p. 5). Castles et al. (1988) have argued that assimilation eventually worked together with nationalist ideology to strengthen fears about increasing numbers of immigrant workers who were perceived as a threat to ‘other’ working-class people. However, such fears proved to be unfounded as immigrants often took the ‘worst paid and least pleasant’ jobs (Castles et al., 1988, p. 112).

Other scholars have argued that during the post-war period and up until the 1970s, there was strong demand for unskilled labour, otherwise known as ‘factory fodder’ to support increasing industrialisation (Bertone, 2008; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Jupp, 2002). As discussed below, these trends largely continue, where new immigrants, and particularly people from non-English speaking backgrounds, continue to experience significant labour market exclusion and are often perceived as a threat to ‘Australian’ cultural values and employment opportunities.

As in other parts of the world, the post-war period was also a time of increasing resistance and cultural change. Aboriginal resistance dates back as early as first settlement (Maynard, 2007) but became increasingly prominent from the 1950s. Drawing inspiration from the Black Power/Civil Rights movements in the United States, Aboriginal activists’ demands for land rights, treaties and self-determination<sup>35</sup> played a key role in drawing international attention to Australia’s discriminatory policies (Foley, 2001; C. Perkins, 1975). The laws that prohibited Aboriginal people from voting were changed in 1962, while in 1967 an overwhelming majority of Australians voted to remove some of the discriminatory clauses from the Australian Constitution. Europeans who had immigrated to Australia on mass also resisted requirements to assimilate into

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<sup>35</sup> Self-determination can be defined as the right to ‘freely determine...political status and freely pursue economic, social and cultural development’ (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, cited in Dodson (1994, p. 68)).

the dominant Anglo-culture and refused to abandon their cultural and linguistic practices (Jupp, 1996). These developments, coupled with increasing levels of affluence and education within Australia society led to further reshaping of government policy towards 'integration' (Jupp, 1996). Though still largely assimilationist, early iterations of integration policy supported some accommodation of cultural maintenance.

By the mid 1960s, however, both assimilation and integration were becoming increasingly unpopular. The White Australia policy was eventually dismantled by both of the major political parties and multiculturalism was adopted as official government policy in 1973, gaining bi-partisan political support. Following early iterations (Zubrzycki, 1968), multiculturalism increasingly moved towards stronger support for the maintenance of cultural heritage, equal opportunity and access among immigrant populations (Galbally, 1978). For example, during the Hawke-Keating Labor Governments, there was more emphasis on cultural maintenance and social justice within multicultural policy (National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1989, 1995). However, at the same time, and in response to increasing globalisation, an economic agenda was also emerging, including increased focus on skilled migration (Bertone, 2009a; Jupp, 2002). Some have argued that former Prime Minister Paul Keating was trying to change the formation of Australian national identity to an increasingly cosmopolitan position. However, Keating was criticised for being too elitist and failing to bring the rest of the community along with his economic rationalist agenda (Forrest & Dunn, 2006a; Jupp, 2002). Nonetheless, and as discussed in Section 3.5 below, a focus on skilled migration continues to be the dominant approach to immigration policy in Australia.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, there was also increasing recognition of Aboriginal land rights through the introduction of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1979 in the Northern Territory. In the High Court's 1992 Mabo decision (*Mabo v Queensland*, 1992), the doctrine of *terra nullius* was rejected and the Court recognised that Indigenous rights and interests to land had survived acquisition of sovereignty by the Crown and in some cases continued to exist<sup>36</sup>, leading to the establishment of the *Native Title Act 1993*. Principles of self-determination also led to

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<sup>36</sup> However, the Australian High Court made it clear that the Crown's acquisition of sovereignty could not be challenged in an Australian court as this would threaten the entire judiciary and parliamentary system on which Australia was based.

increasing Aboriginal control of community services in key areas such as health, education and child protection, among others (I. Anderson, 2007).

During this time, there was also bi-partisan support for a national process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. This led to the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991, which aimed to harness widespread public support for reconciliation, mainly through local level activities. While this period has been heralded as an area of increasing recognition of Indigenous rights, particularly by those on the left (Kowal, 2008), many have suggested that these policy and legislative ‘achievements’ were ideologically and politically limited and have generally failed to deliver on promises of land rights and justice (W. Atkinson, 2001; Foley, 2001; Mansell, 1992). The extent to which these symbolic practices and gestures have transformed into more substantial impacts in local government contexts will be discussed in Chapter 7.

### **Retreat from multiculturalism and Indigenous rights**

While broad-level support for multiculturalism has continued within Australia, there have also been periods of significant retreat from key principles of access, equity, and cultural maintenance within multicultural policy (Forrest & Dunn, 2006a). In particular, from the mid 1990s, there was significant reshaping of multicultural policy in response to concerns that too much focus on ‘minority’ rights had neglected the position of ‘ordinary’ Australians. The Government, led by former Prime Minister John Howard, worried that ‘Australian’ identity, which had been historically aligned with dominant Anglo cultural values, was being distorted (Bulbeck, 2004). At the same time, far-right political parties, such as the One Nation Party, openly attacked multiculturalism, where Indigenous people and Asian Australians in particular were portrayed as receiving special privileges and benefits not available to ‘ordinary’ Australians. This resulted in renewed commitment to ‘Australian’ national values and identity within multicultural policy, including advancing the interests of the wider community, as distinct from the special interests of minority groups (National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1999).

This period also entailed reduced funding for services that had been established to address disadvantage and inequality among minority groups in favour of ‘mainstreaming’ service delivery. The Howard Government also weakened support for



native title by winding back rights under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Tehan, 2003) and refused to provide a formal apology to the Stolen Generations as a key recommendation coming out of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's (2000) report.

This period was also marked by increased focus on 'social cohesion' and more stringent immigration policies, including increasingly punitive measures towards refugees and asylum seekers, particularly people arriving in Australia by boat (Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005). While the policy of mandatory detention was established under Labor, the Howard Government took an even tougher stance, including lengthening the timeframe for detention and legislating for temporary protection visas over permanent residency and citizenship (Jupp, 2002; Mares, 2001). These measures and other events such as the Tampa crisis in 2001<sup>37</sup> led to heightened media and public attention towards asylum seekers and refugees, invoking new pejorative language about 'boat people'<sup>38</sup>, 'queue jumpers' and 'people smugglers' into Australian political and public discourse and debate (Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Klocker & Dunn, 2003; Marr & Wilkinson, 2003; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005).

At the same time, global political events, including terrorist attacks in western and non-western countries, such as the September 11 attacks in the United States and bombings in London and Bali, focused new policy attention on social cohesion and national security in response to 'increased global threats' of terrorism and religious extremism (Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2006). These events have led to rising Islamophobia, defined as prejudice and xenophobia towards Muslim and Arab Australians, in Australia and across the world (Dreher, 2001; Dunn et al., 2004; Poynting & Mason, 2008). According to Dreher (2006, p. v), these events created a 'climate of fear and insecurity' among Muslim and Arab Australians who have been made to feel that they are not welcome and do not belong in Australia. According to Nelson and Dunn (2013), social cohesion was positioned as a remedy for terrorism and extremism with Muslim Australians, in particular, being marked as 'ripe for cohesion' (Wetherell, 2007, p. 7). A number of commentators have argued that this time signalled a period of increased public debate and media attention over issues of national identity,

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<sup>37</sup> The Tampa crisis occurred in 2001 and involved the rescue of 433 asylum seekers by a Norwegian container ship near Australian waters. At the time, the Australian government refused the entry of these asylum seekers onto Australian territory and instead negotiated an expensive deal to house the asylum seekers on Nauru. These events led to a further shift in government policy towards offshore detention.

<sup>38</sup> Although according to Phillip and Boose (2013), the phrase entered the national lexicon as early as the 1970s following the arrival of Vietnamese asylum seekers after the Vietnam War.

culture and racism. For example, the Howard Government was criticised for fostering a climate of divisiveness and fear that lead to a 'resurgence of racism' (Millbank, 1998). Others have suggested that these developments presented numerous challenges to the development of positive race relations (Forrest & Dunn, 2006a; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2001; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005). For instance, Forrest and Dunn (2006) argue that changes to multicultural policy during this time worked to re-establish a more privileged status of Anglo-Australians within multicultural history and identity. Others attribute the rise in racism and the success of far-right political parties to the suppression of debate during the Labor years (Millbank, 1998), where it has been argued that a neo-conservative backlash and the re-emergence of Australian nationalism was brewing (Castles et al., 1988; Hage, 2008).

More recently, and despite successive changes in government, many of the current approaches to immigration policy have remained. Both major political parties continue to support 'off-shore' detention, processing and now settlement of asylum seekers outside of Australia. A further recent policy shift includes policies to intercept boats carrying asylum seekers before they enter Australian waters and 'turn boats around when it is safe to do so' (Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, 2015), thus almost entirely failing to meet Australia's obligations as a signatory under the international refugee conventions. To date, thousands of asylum seekers, including children, remain in prolonged detention, which is causing deleterious effects to physical and mental health (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2014). A focus on national security and social cohesion has also continued within government policy. For example, recent terrorism threats posed by terrorist organisations such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has lead to increased security and government intervention to discourage radicalisation of Australians by Islamic State.

In recent times, there has also been renewed focus on government 'intervention' in Indigenous affairs, a national apology to members of the Stolen Generations and funding cuts to Aboriginal programs and services. The Northern Territory National Emergency Response (known as the NT Intervention) was developed in response to Wild and Anderson's (2007) report into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse. The NT Intervention was implemented in 2007 and included a suite of changes to welfare and health provision, law enforcement, land tenure, housing and

other measures. The approach has been highly controversial and criticised for its hasty implementation and disregard for many of the recommendations of the original report. A number of years on some have questioned its effectiveness and see it as a further example of intrusion into the lives of Indigenous people (Altman, 2007; Calma, 2010; Shaw, 2013).

In 2008, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd gave a national apology to the Stolen Generations, which represented a key symbolic moment in recognising the effects of the removal of Indigenous children during the protection and assimilation eras. While this gesture brought understandable relief to members of the Stolen Generations, it has also been criticised for not providing compensation to people affected by this policy, while also neglecting acknowledgement of numerous other forms of injustice perpetrated against Indigenous people since colonisation (Foley, 2008; Fredericks, 2006). More recently, despite stated commitments to Indigenous Affairs by former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, the Government has made substantial funding cuts to key Aboriginal programs and services. On the whole, some scholars have suggested that recent policy trends in relation to multiculturalism and Indigenous affairs present a move back to assimilation policies of the past (Koleth, 2010; Mansouri & Ebanda de B'éri, 2014).

### **What about anti-racism?**

Until recently, specific measures to address racism have been largely absent from Australian government policy. The first attempt at an official national anti-racism policy response was during the mid-1990s, when \$5 million was earmarked for the first stage of a two-year anti-racism campaign. However, the proposed campaign was never implemented due to concern over its effectiveness<sup>39</sup> (Millbank, 1998). Rather, funds were directed towards a national community grants program to support diversity and promote harmony (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 1998). This program has undergone a number of reviews and maintains some emphasis on promoting diversity and inclusion, alongside more recent alignment with social cohesion and national security agendas (Koleth, 2010).

From 2010, there has been increasing support for anti-racism as a public policy issue.

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<sup>39</sup> It has also been suggested that rather than being developed out of direct concern about racism, the campaign was proposed as an alternative to Labor's proposed racial hatred legislation, which aimed to make racial vilification unlawful (Millbank 1998).

For the first time, the Australian government made explicit reference to opposition of ‘all forms of racism, discrimination, intolerance and prejudice’ within multicultural policy (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2010, p. 5). In 2011, the Australian Government committed to developing and implementing a National Anti-Racism Strategy. A key focus of the strategy included raising public awareness about racism and developing educational resources in mainstream Australia to identify and prevent racism in key settings where it occurs (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Though the full impact of this campaign is not yet known, increased focus on anti-racism at the national level, including engagement with community leaders and institutions across a range of sectors, has helped to raise awareness of racism as an issue, encourage anti-racism action and reshape social norms about what is acceptable behaviour. As discussed below, local government has played an increasing role in supporting diversity and anti-racism at the local level, as part of this strategy and other initiatives.

### **3.3 Support for Diversity and Anti-Racism at the Local Level**

So far, this chapter has reviewed macro-level policy trends in relation to diversity, racism and anti-racism in Australia. As noted, although multiculturalism remains the key policy mechanism for managing diversity in Australia, there have also been periods of retreat from principles of access, equity and cultural maintenance within multicultural policy. In the context of these policy trends, some scholars have argued that local government is playing an increasingly important leadership role in supporting multiculturalism and social cohesion (Lobo, 2009; Pagonis, 2013; Thompson & Dunn, 2002).

Drawing on both macro (i.e. policy) as well as micro (i.e. interactions between citizens) aspects of diversity, this section begins by outlining the changing role of local government in providing ‘services to people’ (Dollery, Wallis, & Allan, 2006, p. 554). It then reviews literature on the role of local government in developing locally specific policies in support of multiculturalism, social cohesion and anti-racism (Mansouri & Strong, 2007; Pagonis, 2013; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). Finally, I consider possibilities and constraints on local government in playing a greater role in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism.

## **The changing role of local government in Australia**

In Australia, local government is the lowest tier of government and is administered by state and territory governments, below the federal tier. As in other parts of the world, the role of local government in Australia is changing. Once perceived as a vehicle for providing a limited range of ‘services to property’ as characterised by the popular expression ‘rates, roads and rubbish’ (Dollery et al., 2006, p. 556), the role of local government has undergone considerable change in recent times. Due to a range of factors, including the amalgamation of councils, the devolution of activities from federal and state governments and increasing community expectations, local government has had increasing roles in community strengthening and responsiveness, in democratic processes as well as greater service delivery functions (Brackertz, 2013; Dollery et al., 2006; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). However, while the role of local government has changed, the capacity of councils to meet these new roles has ‘not grown to a similar degree’ where access to financial resources and democratic safeguards remain key challenges for local government (Brackertz, 2013, p. 3).

Across Australia, local councils vary in size and population, which in turn impacts the financial position of individual councils. All local councils receive funding from state and federal governments, however many councils now rely largely on revenue generated through council rates and charges. However, generally, councils in metropolitan areas receive more funding from rates than smaller rural councils, who therefore receive greater funding in grants. As discussed further in Chapters 6, the changing role of local government supports the case for increased engagement with workforce diversity issues. However, resource constraints, including differences in the financial position of councils, have implications regarding the extent to which councils can resource diversity and anti-racism initiatives. These issues are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 10.

### **Current and potential roles of local government in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism**

In the context of increasing polarisation of diversity issues at the national level, and the changing role of local government discussed above, it is worth examining current and potential roles for local councils in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism. Although there is increasing focus on workforce diversity issues within local

government (Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, 2013; Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government, 2012; Hastings, Ryan, Gibbs, & Lawrie, 2015; Pagonis, 2013), much research and practice on local government's role in supporting positive settlement outcomes among new immigrant communities, enhancing social cohesion and intercultural relationships and service provision (access and equity) to diverse communities (Dunn, Thompson, Hanna, Murphy, & Burnley, 2001; Lobo, 2009; Mansouri & Strong, 2007; Morris & O'Shea, 2015; Pagonis, 2013; Thompson & Dunn, 2002; A. Wise & Ali, 2008). However, as discussed below, in order to fulfil these functions, there is an increasing need for council workforces to be more representative of the diverse communities they serve.

In particular, as the level of government closest to the community, a number of scholars have proposed that local government has 'a strategic policy advantage' to support diversity and promote intercultural understanding and social cohesion in the community (Mansouri & Strong, 2007, p. 26; Pagonis, 2013; A. Wise & Ali, 2008). While it is important to understand and address priorities among the whole community, there is also a need to address the specific needs of diverse communities (Mansouri & Strong, 2007). Other scholars have argued that local government is well placed to provide a leadership role in 'addressing community issues arising from cultural diversity' such as supporting social inclusion, intercultural harmony and exchange, and community engagement through enhanced service delivery and democratic processes (Pagonis, 2013, p. 143; Thompson & Dunn, 2002; A. Wise & Ali, 2008).

Drawing on current best practice across local councils in Victoria, Pagonis (2013) has recently said that in order to achieve these goals, local government can: make commitment to diversity explicit, such as through reference to access and equity in council goals, values and planning processes; dedicate staff positions to lead engagement with Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities; increase diversity in the workforce to better reflect diversity in the community; monitor performance outcomes in relation to diversity standards across council; and establish other specific diversity plans and policies. Useful here is the notion of representative bureaucracy (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997). As discussed further in Chapter 6, in the context of workforce diversity, there is consistent evidence that the presence of people from minority group backgrounds has been linked to more favourable outcomes for

minority groups (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997). Alongside these practices, in Chapters 7 and 8, I examine the extent to which local government can support workforce diverse through inclusive organisational cultures and removing systemic barriers to employment.

Despite current practice and the potential roles for local government to play a greater role in supporting diversity, there are also a number of constraints on local government that need to be taken into account. As discussed above, local councils experience resource and funding constraints, where policy, planning and related expenditure for immigration and community relations largely falls with centralised state and national governments (Dunn et al., 2001; Pagonis, 2013). This limits the capacity of councils to pursue complex diversity agendas in a more strategic and consistent way. Along with funding constraints, it is important to recognise regional factors spatial issues to consider, where resources required for the development of local multicultural policies vary considerably across time and space (Thompson & Dunn, 2002). For instance, councils that have a longer history of settling large numbers of immigrants and refugees have more comprehensive programs and more staff to deal with diversity related issues (Pagonis, 2013).

While a number of councils have developed innovative policies and programs to support diversity issues, there is a lack of a systematic response across local government in Australia (Pagonis, 2013; Thompson, Dunn, Burnley, Murphy, & Hanna, 1998). In the only comprehensive national survey of local government on diversity issues, undertaken by Thompson et al. (1998), the authors found that while some councils had made major inroads over a short timeframe, the bulk of council activities focused on promoting cultural diversity and harmony, such as through information and community events. There was less attention to addressing more complex issues such as racial discrimination and intercultural conflict. Moreover, while some local councils had made important progress in providing more accessible and equitable services to diverse communities, at the institutional level, knowledge was often 'lost' when a project worker's contract expired or when a multicultural liaison officer was transferred to a different department (Thompson et al., 1998).

More recently, Pagonis (2013) found substantial progress in the development of diversity programs within local government, where a number of councils were excelling in their engagement with diverse communities and provision of services. However, there was still a lack of a systemic approach across councils, as reflective of earlier reports. Pagonis (2013, p. 150) has written that in order for local government to respond consistently to issues arising from cultural diversity, there is a need for increased resources and coordination between state and federal governments, including ‘a more clearly articulated, strategic, and mutually agreed position on the respective roles and responsibilities of the three levels of government’. Similarly, Thompson and Dunn (2002) have argued that increasing diversity in the community, where there are now few regions in Australia that do not have significant levels of immigrant or Indigenous populations<sup>40</sup>, compels local governments to institute more systemic responses to the needs of diverse groups. As discussed in Chapter 6, these arguments, alongside other articulated benefits of diversity provide a compelling case for a more institutionalised approach to supporting diversity across Australian local governments, including in workplace contexts.

Alongside these developments, local government is playing an increasing role in developing locally specific anti-racism policies and activities. Dunn et al. (2001) have written that local government involvement in community relations has generally focused around two key roles: a celebratory role in well as a regulatory role in addressing racism and other tensions, such as through problematic media reporting. As noted above, their survey found that local councils were very involved and successful in the former role, but less well established in the latter (Dunn et al., 2001). As discussed in the last chapter, while events that increase intercultural connectedness and social cohesion are important, there is also a need for specific measures to address racism and other tensions arising from cultural diversity (Dunn et al., 2001; Nelson, 2014; Pagonis, 2013).

More recently and in the context of the National Anti-Racism Strategy (described above), there has been increased engagement with anti-racism within local government. For instance, a number of councils have signed up to campaigns developed out of the national strategy, demonstrating important flow-on effects between national and local

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<sup>40</sup> Specifically, the major urban areas have the largest numbers of immigrants or migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, while rural and remote areas have high populations of Indigenous people (Thompson et al., 1998).



level policies. For example, in Victoria, Darebin City Council (2012) has recently developed an anti-racism strategy that builds on national frameworks and research, but is responsive to forms of racism experienced by residents in the Darebin local government area. Local councils have also played an important role in protesting changes to anti-discrimination legislation and declaring local areas as ‘Refugee Welcome Zones’<sup>41</sup> for new refugee populations in Australia. On the whole, and in the context of increasing polarisation of diversity issues at the national level and literature discussed in Chapter 3, local government may be particularly well placed to manage some of the tensions arising from diversity, through a focus on local and contextual anti-racism intervention. These issues will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 10.

### **3.4 Attitudes Towards Diversity and Experiences of Racism**

This section outlines evidence on the nature of attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism in Australia. As will be shown, many Australians are supportive of diversity, while others continue to hold prejudiced views and false beliefs about people from minority group backgrounds (Dunn et al., 2004; Markus, 2014; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005). Alongside these studies, there is increasing research into experiences of racism, where racism is both prevalent and disproportionately affects some racial/ethnic groups more than others. Studies have also shown that racism is contextual and more likely to occur in particular settings. Of particular relevance to this study is evidence of racism in employment/workplace settings as well as important regional variations.

#### **Attitudes towards diversity**

The findings of the Challenging Racism Project (2011) present the largest national data set for understanding Australian attitudes towards diversity. Among 12,512 participants, a large majority of survey respondents (86.8 per cent) were supportive of diversity and feel comfortable about living in a diverse society (78.1 per cent). Most Australians (84.4 per cent) also recognised that racism is a problem in Australia. However, despite

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<sup>41</sup> A Refugee Welcome Zone is a Local Government Area that ‘has made a commitment in spirit to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community’ (Refugee Council of Australia, 2015).

support for diversity, prejudice and old-fashioned attitudes remain. For instance, a substantial minority of Australians (41.2 per cent) agreed that people from ethnic backgrounds should integrate into Australian culture instead of maintaining their own cultural heritage. Moreover, a small minority still held strongly prejudiced views<sup>42</sup>. A large minority of Australians (41.4 per cent) also agreed that there were some cultural groups who did not fit into Australian society (Challenging Racism Project, 2011). According to this body of research, Asian, Muslim and Indigenous Australians have been identified as key 'out-groups' in Australia (Dunn et al., 2004). As discussed below, these groups also experience significant levels of racism, hence providing a compelling case for racism and discrimination to be addressed in key settings where it occurs.

In another, longitudinal survey conducted by the Scanlon Foundation, 84 per cent of respondents agreed that 'multiculturalism has been good for Australia' (Markus, 2014, p. 3). The survey has also found negative views in relation to immigration. However, attitudes have fluctuated over time. For example, in 2009, 37 per cent of respondents felt that the current immigration intake was 'too high' (Markus, 2009). In 2010, this sentiment increased to 47 per cent, but fell again in 2011 (to 38 per cent) and in 2012 (to 39 per cent) (Markus, 2010, 2011, 2012). Negative views increased slightly to 42 per cent in 2013 and decreased again in 2014, where just less than 35 per cent consider that the immigration intake was 'too high' (Markus, 2013, 2014).

Markus (2014) has argued that two key factors influence Australian attitudes towards immigration over time, including the extent to which immigration issues are highlighted in political and public debates, and unemployment levels<sup>43</sup>. Nonetheless, the surveys found that Australians hold negative sentiment towards immigrants from particular backgrounds. For example, in 2010, one in five respondents held negative sentiment towards immigrants from the Middle East (Markus, 2010), while in 2014, negative sentiment towards Muslims was almost five times higher than for other religious groups (Markus, 2014). These findings have implications within workplace contexts, where

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<sup>42</sup> These issues have been measured according to the following questions: 'you are prejudiced against other cultures' as well as 'it is NOT a good idea for people of different races to marry one another' to which 12.4% and 11.2% of Australians agreed with, respectively (Challenging Racism Project, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> In the context of increasing unemployment and economic concerns in Australia, Markus (2014) has argued that recent findings are counter-intuitive, but can be explained by stronger policy mechanisms in relation to asylum seekers, which may have influenced public opinion in relation to immigration.

intolerance towards difference can cause resistance and hamper efforts to accommodate diversity.

Alongside national survey research, studies in social psychology have shown high levels of prejudiced attitudes towards Aboriginal people, asylum seekers and Muslim Australians (Croston & Pedersen, 2013; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Dudgeon, Watt, & Griffiths, 2006; Pedersen & Hartley, 2012). Pedersen et al. (2005, p. 170) note that research has largely focused on these two groups as Indigenous Australians experience ‘significant disadvantage in almost all measures of western well-being’, while asylum seekers are also a very vulnerable group, where many ‘are locked up in detention centers, sometimes for a period of years’. Importantly, research into attitudes towards these groups has been linked to a number of ‘false beliefs’<sup>44</sup> about Indigenous people and asylum seekers (Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005; Pedersen, Clarke, et al., 2005; Pedersen et al., 2006).

Prejudiced attitudes and false beliefs are commonly informed by political and public debates and representation in the media (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Klocker & Dunn, 2003). In the context of national policy trends discussed in Section 3.2 above, this has implications for anti-racism practice where the legitimisation of myths works to ‘create, maintain, and/or enhance social inequality’ and in turn ‘justify or oppose social policies’ (J. M. Jones, 1997; Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005, p. 157; Sidanius, Levin, Federico, & Pratto, 2001). Based on these findings, and as discussed in Chapter 6, I anticipated that false beliefs about minority groups would also be apparent within workplace settings and potentially cause resistance to workforce diversity interventions.

Alongside these findings, there are also differences in attitudes according to a range of socio-economic factors, political views and identification with national identity (Pedersen & Hartley, 2012). For example, socio-demographic indicators, such as lower levels of education, predicted negative attitudes, suggesting that these factors need to be

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<sup>44</sup> For example, Pedersen et al. (2005, pp. 171-172) have outlined three key false beliefs about Aboriginal people, from *Rebutting the Myths* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1992): that ‘Aborigines are more likely to drink alcohol than non-Aborigines’; ‘Aborigines only have to pay a few payments under a hire-purchase agreement for a car, and the government will meet the remaining costs’; and ‘being Aboriginal entitles you to more social security benefits’. Three common myths about asylum seekers include: ‘most asylum seekers are queue jumpers’; ‘asylum seekers must be “cashed up” to pay people smugglers jumpers’; and ‘Australia provides asylum seekers with all sorts of government handouts’.

considered when assessing the nature of prejudiced attitudes (Pedersen, Beven, Walker, & Griffiths, 2004). In relation to asylum seekers, studies have similarly found that prejudiced attitudes are strongly associated with the extent to which people held false beliefs (Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005). A strong sense of group-based national identity was also related to negative attitudes towards asylum seekers and Indigenous Australians (Pedersen, Attwell, et al., 2005).

Other scholars have also linked racism to narrow conceptions of Australian national identity and culture (Castles et al., 1988; Dunn et al., 2004; Hage, 2003; Jayasuriya, 2002). Although multifaceted (M. Wright & Reeskens, 2013), nationalism frequently takes the form of racism in that it ascribes significance and superiority to visible forms of culture and tradition based on an 'us' versus 'them' differentiation (Castles et al., 1988, p. 107). More subtly, nationalist discourse rarely resorts to explicit racist talk, but employs more 'acceptable' language, such as notions of social cohesion, unity and universalism, which in turn provides a 'moral justification' for who does and does not belong (Jayasuriya, 2002, p. 42). As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, narrow conceptions of Australian national identity were also evident in this research, where there were tensions regarding the accommodation of diversity in the community and in the workplace.

### **Experiences of racism**

Racism affects many people in Australia, however, historically and socio-economically, racism has particularly impacted Indigenous Australians. Survey data on experiences of racism among Indigenous Australians is mixed and varies by region (Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008), however its prevalence is consistently high. A recent analysis of a nationally representative survey found that more than one in four of 7,823 respondents (27 per cent) from Indigenous backgrounds experienced racism in the past year (J. Cunningham & Paradies, 2013). Moreover, the authors found that such racism was experienced in public places (41 per cent of those reporting any racial discrimination), legal (40 per cent) and workplace (30 per cent) settings. Among those people reporting racism, around 40 per cent experienced discrimination most or all of the time in at least one setting (J. Cunningham & Paradies, 2013).

In another representative study into experiences of racism by Dunn, Forrest, Pe-Pua and Smith (2005) of 94 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (within a larger

sample of 5056 respondents) in Queensland and New South Wales, racism was experienced in education (36.2 per cent), workplace (28.7 per cent), policing (23.4 per cent), and housing (21.3 per cent) settings. In each of these settings, participants who identified as non-Aboriginal experienced considerably less racism than Aboriginal participants (15.9 per cent; 14.5 per cent, 6.1 per cent and 6.1 per cent respectively), particularly in policing and housing settings. One large population study in Western Australian found that 21.8 per cent of Indigenous young people aged 12-17 years experienced racism (Zubrick et al., 2005).

In a recent (non-random) survey of experiences of racism among 755 Aboriginal people across four communities (two rural and two metropolitan) in Victoria, almost every participant had experienced racism in the past 12 months, with most people experiencing racism multiple times and across a range of settings (Ferdinand et al., 2012). The most common experiences of racism occurred in shops (67 per cent), public spaces (59 per cent), education (50.9 per cent), and sports settings (47.8 per cent). Of particular relevance to this study, nearly half of people surveyed (42.1 per cent) had experienced racism in employment and one in five people (20.3 per cent) experienced racism in interactions with local councils. There were no significant differences in experiences of racism due to gender, age or rurality, although people educated to Year 12 or above reported more racism than people with lower levels of education (Ferdinand et al., 2012).

Another study by Gallaher et al. (2009) conducted in South Australia found that almost two-thirds of 153 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people surveyed experienced racism often or very often in at least one setting, while 29 per cent experienced racism sometimes. Consistent with the Victorian study, racism was most commonly experienced in service (63 per cent), justice (60 per cent), education (58 per cent), and general public (54 per cent) settings. Reports of racism in employment and government settings were also high with nearly half of the respondents experiencing racism in these settings (43 per cent and 46 per cent respectively). In another study conducted in Darwin of 312 Indigenous participants, 70 per cent of respondents reported racism (Paradies & Cunningham, 2009). Racism was most commonly experienced in public places (45 per cent), services (43 per cent) and in employment (40 per cent). These data

demonstrate that Indigenous people in Australia continue to experience high levels of racism across a range of settings, including in employment/workplace settings.

Alongside direct experiences of racism, numerous reports have shown that the effects of colonisation, racism and exclusion on Indigenous people can be linked to present-day inequalities and disadvantages in a range of areas including health, education, employment and justice (Carson, Dunbar, Chenhall, & Bailie, 2007; Gallaher et al., 2009; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1991, 2001; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991). Indigenous people are also over-represented within the criminal justice system (Cunneen, 2001; Department of Justice, 2005; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 1991) as well as less likely to access and receive medical care (Cass et al., 2004; J. Cunningham, 2002), which can also be linked to racism (Paradies et al., 2009).

Racism has also been recognised as a key factor influencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, where several studies have linked racism to ill-health, particularly negative mental health impacts, such as anxiety, depression, poor quality of life, psychological distress and substance misuse (Ferdinand et al., 2012; Gallaher et al., 2009; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009; Paradies et al., 2008). Children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of racism, where studies have linked racism to negative health and wellbeing, including anxiety, depression, suicide risk, substance abuse among children and young people from Indigenous backgrounds (Priest, Paradies, Gunthorpe, Cairney, & Sayers, 2011; Priest, Paradies, Stewart, & Luke, 2011; Zubrick et al., 2005). On the whole, these data show that racism towards Indigenous people is systemic in nature. This provides a strong rationale for addressing racism perpetuated against Indigenous people across a range of institutional contexts, including in workplace/employment settings.

In Australia, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds also experience high levels of racism. In particular, newly arrived immigrants, particularly people born in non-English speaking countries or who may be 'visibly different' from the majority culture experience high levels of racism (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Jakubowicz, 1994). A survey by Forrest and Dunn (2007b) of over 4,000 Victorians found that people born in non-English speaking countries were more likely to

experience discrimination than people born in Australia or other countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The most common experiences of discrimination among people born in non-English speaking countries were sport or other large public events (45 per cent), the workplace (39 per cent), shops or restaurants (34 per cent) and education (30 per cent) settings. Nearly one in five participants born in non-English speaking countries also experienced discrimination in housing (18 per cent) and policing (19 per cent) (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2007).

National longitudinal surveys conducted by the Scanlon Foundation have also found consistent reports of racism among respondents from non-English speaking backgrounds (47 per cent in 2007 and 43 per cent in 2009) (Markus, 2009; Markus & Dharmalingam, 2007)<sup>45</sup>. Another study of 1,130 people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds surveyed in four communities (two rural and two metropolitan) in Victoria found that nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of people participating in the survey had experienced racism in the previous 12 months, with most experiencing racism multiple times (Ferdinand, Kelaher, & Paradies, 2013). Racism occurred across a broad range of settings, and was most commonly experienced in public spaces (35 per cent), employment (32 per cent), shops (30.7 per cent) and public transport (29.2 per cent). One in ten people (11.2 per cent) experienced racism in interactions with local councils. Experiences of racism also varied by age, education, gender and region, where for instance, people living in metropolitan areas reported more racism than people living in rural areas. This study also found that ‘visibly different’ religious groups including Sikhs and Muslims are more likely to have experienced racism than other religious groups (Ferdinand et al., 2013).

A survey of 115 participants born in the Middle East, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey was analysed in comparison with experiences of racism among Australians from a non-Middle Eastern background (Pedersen, Dunn, Forrest, & McGarty, 2012). Middle Eastern Australians were found to experience more discrimination across a range of institutional and everyday settings, in particular in education and at the level of everyday incivilities, such as being treated disrespectfully and name-calling (Pedersen et al., 2012).

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<sup>45</sup> By contrast, respondents from English speaking backgrounds (31.8 per cent in 2007 and 31 per cent in 2009) alongside the Australian born (8 per cent in 2007 and 18 per cent in 2009) experienced less racism (Markus, 2009; Markus & Dharmalingam, 2007).

As is the case for Indigenous populations, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds also experience high levels of racism. A study by Runions et al. (2011) of 47 families (child and parent reports) found that over 85 per cent of children reported discrimination, with 37.5 per cent reporting five or more events. Perceived discrimination was also associated with withdrawn social behaviours, greater emotional problems and indirect aggression. Another study conducted with young people found that over 80 per cent of respondents from Indigenous, migrant and refugee background had experienced racism. This was contrasted to 54.6 per cent of young people from Anglo-Australian backgrounds (Mansouri, Jenkins, & Walsh, 2012). On the whole, it is clear that, alongside Indigenous people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds also experience high levels of racism, including in workplace settings. Again, this provide a strong rational for anti-racism intervention in the workplace.

### **3.5 Labour Market Discrimination**

There is a well-established body of research examining differential labour outcomes among migrant and Indigenous populations in Australia (Bertone, 2009a; Castles, Foster, Iredale, & Withers, 1998; J. Collins, 1991; Khoo & McDonald, 2003; Khoo, McDonald, Giorgas, & Birrell, 2002; Taylor & Altman, 1997). Significant contributions have been made in this area. Rather than repeating this body of literature, this section focuses on understanding discrimination in the labour market. However, as labour market discrimination is linked with other factors, such as differences in human capital, it is first necessary to outline key factors that contribute to labour market disadvantage before seeking to conceptualise discrimination in the labour market.

#### **Understanding differential labour market outcomes**

There are two main approaches to understanding differences in labour market outcomes among diverse groups in Australia and elsewhere. The first, human capital theory, focuses on the role of human agency and maintains that investment in human capital, primarily education, training and skills, enhances an individual's earning potential (Becker, 1975). This theory suggests that differences in pay, occupational and employment status between immigrants and locals reflect differences in productive capabilities between these groups (Wooden, 1994). According to this view, labour market disparities among immigrant groups can be explained by ineffective



transferability of human capital through the process of migration, such as language proficiency, education skills and other cultural differences between the host country and countries of origin (Evans & Kelley, 1991; Piracha, Tani, & Vaira-Lucero, 2014). The second approach, labour market segmentation, emphasises the role of structure, such as social and institutional forces that can reduce opportunities for some groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, who are commonly consigned to a secondary division of the labour market (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Dickens & Lang, 1988; Flatau & Lewis, 1991; Piore, 1979; Reich, 1984).

A number of scholars have argued that structural inequalities have been significantly downplayed in human capital analyses, where for instance, the supply of cheap labour and preparedness of some people to take low skilled, low-paid jobs has been essential for growth in capitalist modes of production (Castles & Miller, 2003; J. Collins, 1984, 1991; Harris, 1995; Ho & Alcorso, 2004; Storer, 1982). For example, Ho and Alcorso (2004, p. 239) have proposed that there is an assumption that, 'if migrants are concentrated in low-paid, inferior jobs, it is because of their individual shortages of human capital and low productivity' rather than other structural factors. On the other hand, human capital attributes such as education and English language proficiency are needed for many kinds of skilled labour. As discussed in Chapter 7, distinguishing human capital from other structural barriers, such as racism, was also a tension in this research.

For new immigrant groups and refugees, an important issue affecting labour market integration is 'skill wastage' and loss of occupational status in the migration process, where there have been significant problems in matching skills to jobs, primarily through the non-recognition of overseas qualifications, lack of local work experience and language barriers (Bertone, 2009b; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Hugo, 2004). Therefore, in Australia, many immigrants are 'over-qualified and undervalued' and work in jobs that do not correspond to their qualifications and experience (Alcorso, 2003; Bertone, 2009b; Bertone, Leahy, & Doughney, 2005; S. Richardson, Robertson, & Isley, 2001)<sup>46</sup>. Over the longer term, this can create problems for upward mobility, where a

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<sup>46</sup> For example, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006, p. 213) have argued that loss of occupational status 'means that doctors and engineers drive taxis, previous lecturers work as teacher's assistants, a sociologist works as an underground miner, a helicopter pilot becomes a courier, economists, accountants and teachers work as cleaners and an engineer holds a semi-skilled job in the building industry'.

decline in skills and experience, gaps in job resumes and lack of networking opportunities mean that many migrant groups remain stuck in low-skilled jobs and become permanently relegated to a secondary division of the labour market (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006).

While English language proficiency, education levels and residency in Australia are commonly cited as key determinants for improved labour market integration (S. Richardson et al., 2004), many immigrant groups continue to experience labour market disadvantage despite having these attributes (Bertone et al., 2005; Bertone, Leuner, Nair, & Qin, 2011; Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Cobb-Clark, 2000). For instance, Hugo (2004) found that while employment outcomes had increased among longer-standing immigrants, this varied by national origin<sup>47</sup>. Women from non-western migrant backgrounds also experience significant labour market disadvantage (Alcorso, 2003; Bertone et al., 2005; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; S. Richardson et al., 2004).

In a study of employees in the hotel sector, Alcorso (2003) found that Filipino women, who were proficient in English and often highly educated, were unable to transfer from cleaning to more secure, well-paid and highly skilled jobs, such as front-of house positions. Due to family responsibilities and employer policies on transfer and training, opportunities for upward mobility were almost impossible for these women (Alcorso, 2003). Similarly, others studies have found that many skilled immigrants, including those who speak English well, continue to experience differential outcomes in the labour market, despite wanting and seeking work, often over many years (Bertone et al., 2005). Conversely, immigrants from English-speaking backgrounds with qualifications that can be more easily recognised commonly fare better in the labour market (Bertone et al., 2005; Cobb-Clark, 2000; Hugo, 2004; S. Richardson et al., 2004). For example, along with the Australian-born, immigrants from English speaking countries, such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, have high rates of participation in the labour market (Bertone et al., 2011; Hugo, 2004). As discussed further below and in Chapter 7, these data suggest that differences in human capital attributes do not fully account for labour market disparities among diverse groups.

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<sup>47</sup> In particular, Vietnamese-born immigrants had the highest rate of unemployment both as recent migrants and as longstanding migrants, while there was also a high degree of long-term unemployment within the Lebanese community. On the other hand, while new arrivals from China experienced significantly higher rates of unemployment, employment outcomes had improved for longstanding Chinese migrants (Hugo, 2004).

## **Labour market disadvantage versus discrimination**

In Australia, there is evidence that labour market disadvantage particularly affects people from refugee backgrounds, who often have ‘little choice but to accept low-status jobs as a way out of marginalisation created by unemployment and welfare dependency’ and often take jobs that many locals avoid (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006, p. 206). Contrary to popular perceptions, refugees who settle in Australia and other western countries come from a diverse range of backgrounds, including many who are well educated and have necessary finances and networks to navigate complex immigration procedures, alongside those who have spent years in refugee camps (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006). This heterogeneity is, however, often not reflected in labour market outcomes, where despite having high skills, education and social attributes, unemployment, underemployment and the loss of occupational and social status among refugee communities is commonplace (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006).

Studies have also found that adequate social and psychological support, including fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, plays a key role in establishing positive settlement outcomes (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006). In their study of key psychosocial factors that assist young refugees in making positive transitions in their new countries, Correa-Velez, Gifford and Barnett (2010) found settlement is most effective when ‘embedded within a broader socially inclusive society’ where real opportunities for inclusion and participation among young peoples are available (Correa-Velez et al., 2010, p. 1399). As discussed in Chapter 8, these factors provide an important case for removing structural barriers for recently arrived refugee populations, including in the area of employment.

Indigenous people also experience significant labour market disadvantage in Australia. There is consistent evidence of much lower employment rates for Indigenous Australians in comparison to other Australians (Altman, Biddle, & Hunter, 2008; Gray, Hunter, & Howlett, 2013; Gray, Hunter, & Lohar, 2012; Taylor & Altman, 1997). These effects are both similar to, and distinct from, the issues presented above for immigrant and refugee communities. As discussed above, Aboriginal people have endured colonisation, dispossession of land and culture, racism and exclusion for more than two centuries. This historical context has led to ongoing disadvantage in a range of areas, including in education and employment. As Paradies et al. (2009) have argued,

historical experiences of discrimination (such as in education) continue to create disadvantages in the present (i.e. when seeking employment).

Other studies have suggested that lower employment rates among Indigenous Australians can be attributed to lower levels of education, training and skills, as well as poorer health, higher levels of incarceration, higher turnover rates and discrimination (Biddle et al., 2013; Gray et al., 2012). Living in areas with fewer employment opportunities also influences labour market outcomes (Gray et al., 2012), however in urban areas and regional centres, where the majority of Indigenous people live, there is also significant disadvantage including in the labour market (Behrendt, 2006; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009). As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 and in light of general experiences of racism outlined above, there is a compelling case for improving opportunities for access, equity and cultural sensitivity in the workplace for Indigenous Australians.

As discussed in Section 3.2, there is increasing evidence of racism and discrimination in workplace/employment settings. However, to date, there are only a handful of studies that specifically examine the nature of labour market discrimination among Indigenous people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Australia (Biddle et al., 2013; Booth, Leigh, & Varganova, 2009; Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; L. Hughes & Davidson, 2011; Junankar, Paul, & Yasmeen, 2002). Apart from a few exceptions (Ferdinand, Paradies, Perry, & Kelaher, 2014; Paradies et al., 2009), there is even less research on how to reduce such discrimination in Australia (Gray et al., 2012). This section outlines contributions that have been made in this area and importantly, justifies the need for more research and practice in this area.

Studies into the nature of labour market discrimination amongst Indigenous people have shown that discrimination and prejudice operates in recruitment and selection processes (Booth et al., 2009; L. Hughes & Davidson, 2011). In their study of bias in the recruitment process, Hughes and Davidson (2011) sent fictitious job resumés for an Indigenous male, Indigenous female, non-Indigenous male and non-Indigenous female to HR professionals for a HR position. Participants ranked the resumes against key selection criteria, including suitability for the position and team fit and also completed a scale determining their attitudes towards Indigenous Australians. The authors found that while participants' gender and attitudes and applicants' gender and race/ethnicity

did not impact resumé ratings, rank differences for the HR position and team fit across the whole sample were significantly different. Specifically, the non-Indigenous male applicant was preferred to the Indigenous male and female applicants. Moreover, participants who held negative attitudes toward Indigenous people consistently ranked the non-Indigenous male applicant more favourably than the Indigenous male and female applicants. Results were also gendered where the non-Indigenous female applicant was ranked more favourably than the Indigenous male applicant, while female participants ranked the non-Indigenous male applicant more favourably than both the Indigenous male and female applicants (L. Hughes & Davidson, 2011).

In another field study which included other racial/ethnic groups, Booth et al. (2009) sent fictitious job applications for entry-level jobs using different and distinctive Anglo-Saxon, Indigenous, Italian, Chinese, and Middle Eastern names. The study similarly controlled for education, work experience and job role and found statistically significant variations in call back rates across these groups. Most notably, applicants with Chinese, Middle Eastern and Indigenous surnames received fewer callbacks than people with Italian and Anglo-Australian surnames. According to these data, Booth et al. (2009) found that, 'ethnic minority candidates would need to apply for more jobs in order to receive the same number of interviews'. As discussed further in Chapter 7, field studies, which measure both conscious and unconscious bias, provide important indicators of systemic racism in recruitment and selection processes.

Studies that control for human capital attributes also provide insight into the nature of employment discrimination (Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Junankar et al., 2002). For instance, Junankar et al. (2002) found no clear link between education levels and labour market outcomes among Asian immigrants, but significant differences in unemployment status between Asian and non-Asian groups, even after controlling for age, marital status, and human capital attributes such as education, English language proficiency, prior knowledge of the Australian labour market and visa status. While these results varied by gender, the authors found that 'unexplained differences' in employment outcomes for males can be attributed to discrimination against Asian immigrants (Junankar et al., 2002, p. 3).

In their study of three recently arrived refugee groups<sup>48</sup>, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) used a purposive sample that was deliberately skewed to include refugees with high 'human capital' (i.e. high language proficiency and high skills). Consistent with other studies, they found variation in employment outcomes between refugee groups. In particular, they found that Black Africans, a 'highly visible' refugee group (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007, p. 60) were the most disadvantaged, experiencing higher levels of unemployment, lower full-time employment and the highest levels of underemployment (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006). Further, African respondents expressed a range of difficulties in obtaining highly skilled employment, even when their qualifications were achieved or updated in Australia. Many attributed these barriers to discrimination and racism, with some respondents giving examples of direct racism in recruitment process (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006).

Borooah and Mangan (2002) have also considered differences in occupational attainment among Indigenous, Asian and white people in full-time employment. The authors found that occupational outcomes varied by gender, race and occupational status. Specifically, racial disadvantage was linked to Asian men and women and to Indigenous men but not to Indigenous women. While attributes such as education were a barrier for Indigenous women within professional, managerial and skilled jobs, Indigenous men faced high levels of disadvantage in professional and managerial jobs. Importantly, the authors have argued that while this is good news for Indigenous women, where barriers in relation to education are easier to overcome, there is also a need to address racial discrimination, particularly for Indigenous men (Borooah & Mangan, 2002).

The situation was different for Asian people, who were less proficient in English but had better educational qualifications than white people, where Borooah and Mangan (2002, p. 46) have argued that, 'it is hard to imagine their employment prospects could be greatly improved by even more investment in human capital'. Though English-proficiency could be a factor, they have suggested that this is debatable, where racism is a more likely contributor, saying that: 'overall the main problem faced by Asian men is simply that they are Asian and this is compounded, to a degree, by their relative lack of proficiency in English' (Borooah & Mangan, 2002, p. 46). The situation was more

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<sup>48</sup> Broadly conceptualised as ex-Yugoslavs, black Africans and people from the Middle East (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007).

complex for Asian women, who face strong racial bias in professional and managerial roles, as opposed to Indigenous women who faced no racial bias. However, in relation to skilled manual work, Asian women faced no significant racial bias or disadvantage. On the whole, Asian employees, even though they had better qualifications than their white counterparts, were racially disadvantaged by being born in non-English speaking countries and being less proficient in English<sup>49</sup>. On the whole, these studies demonstrate the contextual nature of labour market discrimination, which differs by country of origin, gender and type of role/occupation.

Biddle et al. (2013) used a different study design to examine labour market discrimination towards Indigenous Australians. Because discrimination is not directly observed or openly acknowledged, the authors used self-report data to show how Indigenous people experienced discrimination and how such discrimination is potentially associated with poor labour market outcomes. The authors found that unemployed Indigenous people were more likely to report discrimination both in the labour market and in other settings, thus highlighting the intersecting nature of discrimination. As in other studies, the authors controlled for other factors that could explain labour force status, including type of occupation<sup>50</sup>.

The main mechanism by which discrimination might affect Indigenous labour market experience includes a willingness to engage in job searches and ‘to attach oneself to the labour market’ (Biddle et al., 2013, p. 108). In other words, this could mean that some Indigenous Australians actually decrease their interaction with labour market and employment situations in order to avoid potentially discriminatory situations. Similarly, other studies have shown that discrimination is a factor in preventing people from looking for work (Hunter, 2005). Importantly, these studies provide an alternative explanation for understanding labour market discrimination amongst Indigenous people. As discussed in Chapter 7, this attests to the importance of creating welcoming and non-discriminatory environments for Indigenous people.

As this section has shown, there is evidence that disparities in labour market outcomes among diverse groups in Australia exist. However, as demonstrated, there are also

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<sup>49</sup> This includes general levels of disadvantage that affected all Asian people in Australia as well as specific disadvantages that further affected some Asian people more than others (Borooah & Mangan, 2002)

<sup>50</sup> For example, the authors argue that Indigenous people in white-collar industries are likely to have more contact with non-Indigenous people (who are commonly in higher proportions in these roles) and therefore more are likely to face more discrimination than those in blue-collar roles (Biddle et al., 2013).

complexities in differentiating between human capital attributes and other structural barriers that influence labour market outcomes, thus creating a key tension in understandings of racism. On the other hand, studies that control for human capital, along with self-report data on labour market discrimination, indicate that discrimination ought to be recognised as a significant issue that has the potential to undermine social participation and cohesion (Berman, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, & Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2008; Bertone, 2009a; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006). Additionally, increasing evidence of employment discrimination counters claims that differences in labour market outcomes only reflect differences in human capital (Bertone, 2009a; Borooah & Mangan, 2002; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Junankar et al., 2002). Further, studies have shown that labour market discrimination is contextual and likely to differ by country of origin, gender and type of role/occupation, factors that have implications for the present study.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on understanding the nature of racism, support for diversity and anti-racism in the Australian context and the nature of Australian attitudes towards diversity, experiences of racism and labour market discrimination in Australia.

Starting at the macro-level, the first section of this chapter considered the national policy context for supporting diversity and anti-racism. I have shown how support for diversity in Australia has existed alongside racism, both historically and in recent times. For example, alongside a history of racism and exclusion, there has also been bi-partisan political support for multiculturalism and some recognition of Indigenous rights. Nonetheless, public and political support for diversity has been impeded by periods of significant backlash, anxiety about cultural difference, racism and violence. Alongside these trends, national government policy has increasingly shifted towards a focus on social cohesion, national security and more stringent immigration policies, particularly in relation to asylum seekers arriving to Australia by boat. On the other hand, for the first time in Australia, there has been commitment to specific anti-racism measures through the introduction of a national anti-racism campaign.

Second, this chapter has considered support for diversity and anti-racism at the local level. Specifically, I have examined the changing role of local government in Australia



and elsewhere, where there has been increasing emphasis on local councils in providing enhanced levels of service delivery and supporting community cohesion and wellbeing (Dollery et al., 2006). Drawing on both macro (i.e. policy) as well as micro (i.e. interactions between citizens) diversity aspects, this section has drawn together literature on the increasing role of local councils in supporting diversity and anti-racism. This includes initiatives that support positive settlement outcomes and increased service provision to diverse communities, alongside increasing focus on anti-racism (Dunn et al., 2001; Mansouri & Strong, 2007; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). Alongside these roles, I have examined the potential for local government to play an increasing role in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism through principles of representative bureaucracy (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997). I found that despite substantial progress being made by a number of councils, there are also financial and political constraints on local councils and a lack of a systemic response to diversity issues across Australia. As discussed in Chapter 6, a key task of this thesis is to examine the strengths and challenges of workforce diversity within local government in Australia.

The third section of this chapter has outlined research on attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism in Australia, with a particular focus on workplace/employment settings. Attitudinal research has shown that many Australians are supportive of cultural diversity. However, prejudiced attitudes still remain and increasingly take the form of false beliefs about minority groups and anxieties about cultural difference. Moreover, research has shown that Indigenous people and more 'visible' immigrants and refugees, and/or people from non-English speaking backgrounds, experience high levels of racism in Australia, including in workplace/employment settings. Similarly, studies into labour market disparity and discrimination in Australia have found that immigrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds, along with Indigenous people, face significant disadvantages and barriers in the Australian labour market. As discussed further in Chapters 6 and 8, these data provide a clear rationale for addressing racism and supporting diversity in workplace/employment settings.

## Chapter 4

# Racism, Diversity and Anti-Racism in the Workplace

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter, structured in four parts, discusses the nature and impacts of racism in the workplace, current approaches to managing workforce diversity and the role of organisational culture and cultural change. Taking a multidisciplinary approach, the first section of this chapter integrates literature across disciplines such as psychology, organisational behaviour, human resource management and public health, to show how racism manifests in the workplace, both at the interpersonal and systemic level. This section also examines literature on the impact of racism on individuals, workplaces and society as a whole.

The second section of this chapter examines the notion of managing diversity in the workplace. Returning to analytic conceptions outlined in Chapter 2, workplace diversity is conceptualised initially at the meso-level. In particular, I outline the origins of diversity management and key critiques that have emerged in response to diversity management. This includes the extent to which diversity has addressed racial tensions, as well as tensions regarding sameness versus difference and other political complexities within diversity work. Narrow conceptions of diversity as a single-level concept at the meso-level of organisational policy are also discussed. This section also reviews literature on the business case model for diversity, including critiques of traditional business case arguments and the extent to which these arguments have been supported empirically.

The third section of this chapter focuses on the practice-based aspects of diversity, by outlining key activities employed within the workplace to support diversity and anti-racism. While there has been much attention to diversity training, I examine other systemic interventions, specifically organisational audit or assessment tools, in assessing systematic barriers to workplace diversity, including institutional racism.

Finally, this chapter examines the role of organisational culture and cultural change, drawing on literature across a range of disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, organisational behaviour and human resource management. It examines the concept of organisational culture and outlines an integrated model of organisational culture as developed by Schein (2004). The second part of this section examines the concept of organisational change, including distinctions between planned/episodic change and continuous organisational change models.

## **4.2 The Nature and Impacts of Racism in the Workplace<sup>51</sup>**

As established in Chapter 2, racism occurs on a number levels in society. Research has shown how racism at community and societal levels strongly influences workplace structures and practices and shapes employer and co-worker attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Brief, Butz, & Deitch, 2005; Di Maggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Syed & Pio, 2009). In the workplace, racism can occur at either the interpersonal or institutional level and commonly includes both. At both interpersonal and institutional levels, workplace racism can also be overt and/or subtle (Deitch et al., 2003; K. P. Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2013).

There is also increasing evidence on the impact of workplace racism on individual health and wellbeing, organisational productivity and society as a whole (Beagan & Etowa, 2009; Deitch et al., 2003; K. P. Jones et al., 2013; Kessler et al., 1999; Rospenda et al., 2009; Shannon, Rospenda, Richman, & Minich, 2009). This section examines the nature and impacts of workplace racism occurring at both the interpersonal and institutional level.

### **Interpersonal racism in the workplace**

In understanding the basis of interpersonal racism in the workplace, there are a range of cognitive (i.e. specific thoughts and beliefs) and affective factors (i.e. feelings and emotions) that influence prejudice and discriminatory behaviour (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005). In particular, social identity and social categorisation theory (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1983) have

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<sup>51</sup> Parts of this section are adapted from a published report by Trener, Franklin and Paradies (2011). I am the first author of this report and contributed approximately 80 per cent to the publication from which this text is drawn.

described the processes that influence interpersonal level racism. According to social identity theory, in establishing a positive sense of self-identity and worth, people are more likely to associate with people who are similar to themselves, rather than those who are seen to be different or with whom they have less in common. While these are natural cognitive process, this commonly manifests in in-group versus out-group bias. In the context of race, ethnicity and culture, stereotypes about groups who are perceived as different are reinforced when group-based social identity, over personal identity, is more salient (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005).

Categorisation in relation to group versus individual identity can lead to increased fear and anxiety as well as distrust and hostility towards those perceived to be in the out-group (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005; Insko et al., 2001; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Akin to other societal contexts, the effects of in-group and out-group bias in the workplace are more pronounced when others are perceived as a threat (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005). This may include threats to opportunities, organisational resources, power and status within workplace contexts (DiTomaso, Post, & Parks-Yancy, 2007; K. M. Thomas & Chrobot-Mason, 2005). As will be examined in Chapters 6 and 8, the extent to which diversity is perceived as a threat may be particularly salient in organisations that have high compositions of majority group members and therefore larger in-groups.

Social categorisation and social identity can also reinforce bias and stereotypes towards particular groups where behaviours that, ‘violate stereotypical expectations, even when they may be positive...can elicit negative emotions (such as fear, disgust and anger)’ (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005, p. 17). This can in turn lead to discrimination in order to maintain the status quo. These effects have been observed for women who demonstrate more self-promoting and assertive behaviours as well as racial minorities, when making arguments for equal rights and opportunities (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005). Perceptions about negative stereotypes can also have a detrimental effect on work performance for people from minority group backgrounds (Roberson & Kulick, 2007). This commonly manifests in a phenomenon known as stereotype threat (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). This involves a fear of being judged according to negative stereotypes about one’s group (e.g. in relation to inferior intelligence or cognitive ability for certain tasks), which can lead to anxiety and poor performance (Roberson & Kulick, 2007). Stereotype threat can lead employees to work harder but less effectively and is most pronounced

among highly capable and committed workers (Roberson & Kulick, 2007). As discussed further in Chapter 6, managers observed that perceived differences in relation to work ethic had the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes about minority groups.

Studies have also shown how stereotype threat and other detrimental effects for minority groups are more pronounced in situations, such as workplaces, where there are only a few individuals from a particular racial or ethnic group (Kirnan, Alfieri, Bragger, & Harris, 2009). These effects have long been conceptualised in relation to minority group distinctiveness or ‘token’/solo effects (K. M. Thomas & Chrobot-Mason, 2005). First studied in relation to women, Kanter (1977) showed that when women comprised only a small proportion of the workforce they were often seen as ‘tokens’ and thus more distinctive in their minority status. Other research has found similar outcomes, including difficulties in integration and poor performance when gender balance is disproportionate (see K. M. Thomas and Chrobot-Mason (2005) for a review).

‘Token’ effects have also been studied in the context of race and ethnicity. For instance, Pettigrew and Martin’s (1987, p. 41) seminal work conceptualised this as the ‘zero jeopardy’ effect where black American workers often endure:

- (1) negative racial stereotypes;
- (2) the solo role – when the worker is the only black in the work group, and
- (3) the token role – when new black workers are viewed by white co-workers as incompetent because they received their jobs through affirmative action.

Since this seminal work, this phenomenon has been widely studied, where zero-jeopardy effects remain prevalent today (Cox, 1993; Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Ely, Padavic, & Thomas, 2012; Essed, 1991; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998; Paluck, 2006; Tsui & Gutek, 1999). Thus it is not surprising that under these conditions minority group members are often, ‘faced with unrealistically high or low expectations, are highly scrutinized and criticized, and experience feelings of distinctiveness, isolation, exclusion and stereotype threat’ (K. M. Thomas & Chrobot-Mason, 2005, p. 73). As discussed in Chapters 6 and 8, there was evidence that racial/ethnic background, alongside gender, influenced opportunities for upward mobility. In Chapter 9, participants from minority-group backgrounds also discussed feelings of isolation in working within large bureaucracies such as local government.

As discussed in Chapter 2, it is also important to understand the role of privilege in workplace racism (Ahmed, 2012; Bell & Hartmann, 2007; DiTomaso et al., 2007; Essed, 1991; K. M. Thomas & Chrobot-Mason, 2005). In workplace settings, privilege similarly takes on a normative function where it is largely ‘*normal* for high-level executives to be White, male and middle-class’ and have more networking and mentoring opportunities (K. M. Thomas & Chrobot-Mason, 2005, pp. 68, original emphasis). While this is changing in some contexts, the privileged status afforded to people from mainly white, middle-class backgrounds, and predominately males, is still prevalent, particularly in relation to seniority and pay (Creegan et al., 2003; DiTomaso et al., 2007). For example, DiTomaso et al. (2007, p. 490) have argued that already privileged groups (i.e. normative in-groups) may gain more opportunities to perform and demonstrate their competence, where they are often, ‘believed to be more competent, are preferred for job assignments, may garner more rewards, and often are better liked’ as well as having better access to developmental opportunities at work.

In contrast, lower status groups (i.e. normative out-groups), ‘are likely to be more negatively evaluated by others and by themselves’ (DiTomaso et al., 2007, p. 490; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Ridgeway, 2001). Such categorisation may worsen work outcomes for out-group members, including exclusion and avoidance, less effective mentoring outcomes and reduced access to training, as well as increased uncertainty about upward mobility (DiTomaso et al., 2007). In this study, there was evidence of the privileging effects of racism in the workplace, which manifested in denial about racism and resistance to workforce diversity, particularly among managers. These dynamics are discussed further in Chapters 6, 8 and 9.

### **Overt versus subtle forms of racism**

Racism in the workplace can be both overt and subtle (Deitch et al., 2003; K. P. Jones et al., 2013). Deitch et al. (2003, p. 1301) have argued that subtle manifestations of racism can include avoidance of racial minorities, unfriendliness and hostility, as well as failure to provide assistance with work tasks. More subtle interpersonal racism can include apparently positive and well-intentioned behaviour that may include unrealistically positive feedback, overzealous helping, assigning overly easy tasks or tokenistic inclusion. Similarly, Dovidio and Hebl (2005) found that subtle and unconscious forms of discrimination include intergroup anxiety and avoidance. However, the authors have

argued that the motivation and causes of discrimination at the individual level may not come from a desire to harm but arise out of unconscious psychological processes. For instance, even though people may hold egalitarian principles and beliefs, they can unconsciously harbour negative feelings and beliefs, which can manifest in subtle and indirect ways.

There is also evidence of interpersonal racism in selecting applications for job interviews (Booth et al., 2009; Evans & Kelley, 1991; Riach & Rich, 1991) and within interviews themselves (Åslund & Skans, 2007; Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Dovidio & Hebl, 2005). These findings demonstrate the importance of interventions that support positive intergroup contact, along with diversity/anti-racism training and other systemic interventions to raise awareness of unconscious forms of racial bias. These techniques will be discussed further in Section 4.4 below and in Chapter 8.

While subtle forms of racism are becoming more prevalent, overt forms of racism such as bullying, harassment, rudeness, name-calling, exclusion, excessive surveillance, verbal/physical abuse, unfair performance appraisal and firing biases continue to exist within workplace settings. In some cases, jokes and teasing can work to intensify current stereotypes and may result in the exclusion of people from social and work activities (Loosemore, Phua, Dunn, & Ozguc, 2010). However, not all ethnicity-based humour is racist and can instead 'be a form of social glue', helping to accumulate bridging capital and serving anti-racist purposes by making light of difference and reducing conflict between groups (Loosemore et al., 2010, p. 186).

Like racism elsewhere, studies have found that workplace racism and related issues of diversity management are highly contextual and likely to vary according to workplace context, industry and workforce composition (Dainty, Green, & Bagilhole, 2007; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Kochan et al., 2003; Loosemore, Phua, Teo, & Dunn, 2012). As discussed below and in Chapter 6, these contextual differences can influence both attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism in the workplace.

### **Systemic racism in the workplace**

While much academic literature is focused on understanding and addressing racism at the interpersonal level, workplace racism can also be systemic in nature. As discussed in

Chapter 2, while there are important intersections between interpersonal and institutional racism, institutional racism is concerned with how organisational structures, policies, processes and cultures create avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources and opportunities across racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups (Paradies et al., 2009). Therefore, in workplace/employment contexts, institutional racism commonly manifests at the level of organisational policy and practice. This includes human resource areas such as recruitment and selection as well as management, training and professional development opportunities and practices amongst different groups (Gelfand, Nishii, Raver, & Schneider, 2005). For instance, and as discussed in the last chapter, an over-emphasis on English-language proficiency, even when tasks required for the role do not require high levels of language competence (Bertone et al., 2005) commonly act as a monopoly-like mechanism that reinforces labour market exclusion (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006; Valtonen, 2001; Valtonen, 2004).

Systemic racism can also manifest through differences in access to and utilisation of job search agencies (Berman, 2008), disparities in labour market search and labour supply (Habtegiorgis & Paradies, 2013) and fewer opportunities for upward mobility among minority group members (Kalev, 2009). In the previous chapter, I have outlined key employment barriers and related issues of discrimination among minority-group members in Australia. In Chapter 8, I discuss how employment barriers and discrimination manifest in local government, particularly in the area of recruitment.

More subtly, systemic racism can be embedded within organisational processes and practices, including importantly, organisational cultures and social norms. Specifically, racism can manifest in beliefs, values and assumptions, including organisational cultural artifacts (Schein, 2004), such as the physical environment and other cultural and behavioural norms that privilege dominant cultural groups (Ahmed, 2012; Gelfand et al., 2005). As discussed in the last chapter, Ahmed (2012, p. 33) has termed this phenomenon ‘institutional whiteness’, where institutional norms, rules and standards of conduct can take on the form of white bodies and white surroundings. Also discussed was how privilege and racism commonly manifest in ‘the reproduction of likeness’ and a tendency towards ‘sameness’ through routine practices and processes that privilege familiar categories and routes of power (Ahmed, 2012, p. 38; Essed, 2005). Privilege/racism is also reproduced through over-reliance on word-of-mouth referrals



and social networks within recruitment (Bertone et al., 2011; Brief et al., 2005; Essed, 2005). For instance, because word-of-mouth referrals travel through employees' social networks, they tend to produce applicants similar to those employees already in place (Brief et al., 2005). This can indirectly discriminate against particular people, such as minority group members, who already experience employment disadvantage.

Rangarajan and Black (2007, p. 257) found that that, 'the insular perspectives of managers and prevalence of old-boy networks' that employees used 'to bring people like themselves' into the organisation commonly reinforced existing employee configurations. The authors found that an exclusive organisational culture was so pronounced that even affirmative action policies that had been signed off by the organisation had failed to achieve effective recruitment of people from minority backgrounds (Rangarajan & Black, 2007). Similarly, other scholars have maintained that while strong organisational cultures have inclusive properties that foster a sense of internal consensus and cohesion, dysfunctional organisational cultures often 'exclude as well as include' (Rutherford, 2001, p. 370; Wilson, 2000). As discussed in Chapter 8, there was also a tendency towards sameness in recruitment and selection practices in this study, where employees were commonly selected on the basis of being the 'right-fit' for the organisation. The role of organisational culture in supporting/impeding workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention was also relevant for this study and is discussed further in Chapters 7 and 9.

### **The impacts of workplace racism**

In general, there is strong evidence that workplace racism causes ill health, especially mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Paradies, 2006c; Paradies et al., 2015; D. R. Williams & Mohammed, 2009). In particular, workplace racism has been associated with poor mental and physical health and wellbeing (De Castro, Rue, & Takeuchi, 2010; Deitch et al., 2003; K. P. Jones et al., 2013; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Shannon et al., 2009; Triana et al., 2015), such as increased blood pressure (Din-Dzietham, Nembhard, Collins, & Davis, 2004), problem drinking (Rospenda et al., 2009) and psychological distress (Krieger et al., 2011). Studies have found that racism in the workplace can contribute to poor job quality more than other occupational stressors such as low task variety and decision authority, heavy workloads, and poor supervision (D. Hughes & Dodge, 1997).

Alongside the effects of racism on health and wellbeing, racism in the workplace has also been associated with: reduced productivity and innovation (Berman et al., 2008); reduced organisational commitment and employee perceptions of procedural injustice (Buttner, Lowe, & Billings-Harris, 2009, 2010; Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001; Triana & García, 2009; Triana, García, & Colella, 2010; Triana et al., 2015); reduced trust and job dissatisfaction (Ensher et al., 2001; Holder & Vaux, 1998); as well as increased cynicism, absenteeism and staff turnover (Buttner et al., 2009, 2010; Triana et al., 2010; Triana et al., 2015). Moreover, increasing research into the financial costs of racism has shown that racial discrimination is likely to result in substantial economic costs (Blank, Dabady, & Citro, 2004; Buttner et al., 2010; Elias, 2015; Habtegiorgis & Paradies, 2013). For example, employment affords opportunities for social networking and participation in society, where unemployment and under-employment attributable to racism in the workforce can compromise an individual's social integration into society, thus reducing social cohesion (Berman, 2008; Bertone, 2009b). There is also considerable potential for workplaces to suffer litigation costs as a result of substantiated cases of racism (Von Bergen et al., 2002).

Racism can also result in the non-recognition of qualifications and under-employment (Berman et al., 2008), which in turn impacts the economy. A recent study by Elias (2015) found that select mental disorders (anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychological disorders) associated with racial discrimination cost an estimated \$46.4 billion per annum in lost GDP to the Australian economy; roughly 3.7% of the average annual GDP across the period 2001-2011. As discussed further below and in Chapter 6, evidence of the impact of workplace racism helps to establish a strong case for supporting diversity *and* addressing racism in workplace settings.

Also of relevance to this study are power and status dynamics between managers and employees, which have the potential to be reinforced in the context of race and racism. For example, studies have found that racism perpetrated by a supervisor leads to reduced trust and confidence in the workplace (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). In a study by Beagan and Etowa (2009), racism at work resulted in African Canadian women having strained relationships with, and feeling that they could not trust, their co-workers. Furthermore, African Canadian women spent considerable energy educating colleagues

and supervisors (Beagan & Etowa, 2009). As well as directly limiting opportunities for career progression (Fearful & Kamenou, 2006; Pio, 2008; Syed & Pio, 2009), perceptions of barriers caused by racism in the workplace may result in some employees self-limiting their career choices (Gainor & Forrest, 1991; Spokane & Richardson, 1992). Similarly, vicarious discrimination may result in negative career outcomes (Kulik, Bainbridge, & Cregan, 2008). Low, Radhakrishnan, Schneider and Rounds (2007) found that witnessing racism directed at a co-worker resulted in detrimental effects on wellbeing comparable to that suffered by the direct target of such racism.

Subtle forms of racism also result in major inequalities, including reduced opportunities and access to resources (Dipboye & Colella, 2005). Subtle forms of racism can be even more damaging, where, 'everyday encounters with prejudice are not rare instances but are familiar and recurrent patterns of being devaluated in many varied ways' (Deitch et al., 2003, p. 1301). The everyday nature of racism (Essed, 1991; Sue et al., 2007) and its cumulative effects in different contexts and over the life course (Krieger et al., 2011; Paradies, 2006c) also need to be considered in understanding the longer-term impacts of workplace racism. As discussed further in Chapter 9, managers from majority group backgrounds may not be aware of subtle manifestations of racism. This highlights the need for specialised training for managers, including a focus on understanding privilege, awareness of both overt and subtle forms of racism, and responding consistently to issues of racism when they arise (Greene, 2007).

### **4.3 Managing Diversity in the Workplace**

In recent years, the notion of managing diversity in the workplace, or diversity management, has gained increasing usage within academic literature and human resource practice. This growth has been attributed to changing workforce demographics and a shift away from a previous focus on equal opportunity and affirmative action agendas (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Noon, 2007). In many contexts, managing diversity is commonly positioned as a business imperative, where diversity has been linked to increased organisational performance and responsiveness.

Despite its appeal, the practice and discourse of managing diversity has been criticised for overemphasising the benefits of diversity while not adequately engaging with some of its more challenging aspects, including anxiety about cultural difference and ongoing

racial inequalities (Bell & Hartmann, 2007; Noon, 2007; Prasad, Mills, Elmes, & Prasad, 1997; Wrench, 2005). There have also been critiques about the effectiveness of diversity interventions, including common strategies, such as diversity training, in addressing ongoing structural inequality (Kalev et al., 2006).

This section begins by examining the origins of diversity management as a meso-level concept, including how it has been defined within academic and practice-based literature. I then engage with key diversity critiques and dilemmas and examine diversity as a pragmatic concept that can be used strategically, provided underlying political principles are maintained (Ahmed et al., 2006).

### **Origins and definitions of diversity management**

Cox (1993, p. 11) has defined managing diversity as the process of, 'planning and implementing organizational systems and practices to manage people so that the potential advantages of diversity are maximized while its potential disadvantages are minimized'. Managing diversity has also been defined as the systematic and planned commitment of organisations to recruit, retain, reward, and promote employees from a diversity of backgrounds (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000). The above definitions of diversity management have utility for this study due to their focus on planned, systemic change and harnessing the benefits of workforce diversity, alongside addressing its challenges.

The concept of diversity management is relatively new and its current usage can be traced to a report called *Workforce 2000* published by the Hudson Institute in 1987 in the United States (Johnston & Packer, 1987). This report predicted major demographic changes in the American workforce and was influential in challenging managers to rethink workforce diversity, in particular engagement with women and other minority groups (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). In response to this report, scholars have argued that diversity discourses and practice quickly gained popular appeal as an alternative to affirmative action and equal opportunity policies and programs (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Noon, 2007; Prasad et al., 1997).

Scholars such as R. R. Thomas (1990, p. 107) were influential in propagating this shift, declaring that affirmative action, though a necessary intervention, was transitory and

artificial and would eventually 'die a natural death'. R. R. Thomas (1990, p. 108, original emphasis) also argued that affirmative action alone could not 'cope with the remaining long-term task of creating a work setting geared to the upward mobility of *all* kinds of people, including white males'. Diversity was therefore positioned as a more inclusive philosophy that could be applied to the 'whole' organisation and thus avoid some of the backlash effects of affirmative action programs targeting under-represented groups (Wrench, 2005). Similarly, other scholars have argued that diversity management has become more politically attractive than the language and policy of affirmative action and equal opportunity (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Noon, 2007; L. R. Wise & Tschirhart, 2000). As discussed further in Chapters 7 and 9, in this study, diversity similarly had pragmatic appeal and was regarded as a useful term in establishing buy-in for anti-racism action.

### **Diversity management dilemmas and critiques**

Despite the appeal of diversity management, there has been less attention to the common dilemmas of diversity (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000; Prasad et al., 1997). For example, Prasad et al. (1997) have argued that there has been a tendency to emphasise positive accounts of diversity, while glossing over more difficult issues, such as tensions, conflicts and political complexities in diversity work. Common issues include: backlash against diversity and multicultural programs; continuing anger and frustration among minority groups about the lack of real progress; as well as ongoing forms of resistance to difference and diversity programs (Prasad et al., 1997). Rather, there is evidence that people from minority backgrounds continue to face enduring barriers, racism and hostility within the workplace and in employment settings (Creegan et al., 2003; Kalev, 2009). For example, Creegan et al.'s (2003) study into the effectiveness of a local authority's race-equality plan found significant differences in opinion between staff from visible minority, minority and white backgrounds. In contrast to staff from white and less visible minority backgrounds, visible minority staff were more likely to report that: racial discrimination was a problem within the organisation; they did not feel that they had the same promotional opportunities; they had frustrations about the handling of complaints; and there was a lack of transparency and ineffectiveness in procedures. On the whole, employees from visible minority backgrounds were more disillusioned about the impact of the council plan and felt that racial discrimination was 'deeply embedded' into the culture of the organisation (Creegan et al., 2003, p. 634).

An important critique of diversity management relates to the extent to which diversity has been able to address ongoing forms of inequality and racism. For example, while diversity management has been positioned as a more inclusive philosophy, others have suggested that it has actually worked to weaken arguments for affirmative action by diminishing the basis for addressing disadvantage, as well as detracting from equal opportunity and anti-racism agendas (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). Prasad et al. (1997) have argued that differences between diversity management and equal opportunity/anti-discrimination can be explained by different underlying philosophies. They say that the former approach has a more ‘voluntaristic’ nature and can be controlled and managed internally, which may be more attractive to employers (Prasad et al., 1997). By contrast, the latter approach is mandated by legislative and policy requirements, where ‘the locus of control’ commonly rests with government agencies (Prasad et al., 1997, p. 4). Similarly, Noon (2007, p. 775) has argued that diversity discourses are primarily aimed at managers, encouraging them to take ‘ownership’ of diversity issues in line with managerial issues. However, while increased ownership is purported to be one of its strengths because it depoliticizes the issues, Noon (2007, p. 775) maintains that this, in effect, is ‘a fallacy because the issues remain political,’ where the control of policies and practices has always resided with management.

A key concern here is that a focus on diversity can mean that ‘softer’ practices, such as the valorisation of cultural difference through cultural awareness training (Kowal et al., 2013) are prioritised over ‘harder’ equal opportunity and anti-racism measures, such as the use of targets to increase workforce diversity (Noon, 2010; Wrench, 2005) and more ‘reflexive’<sup>52</sup> forms of anti-racism and diversity training (Kowal et al., 2013). Similarly, other scholars have argued that the managerial focus of diversity can work to conceal unequal power relationships and the continuation of systemic inequalities (Ahmed, 2006; Kirton & Greene, 2000), whereby for instance, diversity discourses are underpinned by seemingly neutral language and ideology that conceal power dynamics (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). As Noon (2007, p. 775) has succinctly put it, it is ‘misguided

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<sup>52</sup> Kowal et al. (2013, p. 326) citing Kowal (2008) define reflexive antiracism as ‘an ongoing process of appraising antiracist practice and recognising the inherent tensions and paradoxes the politics of working within racialised fields’.

to believe that diversity will deliver in ways that equal opportunities could not'. As discussed further in Chapters 6 and 7, the continuance of longstanding structural inequalities and barriers for minority groups provides a strong case for increased focus on anti-racism within diversity management programs.

Taking a slightly different approach, Syed and Ozbilgin (2009, p. 2436) have argued that 'single-level' conceptualisations of diversity management at the meso-level of organisational policy has failed to account for the role of macro-level structures and policies, and micro-processes at the level of individual agency. Rather, the authors maintain that diversity management discourse and practice need to be situated 'within the unique context of each society' (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2009, p. 2437). As has been shown in Chapter 3, Australia has a distinct historical, political, social and economic context that needs to be taken into account when developing organisational diversity policies and practices. These important links between macro, meso and micro-level diversity factors will be discussed further in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

### **The business case for diversity**

The origins of diversity management have been accompanied by increased discursive focus and application of the 'business case' for diversity. In this approach, diversity is positioned as an economic driver that responds to increasing demographic shifts and changing market forces, including the supply of labour (Prasad et al., 1997). Moreover, it is argued that diversity will result in competitive advantage through enhanced organisational responsiveness to local service populations (Robinson & Dechant, 1997; R. R. Thomas, 1990). Also central to business case arguments is the notion that diversity will enhance organisational performance, where it is argued that diverse teams are likely to perform better than homogenous work groups because they can bring new and innovative approaches to organisational problems (Cox, 1993; Richard, 2000). While earlier analyses questioned the empirical basis of business case arguments (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000; Prasad et al., 1997; K. Y. Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), there has been increasing research to test claims about the benefits of workplace diversity.

In general, studies have focused on understanding the benefits of diversity at the individual, team and organisational level and in the context of both gender and

racial/ethnic diversity (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008). While a number of business case arguments for diversity have been supported, academic literature is still relatively mixed (Jackson et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003). For instance, Herring (2009) found that diversity was associated with increased sales, more customers, greater market share and greater relative profits. Studies have also linked diversity with greater employee commitment and customer satisfaction (Bertone et al., 2005; Kulik & Roberson, 2008; Paradies et al., 2009; Triana et al., 2010), as well as increased innovation, creativity, productivity and enhanced work group outcomes and organisational performance (Adler, 1997; Berman et al., 2008; Burton, 1995; Cox et al., 1991; Nicholas et al., 2001; Richard, 2000).

Conversely, there is evidence that diversity can reduce staff morale and productivity and be a source of conflict and intergroup bias, including between employees and managers, and leading to deleterious work outcomes (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Kochan et al., 2003; Pelled, 1996; Roberson & Kulick, 2007; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). The relationship between diversity and team and organisational performance is also complex, contextual and difficult to measure (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003; Richard, 2000). Kochan et al. (2003) found few positive or negative direct effects of diversity on performance. Similarly, Jackson et al. (2003) found limited evidence to support the notion that diversity improves team or organisational performance. As discussed further in Chapters 6 and 9, diversity work is often contradictory, where cited benefits of workforce diversity require alignment with addressing its more challenging aspects, including racism.

Indeed, an important critique of the business case model for diversity is an over-reliance on economic arguments in favour of social justice principles (Bendick, Egan, & Lanier, 2010; Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). For instance, Wrench (2005, p. 77) has argued that equal opportunity and affirmative action programs based on principles of 'equality, fairness and social justice' have been replaced by business imperatives. A key problem with this approach is that the struggle against racism and discrimination becomes reliant on economic agendas. Similarly, Noon (2007) has argued that a strictly business case rationale can reinforce short-term commitments to diversity, where such commitments can become too contingent on market forces and provide a restricted view of what constitutes a benefit. The importance of retaining the social and moral basis for diversity



in traditional business case models, including an anti-racism focus, is examined in Chapter 6.

### **Pragmatic value of diversity**

The above section discusses some of the critiques of diversity management. However, despite these dilemmas, diversity is also a pragmatic concept that can be used practically and strategically. Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) have argued that promoting diversity as a business concern has made it operational and hence more ‘doable’ (i.e. more easily integrated into business and human resource practices and procedures). Ahmed (2006) also found a strategic value to diversity work, while also recognising its problematic aspects. She has argued that, on the one hand, diversity is an appealing term because it allows organisations to market themselves as ‘happy’ places ‘where differences are celebrated, welcomed, and enjoyed’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 121). However, it is this marketing appeal, and the positive image sold alongside diversity discourses, that can work to conceal racism and other inequalities:

Diversity work is strategic, even if it has certain political principles behind it. So diversity is used by some precisely because it is a comfortable term that allows people to engage more easily with this kind of work. As a result, practitioners are positive about the term “diversity” for the very reasons some are critical of them (Ahmed, 2006, p. 122).

As Ahmed (2006) found, there is strategic value in diversity work, where practitioners can be positive about diversity work, while maintaining their political principles and being critical of diversity at the same time. The contradictory nature of diversity work and its strategic appeal in creating buy-in will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 9.

### **The importance of context**

Alongside recognition of the benefits of workforce diversity, there has been increasing attention to the importance of group processes and contextual issues in assessing diversity-performance relationships (Jackson et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003). For example, some have suggested that current research neglects the multidimensional nature of diversity and different forms of social identity as well as other interpersonal and organisational factors (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). For example, research into the role of social identity and team process has

provided important insight into a range of diversity dynamics and processes (Ely, 2004; Ely et al., 2012; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jackson, May, & Whitney, 1995; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Roberson & Kulick, 2007). In their widely cited study, Ely and Thomas (2001) have identified three important perspectives that influence diversity dynamics and related tensions within teams, including: the nature of race relations in people's work environment; the extent to which participants feel valued and respected by co-workers and supervisors, and the meaning and significance participants attach to their own racial identity at work (Ely & Thomas, 2001, p. 235). These perspectives have implications for capacity for learning and adaptive change. The authors found that while all three perspectives motivated managers to promote diversity among their staff, only the integration and learning perspective provided the rationale and direction needed to sustain the benefits of diversity over the longer-term. Conversely, restricted valuing of diversity and over-emphasising difference led to greater inter-racial tensions, including greater apprehension among white people and disempowerment for minority group members (Ely & Thomas, 2001).

Further work on team dynamics by Ely et al. (2012, p. 342) suggests that the extent to which racial diversity within teams 'becomes an asset or liability' depends on the interplay between different contextual factors, including perceived and actual experiences of discrimination. Importantly, while these racial dynamics are 'likely to be the norm' (Ely et al., 2012, p. 342), they can also be countered, whereby diverse teams vary in the extent to which racial stereotypes held in wider society inhibit learning behaviours within the workplace. As will be discussed further in Chapter 7, these findings underscore the importance of valuing workforce diversity within organisational goals and values statements.

DiTomaso et al. (2007) further demonstrate the importance of context by examining the role of power, status and workforce composition in workforce diversity. The authors have argued that the relationship between diversity and inequality has been neglected within much workforce diversity literature, where such research can address issues as: 'who is hired or given positions of responsibility in organisations, who gets access to organisational resources or decision making, and who gets rewarded for their contributions and on what basis' (DiTomaso et al., 2007, p. 476). In terms of power differentials, they have argued that over time people in subordinate positions generally

become more constrained and inhibited while those in high power positions become more entitled and assertive. Along with power, there are also important status differentials between groups. Here, the authors draw on Tajfel and Turner's (1986) theory of power and legitimacy, which argues that if boundaries between high and low status groups are more malleable, and allow more possibility for movement into high status groups, low status groups can utilise social mobility strategies to overcome inequality. On the other hand, if there are limited opportunities for mobility, low status groups instead become politicised and undertake strategies for social change (DiTomaso et al., 2007).

What makes these distinctions powerful is when low status groups come to accept these distinctions because they are so widely held and normative (Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson, 1998). Finally, in relation to numbers, they say that the focus within management research has mainly been on the diversity composition of workforces. However, there is a need for more research on other structural differences, such as decision-making powers and access to resources (Pfeffer, 1983; Tsui et al., 1992). On the whole, the authors argue that the historical/longer-term bases of inequality impact on group relations through competition for resources and other mechanism that can reinforce privilege or disadvantage (DiTomaso et al., 2007). The role of power and status in workforce diversity, particularly in the context of relations between employees and managers, will be discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

#### **4.4 Workplace Diversity and Anti-Racism Intervention**

In the context of literature discussed above, it has been argued that the extent to which workplace diversity is supported is contingent on the degree of programmatic intervention (Cox, 1993). Amongst others, common initiatives include: honouring diversity through formal commitments to diversity within organisational values and statements; recruitment and retention strategies to reduce employment barriers and increase the diversity compositions of workforces; and, programs and activities to support positive inter-cultural contact and address racism, such as diversity and anti-racism training<sup>53</sup> (Cox, 1993; Hussain & Ishaq, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003).

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<sup>53</sup> As Kowal et al. (2013) have done, I use this term as inclusive of a range of programs using different labels, including, amongst others cross-cultural/cultural awareness/cultural competency training, anti-racism/anti-discrimination/prejudice-reduction training and conflict resolution training.

This section starts by examining diversity training as a common interpersonal strategy employed within workplaces. It reviews evidence on the effectiveness of diversity training, which again highlights the importance of context, including a need for systemic level intervention, alongside interpersonal level strategies. This section also examines organisational assessment as additional strategy that can work alongside interpersonal level strategies. As will be discussed, organisational assessment has received less academic attention and application, despite having a number of potential benefits alongside other strategies while also establishing increased accountability and the potential for systemic level change (Trenerry & Paradies, 2012).

### **Interpersonal versus systemic level strategies**

Diversity training is one of the most common diversity strategies implemented within workplaces settings and is also a favoured topic of academic research (Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). Generally, training programs aim to facilitate cognitive, skill-based and/or emotional learning in order to increase knowledge/raise awareness of diversity and racism, improve attitudes and develop diversity/anti-racism skills (Kowal et al., 2013). There are also important distinctions between different forms of diversity training, particularly cultural awareness and anti-racism training (Kowal et al., 2013).

Although reviews have generally found diversity training to have a positive impact on participants, there is evidence that training and other strategies that work at the interpersonal level are most effective when accompanied by systemic level interventions (Bendick, Egan, & Lofhjelm, 2001; Cox, 1993; Gilbert & Ivancevich, 2000; Kalev et al., 2006; Kalinoski et al., 2013; Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). For instance, Kalev et al. (2006) found that efforts to moderate managerial bias through diversity training were ineffective, while mentoring and networking programs showed only moderate effects. However, when organisations established responsibilities, the effects of both diversity training and networking and mentoring programs improved. In particular, strategies that established responsibility and accountability, such as affirmative action plans, diversity committees, and staff with dedicated diversity management roles, showed the greatest increases in managerial diversity (Kalev et al., 2006).

Other reviews of literature have found that diversity training is unlikely to have sustained positive effects if implemented in the absence of broader organisational

accountability mechanisms and leadership (Bendick et al., 2001; Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009; Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). For instance, Trenerry and Paradies (2012, p. 12) have argued that ‘even if individual attitudes or behaviours change as a result of diversity training, the effects are likely to be short lived if organisational structures and policies do not reflect inclusive organisational cultures and non-discriminatory norms’. As discussed below and in Chapter 7 and 8, these findings support the case for systemic level responses to diversity and anti-racism.

### **Organisational assessment**

Organisational assessments or diversity audits (R. R. Thomas, 1999) are another strategy, which has received less academic attention and application than diversity training and other individual/interpersonal strategies (Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). Within the field of cultural competency, organisational assessment is well established (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Issacs, 1989; Olavarria, Beaulac, Belanger, Young, & Aubry, 2009; Siegel, Haugland, & Chambers, 2002). However, current approaches have focused mainly on assessing service delivery and have generally lacked attention to addressing racism (Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). Despite being a recommended practice within organisational development and workforce diversity literature (Cox, 1993; R. R. Thomas, 1999), organisational assessment appears to have ‘dropped off’ the diversity agenda in favour of strategies that work at the individual level (Fine, 1996; Trenerry & Paradies, 2012, p. 12). As Trenerry and Paradies (2012) have proposed, this may explain why diversity training, which is arguably easier to implement and measure, is currently the dominant approach both in practice and research settings. Organisational assessment can thus be conceptualised at the meso-level in that it provides a framework through which to analyse organisational policy and practice.

Despite less application of organisational assessment, scholars have described the process of undertaking an assessment as an important strategy for planning for workforce diversity activity and identifying gaps in practice (Cox, 1993; Dreachslin, 1999; Fine, Johnson, & Ryan, 1990; Kossek & Zonia, 1993; Mathews, 1998; R. R. Thomas, 1999). For instance, Mathews (1998, p. 179) has argued that assessment practices help avoid ‘quick-fix’ solutions and enable meaningful change by gathering accurate data about organisational strengths and weaknesses and convincing managers that problems exist (Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). Organisational assessment also

provides the means to establish organisational accountability, by providing a framework for planning and the allocation of resources. Embedding organisational accountability is seen as essential to the implementation and ongoing viability of diversity practices (Cox, 1993; Paradies et al., 2009). Organisational assessment tools usually consist of a series of best-practice<sup>54</sup> statements and examples against which assessment, planning and monitoring of workforce diversity and anti-racism initiatives can be made. As discussed in the next chapter, the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool was a key strategy used in the workplace orientated aspects of *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*.

#### **4.5 The Role of Organisational Culture and Cultural Change**

A key aim of this thesis is to investigate the process of organisational change through a workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. While there is increasing recognition of the role of organisational culture in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism (Bazzoli et al., 2004; Cox, 1993; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Schein, 1996; Scott et al., 2003), there has been less integration of traditional understanding of organisational culture, through disciplines such as anthropology and sociology.

This section outlines the role of organisational culture and cultural change in workforce diversity and anti-racism programs. It begins by examining the concept of organisational culture across disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. Building on this literature base, I then outline an integrated model of organisational culture as developed by Schein (2004). The second part of this section examines the concept of organisational change. I discuss distinctions between planned/episodic change and continuous organisational change, alongside implications of these differing approaches for the current study.

##### **The role of organisational culture**

Organisational culture is commonly defined in relation to shared values, beliefs and norms (Denison, 1990). Schein (2004, p. 17) has defined organisational culture as ‘a pattern of shared basic assumptions’ that is learned by a group and taught to new members. Scholars have also recognised the role of organisational subcultures, which

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<sup>54</sup> While the notion of ‘best-practice’ has been critiqued by some scholars as being only ‘loosely’ based on academic theories (Kalev, et al., 2006, p. 590), the literature attests to a consistency across tools, particularly when they are developed with a strong theoretical basis, empirically tested and context-relevant (Harper et al., 2006; Olavarria et al., 2009).

reflect underlying ideologies and assumptions that may or may not be shared (Brown, 1995; Schein, 2004).

Contributions to organisational culture have been made across a range of disciplines. For instance, disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, which have sustained trajectories in studying cultural and social phenomena, provide important insight into organisational culture (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Schein, 2004). As with culture generally, organisations are laden with symbolic qualities and meaning (Geertz, 1973) that can work both consciously and unconsciously (Levis-Strauss, 1973) through a process of socialisation and normative practices and processes (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Schein, 2004).

Bate (1997, p. 1153) has written that cultural analyses, particularly ethnography, can contribute to deeper understandings of organisational culture through challenging and questioning 'taken-for-granted beliefs' and paradigms. Therefore, rather than being fixed or static, organisational culture is a process, where ethnography can play a role in tracking, describing and explaining that process (Bate, 1997). This is achieved through proximity and intimacy with the everyday rites and rituals, myths, stories and anecdotes about organisations as opposed to its more 'corporate' forms (Bate, 1997, p. 1157). As discussed in Chapter 5, this body of literature supports a need for deep, analytic and process-oriented studies of organisational culture and cultural change, an approach I adopt in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

Within organisational behaviour and management literature, organisational culture has been linked to performance and effectiveness (Schneider & Barsoux, 1997; Scott et al., 2003) and viewed as a 'powerful force' that can both undermine or support organisational objectives (Kotter, 1996; Schneider & Barsoux, 1997, p. 1). In the context of workforce diversity, Metz and Kulik (2008, p. 370) have written that strong organisational cultures have inclusive properties that foster a sense of internal consensus and cohesion (Rutherford, 2001), while dysfunctional organisational cultures 'exclude as well as include'. Similarly, Rutherford (2001) builds on Weber's concept of social closure to conceptualise culture as a dynamic and boundary-making process. She has argued that inclusion/exclusion operates within organisations where groups can monopolise

advantages and close off opportunities to other groups. This includes more subtle and informal kinds of exclusionary practices (Rutherford, 2001).

Wilson (2000) has considered why organisational culture is important and what makes difference more or less acceptable within organisations. She found that organisational culture appeared to be more salient than the existence of written policies, where organisational policy will be ineffective if not supported by organisational culture (Wilson, 2000). As discussed further in Chapter 7, this body of literature highlights the important role of organisational culture in shaping the effectiveness of organisational diversity and anti-racism policies and practices.

### **An integrated framework for understanding organisational culture**



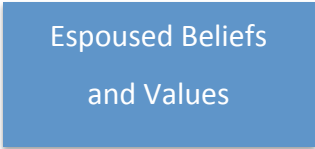

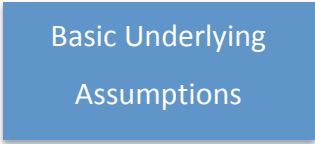
Alongside understandings of organisational culture presented above, this thesis utilises Schein's (2004) integrated model of organisational culture. An important aspect of Schein's (2004) framework is his consideration of organisational culture in relation to its more observable versus hidden factors. As shown in Figure 4.1, Schein (2004) proposes that there are three distinct levels of organisational culture: (1) artifacts; (2) espoused beliefs and values; and (3) underlying assumptions. As discussed below, different levels of organisational culture are interconnected and exist across values and philosophies operating at both conscious and unconscious layers.

At the most visible level of organisational culture, organisational cultural artifacts include, 'all the phenomena that one sees, hears, and feels when one encounters a new group' (Schein, 2004, p. 25). These cultural artifacts commonly manifest in 'visible products of the group', including: the physical environment; language; technologies and products; styles, such as clothing, manners of address, emotional displays and 'myths and stories told about the organisation'; published list of values; and observable rituals and ceremonies (Schein, 2004, pp. 25-26).

Schein (2004) has also written that the 'climate' of the group and the visible behaviour of organisational members is also an artifact of deeper cultural levels. For the purposes of cultural analysis, this includes processes by which such behaviour 'is made routine' such as through organisational charters/charts and other formal descriptions of how the organisation works (Schein, 2004, p. 26). While it has been suggested that responses to



physical artifacts can lead to the identification of images and metaphors that reflect the deepest level of organisational culture, Schein (2004) has argued that symbols are ambiguous and it is precarious to infer deeper assumptions from artifacts alone, because perceptions include projections of one's own feelings and reactions. Conversely, artifacts will eventually become clearer the longer an observer lives in the group. Otherwise, it is necessary to test these observations with analysis of other levels of organisational culture, such as espoused beliefs, values, norms and day-to-day procedures, as will now be discussed.

Level of organisational culture	Description	Application to research study
	Visible organisational structures and processes (hard to decipher)	7. 2 Organisational cultural artifacts - Language - The physical environment
		
	Strategies, goals, philosophies (espoused justifications)	7. 3 Espoused beliefs and values - Commitments - Organisational values
		
	Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feeling...(ultimate source of values and action)	7. 4 Underlying assumptions - Accommodating diversity in the workplace

**Figure 4-1** Levels of organisational culture. Source: adapted from Schein (2004).

At the next level of organisational culture, espoused beliefs and values manifest in the form of goals, strategies and philosophies that underlie organisational artifacts and standards of behaviour. However, unlike behaviours, they are not always directly observable. Schein (2004, p. 28) explains that all group learning is reflective of someone's original beliefs and values and a 'sense of what ought to be, as distinct from what is'. Schein (2004) has said that when a group is first created or is faced with new

tasks or challenges, proposed solutions will normally reflect an individual's assumptions about what is the best way forward and what will or will not work. He argues that 'those individuals who prevail' in influencing others to adopt a particular approach will be identified as leaders (Schein 2004, p. 28). At this point, the group commonly does not have any 'shared' knowledge until some joint action is undertaken and the outcomes of that action are observed. However, if the leader convinces the rest of the group to act on their belief, and if an outcome is achieved whereby other group members have a shared notion of success, this can lead others in the group to adopt or support these values and beliefs through a process of social validation. However, Schein (2004, p. 29) contends that not all beliefs and values will be supported, whereby only those that can be tested and that 'continue to work reliably in solving the group's problems' will be transformed into underlying assumptions.

This leads to the final and most subtle level of organisational culture, which Schein (2004, p. 30) describes as 'basic underlying assumptions' that are often taken for granted but present a degree of consensus from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values. In other words, there is a sense that the certain values and beliefs 'work' and as they continue to work, they are gradually transformed into 'nondiscussible assumptions', which, at a conscious level, are supported by 'articulated sets of beliefs, norms and operational rules of behaviour' (Schein, 2004, p. 29). These rules and norms are reinforced among existing members and taught to new members in a socialisation process that is itself a reflection of culture.

Importantly, Schein (2004) has written that once a shared set of assumptions come to be taken for granted; it determines much of the group's behaviour. In contrast to beliefs and values, assumptions are more embedded and 'tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable, and hence are extremely difficult to change' (Schein, 2004, p. 31). Therefore, while organisational culture is often unconscious and less visible, it gains stability the more deeply it is embedded. Moreover, Schein (2004) has cautioned that if conscious and articulated beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, there may be contradictions between what people 'say' and what they actually 'do'. Conversely, if espoused beliefs and values are consistent with underlying assumptions, the articulation of those values can bring people together and create a shared sense of identity. As discussed further in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, Schein's (2004) theoretical framework relates to

Ahmed's (2006, 2012) research on gaps between statements of commitment to diversity and practice. This model also provides insight into the nature of resistance to workforce diversity and anti-racism initiatives.

### **Organisational change and resistance to change**

The process of organisational change has been described as differences in 'how an organization functions, who its members and leaders are, what form it takes, or how it allocates its resources' (Huber, Sutcliffe, Miller and Glick, 1993, p. 216; Weick and Quinn, 1999). As with organisational culture, organisational change is complex and is studied differently across a range of disciplines (Bate, 1994; Johns, 1973; van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Weick & Quinn, 1999). It has been suggested that current models of organisational change are commonly built on organisational development and management theory with significant borrowing from a wide range of disciplines (Bazzoli et al., 2004; van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

Van de Ven and Poole (1995, p. 510) have argued that although this diversity of theories has created a 'theoretical pluralism' that has enriched understandings of organisational change processes, there is a need for more conceptual integration to guide research. There is also increasing recognition of the importance of organisational culture in organisational change (Bazzoli et al., 2004). Bate (1994) has argued that understanding cultural change depends on how culture is defined. For example, while culture is commonly positioned as an object (i.e. something that an organisation has), in disciplines such as anthropology, culture is not something an organisation *has* but is something an organisation *is* (Bate, 1994). In other words, cultural change is synonymous with organisational change. Alongside this notion, this section reviews literature on organisational change, emphasising aspects of the change process that have relevance for this study.

### **Planned/episodic change versus continuous change**

An important distinction made in the academic literature is differences between planned/episodic change and continuous organisational change. Organisational development has generally focused on theories, values, strategies and techniques aimed at planned change, such as measures to enhance individual behaviour and improve organisational performance (Lewin, 1951). Another way to conceptualise these different

approaches is distinctions between ‘episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent’ change and change that is ‘continuous, evolving, and incremental’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362).

In episodic change, change arises in response to growing inertia and ineffectiveness in the face of environmental and external pressures and is therefore seen as divergent from periods of equilibrium and stability (Weick & Quinn, 1999). These issues create a sense of crisis and urgency and commonly legitimises change interventions, where change agents, such as organisational leaders play a key role in initiating and implementing organisational change (Kotter, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999) (Lewin, 1951). Metz and Kulik (2008) have argued that change initiatives in the private sector are commonly episodic (i.e. brought about by organisational crises or business failures). These crises commonly prompt senior leaders to engage in a process of planned, strategic change (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951). By contrast, although public sector organisations are often restructured after electoral changes in power, they are less likely to experience economic crises and more likely to be driven by organisational reputation and community concerns (Metz & Kulik, 2008).

In continuous change models, change is more emergent and premised on small, continuous adjustments that occur across units but have the potential to ‘cumulate and create substantial change’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 375). Central to this perspective is a perception that change occurs continuously. In contrast to episodic or planned change, continuous change is more concerned with micro level phenomena and the role of ongoing adaptations and adjustments (Weick & Quinn, 1999). While these micro level processes may be small, they are also frequent and continuous, and when occurring across organisational units are ‘capable of altering structure and strategy’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362).

Models of continuous change focus on ideas of improvisation, translation and learning. Studies have suggested that improvisation can lead to the replacement of standard procedures in developing new products (Moorman and Miner, 1998) while translation is based on the notion that the spread of ideas is based on a process of continuous adoption and refinement (Latour, 1986). However, Weick and Quinn (1999) have made an important distinction between translation and diffusion in continuous change, where

the spread of ideas is not dependent on the influence of the originator of the idea, as with diffusion of innovation theory (Greenhalgh, Robert, MacFarlane, Bate, & Kyriakidou, 2004). In other words the first actor in the chain is not more important than the last and it is impossible to know when the process finishes. Finally, a focus on learning in support of continuous change models rather than specific actions means that a range of skills and knowledge are altered, where change can strengthen rather than replace existing skills.

Organisational learning is also framed in relation to retention-learning mechanisms, which can work to embed change within processes, practices and organisational memories (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Based on these factors, continuous change occurs through repeated acts of improvisation, translation and learning that can 'enlarge, strengthen or shrink the repertoire of responses' (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 377). As discussed in Chapter 8, evidence of hyperformalisation in recruitment practices (Noon, Healy, Forson, & Oikelome, 2013), including in large bureaucracies such as local government, may hinder the improvisation needed for organisational change.

Similarly, Orlikowski (1996) has supported models of continuous change, arguing that organisational thinking and practice to date has been dominated by discourses of stability, based on principles of production and bureaucracy with an emphasis on routines, standardisation and control. However, in the context of increasing economic, political and technological change, Orlikowski (1996) has proposed that such approaches are becoming less relevant where change is now part and parcel of organisational life. Further, Orlikowski (1996, p. 63) has said that change is often subtle and grounded in everyday practice and 'micro-level changes that actors enact over time as they make sense of and act in the world'. Importantly, this perspective challenges assumptions that organisational change must be planned and that radical changes can only occur rapidly and discontinuously. Rather, Orlikowski (1996) observed how subtle shifts in action by organisational actors transformed aspects of their work practice over time. Linking this to Giddens' (1984) notion of agency, she has proposed that actions taken by organisational members can produce, reproduce or alter existing organisational structures and processes. Similarly, other scholars have argued that micro-level changes do not imply 'trivial' change, where small changes do not stay small but are likely to be 'decisive if they occur at the edge of chaos' (Ford & Ford, 1994; Weick & Quinn, 1999,

p. 378). On the whole, it is conceivable that transformation is comprised of many 'micro' changes, as will be tested and discussed in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

### **Dealing with resistance**

Finally, in understanding organisational change processes, a key challenge in gaining widespread support for workforce diversity and anti-racism initiatives, as with organisational change processes more generally, is dealing with resistance. Organisational development scholars have made important contributions to understanding the nature of resistance and strategies to deal with resistance (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Narine & Persaud, 2003; Piderit, 2000; Scott et al., 2003). Indeed, scholars have said that all organisational change efforts are likely to cause some resistance because change often 'evokes a sense of loss' (Narine & Persaud, 2003; Piderit, 2000; Scott et al., 2003, p. 114).

In the context of workforce diversity, resistance can take a number of forms. This includes overt/active or subtle/passive resistance (K. M. Thomas & Plaut, 2008) as well as individual versus institutional resistance (Cox, 1991; Prasad et al., 1997; Rangarajan & Black, 2007). While individual resistance commonly infers resistance among individuals, such as managers, institutional resistance arises from structural mechanisms (Prasad et al., 1997). For example, individuals may be supportive of flexible leave policies for women, however institutional processes and structures, including organisational culture and norms, may indirectly favour and provide more opportunities to employees who work longer hours (Prasad et al., 1997). Both forms of resistance may also operate simultaneously. For instance, individual managers can influence organisational policy and culture, or alternatively, may resist or fail to implement something that they do not agree with or see as a priority (Prasad et al., 1997).

Of particular relevance to this study, scholars have linked different forms of resistance to racism and discrimination in the workplace (Allison, 1999; Dass & Parker, 1999; Johnstone & Kanitsaki, 2008; K. M. Thomas & Plaut, 2008). For example, K. M. Thomas and Plaut (2008) have argued that individual-level resistance to diversity can manifest as verbal and physical harassment and overt hostility and discrimination, while more subtle forms of individual resistance include staying silent on inequality and discrimination in the workplace, avoidance and exclusion and discrediting of ideas and

individuals who are different from the norm. At the institutional level, resistance can manifest overtly in terms of intentionally discriminatory practices and policies, while more subtle forms of resistance include a culture of silence around diversity and discrimination, mixed messages about diversity and lack of priority and commitment to diversity issues. Resistance to diversity was also evident in this study and took a number of forms, as will be discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

Taking a multidisciplinary approach, this chapter has examined four key themes in relation to workplace racism, diversity and anti-racism organisational change: the nature and impacts of racism in the workplace; diversity management discourse and practice; workplace diversity and anti-racism intervention; and the role of organisational culture and cultural change.

The first section of this chapter has shown how racism occurs at the individual and institutional level and manifests in both overt and subtle forms. I have also discussed the costs of workplace racism, such as to individual health and wellbeing, organisational productivity and other economic costs.

Second, this chapter has analysed literature on managing diversity in the workplace. I have charted the origins of diversity management, where discourses of diversity and inclusion have had widespread appeal (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; R. R. Thomas, 1999). Conversely, common critiques of diversity have been discussed, including concern that diversity discourses have weakened arguments for equal opportunity and affirmative action, and a tendency to deny ongoing issues of racism and inequality (Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). Another critique is how diversity has been conceptualised as a 'single-level' concept at the meso-level of organisational policy (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2009, p. 2436). This fails to account for the role of macro-level structures and policies as well as micro-processes. As will be discussed in Chapters 6-9, such contextual factors need to be taken into account when understanding diversity impacts at the meso-level.

Despite the dilemmas of diversity discussed, this chapter also saw that diversity has strategic appeal and can be useful in establishing buy-in for diversity work (Ahmed, 2012). This section also overviewed literature into the business case for diversity and

found that diversity can be both beneficial (Berman, 2008; Cox et al., 1991; Richard, 2000) and challenging (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Roberson & Kulick, 2007). Establishing the business case for diversity and associated benefits and challenges is discussed further in the next chapter.

Third, this chapter examined the nature of workplace diversity and anti-racism intervention. It has focused on the importance of systemic intervention, alongside strategies that work at the interpersonal level, such as diversity training. Moreover, it has presented organisational assessment as a meso-level diversity tool and an under-utilised approach in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism (Trener & Paradies, 2012). As discussed in the next chapter, the development of the Workplace Assessment Tool helped to inform program implementation and also provided a mechanism through which to research the process of organisational change.

Finally, this chapter has outlined literature on the role of organisational culture and the nature of organisational change. It has drawn together insights from anthropology and sociology (Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Bate, 1994, 1997) and presented an integrated framework for understanding organisational culture in relation to its more observable versus hidden factors at three levels of the culture (Schein, 2004). This framework is employed in Chapter 8 to examine the role of organisational culture in supporting or impeding workforce diversity and anti-racism in the local council case study sites. Alongside the role of organisational culture, this chapter has also presented literature on organisational change. I have reviewed planned/episodic change models, which are commonly driven by economic imperatives and/or organisational crises (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951) and continuous change models, where change is more emergent and likely to occur as a result of small, continuous adjustments and improvements (Orlikowski, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999). As discussed in Chapters 7, 9 and 10, the latter model of organisational change has particular relevance for this study.



# Chapter 5

## Research Methods

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methods used in this study and the rationale for why I took this approach. I conducted case study and ethnographic research, using multiple methods of data collection, namely participant observation and key informant interviews. I also analysed secondary survey data and organisational documents. This chapter also details the research process, including engaging with research participants and gaining access to the workplace sites. I discuss ethical issues and complexities in my different roles as participant-observer, researcher and social change advocate.

Two local council case study areas were selected for inclusion in this study, one in an outer-suburban area of Melbourne and the other in a regional area of Victoria. I spent approximately 18 months at both councils, undertaking intensive fieldwork. Primarily, I conducted participant-observation of key meetings and events through the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool. I also conducted 20 key informant interviews with council employees and other stakeholders involved in the program.

Data analysis of the field notes and interviews was thematic in line with the original research aims and other findings that emerged in the field. I also analysed survey data collected through the program evaluation on council employee perceptions of organisational approaches to diversity and anti-racism, experiences of racism and attitudes towards cultural diversity (n = 403, Stoneway City Council; n = 366, Corrington Shire). Finally, I analysed council organisational documents and drew on general, publically available documents and images, such as diversity statements and photographs of workplaces to support this ethnography of organisation change.

## 5.2 Research Design and Rationale

### Philosophical approach

While there is no definitive way to categorise epistemological frameworks (Patton, 2002), traditionally there have been two main perspectives in the search for truth and meaning within scientific research - objectivism and constructionism. According to Crotty (1998, p. 6), objectivism is the view that, 'things exist as meaningful independently of consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning residing in them as objects'. Conversely, constructionism states that knowledge about reality is socially constructed, changing and indeterminable, wherein, 'all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices' (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). A third perspective, subjectivism, has emerged from post-structuralism and critical theory, in particular feminist, queer, indigenous and critical race theory. This view aligns more closely with social constructionism, in that it recognises that truth is contextual and changing, but goes further to suggest that the purpose of research is to question what is accepted as 'knowledge' by challenging the status quo and oppressive social structures (S. R. Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Subjectivism especially sees a greater role for research as a form of advocacy and social change, which includes more transparency, accountability and participation in broader goals of transformative and emancipatory research (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; P. Park, 1993).

Traditionally, quantitative research has stemmed from positivism, or the 'objective' nature of scientific knowledge, while qualitative research has usually taken a more constructivist approach (Crotty, 1998). Park (1993) has argued that the production of knowledge that centres on three key paradigms: instrumental (i.e. positivist, quantitative knowledge within controlled physical and social environments and contexts); constructivist (i.e. qualitative or ethnographic knowledge from lived experience) and critical paradigms, which take their basis from reflective knowledge derived from feminist, indigenous and queer theory. While epistemological frameworks must be linked to methodology, my reading of this view appears to mix the two inadvertently and neglects that a range of methods, including quantitative techniques, can be used for social change (Ponterotto, Mathew, & Raughley, 2013). Moreover, qualitative techniques can also be instrumental in nature and though commonly positioned as more

participatory and empowering, can also evoke uneven power dynamics (Kvale, 2006; Winchester, 1996). These issues are discussed further in Section 5.3 below.

Acknowledging these complexities, my approach in this study falls somewhere between constructionism and subjectivism. I subscribed both to the axiom that the nature of reality is socially constructed and contextual (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and sought to establish a shared sense of interpretation and meaning through collaboration and participation with my research participants (S. R. Jones et al., 2006; P. Park, 1993). On the other hand, my hope is that this research has, at least to some extent, an emancipatory function, both in relation to the issues that it explores and through the development of research tools and evidence that may have ongoing, practical relevance in institutional settings. In taking a more subjective stance, I also demonstrate my commitment to reflexive and politically engaged practice (Came, 2012; Lather, 1995; Reinharz, 1997), as discussed further in Section 5.5 below.

### **Case study research**

Case study research involves in-depth exploration of a program, event, activity or process of one or more individuals, bounded by a period of time and activity (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 1995). Yin (2009) has provided clear guidelines for when to use case study research, such as when research is more explanatory and asks ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. In contrast to experimental research design, where conditions can be controlled and manipulated, in case study research, the focus is on real-life contexts, where the researcher has little control over events (Yin, 2009).

Stake (1995) has distinguished between intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. Intrinsic case studies are often exploratory in nature and more concerned with coming to know a particular case well, before considering how it may be different or similar to other cases. Instrumental case studies are used to study something other than just the object of study, which lead to generalisation and theory development. Collective case studies include the use of two or more case studies. Yin (2009) has recommended the use of multiple case studies in order to strengthen research findings through replication and theory development<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> However, rather than statistical generalisation, multiple case study designs strengthen comparisons between theory and empirical data (Yin, 2009).

Two councils, Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, were selected for inclusion in this study. As discussed in Chapter 1, the selection of councils was determined by their involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. The case study sites were geographically distinct (i.e. one in outer-suburban area of Melbourne versus one located in regional Victoria) and varied in relation to other socio-economic characteristics (described in Chapter 6). These conditions were ideal for comparative case study analysis (Yin, 2009). In the context of the present study, scholars have emphasised the role of place in studies of racism and anti-racism activity (Bonnett, 1996; Dunn & McDonald, 2001) as well as the importance of context in workforce diversity programs and organisational change processes (Jackson et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003).

As discussed further in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, there were important contextual variations between the council sites. To highlight these contextual variations, in Chapter 6, I introduce the case study sites individually and present survey data separately. In Chapters 7 and 8, ethnographic and some interview data is also presented separately and provides some of the strongest contextual differences between the case study sites. Alongside these contextual differences, there were also many consistencies in themes across the council sites, which led to presenting interview data thematically. In choosing this approach, I was also conscious of trying to protect the anonymity of council organisations and participants. In particular and as discussed further in Chapter 10, the very different historical, geographical, socio-economic and political contexts for each council needs to be acknowledged when making comparisons between councils, particularly in relation to ‘progress’ towards workforce diversity and anti-racism goals.

## **Ethnography**

Along with employing a case study design, this thesis is also an ethnographic study. Ethnography is the process of conducting research in order to produce ‘thick’ descriptions of everyday life (Geertz, 1973, p. 3). While founded in cultural anthropology (Bernard, 1994), ethnography has had application in other disciplines (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994), particularly sociology and increasingly in institutional and policy contexts (D. Smith, 2005; S. Wright & Shore, 1997). Ethnographic research usually involves direct contact with people over a sustained

period of time in the context of their daily lives (O'Reilly, 2005). The process of conducting ethnographic research is iterative-inductive, in that the researcher is informed by research questions and relevant theory yet remains open to phenomena as they arise through close, ongoing contact with participants in the field (O'Reilly, 2005).

A central concern for researchers conducting ethnography is to understand what is 'meaningful and important' to participants, while recognising their own role in unfolding events (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 2). As with other research methods, there have been longstanding debates between the subjective versus objective nature of ethnographic research. Ethnography emerged as a critique to positivism as a paradigm of inquiry, which may be more likely to capture 'what people say rather than what they do' where social phenomena is treated as more 'clearly defined and static than they are' (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 251). These arguments provide an important rationale for undertaking ethnographic research, alongside other (including positivist) research techniques in the present study.

In particular, I was interested in gaining insight into systemic racism and barriers to workforce diversity alongside the role of organisational culture and social norms in supporting/inhibiting workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. Ethnography made this possible for a number of reasons. First, I was closely involved with the implementation and evaluation of *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* within the council workplace settings. Participant-observation provided a formal process to gain deeper insight into implementation and organisational change processes. Second, observational methods provided an opportunity to capture issues and insights as they were unfolding in 'real-time' and in the context of everyday life (D. Smith, 2005) and 'real-life' workplace settings. As discussed above, this approach is a key strength of ethnographic research and provided unique insight into interactions, dynamics and processes that might not have been captured using other methods. Nonetheless, the use of participant-observation was complimentary to other methods, such as interviews, which capture similar insights but are more retrospective and reflective. The benefits and challenges of conducting ethnographic research are discussed further below and in Chapter 10.

## **Selection and engagement with cases study sites**

The selection of case study sites for this study was guided by my involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Spaces*. My involvement in the program commenced in early 2009, when an in-principle agreement was made between the program funding body, my university and another university (commissioned to undertake the program evaluation) for me to be involved as a PhD student and member of the evaluation team. As program planning got underway, it was agreed that I would provide research assistance to support program implementation and evaluation within the council workplace settings, whilst also collecting data for my PhD research. Primarily, my involvement was centred on developing and supporting the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool (described in Section 5.3. below). Where appropriate, I also conducted other research activities to support program implementation and evaluation. Prior to commencing data collection, I received university ethics approval for the research project.

## **Gaining access to the research sites**

Gaining access to the research sites was also facilitated by my involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Spaces*. From an early stage, I was invited to attend operational group meetings among partner organisations involved in the program, including funding bodies, local councils, universities and other specialist agencies assisting with program implementation, evaluation and communication of findings. Involvement in these meetings provided an opportunity to gain rapport with program stakeholders, including local council representatives. During one such meeting and subsequent meetings I attended, I communicated my research project with stakeholders and formally requested council organisational involvement in the research. I asked to be based at each of the council sites for approximately one day per week over a period of 6-12 months, in order to assist with the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool and conduct ethnographic fieldwork and interviews for my PhD.

A number of scholars have discussed challenges in gaining access to organisations to conduct ethnographic research (Buchanan, Boddy, & McCalman, 1998; Johl & Renganathan, 2009; O'Reilly, 2005; Van Maanen & Kolb, 1983). As indicated in Chapter 1, these difficulties may explain why there has been limited study of workforce diversity

and racism within real-life workplace contexts, despite a critical need for such work (Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Fine, 1996; Wrench, 2005). On the whole, I was fortunate in not experiencing any significant challenges, although it is likely that access could have been more difficult had I not been part of a broader program that had a strong emphasis on evidence-based implementation and evaluation.

On the other hand, negotiating my involvement was not always a straightforward process. It took time and energy to build trustworthy relationships (Bowen & Martens, 2005), both before entering the field and then on an ongoing basis once I began my research. There were also delays in commencing fieldwork, which were mainly due to collecting baseline data and developing research tools before implementation could begin. I recall my nervousness when presenting my research proposal to stakeholders, particularly when discussing participant-observation, as shown in the following journal entry, written after one such meeting:

Everyone seems okay about the participant-observation, partly shown by laughter and jokes that were made, mainly when I said 'it's not about being a spy' but providing a formal process to gain insight into some of the issues we're all trying to think through and address. I think later about why I'm nervous about it. Well, because I am both new to the method and concerned that people might put a barrier up if they feel like they are being 'observed' or judged. But I also think about the group and how comfortable everybody is with each other. There's a level of seriousness that's needed but this is kept in balance by the underlying banter. So there's lightness too. A 'safe space' perhaps - that everything that needs to be said has been said - and optimism about what we are trying to achieve, that we're all in it together. (Journal entry 16/04/2010)

While the above journal entry is revealing of my inexperience in conducting ethnographic research, my feelings of nervousness diminished after I spoke openly about the usefulness of participant-observation as a method and received positive feedback by way of laughter. Perhaps in other professional contexts, and if participants were not already well known to me, my openness would have been less appropriate. However, I think in this context it worked to be upfront about my own concerns, in that I didn't want people to feel like they were being judged or 'spied on' for that matter. My journal reflection also reveals my insider-outsider status in the program as both a participant and observer. In particular, I sought to be part of the group, and had

my own sense that ‘we’re all in it together’, while also needing to keep some distance, in making participants aware of my observer role. Hammersley (2006) has described this phenomenon as tensions between being a participant, while also having an analytical role. In the participatory role, the focus is commonly on trying to understand the perspectives of participants and provide detailed description of their activities and actions. At the same time, there is usually, ‘equal emphasis on developing an *analytic* understanding of perspectives, activities and actions, one that is likely to be different from, perhaps even in conflict with, how the people themselves see the world’ (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4). In other words, the more ‘subjective’ nature of ethnographic research might mean that interpretation of meaning is not always clear. However, as with more positivist epistemologies, qualitative researchers have developed reliability and validity constructs to measure the trustworthiness and authenticity of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), as discussed in Section 5.5 below.

### **5.3 Data Collection Methods**

The main data collection methods used in this study were participant-observation, in the form of ethnographic fieldwork, and qualitative, key-informant interviews. This section briefly outlines the process of data collection, namely participant-observation and key informant interviews. Prior to this, the development the Workplace Assessment Tool is briefly outlined to provide context to the study.

#### **Development of the Workplace Assessment Tool**

Myself and another member of the evaluation team developed the Workplace Assessment Tool to support the implementation of *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* within the council workplace setting (shown in Appendix A). The tool was developed following a review of international literature on how to best assess current policy and practice and plan for change in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention (Trenerry et al., 2010).

The process of developing the tool included an extensive piloting process with local councils taking part in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. Research-practitioner collaboration (Bowen & Martens, 2005) meant that the final tool was in a format that was easily accessible and relevant to practitioners, with items that could be easily operationalised. However, the process of developing and trailing the tool in one



council prior to it being implemented could have contributed to issues of participant-overload, as discussed further in Chapter 9.

The tool was structured to assess six domains<sup>56</sup> of workplace policy and practice, as shown in Appendix A. The process for implementing the tool involved working through a series of questions based on best-practice statements and examples<sup>57</sup> grouped under the six domains. Questions and best-practice statements guided discussion, alongside a review of organisational documents (discussed further in Section 5.4 below). Although the purpose of the tool was to generate discussion and reflection, there was resistance to discussing gaps in practice, particularly when it came to assigning responsibilities for actions coming out of the tool. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 9.

To implement the tool, an assessment committee was established comprising individuals representing key functions within the organisation including senior leadership, human resources, community services, administration, finance, communications, policy and planning, as well as individuals whose job roles were directly concerned with workforce diversity issues (e.g. human resource managers and diversity practitioners). Alongside these requirements, it was also important to have representation of people from people from minority group backgrounds or diversity champions from majority group backgrounds<sup>58</sup>. Consistent with other studies (Creagan et al., 2003), such participants may have a clearer understanding of how process and policies create unfair treatment and inequity than those in positions of power. Representation of individuals from minority group backgrounds and/or individuals with high levels of racial literacy was achieved somewhat in practice and more so at Stoneway City Council, which had higher levels of workforce diversity, than at Corrington Shire. Getting the right people involved in the process and balancing dynamics in relation to seniority, role and responsibility was also a challenge. Issues of engagement and group dynamics among assessment committee members, including the dynamics of resistance, are discussed further in Chapter 9.

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<sup>56</sup> A domain is a term used in cultural competency assessment and is defined as an area of practice identified for assessing an organisation's progress in cultural competency (Siegel, et al., 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Sourced from a review of international literature as discussed above (see Trener et al., 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Defined here as people from majority group backgrounds, who are committed to workforce diversity and anti-racism and have high levels of racial literacy (Warren & Sue, 2011).

My role involved taking notes and summarising discussion points during meetings. I also helped to clarify items that were unclear in the tool and provided my knowledge and expertise in the area of workplace diversity and anti-racism action. At the same time, the implementation of the tool was a mechanism through which to gather data for my PhD research.

### **Participant-observation**

For this study, I actively participated in meetings and events, while also observing the process of implementing the Workplace Assessment Tool and making detailed field notes following each meeting (Emerson et al., 1995). My fieldnotes documented what I observed in relation to my research questions, alongside other themes that emerged through ongoing contact with participants (O'Reilly, 2005). For example, I took notes about what was said, or said quietly (such as under one's breath), and observed interactions between the group, including body language, the use of humour and other social and power dynamics. Following meetings, I reflected on the possible meanings of these interactions. Alongside my fieldnotes, I kept a journal of personal reflections, which included reflection on my reading of the academic literature and other events related to the research (discussed further in Section 5.5).

The process of participant-observation took place over a period of approximately 18 months. After gaining consent from participants (described below), I observed meetings and events that took place both in relation to the broader program and the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool within the two council sites. My involvement across the council sites was staggered, where I commenced at the first council site, Stoneway City Council, for one day per week over a period of approximately eight months. Due to delays in implementation and travel requirements, I spent less time (approximately five months) at the second council site, Corrington Shire. However, I also returned to Corrington Shire to conduct follow up interviews over a number of weeks.

A total of 33 participants agreed to be involved in the participant-observation phase of this research. This included stakeholders involved in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* (i.e. program coordinators and managers based at council and the funding body, members of the evaluation team and other stakeholders involved with the

program) and council employees involved in implementing the Workplace Assessment Tool (i.e. human resource managers/officers, communications and operational managers/officers, diversity managers/officers and other managers and officers within council). I communicated my research aims and methods to participants at various meetings and followed up verbal communication with emails, attaching a copy of the information sheet and consent form. The program coordinators based at council largely facilitated the involvement of council employees in the research. For example, prior to the first meeting, the program coordinator explained my role and sent a copy of my research plan, information sheet and consent form to participants. My email address was provided and participants were asked to email me directly indicating whether they were happy to be involved in the research. At the first meeting, I had the opportunity to outline the research verbally and respond to any questions. I also approached participants who missed this first meeting or became involved at a later date to be involved in the research.

All participants taking part in the participant-observation were requested to sign a written consent form. While most returned consent forms, a very small number of participants provided consent over email. One participant did not reply by email so I organised to meet with this person to see if they had concerns about being involved in the research. During our meeting, it became evident that their main concern was a lack of clarity about when my 'ethnography hat was on or off' (journal entry, 1/5/14). After further discussion of my research interests, this person verbally agreed to be involved. This conversation did, however, prompt me to reflect on what it meant to be 'on or off' whilst conducting ethnographic research. These distinctions can be blurry (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001; Punch, 1986), where the researcher might find out more in hallway conversations and at the photocopier than in formal meeting contexts. I found that participants increasingly did confide in me within a range of informal contexts. Along with my observations of formal meetings and activities, I reflected on these interactions and events in my fieldnotes, where undoubtedly, these interactions influenced my research questions and informed my analysis. However, in this thesis, I have mainly presented data on what occurred in formal contexts, and was supported by interview data. This was partly an ethical decision, such as in response to concerns made by a participant (described above) as well as my own desire to protect anonymity among participants, due to the sensitive topic of the research and the professional settings in

which I undertook it. To further protect anonymity, I have used pseudonyms for individual and organisational participants and changed other identifying characteristics, such as gender.

### **Key informant interviews**

Key informant interviews, which are a qualitative research method used to gain in-depth knowledge into an issue or topic of study, was the other key method used in this research. Key informants generally have specialised or first-hand knowledge about a specific topic, program or community and are also selected for their competence and ability to clearly articulate their knowledge and understanding of the topic at hand (Bernard, 1994; Patton, 2002). Key informants for this study were selected on the basis of their role and involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* and/or other expertise in relation to workforce diversity and organisational change processes. Key informant interviews naturally complement participant-observation methods in that the same participants can be approached for follow up interviews, after immersion in the field. For this study, interviews provided a formal mechanism through which to follow up issues and topics of interest that I observed during the participant-observation phase of the research. Interviews were thus conducted as a second phase of the research and after initial analysis of fieldnotes to inform the development of interview questions (described in Section 5.4 below).

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. Structured interviews usually include pre-determined and closed questions, as set out in an interview schedule or questionnaire. This approach strengthens reliability in that the same questions are presented in the same order across a given sample, allowing larger sample and thus being more representative (Minichiello, Aroni, E., & Alexander, 1995). Semi-structured interviews may still use an interview guide, but do not follow the same strict rules in terms of consistent questions and ordering, where there is more flexibility to deviate from the interview schedule. This creates more opportunities for dialogue and interception by the interviewer, while still covering a consistent set of themes or topics (Minichiello et al., 1995). Unstructured interviews are even more conversational and focused on understanding the experiences and perspectives of interviewees, an approach that helps to increase validity due to less reliance on the researcher's pre-conceived ideas, motivations and interests (Minichiello et al., 1995).

For this study, I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews. This included 16 interviews with council employees across both council sites and four interviews with other program stakeholders. The sample was selected according to the selection criteria for key informants discussed above (Bernard, 1994; Patton, 2002). Based on my observations in the field, I approached individuals who played a more active role in the assessment process and who had demonstrated expertise and knowledge in workforce diversity and organisational change issues. I also tried to balance role, seniority, gender and racial/ethnic background in the selection of key informants to account for power dynamics discussed above. I interviewed one council employee who was not involved in the assessment process, but due to their role and seniority, I considered would provide important insight into my research questions.

The majority of interviews lasted for one hour, although some interviews were 1.5 hours in length and could be considered more unstructured, conversational and ‘in-depth’ (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). For all interviews, I relied on a standardised interview schedule (see Appendix B for a full copy of the interview schedule). However, I often deviated from the script by clarifying or asking further questions on particular topics, or in some cases letting the participant talk freely, with minimal prompting from me. As discussed below, the extent to which the interviews were more structured versus freer flowing varied in relation to whom I was interviewing.

## **5.4 Data Analysis**

### **First stage analysis of fieldnotes**

Data analysis for this research took place in a number of stages. I began analysis of fieldnotes prior to commencing interviews, so that my observations could inform the development of interview questions. In total, I generated over 100,000 words of fieldnotes. In the first stage of analysis, I read through all field notes in order to absorb these data as a whole and as it evolved over time (Emerson et al., 1995). During this process, I created a document of key terms and expressions that were commonly used by participants, along with key terms and themes I had used in my journal. Identifying phrases that are consistently used by informants point to regularities within settings (M. Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach could also be described as inductive-focused

coding, where the first stage is more inductive or ‘open’, wherein field notes are read line by line to identify ‘any and all’ ideas and themes that emerge (Emerson et al., 1995). The next stage is more focused or ‘closed’, where the researcher aims to link analytical concepts and codes together. Central to my analysis was linking themes I had observed in the field to my research aims and objectives (outlined in Chapter 1). Through this process, I identified the following key themes for investigation in interviews<sup>59</sup>:

- Professional role and background.
- Implementation of pro-diversity and anti-racism program.
- Benefits and challenges of diversity in the workplace.
- Process of organisational change.
- Diversity and anti-racism practice.

### **Second stage analysis of fieldnotes and interviews**

In the second stage of analysis and after conducting interviews, I analysed all data together by importing my fieldnotes, journal entries and interview transcripts into the NVivo qualitative data-coding package. Initially, I followed a similar inductive approach to coding (outlined above) and established nearly 300 unique or ‘open’ codes in NVivo. I then undertook thematic analysis by grouping these codes into broader themes (called ‘tree codes’ in the software package). In grouping themes, I looked at the frequency of codes, which helped to inform decisions about which themes were most consistent across participants and the full data set. I also checked that key themes were consistent with my research aims and objectives while also being open to examining new themes that had emerged (O’Reilly, 2005). On the whole, the process of data analysis was iterative and continued during the writing stage through a process of ‘reading, thinking and writing; and rereading, rethinking and rewriting’ (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 163).

### **Secondary data analysis: workplace surveys**

For this study, I also analysed secondary data sources, namely surveys conducted with council employees as well as organisational documents. Surveys generally collect

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<sup>59</sup> At this early stage, I was also interested in understanding the process of knowledge translation, broadly defined as synthesis, dissemination, exchange and application of knowledge, including interactions between researchers and practitioners (Graham et al., 2006) although I dropped this later emphasis in favour of focusing more specifically on organisational change.

quantitative data, employing scales that generate measures of trends, attitudes or opinions within a population sample, although they can also be used to collect qualitative data (Creswell, 2009). Findings from a sample can then be generalised to make claims about the population. For this study, I analysed quantitative data from workplace surveys conducted at Stoneway City Council as Corrington Shire as part of the program evaluation for *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. The purpose of the surveys was to evaluate the effectiveness of the program across council. The surveys collected data on staff attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism and were undertaken prior to implementation of the program (at baseline) and after all program activities had been finished (post-surveys). Key themes explored in the survey were (see Appendix C for a full copy of the survey):

- Perceptions of the organisational environment in the context of diversity and anti-discrimination policies, practices and processes.
- Experiences of race-based discrimination.
- Attitudes towards cultural diversity.

The evaluation team, in consultation with council program staff, designed the council workplace surveys. The survey was administered by council staff as both an on-line survey and in a paper-based format to ensure maximum participant by council employees (i.e. employees who were not based at the main council building or who did not have ready access a computer). To further improve response rates, CEOs at each council emailed all employees, encouraging them to participate in the survey.

As a member of the evaluation team, I helped to analyse data from the baseline workplace surveys at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Survey findings were analysed using a statistical program called Stata (Version 11). As the surveys were administered in different formats, each set of surveys were coded separately and then combined. Descriptive statistics, mainly percentage response distributions, were used to describe the sample characteristics and the survey findings. A summary of data analysis was provided to the evaluation team, local council organisations and other stakeholders involved in the program. I also tested for significance ( $p < 0.05$ ) in survey responses between the two council sites and conducted further analyses by background in relation to experiences of racism.

Due to the timelines for this study, I was not able to include the post-test survey findings. While this is a limitation of the present study, my research interests in investigating the *process* rather than the *outcome* of change, help to support this approach. On the whole, the workplace surveys provided important context to this study by providing a baseline understanding of employee attitudes and experiences. The surveys also helped to inform program implementation within council, including implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool<sup>60</sup>. Selected findings from the council workplace baseline surveys (herein workplace surveys) are presented in the next chapter, Chapter 6.

### **Secondary data analysis: organisational documents**

Document analysis is a procedure for analysing written material, such as organisational publications, reports, correspondence and policy documents. Organisations produce large amounts of documents, many of which are publicly available, particularly in public organisations such as local government (Patton, 2002). According to Patton (2002), document analyses provide insight into organisational contexts and decision-making processes and can also be used to triangulate the research by corroborating the findings collected through other methods. As described, analysis of organisational documents formed a critical component of conducting the Workplace Assessment Tool. The assessment process provided access to a range of organisational documents, mostly publicly available documents, as well some internal documents. Documents reviewed as part of the assessment process included:

- Mission, vision and values statements.
- Code of conduct policy.
- Organisational website.
- Annual reports.
- Community plans and other relevant planning and strategic documents.
- Multicultural, diversity and reconciliation plans and statements.
- Communications and marketing plans, strategies and guidelines for staff.
- Staff newsletters (including e-news).

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<sup>60</sup> For example, members of the assessment committee and other senior leaders were briefed on the survey findings and I also drew on the findings occasionally in interviews with council employees.



- Staff and volunteer orientation materials.
- Human resource strategic plans, policies and procedures, including Equal Opportunity policies and procedures for handling complaints.
- Copies of current and recent job postings, with associated position descriptions.
- Selection, recruitment and interviewing policies and guidelines.
- Performance evaluation guidelines.
- Information on trainee and work experience programs.
- Data on race, ethnicity, culture, religion and/or spoken languages collected in Human resource management systems.
- Other relevant documents.

Documents were reviewed as part of the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool (detailed above) and informed discussions during this process. For this study, analysis of organisational documents provided important insight into organisational contexts, including organisational change process. On the whole, document analysis was complementary to other data collection methods and helped to triangulate the research findings (Patton, 2002), as will now be discussed.

## **5.5 Trustworthiness and Authenticity of the Research**

Issues of validity and reliability are approached differently in qualitative research than in traditional scientific paradigms, although the question of rigour remains a central concern for qualitative researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Lincoln and Guba (1986) provide alternative criteria to traditional concepts of rigour, primarily through notions of trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness can be measured against positivist concepts, where ‘credibility’ is an analog to ‘internal validity’, ‘transferability’ corresponds to ‘external validity’, ‘dependability’ corresponds to ‘reliability’, and confirmability is an analog to ‘objectivity’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 18). Authenticity relates to the degree to which the research is ‘empowering or impoverishing, and to whom’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 24). This section outlines how I established trustworthiness and authenticity in this research study, including through a commitment to reflexive research practice.

## **Establishing trustworthiness**

Key techniques for establishing credibility include: prolonged engagement with participants and ongoing observation in the field; triangulation or cross-checking of data; peer debriefing; and member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, pp. 18-19). As discussed above, participant-observation was a key method utilised in this study and involved prolonged engagement with participants in the field. Triangulation was achieved through using multiple methods of data collection. Specifically, key informant interviews were a formal mechanism through which to validate observations in the field. As discussed, findings were also integrated with analysis of workplace surveys and document analysis to support the triangulation of research findings.

Member checking was another technique used to establish credibility for this research. As discussed above, I regularly provided updates on my PhD research project to participants during operational group meetings over the course of *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. This group of participants was deemed the most appropriate group to report back preliminary research findings to because it included representatives from the council organisations, the main program funding body and the evaluation team. In particular, I provided de-identified preliminary research findings, such as interview data, to this group of participants. When reporting back findings, I also adhered to governance structures established by the program funding body, which helped to minimise potential risks and resource demands on participants. Peer-reviewed publications from this research will also be forwarded to interested research participants, in line with principles of authenticity, trustworthiness and reciprocity (Lather, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1986), discussed further below and in Chapter 10.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1986), transferability as an analog for ‘external validity’ involves demonstrating how findings might have applicability in other contexts. Transferability can be obtained through thick, descriptive data so that others can judge the extent to which some or all of the findings can be applied to other contexts. As discussed in Chapter 10, the rich descriptions that I provide throughout this thesis ought to illuminate the unique context for this research, and how the findings might be transferable to other contexts.

Alongside transferability, dependability is concerned with consistency of the study over time and therefore needs to account for potential contextual differences (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Dependability also relates to consistency in the research process, such as accuracy in data collection methods, interpretation of findings and presentation of results. It can be established through reporting research processes in detail, thus enabling 'a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results' (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). As discussed in the remaining chapters of this thesis, understanding of contextual variations in workplace racism, diversity and anti-racism intervention is a key contribution of the present study, where the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis has helped to highlight these variations.

Finally, confirmability, as an analog to 'objectivity' (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), relates to the extent to which the researcher acknowledges potential biases. While subjectivity is more readily acknowledged in social construction and constructivist criteria, issues of bias still need to be taken into account, where the researcher should take steps to help ensure, as much as possible, that research 'findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher' (Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004, p. 72). This includes examination of beliefs and values underlying the choice of research design and methods, including justification for why one approach was favoured over another and weaknesses of techniques employed (M. Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shenton, 2004). This chapter has provided extensive detail on the research process for this study, including research design, methods of data collection and approaches to data analysis, where the triangulation of data and other member-checking processes helped to reduce investigator bias. It has also looked at the impact of my differing roles on the research. I have discussed power dynamics and how such dynamics potentially impacted on this study, along with my attempts to balance them, such as through 'exposing oneself' (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 19) by providing my own background and motivations for undertaking this research (discussed in Chapter 1).

### **Authenticity and a commitment to reflexive practice**

Authenticity can be established through notions of 'fairness', defined as 'a balanced view that presents all constructions and the values that undergird them' (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 20). Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest that achieving fairness involves an effort to understand the role of different value and belief systems, such as differing

perspectives and conflicting views, where fairness can also be achieved through stakeholder engagement and linked to ethical procedures applied to research. This means that, when properly established, the relationship between researcher and respondent can be ‘one of respectful negotiation, joint control, and reciprocal learning’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1986, p. 17). On the other hand, building trust in the researcher and the research process can be a challenge for effective research-practitioner relationships, where a lack of understanding or trust in the researcher and the research process, including how the data will be used, presents particular challenges (Bowen & Martens, 2005).

As indicated in Section 5.2, partnerships developed in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* relied on the establishment of close working relationships between local council implementing bodies and researchers. For this study, I followed the same governance and administrative structures established by the program. The development and testing of the Workplace Assessment Tool also helped to develop effective research-practitioner relationships. This resulted in a tool that has had ongoing relevance for practitioners and researchers. Moreover, since the time of this research, the tool has been developed into a national, online tool by key agencies involved in leading workforce diversity and anti-discrimination practice in Australia. Therefore, it is an important example of effective knowledge translation (Bowen & Martens, 2005). I also introduced other member checking processes (Patton, 2002), such as providing interview transcripts and feeding back findings to a range of research participants, as noted above. Maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of both organisations and individuals was a key concern for this study. I used pseudonyms for council organisations and participants and changed other distinguishing features (such as gender) to protect participant anonymity.

Reflexivity, which refers to critical self-awareness and reflection on the research process, is seen as essential within social constructivist and critical research paradigms (Lather, 1995; Reinharz, 1997). Reinharz (1997) has articulated a need to integrate data gathering with insight into how data collection and analysis was influenced by the researcher’s role, which involves acknowledging the ‘self’ in qualitative inquiry. Part of this involves making explicit ‘what the researcher’s attributes mean to the people being studied’ (Reinharz, 1997, p. 4). Similarly, other feminist and critical race scholars have challenged

researchers to consider whose story we are telling and who actually benefits from research (hooks, 1990; L. Smith, 1999).

Alongside writing ethnographic field notes, keeping a journal was a key reflexive tool used in this study. As noted above, I reflected on my reading of theory and literature relevant to issues examined in this thesis, along with acknowledgement of my standpoint (discussed in Chapter 1) and reflection of my role in the research process. There are many examples from my journal of the internal struggles I went through in navigating the complexities of this research topic, which has been both personally and professionally confronting. Lather (1995, p. 43) has eloquently written about the difficulties in trying to 'ride our/write out of the crisis of representation' as both a source of energy and paralysis. I felt both energised and paralysed in equal measures. As I wrote in my journal early on, 'it seems the more reading I do and more I start to engage with people in the field, the more I feel confused about what it is I am to do' (journal entry, 28/10/2009). In many ways, my own feelings of stuckness and habitual tendencies were reflective of the same kinds of obstacles and resistances I observed in organisational change processes. These issues will be discussed further in Chapters 8, 9 and 10.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the research design and rationale for the philosophical approach and methods used in this study. My approach aligned with both constructionism and subjectivism. Specifically, I sought to establish a shared sense of meaning through collaboration with research participants. Given the research topic, I also took a critical approach, in recognition that knowledge is not only socially constructed, but important in informing advocacy and social change projects.

The research design included case study and ethnography, with participant observation and semi-structured interviews as the main methods of data collection. Participant-observation provided a mechanism to gain insight into 'real-life' workplace contexts, processes, interactions and group dynamics, while interviews provided an opportunity to validate what I had observed in the first stage of the research. The process of data collection and analysis led me to reflect on power dynamics in conducting interviews. I reflected on how my interview style varied between participants, as well as gender, racial

and class dynamics. Specially, I have proposed that my own dilemmas in navigating interviews with executive males should encourage other female researchers to pay attention to these dynamics and use strategies to challenge dominant male-female patterns of interactions (Winchester, 1996) while at the same time not undermining their perspectives and position (Schoenberger, 1991). In the context of race/ethnicity, I used strategies to counter uneven power dynamics, such as disclosing my background and commitment to anti-racism and diversity practice.

This chapter has also examined issues of trustworthiness and authenticity, as alternative criteria for establishing validity and reliability within qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Patton, 2002). I have detailed techniques such as prolonged engagement with participants and observation in the field, triangulation of data and member-checking processes, consistency in the research process and strategies to reduce investigator bias. Alongside these criteria, I have assessed qualities of authenticity in research practice, which includes establishing reciprocal research-practitioner relationships (Bowen & Martens, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and a commitment to reflexive practice (Lather, 1995; Reinharz, 1997). The use of a reflexive journal during this research helped me to reflect on issues of standpoint; my differing, and at times conflicting roles, and my own internal struggles in navigating with a practice of politically engaged research (Came, 2014; Land, 2012).

# Chapter 6

## Context: Setting the Scene and Building the Case for Change

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### 6.1 Introduction

So far, this thesis has presented theory and literature on racism, diversity and anti-racism in institutional, and specifically workplace settings, and in the context of Australian local government. Chapter 2 laid the theoretical foundations for this research and defined institutional racism as attitudes, behaviours, cultures, requirements, conditions, policies and practices that create unfair and avoidable inequalities among diverse groups, which includes the role of organisational culture in earlier definitions (Paradies et al., 2009). Essed's (1991, p. 39) theory of everyday racism was also discussed, which links structural and historical racism to routine, everyday practices 'made by agents', thus making an important link between structure and agency. Anti-racism was conceptualised as a diverse concept that takes different forms in practice and is politically complex/confronting. Drawing on Ahmed (2006; 2012), it also showed that anti-racism is often 'non-performed', revealing gaps between statements of commitment and practice. Diversity was discussed at the macro-level, including its articulation through multicultural policy within western, liberal societies. The limits and potential of multiculturalism as an anti-racism policy were also discussed.

In Chapters 3 and 4, central themes of racism, diversity and anti-racism were contextualised to the Australian local government context and to workplace/employment institutional settings. At the macro-level and meso-levels, Chapter 3 examined the national and local policy context for understanding diversity, racism and anti-racism in Australia. Literature on the nature of racist attitudes and experiences, along with evidence of labour market discrimination in Australia was also presented. In Chapter 4, literature on meso-level racism, diversity and anti-racism was presented. This included evidence that racism exists at both the interpersonal and institutional level and has a number of detrimental impacts. Literature on diversity management revealed that the origins of diversity management as a more 'inclusive'

concept than previous affirmative action and equal opportunity agendas as well as narrow business case models has created dilemmas for how diversity can effectively address ongoing inequality in employment and racism. Chapter 4 also outlined practice-based aspects of diversity and introduced workplace assessment as a meso-level diversity strategy. Finally, the role of organisational culture and cultural change was discussed. Schein's (2004) integrated model of organisational culture was outlined as another key theoretical framework, along with Ahmed's (2006; 2012) notion of non-performativity, which has informed the present study. Alongside the concept of organisational culture, literature on organisational change was presented, including differences between episodic and continuous change and the role of individual agents, including leaders, managers and diversity change agents in enabling and resisting change.

The next four chapters (Chapters 6-9) make up the empirical findings of this thesis. In structuring the empirical chapters, four central themes emerged following the review of literature discussed above and the data analysis process: the role of context, culture, structure and agency in understanding institutional racism, diversity and anti-racism action. These themes are in keeping with the research aims and objectives outlined in Chapter 1 to understand the nature of and responses to racism and diversity and the benefits and challenges of diversity and anti-racism in workplace/employment contexts.

This chapter, Chapter 6, sets and the scene and introduces the case study sites of Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. This is done through fieldwork observations and demographic information, including key diversity indicators, obtained through the Australian Census. Chapter 6 also presents analysis of surveys undertaken with local council employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire on their perceptions of workplace diversity, experiences of racism and attitudes towards diversity in Australia. In this way, Chapter 6 provides context to the empirical findings presented in Chapters 7-9. The final section of this chapter analyses interview data to consider the benefits and challenges of diversity in the workplace in the context of local government in Australia. Again, these data provide important context to the remaining the empirical chapters and builds the case for institutional change within local government workplace settings. On the whole, analysis of data in Chapter 6 reveals important contextual differences between the case study sites that inform the remaining empirical chapters.



The ethnographic content of this thesis is presented in Chapters 7 and 8 and follows a series of events that occurred during my involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* and the implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool. In Chapter 7, the story begins on a cold, Autumn day in Melbourne while observing a Sorry Day event at Stoneway City Council. This event anchors the chapter and its focus on the role of organisational culture in workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. Theoretically, the chapter centres on Schein's (2004) schema of organisational culture, which also determines the structure of the chapter in looking at different layers of organisational culture. As revealed in the literature, this focus responds to a need for more understanding of the role of culture in institutional racism and workplace diversity and anti-racism intervention.

Chapter 8 examines another key aspect of institutional racism and anti-racism action – the role of structure. In this chapter, the ethnographic narrative resumes at Stoneway City Council in Spring, where I observed implementation of the Workplace Assessment Tool at Stoneway City Council, a meso-level diversity and anti-racism strategy aimed at addressing structural barriers. The focus is on understanding and addressing employment barriers, where interview material on recruitment barriers is presented prior to the ethnographic material to provide context. The narrative then jumps forward to Summer in regional Victoria and the examination of strategies to address employment barriers at Corrington Shire. It then considers support for and resistance to a positive discrimination strategy at Corrington Shire. The central theoretical hook in this chapter is Ahmed's (2006) concept of non-performative anti-racism, where I sought to 'follow' statements of commitment to diversity and anti-racism 'around' (Ahmed, 2006) during participant-observation and interviews with council employees.

Chapter 9 is structured around the final theme of agency and focuses on the role of organisational leaders, managers and diversity champions in both enabling and resisting change in the context of workplace diversity and anti-racism. This chapter draws on interview data to discuss the role of human agents in change processes and how such agents can build coalitions for change and create broader organisational change through their everyday actions and behaviours.

## 6.2 Description of Case Study Sites

As discussed in the last chapter and in Chapter 1, two councils, Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, were selected for inclusion in this study due to their involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. This section describes the LGAs in which the councils are situated and draws on Australian Census data (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a, 2011b) to provide a diversity profile for each council.

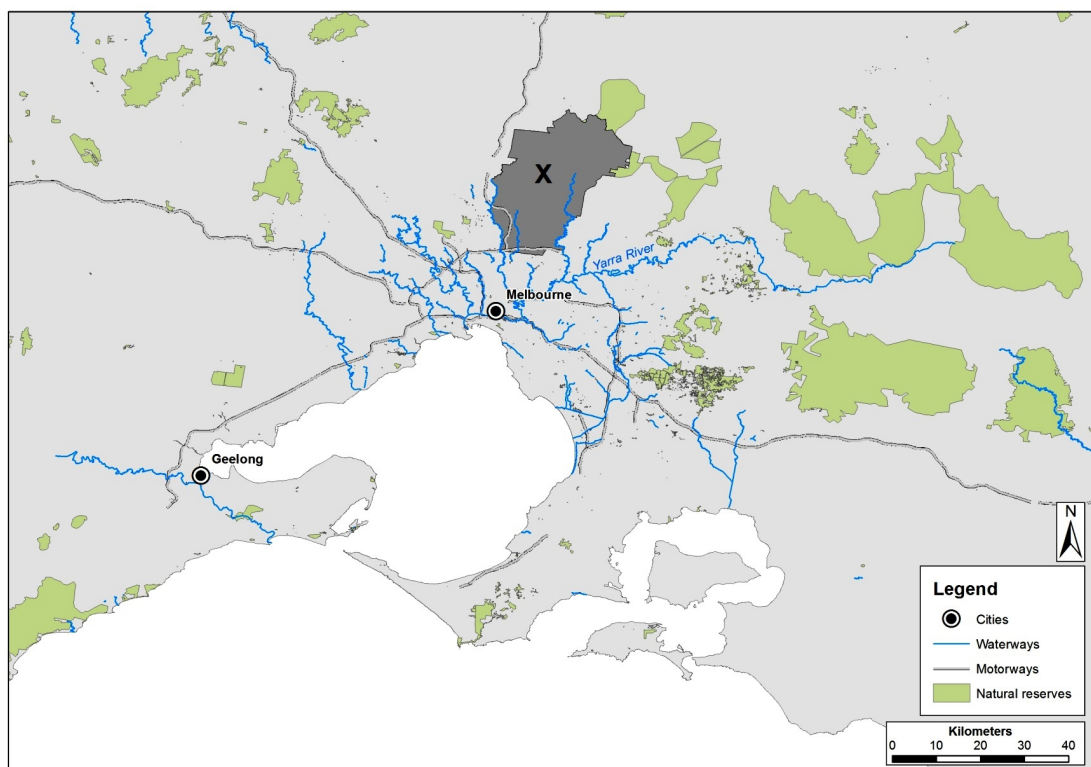
### Stoneway City Council

Stoneway City Council is located on the northern outskirts of metropolitan Melbourne in Victoria (see Figure 6.1, showing location of Stoneway City Council LGA). The City is one of Victoria's fastest growing municipalities and the first thing you notice as you enter the area is a mix of old and new, urban and rural landscapes. In this municipality of 489.9 square kilometres (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011b), neighbourhoods established in the 1950s and 1960s are intercepted by industrial areas, shopping strips and complexes. More recently, new housing developments have been steadily creeping into the retreating rural landscape. In the rural areas and small townships of the municipality, you will find remnants of the old: farmland and bluestone walls surrounding agricultural properties, homes dating back to the 1800s. Older still and less visible is the Aboriginal history of this place, the sacred sites and meeting places known to a relatively large Aboriginal population who reside in this municipality and elsewhere.

Driving through the municipality, there are strong markers of a vibrant and well-established migrant community; mosques, temples, eateries and shopping haunts frequented by a highly diverse population. According to Australian Census Data (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011b), 0.7 per cent of the total population of more than 150,000 residents identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while 38.3 per cent of the population were born overseas. While the majority (61.7 per cent) of residents were born in Australia, other common countries of birth include Italy (4.0 per cent), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (3.7 per cent), India (3.4 per cent), Greece (2.6 per cent) and Vietnam (1.7 per cent) (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011b). Nearly half (42.7 per cent) of the population speak a language other than English at home, with common languages spoken including Macedonian (6.8 per cent), Italian (6.7 per cent),

Greek (4.7 per cent), Arabic (4.6 per cent) and Vietnamese (2.6 per cent) (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011b).

As you enter the main building at Stoneway City Council, nestled between the urban and rural landscape, one of the first things you notice are the large flagpoles outside the front of the council building. The Australian flag is displayed alongside both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags. As discussed in Chapter 7, most local councils now fly the Aboriginal flag, however, it is rare to see both flags displayed. The building and surrounding gardens are immaculately kept, overlooking the surrounding landscape of expansive green fields and eucalypt trees. The semi-rural landscape is being slowly encroached upon by new development, such as a shopping centre, a train station and other infrastructure needed to meet with demands of a rapidly growing population.



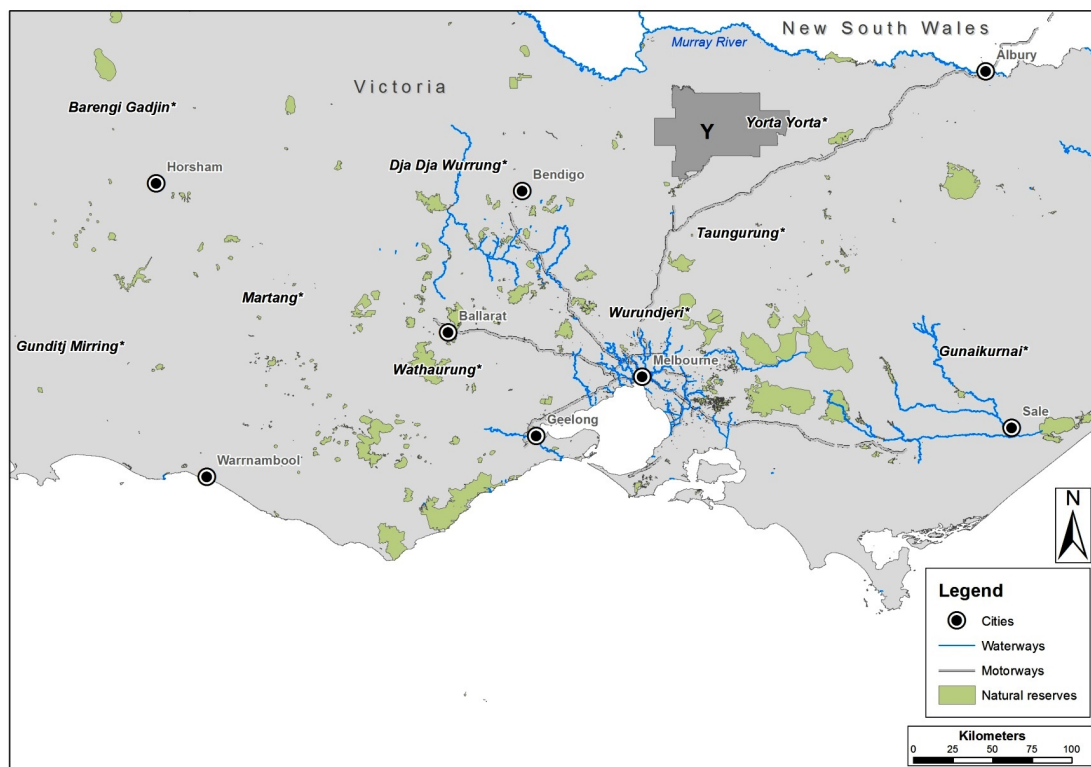
**Figure 6-1** Map of greater Melbourne showing location of Stoneway City Council. Source: author.

### **Corrington Shire**

Travelling along the highway in regional Victoria, there is not much to see apart from the surrounding bush. The occasional service station stands in stark contrast to the rural landscape made up of eucalypt and wattle trees and the many shrubs and grasses native

to this area. If you are driving at sunset, you might spot a kangaroo or two, a flock of cockatoos or the occasional kookaburra. When it rains, little creeks flow more rapidly from the surrounding rivers and are prone to flooding in some places, while in the summer months the bush can be tinder-dry and stifling.

As you enter the municipality of Corrington Shire, located in the north of Victoria, there is an acknowledgement sign recognising the traditional owners of the land, suggesting some inroads have been made with the local Aboriginal community, one of the largest in Victoria. Figure 6.2 shows the location of Corrington Shire as well as Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups that have been recognised as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (the Act). RAPs are recognised as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage and have with responsibilities to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage under the Act. From the acknowledgement sign, which borders the municipality, there is still a way to drive until you reach town. Passing a smaller township on the way, the speed limit drops to 70 kilometres per hour as you travel through the outskirts of this large regional centre, past motels, shopping centres and markers of the large agricultural and manufacturing industry that supports this region.



**Figure 6-2** Map of Victoria showing location of Corrington Shire and Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups<sup>61</sup>. Source: author.

The town itself is large; residents can find what they need here in the many shops that service not just the local community but the small neighbouring towns scattered throughout this large region, which measures 2,422 square kilometres (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). In town, there are a small number of organisations and landmarks indicating the strong presence of the Aboriginal community in the region, which constitute 3.5 per cent of the total population of more than 60,000 residents (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). While the city boasts some well-established immigrant communities, only a handful of eateries mark the culturally and linguistically diverse population that have settled here more recently.

As with other rural communities in Australia, the region has become home to recently arrived refugees, who have been settled in this area through the Australian Government's humanitarian program. While the large majority (80.8 per cent) of residents in Corrington Shire were born in Australia, nearly one in five (19.2 per cent) residents were born overseas, with the most common countries of birth, after Australia, including Italy (1.6 per cent), England (1.4 per cent), India (1.3 per cent), New Zealand (1.0 per cent) and Afghanistan (0.9 per cent) (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a). While the majority (82.2 per cent) of residents only speak English at home, over one in ten (12.5 per cent) residents also speak another language at home, including Italian (2.7 per cent), Arabic (1.7 per cent), Turkish (1.0 per cent), Albanian (0.8 per cent) and Punjabi (0.8 per cent) (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a)<sup>62</sup>.

The main council building is situated in town, a few blocks away from the main street and in a privileged spot near the river, while a handful of other buildings and facilities run by Corrington Shire are scattered nearby or on the outskirts of town. As you walk

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<sup>61</sup> Appointed as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) as at December 9, 2013. RAPs have responsibilities to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage under the Victorian Cultural Heritage Act 2006. RAP groups and names are sourced from Department of Premier and Cabinet (2013). Notes: Map does not show applicants that are awaiting RAP status. \*Barengi Gadjin (Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation); Dja Dja Wurrung (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation); Gunaikurnai (Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation); Gunditj Mirring (Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation); Martang (Martang Pty Ltd Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation); Wathaurung (Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation); Wurundjeri (Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc.); Yorta Yorta (Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation).

<sup>62</sup> Note: 2011 Census does not reflect recent immigration intakes, such as immigrants from Africa, the Middle East and South Asia (Pagonis, 2013).

into the main building you can see the Aboriginal flag taking its place alongside the Australian flag. A modern, public, gallery space, recently built and air-conditioned, sits next to the council building and provides opportunities for council employees and residents to come together and experience the many different facets of community life through the arts. Signs of ‘diversity’ are on display here too, through Aboriginal artworks hanging on the walls, and flyers advertising other multicultural activities for residents in the centre and surrounding towns. The importance of the physical environment in creating a welcoming environment for members of diverse group will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

### **6.3 Local Council Workplace Surveys**

This section presents analysis of quantitative data gathered through workplace surveys undertaken with employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. As discussed in Chapter 5, it is worth reiterating that these data were collected as part of the program evaluation for *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places* rather than through this study. As such, only findings relevant to the aims and objectives of this study are analysed. This section begins by outlining the characteristics and representativeness of the sample for Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Key characteristics such as gender, age and race/ethnicity indicators are then compared with Census data for each LGA.

#### **Survey participants**

At Stoneway City Council, a total of 403 employees participated in the baseline workplace survey, representing approximately 44 per cent of the total workforce at the time (personal correspondence 18/01/11). As shown in Figure 6.1, the sample was representative of council employees by gender<sup>63</sup>. At Corrington Shire, a total of 366 employees participated in the survey at baseline, which represented approximately 45 per cent of the total workforce (personal correspondence 12/04/11). The sample was representative of council employees by gender (Figure 6.3).

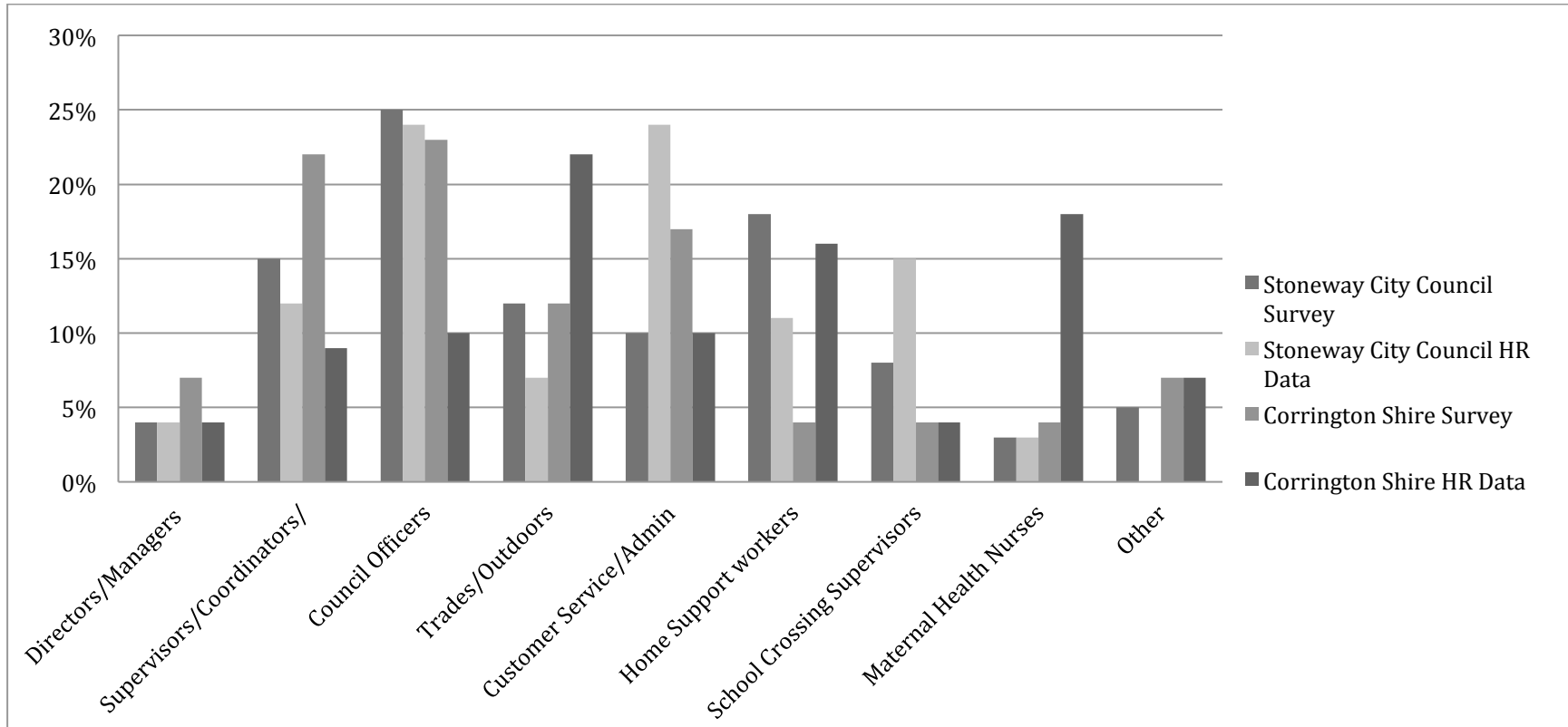
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<sup>63</sup> Demographic data obtained through the surveys were compared with HR employee data for Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire to determine representativeness of the sample by gender and role. As discussed below, councils did not have adequate employee data on race/ethnicity so comparisons between these data and the sample were not made. It was also not possible to make comparisons by age, as data on age were not collected in the survey due to an error in survey administration.



**Figure 6-3** Representativeness by gender, Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire

For job role, the sample was largely representative of actual roles at Stoneway City Council (Figure 6.4). However, two roles (trades/outdoors staff and home support workers) were overrepresented in the sample, while customer service/admin staff and school crossing supervisors were under represented in the sample. At Corrington Shire, the sample was more representative of some roles, including directors/managers, school-crossing supervisors and ‘other’ council roles. However, the sample over-represented the views supervisors/coordinators, council officers and customer service/admin staff. Three roles were also under-represented in the survey, including trades/outdoor staff, early childhood workers and service delivery staff.



**Figure 6-4** Representativeness by job role, Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire



## **Comparison of survey characteristics with LGA Census data**

For both councils, survey characteristics were also compared with Australian Census data for each LGA (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a, 2011b). As discussed further in Section 6.4, the purpose of this comparison was to understand the representativeness of councils workforces compared with diversity in the community. As shown in Table 6.1, at both councils, there were more female than male employees in the workplace in comparison to community demographics, although importantly, council figures did not take into account gender dynamics by role. In terms of Indigeneity, the proportion of Indigenous people employed at Stoneway City Council (three per cent) was more than the proportion of Indigenous people in the community (0.7 per cent). At Corrington Shire, the proportion of Aboriginal people employed at council (1 per cent) was much lower than the proportion of Aboriginal residents (3.4 per cent). These data indicate that Stoneway City Council had been more effective at employing Indigenous people. By contrast, low levels of employment of Aboriginal people at Corrington Shire, particularly given the large Aboriginal population in the community, are concerning.

In making comparisons between other ethnic/racial groups, Table 6.1 shows comparisons by most common countries of birth. As discussed below, while data on race/ethnicity was not available from the councils or in Census data, comparisons between the workplace surveys and Census data on most common countries of birth between could be made. As shown in Table 6.1, at Stoneway City Council, the most common country of birth was Australia (77 per cent of respondents) followed by England (three per cent). Alongside the Australian-born and those born in English-speaking countries (e.g. England, Ireland and New Zealand), there was a good representation of overseas-born employees in the workforce, particularly among people born in Europe (e.g. Italy, Macedonia and Greece) and South Asia (e.g. India). Vietnamese-born residents, who were among the most common country of birth in the community (1.7 per cent), were not well represented in council. At Corrington Shire, the large majority of respondents (90 per cent) were born in Australia, with those born in England (three per cent) making up the second largest group in the workforce. In comparison with community demographics, employees from other English speaking countries (e.g. New Zealand), alongside those born in South Asia (e.g. Sri Lanka and India) were also well represented in the council workforce.

**Table 6.1** Characteristics of workplace survey, compared with LGA Census (2011)

		<b>Stoneway City Council Workplace Survey (2010)</b> n=403	<b>LGA Census Data (2011)</b> n= 154,880	<b>Corrington Shire Workplace Survey (2010) n=366</b>	<b>LGA Census Data (2011)</b> n= 60,449
<b>Gender*</b>	Male	39%	49.6%	42%	49.4%
	Female	61%	50.4%	58%	50.6%
<b>Age</b>		Not available+	34 (median)	Not available+	34 (median)
<b>Race/ethnicity indicators*</b>	Indigenous	3%	0.7%	1%	3.4%
	Born overseas	23%	38.3%	10%	19.2%
	Most common countries of birth	Australia (77%) England (3%) Italy (2%) Macedonia (2%) Greece, India, Ireland, Malta, New Zealand, Sri Lanka (all 1%)	Australia (61.7%) Italy (4.0%) Macedonia (3.7%) India (3.4%) Greece (2.6%) Vietnam (1.7%)	Australia (90%) England (3%) New Zealand (2%) Sri Lanka (1%) India (1)%	Australia (80.8%) Italy (1.6%) England (1.4%) India (1.3%) New Zealand (1.0%) Afghanistan (0.9%)

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011a, 2011b)

\*ABS Census figures refer to all people counted, whereas respondents in the council surveys were more likely to be aged over 18 years old (i.e. adults)

+ Due to an error in survey administration, data on age was not collected in the survey.

However, Italian-born and Afghanistan-born residents, who were among the most common countries of birth in the community, were not well represented in council. On the whole, these data suggest that both councils, and particularly Corrington Shire, were not currently representative of the diverse communities they served. Moreover, at both councils there was also over-representation of people born in English-speaking countries in comparison to community demographics. This aligns with other research, which has found that immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds were under-represented in the public sector, in contrast to their non-English speaking counterpart (Bertone et al., 2005; Bertone et al., 2011). As discussed in Section 6.4 below and in Chapter 10, at the time of this research, this situation was at odds with council employee discourses surrounding goals of representative bureaucracy (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997).

On the other hand, it is important to note limitations of comparisons between the workplace surveys and Australian Census data (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a, 2011b). Although data on country of birth and other racial/ethnic attributes (e.g. language spoken at home) was collected in the Census and the workplace surveys, this is not an accurate indicator of race/ethnicity (Jupp, 1995), where for instance, both the Australian-born and the overseas-born come from a diverse range of backgrounds. By contrast, in other contexts such as the United States and the United Kingdom, data on race and ethnicity is collected (e.g. Office of Management and Budget, 1997). While this approach is not without critique (e.g. Gomez and Lopez, 2013; Saperstein, 2012), categories of race and ethnicity enable effective monitoring of racial inequalities. For instance, in health care contexts, data on race and ethnicity for patients can be used to examine health disparities and health care effectiveness, including access and quality of care (Kelaher, Parry, Day, Paradies, & Anderson, 2012; Wynia, Ivey, & Hasnain-Wynia, 2010). As discussed further in Chapter 10, such analyses ought to extend into the workforce as a site of significant inequality.

## **Results**

This section presents analysis of findings from the workplace surveys conducted at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Findings are presented according to the following themes: perceptions of organisational commitments to diversity and anti-racism; perceptions of organisational policy and practice; skills and capacities;

perceptions of workplace diversity; attitudes towards racism and diversity; and experiences of racism. Statistically significant findings are discussed to highlight variations between council sites.

### *Organisational commitments to diversity and anti-racism*

As shown in Table 6.2, a large majority of council employees who participated in the survey (herein called respondents) from Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (92 per cent and 85 per cent respectively) agreed<sup>64</sup> that their organisation was committed to providing a workplace environment that is welcoming, safe and inclusive for people from varied racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds (herein background). Differences between councils were statistically significant, indicating that more could be done at Corrington Shire to demonstrate council's commitments to diversity and anti-discrimination. As discussed in Chapters 7 and 8, organisational commitments can be demonstrated through a range of actions, including organisational values, policies, programs and cultures that make employees from diverse backgrounds feel welcome and included (Bowen, 2008; Hicks-Clarke & Iles, 2000) alongside 'harder' measures, such as strategies to increase workforce diversity and address racism (Noon, 2010; Wrench, 2005).

A large majority of respondents at Stoneway City Council (90 per cent) and Corrington Shire (86 per cent) also agreed that all employees, regardless of background, had equal access to training and development opportunities. However, at both councils, fewer respondents, although still a majority (81 per cent at Stoneway City Council and 82 per cent at Corrington Shire), felt that all employees, regardless of background, had equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. When the same question was asked in relation to chances of being promoted, the proportion of respondents who agreed with this statement decreased at both councils (73 per cent at Stoneway City Council and 79 per cent at Corrington Shire). These findings are consistent with other research, which has shown broad consensus on equality of opportunity but evidence of differential treatment among diverse groups, particularly in relation to upward mobility and higher paying jobs (Alcorso, 2003; Kalev, 2009; Loosemore et al., 2010). As

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<sup>64</sup> For this analysis, categories 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are combined into 'agree', while 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' are combined into 'disagree'.

discussed in Chapter 7, targeted recruitment strategies only extended to roles that worked directly with the community, rather than other ‘mainstream’ roles in council.

**Table 6.2** Perceptions of organisational commitments to diversity

		Workplace environment is welcoming, safe and inclusive <sup>65</sup>	All employees have equal access to training and development opportunities	All employees have equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes	All employees have the same chance of being promoted
Stoneway	Agree	92%	90%	81%	73%
City Council	Neither agree nor disagree	6%	7%	13%	18%
	Disagree	2%	3%	6%	9%
Corrington Shire	Agree	85%*	86%	82%	79%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11%	10%	12%	15%
	Disagree	4%	5%	6%	6%

Notes. Categories ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ are combined into ‘agree’, while ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’ are combined into ‘disagree’.

\*Statistically significant difference between councils 1 and 2 at  $p < 0.05$  level.

### *Organisational values, policy and practice*

As shown in Table 6.3, a large majority of respondents at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (93 per cent and 89 per cent respectively) agreed that organisations play an important role in setting non-discriminatory standards. However, nearly one third of respondents at both councils (32 per cent at Stoneway City Council and 31 per cent at Corrington Shire) felt that there were inadequate policies, practices and processes in place to address race-based discrimination. Moreover, 22 per cent of respondents at Stoneway City Council and one in five (20 per cent) of respondents at Corrington Shire believed there were no clear consequences for engaging in discriminatory behaviour. Importantly, these data indicate that council employees

<sup>65</sup> Questions have been modified for tables.

support organisations taking a leadership role in establishing non-discriminatory standards and norms. These findings are consistent with other studies that have shown the importance of social and cultural norms in anti-racism practice (Guerin, 2003; Paradies et al., 2009; Pedersen et al., 2011).

**Table 6.3** Perceptions of organisational values, policies and practices

		Organisations play an important role in setting non-discriminatory standards	There are inadequate policies in place to address race-based discrimination	There are no clear consequences for engaging in racially discriminatory behaviour
Stoneway City Council	Agree	93%	32%	22%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5%	25%	25%
	Disagree	3%	43%	53%
Corrington Shire	Agree	89%	32%	20%
	Neither agree nor disagree	10%	31%	23%
	Disagree	2%	38%	57%

Notes. Categories 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are combined into 'agree', while 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' are combined into 'disagree'.

As discussed in Chapter 8, ethnographic and interview data similarly supported the important role of social and cultural norms in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism. However, despite support for non-discriminatory standards, at both councils, there was concern about the adequacy of current policies and practices in addressing racism. This included a lack of clear consequences for engaging in discriminatory behaviour. As discussed in Chapter 9, ethnographic and interview data also revealed gaps in policy and practice, such as unconscious bias and passive resistance by managers in support of workforce diversity.

#### *Perceptions of workforce diversity, skills and competencies*

As shown in Table 6.4, a majority of respondents at Stoneway City Council (79 per cent) and Corrington Shire (77 per cent) believed that racial diversity was beneficial to an

organisation. A majority (74 per cent) of respondents at Stoneway City Council also preferred to work in a diverse organisation.

**Table 6.4** Perceptions of workforce diversity, skills and competencies

		Racial diversity is beneficial to an organisation	Prefer to work in a racially diverse organisation	Discomfort with manager from a different background	Skills and ability to address racial discrimination in my work role
Stoneway City Council	Agree	79%	74%	19%	75%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16%	21%	6%	18%
	Disagree	6%	4%	75%	7%
Corrington Shire	Agree	77%	65%*	17%	66%*
	Neither agree nor disagree	20%	31%	13%	27%
	Disagree		3%	71%	6%

Notes. Categories 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are combined into 'agree', while 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' are combined into 'disagree'.

\*Statistically significant difference between councils 1 and 2 at  $p < 0.05$  level.

By contrast, 65 per cent of respondents at Corrington Shire preferred working in a diverse organisation. Nearly one in five respondents at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (19 per cent and 17 per cent respectively) were uncomfortable with having a manager from a different racial, ethnic, cultural or religious background. Moreover, at Stoneway City Council, a majority (75 per cent) of respondents felt that they had the skills and ability to address racial discrimination and promote diversity in their work role. Respondents at Corrington Shire were less confident about their skills and capacities, where only 66 per cent of respondents felt confident about addressing racial discrimination and promoting diversity in their work role. These findings indicate important contextual variations between the sites. For instance, while respondents at both councils saw the benefits of workplace diversity, less preferred to work in a diverse organisation, particularly at Corrington Shire. Data also indicated some level of discomfort with having a manager from diverse backgrounds. Although not reported

here, I conducted further analysis for this question by racial/ethnic background and found no significant variations. Therefore, discomfort in relation to having a manager from a different background was an issue for members from both majority and minority group backgrounds.

### *Understandings of racism and attitudes towards diversity in Australia*

Along with internal workforce issues, I also analysed two questions on employee understandings of racism and attitudes towards diversity in Australia, themes have been examined in other studies (Challenging Racism Project, 2011; Dunn et al., 2004; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2007). As shown in Table 6.5, a majority of respondents (68 per cent) of respondents at Stoneway City Council agreed that racial discrimination is a problem in Australia. A smaller majority (59 per cent) of respondents at Corrington Shire agreed that racism is a problem in Australia. At Stoneway City Council, nearly one in five (19 per cent) of respondents agreed that ‘Australia is weakened by people from different racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds sticking to their old ways’. By contrast, nearly one in four (24 per cent) respondents supported this statement at Corrington Shire.

In comparison with other national survey research, where between 83 and 93 per cent of respondents agreed that racism is a problem in Australia (Challenging Racism Project, 2011; Dunn et al., 2004; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2007), fewer respondents at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (68 per cent and 59 per cent respectively) agreed that racism is a problem in Australia. These data indicate that while a majority of respondents at both councils acknowledge racism in Australia, there is also denial of racism. As discussed in Chapter 2, denial of racism is a key aspect of contemporary racism and occurs within public and political discourse in Australia (Dunn, Pelleri, and Maeder-Han, 2011; Nelson, 2013). As discussed further in Chapter 9, denial of racism has implications for the effectiveness of diversity and anti-racism interventions, and could leave to higher levels of resistance.

The second question examined attitudes towards diversity, asking whether ‘Australia is weakened by people from different racial backgrounds sticking to their old ways’. This question has been used in other survey research to measure support for assimilation versus cultural maintenance (Berry, 1984; Challenging Racism Project, 2011; Dunn et al.,



2004). At Stoneway City Council, nearly one in four (19 per cent) of respondents agreed with this statement, while at Corrington Shire, this figure increased to one in five (24 per cent) of respondents.

**Table 6.5** Attitudes towards racism and diversity

		Racial discrimination is a problem in Australia	Australia is weakened by people from different backgrounds sticking to their old ways
Stoneway City Council	Agree	68%	19%
	Neither agree nor disagree	17%	21%
	Disagree	15%	59%
Corrington Shire	Agree	59%*	24%
	Neither agree nor disagree	29%	31%
	Disagree	12%	44%

Notes. Categories 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are combined into 'agree', while 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' are combined into 'disagree'.

\*Statistically significant difference between councils 1 and 2 at  $p < 0.05$  level.

As shown in Table 6.6, these figures are lower than the range in the distribution of responses for the Challenging Racism national data set (2011) and state based data (Forrest & Dunn, 2007b), indicated that council employees were generally more tolerant (i.e. supportive of cultural maintenance) than the broader population, particularly at Stoneway City Council. As discussed in Section 6.4 below, variations in denial of racism and support for cultural maintenance could reflect differences in exposure to diversity in urban versus regional areas. Moreover, interview data also revealed mixed views in relation to support for cultural maintenance versus assimilation into dominant cultural norms.

**Table 6.6** Workplace surveys, compared with national and state attitudinal research

<b>Stoneway City Council</b> <i>Workplace Survey</i> 2010	<b>Corrington Shire</b> <i>Workplace Survey</i> 2011	<b>Victorian Health Promotion Foundation Survey</b> <i>Victorian Survey</i> 2006-07	<b>Challenging Racism</b> <i>Combined National Data Set 2001-2010</i>
68 per cent of respondents agreed that racial discrimination is a problem in Australia	59 per cent of respondents agreed that racial discrimination is a problem in Australia	Almost 85 per cent of respondents agreed that racial prejudice exists in Australia	83-93 per cent of respondents agreed that racial prejudice exists.
19 per cent of respondents felt that 'Australia is weakened by people from various racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds sticking to their old ways'	24 per cent of respondents felt that 'Australia is weakened by people from various racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds sticking to their old ways'	37 per cent of respondents felt that 'Australia is weakened by people of different ethnic origins sticking to their old ways'.	25-46 per cent of Australians agreed that 'Australia is weakened by ethnic groups sticking to their old ways'.

### *Experiences of racism*

As shown in Table 6.7, around one in ten respondents at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (10 per cent and eight per cent respectively) had witnessed situations where staff had been treated unfairly because of their race, ethnicity, culture or religion<sup>66</sup>. At both councils, over one in ten (12 per cent at Stoneway City Council and 12 per cent at Corrington Shire) had witnessed situations where clients had been treated unfairly due to their race, ethnicity, culture or religion. Nearly one in ten (eight per cent at Stoneway City Council and 10 per cent at Corrington Shire) respondents had observed policies or practices that excluded or negatively affected others based on race, ethnicity, culture or religion. When asked how they themselves were affected by policies

<sup>66</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, the categories 'very often' and 'often' and 'sometimes' were combined as a report of racism (other categories included in the survey included 'rarely' or 'never'. While 'rarely' could still be considered a report of racism, following further analysis it was decided that this category was considerably different to other categories and thus should not be grouped together with other reports of racism.

**Table 6.7** Experiences of racism in the workplace

	Background	I have witnessed unfair treatment staff*	I have witnessed unfair treatment clients	I have observed policies and practice exclude others	I have observed policies and practices that exclude me	My training, development, participation has been unfairly limited	I have felt left out avoided or excluded	I have been treated as less intelligent or inferior	I have been ignored, treated with suspicion or rudely
Stoneway City Council	Majority (n)	8% (24)	11% (33)	6% (19)	4% (11)	3% (8)	6% (17)	5% (16)	5% (15)
	Minority (n)	23%* (8)	17% (6)	17% (6)	14% (5)	14% (5)	11% (4)	9% (3)	9% (3)
	All responses	10%	12%	8%	5%	4%	6%	6%	5%
Corrington Shire	Majority (n)	6% (15)	13% (30)	11% (25)	4% (10)	3% (6)	3% (8)	3% (7)	3% (6)
	Minority (n)	14% (2)	7% (1)	7% (1)	7% (1)	7% (1)	7% (1)	7% (1)	0%
	All responses	8%	12%	10%	5%	4%	4%	4%	3%*

Notes: the categories 'very often', 'often' and 'sometimes' were combined as a report of racism.

+ Statistical differences in this table are in relation to background and not between Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire.

\*Statistically significant difference between majority and minority background at  $p < 0.05$  level.

and practices, this figure reduced to include five per cent of respondents at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. A small minority (four per cent of respondents at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire) agreed that their opportunities for training, development or participation in decision-making had been unfairly limited due to their background. The same proportion of respondents (four per cent at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire) reported feeling left out or avoided due to race, ethnicity, culture or religion, while an even smaller proportion (three per cent at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire) agreed that they had been ignored, treated with suspicion or rudely due to their background.

On the whole, while these data are lower than reports of racism in other surveys (outlined in Chapter 3), it is still concerning that in many instances, approximately one in ten respondents had experienced or witnessed in the workplace at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. There are a number of reasons why reports of racism could be low.

First, other surveys have looked at experiences of racism in workplace settings generally, where respondents are likely reflecting on their experiences within a number of workplaces. By contrast, the council workplace survey only considered reports of racism within one organisational context.

Second, as a largely 'white-collar' industry, local government might not be considered your 'average' workplace, where racism might be more likely to occur in other, more 'blue-collar' industries (see for instance Dunn, Loosemore, Phua and Ozguc (2011)). As discussed further below, this highlights important contextual differences in racism across varying workplace/industry settings.

Third, a number of studies indicate that minority group members who have historically experienced high levels of racism are likely to downplay or under-report experiences of racism, so as to avoid confronting a difficult or painful experience or potentially negative social repercussions from labelling experiences as racist (Biddle et al., 2013; Dunn & Nelson, 2011). Although relatively few studies have examined this phenomenon (Coleman, Darity, & Sharpe, 2008) with workplace settings, it is likely

that these factors could be more pronounced, where people may be uncomfortable about reporting experiences of racism due not only to social repercussions, but threats to employment status. A fourth factor could be lack of awareness or ambiguity about what constitutes racism (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2007), including subtle manifestations of racism (discussed in Chapter 4). Interestingly, respondents made more reports of racism in relation to others (i.e. against staff, clients etc.) rather than themselves, which supports a degree of cautiousness in reporting personal experiences of racism in workplace contexts.

Finally, low reports of racism could be due to the effects of workforce homogeneity, where there is less 'visibility' of diversity and thus less racism. On the other hand, variations in workforce heterogeneity between the two councils did not lead to significant differences in reports of racism. As has been discussed elsewhere (Greene, 2007; Paradies et al., 2009), strong non-discriminatory norms could lead to increased reporting of racism, where employees might feel more comfortable in reporting racism when they know that grievances will be dealt with sensitively and without threat to social or employment status. These issues will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

### *Experiences of racism by background*

Based on relatively low reports of experiences of racism at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, it was necessary to delve deeper into the survey findings and examine experiences of racism by background. As outlined in Chapter 3, research has consistently shown that people from minority group backgrounds experience more racism, and perceive racial equality differently (Allison & Hibbler, 2004; Creegan et al., 2003). In consultation with the evaluation team, I used two categories to categorise background. Participants were identified as majority group members if they identified as only Australian, New Zealander or British, or with a European ethnicity. All other participants (including Aboriginal respondents) were categorised as minority group members. At Stoneway City Council, majority group members comprised 90 per cent of the total sample (n=311), while minority group members made up 10 per cent of the sample (n=36). At Corrington Shire, majority group members comprised a slightly higher proportion (94 per cent, n=256) of the sample, while minority group members made up slightly less (six per cent, n=16) of

the sample, than at Stoneway City Council. The limitations of these categorisations are discussed further below.

As shown in Table 6.7, at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, a higher proportion of respondents from minority backgrounds (23 per cent and 14 per cent respectively) than those from majority backgrounds (eight per cent and six per cent respectively) had witnessed situations where staff had been treated unfairly because of their race, ethnicity, culture or religion. At Stoneway City Council, more respondents from minority backgrounds (17 per cent) than from majority backgrounds (12 per cent) had witnessed unfair treatment of clients. However, at Corrington Shire this was reversed, where more respondents from majority backgrounds (13 per cent) than from minority backgrounds (7 per cent) had witnessed unfair treatment of clients. Similarly, at Stoneway City Council, more respondents from minority backgrounds (17 per cent) than from majority backgrounds (eight per cent) had observed policies or practices that excluded or negatively affected others. Again, this was reversed at Corrington Shire, where slightly more respondents from majority backgrounds (10 per cent) than from minority backgrounds (seven per cent) had observed policies or practices that excluded or negatively affected others.

At both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, more respondents from minority backgrounds (14 per cent and four per cent respectively) than from majority backgrounds (eight per cent and six per cent respectively) had observed policies or practices that excluded or negatively affected themselves. Similarly, at both councils, more respondents from minority backgrounds (14 per cent at Stoneway City Council and seven per cent at Corrington Shire) than majority backgrounds (three per cent at Stoneway City Council and three per cent at Corrington Shire) agreed that their opportunities for training, development or participation in decision-making had been unfairly limited due to background. At both councils, more respondents from minority backgrounds versus majority backgrounds reported: being feeling left out, avoided or excluded (11 per cent per cent versus six per cent at Stoneway City Council and seven per cent versus three per cent at Corrington Shire); being treated as less intelligent or inferior (9 per cent per cent versus five per cent at Stoneway City Council and seven per cent versus three per cent at Corrington Shire); and, being ignored, treated with suspicion or rudely due to background (nine per cent versus five

per cent at Stoneway City Council and zero per cent versus three per cent at Corrington Shire).

On the whole, people from minority group backgrounds made more reports of racism (both among others and themselves). The results also showed indicated that some majority group members also made reports of witnessing racism, thus demonstrating racial literacy among some members of this group (Warren & Sue, 2011). Differences between majority and minority group perspectives across councils were statistically significant in two cases. First, more respondents from minority backgrounds had witnessed unfair treatment of staff at Stoneway City Council than at Corrington Shire, thus demonstrating potentially higher levels of racial literacy at Stoneway City Council. At Corrington Shire, it was also significant that no members from a minority background reported being ignored, treated with suspicion or rudely while some members of the majority group did. This could be due to a phenomenon known as reverse racism, where majority group members feel that they are being discriminated against, particularly in relation to redistributive policies and programs, such as affirmative action (Norton, Sommer, Apfelbaum, Pura, & Ariely, 2006).

In understanding these findings, it is important to point out a number of limitations. First, the small number of participants in each category, particularly within the minority group, could be a reason for a lack of statistically significant findings. Another limitation includes the potentially problematic majority/minority group categorisation. For the survey, respondents were asked to self-identify by racial, ethnic or cultural background and encouraged to provide more than one response. However, self-reported data posed some challenges for data analysis. For example, when discussing how to code and categorise self-reported identity, the evaluation team faced particular challenges in categorising respondents who identified themselves only as 'Australian'. As an evaluation team member pointed out, 'we cannot assume that 'Australian' means 'Anglo-Australian' (fieldnotes 9/3/11). This raises an important issue, where despite a desire for 'neat and tidy' ethnic categories, defining 'Australian' as 'Anglo-Australian' would reinforce dominant forms of whiteness implicit in these categories. Given these issues, and due to the high

variation of responses in self-reports of background<sup>67</sup>, it was difficult to create adequate categories from which analysis could be undertaken.

Another limitation is that who identified as ‘European’ (with responses again extremely varied, i.e. ranging from Italian, Greek, Albania etc.) were included in the ‘majority’ group<sup>68</sup>. This raises an interesting question about the extent to which those from a non-Anglo European background are included in dominant forms of whiteness, including within workplace settings. As some scholars have pointed out, the boundaries of whiteness are continually expanding<sup>69</sup> (Colic-Peisker, 2011; Warren & Winndance-Twine, 1997). For example, in the Australian context, Colic-Peisker (2011, p. 562) has proposed that significant changes in the socio-economic position of ‘ethnic’ Australians, including the rise of a ‘multicultural middle-class’, has fundamentally shifted the power and resource bases traditionally held by Anglo-Australians. This means, importantly, that many Anglo-Australians in lower socio-economic also experience considerable disadvantage and uncertainty in the labour market. As discussed further in Chapter 10, these findings need to be taken into account when dealing with resistance towards workforce diversity and anti-racism policies.

#### **6.4 The Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in the Workplace**

This section draws on interviews undertaken with council employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire to examine the benefits and challenges of diversity in the workplace. Specifically, I integrate literature outlined in Chapter 4 to examine the extent to which current business case arguments for diversity are supported within local government contexts in Australia. This section also links survey data analysed in Section 6.3 above with interviews findings.

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<sup>67</sup> For example, one respondent self-identified as a ‘real Aussie LOL’, which speaks directly to the issues I have raised above in relation to both the difficulties of racial/ethnic categorisation and the potential for dominant forms of whiteness and privilege to operate in categorising self-identified categories of ‘Australian’ as ‘Anglo-Australian’.

<sup>68</sup> Given these issues, I conducted a sensitivity analysis by also coding participants who spoke another language at home or were born in a country other than Australia in a separate category to those who still identified as ‘white’ (i.e. with Anglo-Celtic backgrounds), an approach that is commonly used in analyses of Australian Census data. However, there were still no significant differences in reports of racism when coded this way. As previously noted above, this could also be due to the small participant numbers within the group who spoke another language at home or were born in a country other than Australia.

<sup>69</sup> Although others, such as Galster (2012), have recently argued that European immigrants (e.g. Germans) living in Detroit started redefining themselves as white in the early twentieth century.



## **Enhanced responsiveness and effectiveness**

Consistent with evidence regarding the changing role of local government discussed in Chapter 3, increasing diversity in the community was seen as a key-driving factor for increased engagement with workforce diversity. In particular, the notion that local councils should be more reflective of diversity in the community was a view shared by many. For instance, Paul, said:

I think it's a realisation that local government, for its survival, needs to become more reflective of its community. So the whole notion of community engagement is now gathering so much more momentum there's no doubt in my mind that it's important for local government to be effective, because local government, from my point of view, it's where democracy hits the streets, and I think that the future for democracy is in engaging and involving the community. (Senior manager, 5 years at Council)

Paul conceived that local government needed to be more reflective of diversity in the community and linked this to the 'survival' of local government. This supports literature outlined in Chapter 3, where it has been suggested that for local government to remain effective, it must be responsive to the changing population and complex needs of local communities (Mansouri & Strong, 2007). Paul also linked the effectiveness with the enhanced engagement with the community and democratic processes. This aligns with theories of representative bureaucracy, where there is evidence that the presence of people from minority group backgrounds has been linked to more favourable outcomes for minority groups (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997). Other employees also linked workforce diversity to enhanced effectiveness. For example, Andrew said:

I think we'll get better outcomes. When I say better outcomes I mean, you know, the full range of outcomes. So I'm thinking, yeah we'll get better levels of service, better responses to people, quicker, faster, more comprehensive sort of outcomes rather than just the, I'm not sure of the word, but yeah, rather than sort of shallow responses. I think we'll get some deeper sort of responses. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Andrew equated workforce diversity with effectiveness, including improved service delivery and responsiveness to diverse communities. This included increased capacity

in delivering services ('quicker, faster') as well as being able to work more comprehensively in responding to community issues and concerns. Although the link between workforce diversity and organisational performance is complex and contested (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008; Jackson et al., 2003; Kochan et al., 2003), both Andrew and Paul supported arguments that increasing diversity could enhance organisational effectiveness, thus constituting a key business case argument for local government.

On the other hand, and despite a desire for local councils to be more responsive to diverse communities through increasing workforce diversity, it appeared that this was not currently the case. For instance, Paul and another council employee, Andrea said:

Paul: What I [have] found in local government is that, across all the local governments that I've worked in, they don't really reflect, and maybe this is the same for most government bureaucracies, is that I don't know that we really reflect the communities that we serve. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Andrea: I think that the fact that we haven't employed many people from different backgrounds is really bizarre given that the theory is we should be replicating the demographics of our community. I just don't understand why we haven't for whatever reason. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Paul and Andrea's experience of working in a number of councils across Victoria was that local government was not currently representative of diversity in the community. These views align with the survey findings discussed in Section 6.3 above, particularly for Corrington Shire. Similarly, other research has shown relatively low levels of cultural diversity within local government and other public sector agencies (Bertone et al., 2011) as well as a systematic response to responding to diversity within local government in Australia (Pagonis, 2013; Thompson & Dunn, 2002). On the whole, despite increasing diversity in the community being a key imperative for workforce diversity within council employee discourses, this commitment was not currently reflected in practice. These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter.

### **Economic *and* social benefits**

Council employees also spoke about differences between the business sector and local government. A number of participants felt that local government had more of a

mandate in working with diverse communities, in contrast to the business sector. On the other hand, traditional business case arguments for supporting diversity also had resonance. As Mark and Kon said:

Mark: I think this would be a different conversation in a private enterprise because there'd be more questions about why are we doing this than in local government because I think immediately in local government you think well we are for the community in everything we do and this is just part of that remit. (HR Advisor, 6 months at council)

Kon: People argue that companies should do all this because it achieves a bottom line outcome, not just do it because you know it looks right and it sounds right. And again, the leverage off that is that it's good for business, it increases productivity, it reduces absenteeism, it increases your available labour pool. (Senior manager, 13 years at council)

Mark assumed there would be differences in the business case model between private enterprise and local government. Implicit in his statement was the suggestion that economic imperatives would be less of a driving force for local government, who have more of a mandate to work with the community 'in everything we do'. On the one hand, Kon saw a place for economic arguments in driving local government diversity agendas. In his experience, diversity led to increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and an increased labour pool. His rationale fits consistently with traditional business case models for diversity outlined in Chapter 4. On the other hand, Kon also spoke about the *social* benefits of diversity:

You know the social benefit too I mean we're in local government, we're here to service the community and we're a major part of the solution. You know you look after an individual or you help them get on track, the flow through to the community must be massive. I don't know if anyone's ever done the numbers but instead of having a family on welfare you'll have a breadwinner and you know it all flows through. So instead of being a social cost they're a social benefit. (Senior manager, 13 years at council)

Kon conceived that creating employment opportunities for diverse groups within the area would have a flow on effect in the community. He saw this as an opportunity for

local government to be 'part of the solution' in addressing socio-economic disadvantage and inequality. Importantly, Kon's argument supports a public sector model for diversity that includes both economic and moral arguments (Noon, 2007). As discussed in Chapter 7, the inclusion of moral arguments, alongside economic justifications, confirms a longer-term view in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism.

### **Debate, creativity and innovation**

Participants also spoke about the potential for diversity to encourage debate and creativity through the exchange of different skills and ideas. For example, Liz said:

I think that's really important, to actually embrace other ways of seeing the world, and that there's a lot of benefit to be had from that and there's a lot of joy to be had from that exchange, rather than seeing it as a threat. To actually embrace it is just fantastic, because we don't want to have a monoculture, we don't want to have a McDonalds kind of world.

If there's only one set of ideas on the table then nothing's going to challenge that, and if you have a diversity of people and a diversity of ideas and you have different skill sets that come in, and if you can find ways to embrace and work with all of that, then it can only be a benefit. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Similarly to other studies (Bassett-Jones, 2005; Berman et al., 2008; Cox & Blake, 1991), Liz felt that workforce diversity led to increased debate and dialogue, thereby fostering creativity and the germination of new ideas. Rather than being viewed as a threat (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999), diversity was presented as an opportunity to challenge narrow thinking and bring new ideas to the table. As discussed further below, this position supports the case for increasing workforce diversity in local government.

### **Social cohesion and organisational pride**

Participants also discussed the value of diversity in providing opportunities for connection and social cohesion. For example, Andrea said:

So just that pride and ability to retain a workforce or attract a workforce in the first place - social bonding for want of a better word. It is a really important part of a good, healthy workplace. It sort of creates a natural talking point for people and a way to come together. What else? I like to live through other people's holidays, so you know. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Andrea considered that the ability to attract and retain a diverse workforce contributed to social bonding. Diversity promoted connectedness and cohesiveness because it provided a 'natural talking point' and 'a way to come together', which could lead to other outcomes, such as a 'good, healthy workplace'. Andrea also positioned diversity as something that could be celebrated and lived through by others' experiences, such as holidays.

As discussed in Chapter 2, scholars have been critical of too much emphasis on 'celebrating' diversity, which can lead to the valorisation of cultural difference and neglect underlying issues of structural inequality and racism (Ahmed, 2006; Castles et al., 1988). For instance, Ahmed (2006, p. 121) has brought a critical perspective to the role of diversity in enabling organisational pride, where she suggests that the marketing appeal of diversity allow organisations to present themselves as 'happy' places where difference is celebrated. In this act of positive rebranding, diversity becomes a form of 'organizational pride' that can conceal racism and other inequalities (Ahmed, 2006, p. 121). As discussed in Chapter 2, others have provided counter critiques to such positions, arguing that opportunities for intercultural contact through diversity related events play an important role in supporting connection and inclusion (T. A. Richardson, 2010). As discussed further in Chapters 7 and 9, Andrea's comments highlight the important role of workplaces as sites for positive intercultural contact.

### **Team dynamics and conflict**

Among some council employees, there was ambiguity the benefits of workplace diversity. For example, Josh was aware of academic literature that cited increased creativity and innovation, however he was unclear about the extent to which such effects could be attributed to workforce diversity or other team dynamics. He said:

I do work in quite a diverse team. Sometimes I think it's hard to know if the innovation is, you know when it talks about increased creativity, innovation, all of that kind of stuff. Sometimes I suppose it is quite hard to pinpoint that because we are - the people who make up our team are from a variety of different backgrounds. (Diversity practitioner, 2 years at council)

Josh's comments spoke to problems in differentiating between diversity effects and general team dynamics. As discussed in Chapter 4, the impact of diversity on team development, performance and identity within workplace contexts has been a focus of increasing academic research (Ely et al., 2012; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). As the literature suggests, there is ambiguity around the benefits of diverse teams, where such teams 'can outperform homogeneous ones by bringing a broader array of knowledge and experience to the work at hand' at the same that they can underperform through conflict and communication issues (Ely et al., 2012, p. 342). Studies have highlighted the important role of context in fostering positive team relations that enhance productivity and performance (Ely & Thomas, 2001). As discussed further below, conflict due to cultural difference and/or racism can have a negative impact on team dynamics.

Other participants talked about complexities and conflict in managing diverse teams, which can be linked to survey findings discussed in Section 6.3, where nearly one in five respondents at both councils felt uncomfortable in working with a manager from a diverse background. A small minority of employees also did not prefer to work in a diverse workplace. For instance, Andrea and Craig said:

Andrea: I think essentially it's that diversity in the workplace is a good thing. It's got a lot of benefits. But to really embrace those benefits there's some challenges that come with it and it's challenges of attitude from other staff, but it also challenges within cultural groups that [you] either need some flexibility to deal with or some really honest upfront conversations amongst team members. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Craig: Their work ethic is a key issue, so they've got to understand that, that Australians don't like bludgers. So if they sit around and do nothing and they intend to be seen that way because of the fact that they don't talk much - people say, 'oh they show no initiative'...heck, I'm going to racially discriminate here, right, but there are

people who came from different backgrounds that don't have strong work ethics, and therefore when they get into a workforce like this they will struggle. They've got to develop and be taught that work ethic. (Senior manager, 10 years at council)

Andrea recognised the benefits of diversity in the workplace ('essentially...it's a good thing') but also acknowledged that harnessing these benefits required addressing challenges in working in diverse teams. This included managing attitudes of staff as well as addressing tensions and conflicts about cultural difference. Her approach to managing these tensions included being flexible and having 'really honest upfront conversations'. Other studies have emphasised the importance of addressing prejudiced attitudes and conflict through dialogue and establishing accountability around discriminatory behaviours (Ely et al., 2012; Greene, 2007). Similarly, Ely and Thomas (2001) have emphasised the importance of good managerial skills and a willingness to engage in more difficult discussions as essential to integrating diversity within teams.

Craig also spoke about staff attitudes as a potential source of conflict. Craig suggested that differences in work ethic could be a source of conflict within teams, saying that there are people from different backgrounds who did not have a strong work ethic would 'struggle' within workplace such as local government. On the one hand, Craig's views might be considered problematic, in that they could reinforce stereotypes about minority groups in relation to work ethics. As discussed in Chapter 4, this in turn could lead to stereotype threat (Roberson & Kulick, 2007; Steele et al., 2002). Also implicit in Craig's comments was the suggestion that there is no such variation in work ethic among majority group members (i.e. Anglo-Australians) ('Australians don't like bludgers'). On the other hand, Craig spoke to the importance of 'work ethic' within Australian workplace contexts. While the notion of work ethic has origins in western, Protestant traditions (Hopkins, 1997; Weber, 1958), it also has a long trajectory in many non-western countries as well (Kumar & Rose, 2010; M. J. Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002; Shimko, 1992). Shimko (1992) found that while there are similarities between work ethics among different groups, there might also be differences.

Craig's comment about differences in work ethic among cultural groups raises a question about the extent to which this is in fact a racist comment. Even though he

sees it as such, and declares and warns of it before speaking ('heck, I'm going to racially discriminate here'), it may just as easily be an honest observation of perceived cultural difference. For example, if a 'protestant work ethic' is understood as a specific western cultural construct rather than a 'lack' and 'failing' among anyone who doesn't have it, then being 'taught that work ethic' (i.e. such as having 'initiative' etc.) could be considered, for example, the same as learning English or how to navigate the paperwork inherent to government bureaucracies. Seen in this light, one must be careful not to unreflexively label the recognition of cultural difference/alterity as racism. As discussed further in Chapter 9, Craig provides important insight into some of the tensions and complexities inherent in diversity and anti-racism practice. While his views may be considered 'politically incorrect'<sup>70</sup>, his willingness to talk openly and honestly about the more challenging aspects of workforce diversity is important. In particular, acknowledgement of challenges means that managers can be at the forefront of addressing potential sources of conflict among staff, such as perceived differences in work ethic.

### **Racism and prejudiced attitudes**

In general, council employees expressed concern about racism and prejudiced attitudes in the workplace. For example, Sonia gave an example of racist behaviour within council:

I've seen racist behaviour through [a council department]. There's a guy who I think is a Muslim...and I don't think his English skills are particularly that good, but he's a [council] officer, and one of the [other] officers was invited to his house and he was telling us about how he was in that space and the women were here and the men were there, and he was going on and on and on about how that was a bad thing and he was giving his opinion to them, and we were like 'you've been invited to someone's house and you have the audacity to sit there and make judgements and tell your opinions to this person?' (Diversity practitioner, 7 years at council)

Sonia expressed her anger at her colleague's behaviour towards another council employee. She was concerned not only about the nature of the behaviour but the fact

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<sup>70</sup> See also Kowal and Paradies (2005, p. 1351) who argue that political-incorrecness is often perceived as 'a statement which would be seen by the mainstream left/progressives/liberals as racist'.



that it had occurred in such an intimate setting as an employee's home. A. Wise (2005, p. 172) has considered how diversity and cultural interconnection occurs in 'real, lived environments, not simply in abstract multicultural policy'. In her ethnographic study, she observed how 'ethnically different' residents corporeally interacted with each other 'as neighbours, shoppers, workers; rubbing up against one another in a myriad of quotidian situations' (A. Wise, 2005, p. 172, original emphasis). She found that 'certain forms of manners, recognition, gratitude and hospitality' were essential conditions for more hopeful and positive encounters (A. Wise, 2005, p. 182).

In Sonia's narrative, interactions between her co-workers similarly took on a corporeal form that extended beyond the workplace. It seemed that the potential for a positive intercultural interaction was lost through misunderstanding and potentially racist behaviour by her colleague. Sonia's attempt to pull her colleague up on his behaviour could be described as a form of bystander anti-racism, which is defined as a form of action in which an individual who is present or witnesses racism acts to directly confront the situation (Nelson, Dunn, & Paradies, 2011). Sonia's decision to confront her employee could also have changed the possibilities for a more positive and respectful intercultural encounter in future. In another part of the interview, Sonia spoke about her experience as a woman, where she felt that she had not had the same opportunities when returning to work after having a baby. She felt that discrimination on the basis of gender was more of an issue than racism in council, saying that many of the organisational structures were 'run by males':

Like I really have this thing about gender, in that I think [this council] has an issue with gender more than they have an issue with cultural diversity and racism, although they could probably both exist on the same plane. It's kind of old fashioned or something.  
(Diversity practitioner, 7 years at council)

Sonia raised an important point about the potential for racism and gender discrimination to be operating simultaneously. As discussed in Chapter 2, this highlights the intersecting nature of discrimination. There is a rich body of literature on the intersecting role of race and gender in the workplace (Cox et al., 1991; Herring, 2009; Kalev, 2009; Kochan et al., 2003; Metz & Kulik, 2008). In their study of organisational cultural change within the Victorian Police Force, Metz and Kulik

(2008, p. 370) found that swift and systemic culture change, including the appointment of a female Chief Commissioner, was needed to dislodge entrenched sexism and racism in 'male hegemonic organizations' such as the police force. Sonia's comment about a lack of progress in relation to workforce diversity (i.e. a tendency to be 'old-fashioned') speaks similarly to how different forms of discrimination, such as sexism and racism, as well as privilege, manifest within public sector organisations, many of which have similar 'male hegemonic' cultures and hierarchical power structures. In Chapter 7, I further discuss the role of organisational culture and social norms in both supporting and inhibiting change.

Racism and lack of awareness also manifested in council employee interactions with the community, particularly in service delivery. This resonated with council workplace findings above, where nearly one in ten respondents at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire reported witnessing situations where customers or clients had been treated unfairly due to their background. For example, Andrea and Victoria both said:

Andrea: Attitudinally and behaviourally there's that really strong mentality of not being as supportive in terms of helping people to access services. It's almost that awareness of how difficult it is to access a service if you don't speak a language or if it's entirely foreign to you altogether. Or [the] last time you were in a government building you were taken away and never saw your family again; like all that sort of stuff, we just haven't got that awareness [at this council] as a general rule, whereas [at another council] we definitely did, and people who could tell those stories first hand as well. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Victoria: Especially in projects like this, you are always on the front of any community difficulties. You will hear comments that gee they were very hurtful, they will come to me and say why did this happen? (Diversity practitioner, 4 years at council)

Andrea felt that some council employees lacked awareness about the difficulties diverse communities faced in accessing council services. She contrasted her experience of working in another council, where there was greater awareness of the needs of diverse communities. As discussed below, she linked this to a lack of exposure to diversity, where it helped to have employees in the organisation who

could ‘tell those stories first hand’. Victoria, who worked at the forefront of ‘community difficulties’, also spoke about the impact of negative interactions between council staff and the community. Both employees indicated that past and present interactions with government agencies can and did create fear and distrust amongst members of diverse groups. In turn, this had the potential to influence the effective provision of services and outreach to diverse constituents, as a central component of more responsive and representative local government.

### **The accommodation of cultural difference**

Interlinked with evidence of racism and prejudiced attitudes within council were discussions about the accommodation of cultural difference. For instance, Frank expressed concerns about requests for women to have their own swimming areas within council-run pools to accommodate religious and cultural beliefs and practices.

The part that I personally don't understand is that if I go overseas to a country like Libya I have to adapt to their ways. Here [with] people coming to Australia yes we expect them to become Australian citizens and be good Australians but we make exceptions for them or for their particular culture and in a place like the Council there are requests for - not necessarily in this council - but swimming, you know there might be closed off swimming sessions for a particular cultural group of women, or we might have to spend a certain amount of money to adapt, I think that causes angst to people. But that's just me talking, it's I suppose not angst but it frustrates me a little bit in terms of how, there are adaptations, people come to this country I suppose I am showing my bias a little bit there, but sometimes it doesn't make sense to me. (HR Manager, 7 years at council)

In the context of survey findings discussed in Section 6.3 above, where a large minority of employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (19 per cent and 24 per cent respectively) agreed that ‘Australia is weakened by people from different backgrounds sticking to their old ways’, Frank’s position could be considered assimilationist. Frank proposed that new immigrants to Australia should integrate into Australian society in favour of maintaining their own cultural and religious practices. He justified this by saying that on visiting or moving to another country overseas, he would have to adapt to that cultural context, which qualifies his view that people coming to Australia should also ‘fit in’. While Frank’s view is largely

supported by liberal multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995), in that that some adaption is necessary in moving to another country and culture, it neglects the privileges of whiteness (Clark, 2001). Frank's statement also carries an expectation that people who come to Australia and want to become citizens should become 'good Australians'. As other scholars have found (Dunn, 2003; Lefebvre, 1996), this narrows the scope of Australia citizenship as being largely dependent on Anglo-Australian values. Specifically, Frank's example regarding the use of council swimming pools as a shared public space, worked to privilege the activities of dominant cultural groups. As discussed further in Chapter 7, Frank's comments reflect broader tensions regarding the accommodation of new forms of cultural and religious diversity in western societies, where contestations over space also occurred in micro-organisational contexts.

Frank also openly admitted that his views could be biased. This acknowledgement takes time, however, in that he initially suggested this was something that others may feel 'angst' towards before conceding that it also frustrated and perplexed him ('sometimes it doesn't make sense to me'). Further, while Frank was able to take responsibility for his own opinions, he also deflected his discussion of council swimming pools, by suggesting it was not happening 'in this council'. Nelson (2013, p. 93) has argued positioning racism as something that does not happen 'around here' is a form of spatial deflection that works to deny racism. As discussed in Section 6.3 above, denial was also operating in the council surveys, where the number of respondents who agreed that racism is a problem in Australia (68 per cent at Stoneway City Council and 59 per cent at Corrington Shire) was much lower than national averages, where between 83-93 per cent of respondents agreed that racism was a problem (Challenging Racism Project, 2011).

John showed some support for cultural maintenance but was concerned about issues arising through the resettlement process, saying that:

I don't have a problem with people, you know it sounds awful and bigoted of me but I'll say it, is that when all of our new people come here to establish a new way of life away from the terror which they've probably left, as long as they leave all of their crap behind and their heritage, and recognising their heritage and their culture and what is important to them. I think that's part of what makes our collage so interesting, but you

want the good stuff but not the bad stuff so you don't want all of that terrible stuff that goes on and that I think that is a real dilemma for us as a community. (Senior Manager, 5 years at council)

Like Frank, John recognised his views may be biased. However, he appeared more concerned with how his views may be perceived, going to greater lengths to qualify them ('this sounds awful and bigoted of me but I'll say it'). In discourse analyses, this phenomenon has been widely recognised as a form of racist talk, where qualifying statements are used to provide justification for holding prejudiced attitudes. For example, Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) have argued that expressions such as 'I'm not racist, but...' are commonly used to avoid being seen as racist, though are commonly followed by negative statements or stereotypes about minority groups. Van Dijk (1984) describes these discursive practices as strategies to make negative evaluations more credible.

John's support for the maintenance of cultural heritage was also conditional, in that he wanted new migrants to leave any 'problems' they may have behind when they came to live in Australia ('you want the good stuff not the bad stuff'). In other words, he was supportive of the 'benefits' of diversity but unwilling to accept 'negative' effects that such diversity may bring. In taking this view, and like Frank, John limits his notion of citizenship as something that is pre-defined ('I think that is a real dilemma for us as a community'). In doing this, he also positions Australia as a place that is basically 'good' to begin with, free of any of the troubles or complications that diverse 'newcomers' may bring. This in turn supports the notion of an imagined, cohesive nation (B. Anderson, 1983), where these more 'troubling' aspects of diversity are perceived as a threat to the cohesiveness and security of the nation. John's attitude and anticipation of 'trouble' also places a heavy burden on new migrants to not be 'troublemakers' where any sign of trouble would likely confirm pre-existing stereotypes and false beliefs about refugees and asylum seekers (Sidanius et al., 2001).

On the other hand, John is less concerned about accommodating cultural difference (as with Frank). Rather, he is worried about the effects of trauma and disadvantage on refugee communities, as a consequence of war, persecution and displacement, effects that have been well documented (K. E. Miller & Rasco, 2004; Schweitzer et

al., 2006; Steel, Silove, Phan, & Bauman, 2002). Nonetheless, it is clear that local government can play an important role in fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion and establishing positive settlement outcomes (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Pagonis, 2013), including in the area of employment.

### **Regional variation in attitudes**

As with survey data, interviews also revealed regional variations in relation to prejudiced attitudes. For example, Jane made an important observation about differences in attitudes in rural communities as opposed to metropolitan areas.

Because if we are talking about people from small community towns that have limited exposure to diversity... I think that's going to take a long time. Even in the...sense that if they do have someone in their community, they have an Aboriginal person in their community and they play football and they're a football star and they love them, but then again other Aboriginal people, 'oh well, he's different'. Well, he's not really, do you know what I mean? (Diversity practitioner, 4 years at council)

Speaking about community attitudes more generally, rather than attitudes within council, Jane conceded that changing attitudes in rural areas would take longer, where people were generally less tolerant towards diversity. This observation resonated with the survey findings, where significantly fewer employees at Corrington Shire (65 per cent) than at Stoneway City Council (74 per cent) preferred to work in a diverse organisation. Spatial variation in attitudes towards diversity is supported by other research (Dunn & McDonald, 2001; Forrest & Dunn, 2007b). For example, a study conducted in Victoria found that, on the whole, Victorians from rural areas were generally less tolerant than people living in metropolitan Melbourne (Forrest & Dunn, 2007b). Jane linked intolerance and slower progress in shifting attitudes to limited exposure to diversity. Some studies support the role of exposure in fostering more positive intercultural relationships, where living in close proximity to minority groups can result in less bias and more positive attitudes through greater opportunities for intergroup contact (Wickes, Zahnow, White, & Mazerolle, 2014). Similarly, Gilliam et al. (2002) found that increased exposure to diversity led to more positive attitudes towards out-group members, because in-group members were able to base their opinions on first hand experience rather than what they had heard in the media.

Evidence on the role of exposure to diversity resonates somewhat with Jane's comments about positive attitudes towards an Aboriginal footballer. However, it does not explain the more troubling aspects of Jane's comments, where the community's acceptance of one minority group member (i.e. a football star), does not change perceptions and discriminatory attitudes more generally. Stolle, Soroka and Johnston (2008) found that issues such as trust and connection are strongly mediated by actual contact, such as the extent to which in-group and out-group members actually interact and talk with each other, rather than exposure *per se*.

As shown in Chapter 3, Aboriginal people in Australia continue to experience high levels of racism, resulting in strained relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Wickes et al., 2014). These relationships are marred by the ongoing impacts of colonisation, different cultural traditions and relationships to land (Kowal, 2015; Land, 2012; Muir, 1998). Wickes et al. (2014) have proposed that the 'diversity-distrust association' is likely to be enhanced when competition for resources is scarcer or when cultural values and norms are very different (Lancee & Dronkers, 2011). Therefore, in regional areas, where there is more contention over resources, including land, and access to socio-economic opportunities, including employment, these effects could be enhanced. Given the region does have a high population of Aboriginal people, lack of exposure cannot explain the persistence of prejudiced attitudes. Rather, as Stolle et al. (2008) have suggested, limited opportunities for positive intergroup could contribute to the persistence of prejudice and strained in-group out-group relations. As discussed below, this provides a strong case for increasing opportunities for positive intergroup contact, including in the workplace (Paradies et al., 2009).

On the whole, this section has demonstrated a number of benefits of diversity in the workplace, alongside some challenges. Council employees recognised that increasing diversity in the community was a key-driving factor for increasing the diversity composition of council workplaces. They also saw that local government had an increasing role and responsibility for engaging with the local community (Thompson & Dunn, 2002). In the context of these issues, it was conceived that workforce diversity could lead to enhanced organisational effectiveness and service delivery. Nonetheless, despite a desire for increased workforce diversity, council employees

pointed out that many local council workforces did not currently reflect diversity within the community. Council employees also discussed the economic and organisational benefits of diversity and saw that increased workforce diversity would lead to increased productivity, innovation, debate and creativity, alongside expanded labour markets and reduced absenteeism. Importantly, together with articulated business benefits, council employees also spoke about the social benefits of diversity, where for instance, local councils could play a role in modelling practices to improve socio-economic disadvantage. Others described the social benefits of diversity as a sense of social cohesion and organisational pride, where diversity provided an opportunity for people to come together and create social bonds.

In the context of team dynamics, there was ambiguity about the benefits of diverse teams, in that it was difficult to measure the extent to which diversity was a contributing factor to improved or weakened performance. Important here is the role of context (Ely & Thomas, 2001), where council employees recognised the importance of managing racial tension and conflict in order to enhance team dynamics. For example, differences in work ethic were raised as a source of potential conflict. Although this view was problematic in that it positioned positive work ethic as an 'Australian' (i.e. western) value, it also highlighted differences in work ethic that might need to be accommodated in the workplace.

Interview data also revealed evidence of racism and prejudiced attitudes, where council employees had witnessed racism between co-workers and were concerned about its impact on employees. However, employees who had witnessed racism also spoke up about it, where their actions had the potential to challenge racism and support more positive forms of inter-cultural interaction. Racism also intersected with gender, in a sense that male hegemonic cultures and gender discrimination were also issues in the workplace. There was also concern about the extent to which new forms of diversity should be accommodated in the community. These views were commonly based on narrow conceptions of national identity, such as the privileging of dominant cultural norms when faced with new forms of cultural and religious diversity. Finally, interviews revealed perceptions of regional variation in relation to acceptance of diversity and prejudiced attitudes. For example, less tolerance of



diversity in rural areas as compared to metropolitan areas was associated with a lack of exposure to diversity.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire as the case study sites for this research study. This chapter has also outlined findings of workplace surveys conducted with council employees as part of the evaluation for *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*, analysis key themes such as perceptions of the organisational environment in the context of diversity and anti-discrimination policies and practices, experiences of racism and attitudes towards diversity. Interview data has also been presented on attitudes towards diversity and experiences of racism.

Comparison of survey diversity characteristics with Australian Census data by LGA (Australia Bureau of Statistics, 2011a, 2011b) revealed a mixed picture of the representativeness of the council workforces, when compared with community demographics. For example, at Stoneway City Council, Indigenous people were well represented in the workplace. By contrast, low levels of employment of Aboriginal people at Corrington Shire, particularly given the large Aboriginal population in the community, were concerning. At both councils, while some immigrant groups were well represented in the workplace, there was also over-representation of the Australian-born and people born in English-speaking countries, particularly at Corrington Shire.

Despite noted limitations (i.e. country of birth data is not an accurate indicator of race/ethnicity), these findings suggest that, on the whole, council workplaces are not currently representative of the diversity in the community. Survey findings revealed a strong sense of organisational commitment to diversity, particularly at Stoneway City Council. On the other hand, organisational commitments to diversity were not necessarily reflected in council policies and practices. Generally, councils fared better at providing equal access to training and development than providing equal opportunities to participate in decision-making and to be promoted among diverse groups. A large minority of respondents also felt that there were inadequate policies to deal with racism, alongside a lack of clear consequences in responding to

complaints of racism. However, there was recognition that local government should play an important role in setting non-discriminatory standards. On the whole, these findings highlight incongruities between commitments to workforce diversity and current practice, as discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

Survey and interview data revealed a number of benefits, alongside some challenges, of diversity in the workplace and in the community more broadly. For example, interview data supported notions that increasing diversity in the community was a driver for workforce diversity. Further, workplace diversity was linked to economic and social benefits, including increased productivity, innovation, debate and creativity and a sense of belonging and organisational pride. It was also recognised that local government could play an important role in leading inclusive employment practices and addressing socio-economic disadvantage. Similarly, survey findings revealed a general sense of agreement about the benefits of diversity in the workplace. However, not everyone preferred to work in a diverse organisation and there was some discomfort in working with diverse groups (e.g. managers) and a sense that employees lacked skills to address racism in their work roles. As discussed further in Chapter 9, these findings demonstrate the importance of anti-racism interventions, such as training, to increase competencies and change attitudes.

Both survey and interviews showed evidence of racism in the workplace. For example, surveys revealed that approximately one in ten respondent from both councils had witnessed or experienced racism. While reports of racism on the workplace were lower than reports in other surveys, I have provided a number of reasons for why this may be the case, such as difficulties in minority/majority group categorisation, small sample sizes for minority groups and, potentially, a reluctance to downplay or under-report experiences of racism (Biddle et al., 2013). Despite these limitations, reports of racism among minority group members were consistently higher than those in the majority group. Additionally, surveys revealed that racism occurred with workplaces and existed alongside other forms of discrimination, such as gender discrimination and 'male hegemonic' cultures and power structures (Metz & Kulik, 2008). Alongside these findings, there was also evidence of denial of racism and/or low levels of racial literacy, where fewer respondents at both councils (in comparison to the broader population) agreed that racism was a problem in Australia,

particularly at Corrington Shire. On the whole, these findings suggest that racism, including denial of racism, is a problem in local government. However, as discussed in Chapter 10, there is need for improved data collection on race/ethnicity to improve understanding of racism.

Alongside racism, team dynamics and tensions about the accommodation of cultural difference were also challenges to workforce diversity. While survey data indicated that council employees were more accepting of cultural maintenance than the general population, there was still a degree of ambivalence about diversity. Interviews revealed tensions about the accommodation of new forms of diversity (e.g. in public areas such as council-run swimming pools), while support for diversity was contingent upon it being the 'good' versus the 'bad' type of diversity; hence there was a desire to mitigate against the potentially negative effects of diversity. Other tensions included potential conflict over perceived differences in work ethic among diverse groups. On the whole, these data indicate that racism, conflict and tensions about the accommodation of difference are challenges to workforce diversity. However, as discussed further in Chapter 10, such challenges can have a positive, productive role in disrupting dominant cultural norms that can in turn lead to enhanced innovation, creativity and other benefits.

Finally, this chapter revealed regional variations in attitudes and experiences of racism between Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. As noted, workforce demographics were more reflective of the community at Stoneway City Council than at Corrington Shire. As discussed in Chapter 3, such differences can be attributed to different historical, social, economic and political factors, where for instance, some local government areas have had stronger historical role in resettling new immigrants (Pagonis, 2013). There was stronger recognition of the benefits of workforce diversity and preference to work in a diverse organisation at Stoneway City Council, while denial of racism was more pronounced at Corrington Shire. Through interviews, it was argued that lack of exposure to diversity could explain a slower pace of attitude change in rural/regional areas. Although this proposition has been supported by other research (Forrest & Dunn, 2007b), it failed to explain ongoing negative perceptions towards Aboriginal people and why so few Aboriginal people were

employed at council. The implications of these contextual variations will be discussed further in Chapter 10.

## Chapter 7

# Culture: The Role of Organisational Culture in Racism, Diversity and Anti-Racism

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### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the role of organisational culture in workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. I apply Schein's (2004) integrated model of organisational culture and other interdisciplinary literature and draw on ethnographic and interview data and to examine how organisational culture manifests at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. This chapter is structured in three sections as described below.

At the first and most visible layer of organisational culture, this chapter investigates organisational cultural 'artifacts', including the role of language, the physical environment and other symbols, ceremonies and rituals (Schein, 2004, p. 25). Starting with language, I discuss how diversity practitioners and council employees talked about racism and diversity, including their resistance to certain words and the pragmatic value placed on other terms in the process of engagement. Turning to the physical environment, I examine the role of organisational symbols, ceremonies and rituals in creating a welcoming environment for diverse groups, through practices such as flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, Welcome to Country ceremonies and other speech acts and signage acknowledging Aboriginal people and traditional landowners at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire.

At the next level of organisational culture, this chapter considers the nature of 'espoused beliefs and values', which commonly manifest in organisational goals, values, strategies, policies and standards of behaviour (Schein, 2004, p. 28). This section also utilises critical theory to examine gaps between statements of commitment to diversity and practice (Ahmed, 2006, 2012). Specifically, I investigate the extent to which organisational values and beliefs that support workforce diversity are articulated and espoused at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Finally, this chapter examines the role of 'basic underlying assumptions', which are deeply

embedded and manifest at the most subtle level of organisational culture, and hence are more difficult to change (Schein, 2004, p. 30). In the context of workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention, I draw on insights from cultural geography regarding the racialised nature of space (Delaney, 2002; Dunn, 2001, 2004; Hubbard, 2005; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). I provide two examples from my research, including discussions of accommodating diversity in a staff tearoom and a prayer room at Stoneway City Council.

## **7.2 Organisational Cultural Artifacts**

As discussed in Chapter 4, one way to measure support for diversity is through what Schein (2004) has called organisational cultural artifacts. Artifacts are the most visible forms of organisational culture and are observable in structures and processes, such as the physical environment, organisational language and style of communication, dress code, manners of address, rituals, ceremonies, and myths and stories told about an organisation (Schein, 2004). These symbolic and structural forms and practices provide important signifiers of organisational culture, as consciously and unconsciously perceived by organisational members and outsiders (Geertz, 1973). Signs and symbols also send important messages to employees and the community about organisational values and cultural competencies (Cross et al., 1989; Senge, 1994). This section examines the role of language, the physical environment, symbols and ceremonies. Alongside Schein's (2004) model, it employs insights from critical literature and discourse studies (Ahmed et al., 2006; Augoustinos & Every, 2007; van Dijk, 1992) and cultural competency (Cross et al., 1989).

### **The role of language**

An important starting point in diversity practice is to consider what Ahmed (2012, p. 51) has termed 'the language of diversity'. Language is important and has a broad role in shaping social and political discourse (Foucault, 1978). In the context of diversity and anti-racism practice, Ahmed et al. (2006, p. 34) have written that, 'words are important for what they bring into view, and also for what they keep out of view'. The field of critical discourse studies has also provided important insights into how racism and prejudice is produced through language and discourse. This includes analysis of the processes and meaning within and behind racist language and social interactions (Guerin, 2003; van Dijk, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), an approach

that is particularly useful in analysing the complex ways in which ‘new’ and subtler forms of racism continue to be constructed and reproduced. This section analyses how practitioners and council employees talked about racism and diversity, including their resistance to certain words and the pragmatic value placed on other terms in the process of engagement.

### *Discomfort and negative perceptions of racism*

Denial of racism has been recognised as a key aspect of contemporary racism (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Nelson, 2013; van Dijk, 1992). In part, this is due to negative perceptions of racism, where terms such as ‘racism’ and ‘racist’ are commonly attributed only to extremist attitudes and behaviours (van Dijk, 1992). Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) have argued that this has created resistances to using certain terms, where in some contexts, being labelled as racist or even talking about racism has become more contentious than racism itself. Similarly, other studies have found that racism has a negative connotation, both among lay people (Walton, Priest, & Paradies, 2013) as well as local anti-racism actors (Nelson, 2014). Consistent with these studies, a number of participants I spoke with felt that terms such as racism and racist had a negative perception and were uncomfortable with using these terms. For example, Craig said:

I don't like the word racist or anything like that, only because I believe, once again, I think everyone's racist in some vein if you really want to be technical...[but] I don't think it's helpful to keep pouring petrol on the fire by using the word racist. (Senior manager, 10 years at council)

Craig indicated that labelling someone as ‘racist’ had the potential to inflame a situation and thus exacerbate tensions. Some studies have recommended cautiousness in messaging and communicating about anti-racism strategies (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2009; Donovan & Vlasis, 2006). For example, a review of the Australian Government’s Living in Harmony program (2009) found it was more effective to engage people through ‘activities and messages that are subtle, non threatening, positive, apolitical, engaging, encouraging, warm, optimistic and non dictatorial’, whereas strong anti-racism messages tended to produce negative results by alienating a broad range of audiences. On the other hand, Craig also admitted that racism does exist (‘I think everyone's racist in some vein’, which aligns with research

on the importance of acknowledging rather than denying racism (Nelson, 2014). As discussed below and in Chapter 9, organisational leaders and managers play a particularly important role in acknowledging racism, and establishing non-discriminatory standards and behaviours.

### *Problematic diversity discourses*

Alongside perceptions that terms such as racism and discrimination had negative connotations, diversity was positioned a more 'positive' and inclusive term. For example, Jane and John, both council employees, said:

Jane: I think discrimination inputs a negative aspect on it whereas diversity is more of a positive wording. Yes, I think it definitely needs a more positive slant on the issue rather than a negative slant, right from the start. (Diversity practitioner, 4 years at council)

John: So from my point of view, I think that the words that have more resonance for me [are] about diversity and about inclusion. And about engagement, it's about understanding difference and being tolerant of difference. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Jane felt that diversity had 'more of a positive wording' and argued that it was more useful to have a 'positive' rather than a 'negative slant, right from the start'. John also preferred terminology that focused on 'understanding' and 'being tolerant' of difference. John indicated that terms such as diversity had a more 'inclusive' quality, and thus had more resonance in the process of engaging others. As discussed in Chapter 4, while diversity is commonly positioned as a more 'inclusive' term, there has also been widespread critique about an overemphasis of discourses of inclusion and harmony, both in public (Hage, 1998; Vasta & Castles, 1996) and workplace contexts (Ahmed, 2012; Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000; Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). As discussed in Chapter 3, discourses that promote liberal values of tolerance and equality also commonly deny racism (Jayasuriya, 2002; Vasta & Castles, 1996). Similarly, in the workplace, there has been concern that 'harder' equal opportunity and racial equalities agendas have been replaced by 'softer' language and practices framed around diversity management (Wrench, 2005). Consistent with these critiques,



the use of the term 'diversity' was problematic for some practitioners. For instance, Manika, a council employee, said:

Yes but unfortunately I don't know whether it's in Australia or whether it's everywhere I still [hear that] diverse peoples should be non-white...Yeah that's a kind of hidden racism in itself. (Diversity practitioner, 2 years at council)

As Manika pointed out, there was a common perception that diversity or being 'diverse' only referred to people from 'non-white' backgrounds, where perceptions of 'diverse peoples' as 'non-whites' operated as a racialised construct that privileged whiteness. Kumas-Tan, Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod and Frank (2007, p. 551) found a similar assumption operating within cultural competency practice, where 'culture' was commonly conceptualised as something that white practitioners must deal with in their interactions with racialised 'others'. Similarly, other studies have found that majority group members commonly perceive multiculturalism as excluding their own group (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011; Yogeewaran & Dasgupta, 2014). As Ahmed et al. (2006, p. 36) have said, this demonstrates the importance of continually scrutinising and unpacking the meaning behind terms such as diversity by looking at 'what the term 'does' and for whom, as well as what it doesn't do, and for whom'. Also useful here is positioning diversity as a 'relational concept' between groups rather than a characteristic of individuals (DiTomaso et al., 2007, p. 475; Tilly, 1998). These issues are discussed further below and in Chapter 10.

### *Using language strategically*

Although diversity discourses can be problematic, practitioners also spoke about the strategic value of using certain terms. For example, Will, who worked as a researcher on *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*, said:

I think that in mainstream organisations people feel very threatened by terms around racism, which is why we've been using terms that are a little softer. I think that probably has, you know, it has some advantages. Because I guess...there haven't been people who have said, 'I don't see the point of this', but there have been a few people who've said, 'are we really 'bad', are we bad areas? Is that why you're targeting us?' But I think putting it on a more positive note and promoting and celebrating diversity

makes it less challenging for people in an initial sense until they really understand what it's about. (Researcher)

Will considered whether using less threatening or 'softer' language might work in 'an initial sense' in terms of engaging people before being able to talk more explicitly about racism. Like Craig's comments above, he felt that explicit talk about racism could be threatening, particularly in mainstream organisational settings. Will had also experienced this first hand, where some people involved in the program had asked whether they were being targeted for intervention because they were 'bad' (i.e. racist) areas. In other words, speaking about racism contributed to perceptions that a particular area or organisation had a problem with racism and was therefore perceived negatively.

Nelson (2013, p. 89) found that local actors who downplayed or denied racism in their areas were engaging in a process of 'place-defending', which involved protecting their locality being labelled a racist space. This is consistent with critical discourse theory outlined above, where talking about race is carefully structured to avoid accusations of racism, and thus commonly denied or downplayed (van Dijk, 1992). Similarly, William saw that speaking about racism had the potential to make people defensive. Conversely, William's comments demonstrated the contextual and pragmatic value of language, where he conceded that it was important to use more 'positive' or 'accepted' language in mainstream organisational contexts until people had improved levels of racial literacy.

Jan, a program manager for *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Spaces*, had similar views to William about the pragmatic value of using more 'inclusive' language such as 'diversity'. She drew on her experience of working in government and non-government agencies, saying that:

Most of my professional socialisation occurred in government or non-government agencies where I think you learned...the gentle art of being able to name something without necessarily using words that were going to turn people off. That was seen to be strategic... (Program manager)

Over the course of her profession, Jan had learnt to be ‘strategic’ in her use of language. This included an ability to be able to talk through an issue without getting people offside (i.e. her ‘professional socialisation’). Being strategic was therefore a ‘skill’ or tactic that policy practitioners and others must learn to get support for politically sensitive issues. Jan also described this as a ‘gentle art’, implying that language and communication involved ongoing practice and effort. Ahmed (2006, p. 122) has also discussed how diversity work is strategic, where practitioners have articulated the usefulness of diversity terminology in that it ‘allows people in: once they are in, we can then do different things or even use a different set of terms’. This appears to be the approach taken by both Jan and William, where their use of ‘softer’ language played an important, initial role in establishing buy-in for the program.

Another way that practitioners used language strategically was to adjust terminology for different audiences. For example, Josh felt that it was important to speak directly about racism when speaking with communities directly affected by racism:

So when I am talking to communities, the communities affected by discrimination, we use the word racism or a bit interchangeably, particularly [with] the Aboriginal community, to use the word racism...I think for them, for communities they get what racism is. It's a bit clearer. (Diversity practitioner, 2 years at council)

Josh used language interchangeably, using ‘the word racism’ when communicating with people affected by racism and discrimination. He explained that communities affected by racism ‘get what racism is’, thus acknowledging that racism is commonly a lived experience for people from non-white backgrounds (Essed, 1991; Gilroy, 1992). On the other hand, using the term racism is not only ‘a bit clearer’ as Josh suggests, but not using the term could actually be insensitive to someone who has been subjected to racism<sup>71</sup>. As discussed above, not speaking about racism can work to deny or conceal the problem, which may cause anger and distrust among communities who not only know what racism is but also regularly experience it. While the pragmatic or strategic value of language is important, who is being spoken to and whose voice gets leveraged is a consideration in such debates. In other words, a desire to make things more palatable in order to create buy-in within more

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<sup>71</sup> In fact, in another exchange Josh revealed that he had been criticised for not explicitly using the term racism when communicating with the Aboriginal community.

conservative or political environments might work to undermine relationships with communities affected by racism. A key question, discussed below and in Chapter 10, is whether such tensions can be resolved through using language interchangeably, as some diversity practitioners had done.

### *Countering denial and dealing with discomfort*

In light of these issues, some practitioners believed that it was important to use the language of racism explicitly. For example, Victoria and Tim said.

Victoria: I think sometimes we need to use [the terms] as they are, we don't need to cover them up because that's what happened in the past. Racism has been here forever. And people should call it what it is, racism. (Diversity practitioner, 4 years at council)

Tim: Yeah, I think [you] need to say that word...Because this is a country that had a White Australia policy in practice, treating people Aboriginal people based on their colour and skin differently. (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

Both Victoria and Tim agreed that speaking directly about racism was important and linked this to the historical basis of racism. This provided justification to not 'cover' up the issue. As discussed above, speaking about racism is an important because it helps to prevent denial (Nelson, 2013), including its historical basis (Goldberg, 1993) (Nelson, 2013). Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2006) have argued that recent discursive shifts favouring terms such as diversity and inclusion work to conceal the historical context surrounding anti-racism political movements. As discussed in Chapter 4, in the workplace, it has been argued that diversity discourses have depoliticised former anti-discrimination and affirmative action movements and need to be re-situated within the context of these agendas (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Noon, 2007; Wrench, 2005). On the whole, acknowledgement of the historical basis of racism and the inherent political nature of diversity work provided justification for using stronger language.

Liz, a council employee, provided further insight into the importance of speaking directly about racism, saying that:

I've come a long way from oh, that's a really heavy topic, and really uncomfortable with even saying the word racism...So I know I'm a lot more comfortable in the space now, just talking about these things, because I feel like I know a little bit more...I've also noticed that throughout the organisation, people are talking about it. Whether they're comfortable or whether they own the idea more, but people will talk about racism now. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Liz was initially uncomfortable with talking about racism and even using the word racism, which she saw as 'a really heavy topic'. However, through her involvement in the program she had become more comfortable with both using the language and talking about the problem of racism. She linked her increased comfort with greater knowledge and understanding ('I feel like I know a little bit more'). Importantly, Liz also noticed that other people in the organisation were also more open in speaking about racism. As shown above, language plays an important role in broader social and political discourse. In Liz's example, knowledge and understanding of racism was linked with less discomfort in speaking about racism. These effects had reverberated throughout the organisation where engagement with the language of racism had influenced broader institutional discourses. Consistent with critical discourse theory, just as discourse can enact and reproduce racism, the formation of discourse and discursive objects is also subject to change (Goldberg, 1993). Therefore, speaking about racism was an important starting point for anti-racism action in that it helped to overcome discomfort and denial (Nelson, 2014).

### **The role of the physical environment, symbols and ceremonies**

According to Schein (2004), alongside language, the physical environment, symbols, ceremonies and stories told about the organisation also make up a key aspect of organisational culture at its most visible layer. Providing a welcoming and inclusive for diverse groups is also a central concept within cultural competency (Bowen, 2008; Siegel et al., 2002; Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2008). For example, the following list, developed by a peak Aboriginal child and family welfare organisation in Victoria (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2008, p. 47) is an example of cultural competency standards for enabling welcoming and accessible environments for Indigenous Australians:

- Posters and symbols (such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag) that promote cultural respect.
- Public support for Aboriginal cultural events.
- Plaques that recognise the Traditional Owners of the land.
- Involving Elders in traditional welcome to country.
- Acknowledging Traditional Owners and Elders at meetings and public forums.
- Appointing Traditional Owners and elders as cultural advisors.

Aspects of this list also formed a component of the Workplace Assessment Tool (discussed in Chapter 5). Drawing on these standards and Schein's (2004) typology, this section describes the role of the physical environment and organisational ceremonies in providing a welcoming environment for Indigenous people at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. I start by describing an ethnographic observation of a Sorry Day Ceremony at Stoneway City Council. Other practices, such as flying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and acknowledging Traditional Owners and Aboriginal people through signage on council buildings at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire are then discussed. At the conclusion of this section, I analyse how these cultural artifacts relate to Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture.

### *Sorry Day Ceremony at Stoneway City Council*

In Australia, Sorry Day is a national day to mourn and remember the impact of government policy on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to the forced removal of children from their families. National Sorry Day events are held all over Australia, with an increasing number of local councils formally commemorating Sorry Day. At both Stoneway Shire Council and Corrington Shire, observing Sorry Day had been written into council policy. Both councils flew the Aboriginal flag at half-mast as a sign of respect and held formal Sorry Day events in partnership with the local Indigenous community and other supporters, such as local reconciliation groups, other organisations and members of the public.

On a cold, wet, late autumn morning on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May in 2011 in Melbourne, I attended a National Sorry Day event at Stoneway City Council. At this particular

event, a couple of hundred of us gathered on the pavement outside the main council building. The surrounding gumtrees and bushland, alongside the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags flying at half-mast, provided a backdrop to the ceremony we were about to have. I was more than half way through my fieldwork at Stoneway City Council and recognised a handful of faces in the crowd, mainly employees who worked here, along with a number of people from the local community. I spotted the Mayor and other Councillors, who I recognised from their pictures hanging on the wall inside and various council reports I had read. Members of the Aboriginal community were also here, including local Wurundjeri<sup>72</sup> Elders and members of the council reconciliation group who helped to organise this event.

As the ceremony began, we huddled together in a large circle in front of a fire, our gaze drawn towards the flame and its warmth on this cold day. The event began with a traditional Welcome to Country<sup>73</sup> by the Wurndjeri Elder: ‘Wominjeka Wurundjeri Balluk yearmenn koondee bik [Welcome to the land of the Wurundjeri people]’. The words seemed to command a moment of silence and reflection among those present. The Wurndjeri Elder passed a branch of eucalypt leaves around the group. As we passed it around, we each took a moment to connect with the leaves before they were finally put on the fire, the smell of the leaves and the smoke enveloping us.

Following the welcome and smoking ceremony, the Wurndjeri Elder and the Mayor lead us on a ceremonial walk around the council grounds. We walked from the front of the building, past the employee and visitor car park and towards the back of council, stopping at several landmarks on the way, including a large eucalyptus tree and a newly unveiled plaque dedicated to the Stolen Generations. Each time we stopped, the councillor gestured to the Wurndjeri Elder, ‘we acknowledge the impact of the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, we’re sorry. We acknowledge that this land was taken, we’re sorry’. We stood for a moment and then walked to the next site, where the gesture was repeated. The process of walking, stopping and the repeated acknowledgement appeared to have a powerful effect on

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<sup>72</sup> The Wurjudjeri people are recognised as Aboriginal Traditional Owners of areas of Melbourne, mainly in the northern region.

<sup>73</sup> A Welcome to Country is held by a representative of the local traditional owner group while an Acknowledgment of Country is a statement commonly recognising traditional owners, ancestors and Aboriginal people that can be made by both non-Indigenous or Indigenous people not local to the area (Kowal, 2015).

the audience, who were made to reflect each time we stopped on the effects of removing children from their families, as well as the theft of land during colonisation.

I thought back to the time when I worked at ANTaR and considered how much work would have gone into organising an event like this, in working with the community, in getting the protocols right. This year's event, which included other activities alongside the ceremony, built on previous events and reflected several years of activity and engagement from council with the local Aboriginal community. From my own professional experience, and from what I had observed during my field work at Stoneway City Council, it was clear that these relationships and partnerships had developed slowly but steadily, through continued engagement with the Aboriginal community by council. Over time, these relations had led to significant changes to council practice and policy, including the employment of Aboriginal people within council, and had been facilitated through the efforts of a long-standing reconciliation group, which included Indigenous Elders and community members, councillors and past and present council employees. As discussed in Chapter 4, these developments were reflective of organisational change as 'continuous, evolving, and incremental' (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362), where micro-level adaptations and adjustments by organisational members and external parties had led to significant changes to organisational culture over time (Orlikowski, 1996).

Past the ceremony and the smoke, my mind turned to those remaining inside the council building. Though the group outside was large, relative to the size of the organisation levels of participation among employees were low. Kowal (2015, p. 89) has written that Welcome to Country ceremonies, along with their 'twin ritual', an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners, have become increasingly commonplace within a range of organisations. For example, many local government organisations now formally begin public council meetings with an Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and it is also common practice for public council events and forums to include a Welcome to Country ceremony. Although such practices have become increasingly accepted, and indeed expected, there has also been some contention



about the extent to which they are now too ‘politically correct’ or tokenistic (Everett, 2009; Kowal, 2015)<sup>74</sup>.

Reflecting on these debates, Kowal (2015, p. 89) has described these forms of ‘anti-racist speech acts’ as a ‘key site of Indigenous recognition by mainstream Australia, a cause of anxiety for some event organisers, and a periodic focus of political posturing’. She suggests that underlying these rituals and rhetorical devices are feelings of discomfort and anxiety that stem from unresolved issues and politics in relation to belonging (Kowal, 2015). In some ways, these tensions were also present during the Sorry Day event at Stoneway City Council. On the one hand, council’s commitment and support for diversity was evident through the presence of council employees and organisational leaders at the event. On the other, the fact that a large number of council employees did not attend indicated incongruities between council’s commitment and a lack of priority and ownership for diversity issues among the whole organisation. These issues are discussed further below and in Chapter 9.

### *Flying the flags and signage acknowledging Traditional Owners*

Alongside Welcome to Country ceremonies and speech acts acknowledging Traditional Owners, support for diversity within local government is also made visible by flags and acknowledgement signs that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as First Peoples and traditional landowners. Alongside the Australian flag, most local councils now permanently fly the Aboriginal flag<sup>75</sup>. In some cases, the Torres Strait Islander flag is also flown, recognising a diversity of Indigenous identities in Australia.

At Stoneway City Council, we discussed how diversity was supported through the physical environment at the beginning of spring in 2011. For this particular meeting, we met in one of council’s many meeting rooms. The room was comfortable with a

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<sup>74</sup> For example, in 2010 former Victorian Premier Ted Ballieu confirmed he would no longer force ministers and public servants to acknowledge traditional Aboriginal landowners at official events (as was endorsed by the previous Labour government). Ballieu based his view on the perception that this gesture had become tokenistic, a view that was supported by other conservative public figures such as former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett, but condemned by Aboriginal leaders and non-Indigenous supporters as a backward step.

<sup>75</sup> A survey of local government in Victoria conducted by Reconciliation Victoria (2012) found that 47 out of 77 councils surveyed (from a total of 79 councils in Victoria) flew the Aboriginal flag permanently. This compared with only nine councils in 2001 at which the Aboriginal flag was permanently flown.

large oak table and leather chairs, with a pleasant view of the council grounds, including a large water feature outside. A couple of diversity awards received by Stoneway City Council framed the walls, setting the scene for our discussions. Josh, a diversity practitioner, chaired the meeting, while I took notes. Along with Josh and myself, Tim, Victoria, Sonia (all diversity practitioners), Frank, Andrew and Mark (from HR), Sally from Communications, and two other senior leaders, Kon and Anthony, were in attendance. The group discussed how the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags (see Figure 7.1 for an example) were flown permanently outside the main council building, alongside the Australian flag. As Tim pointed out, flying both flags was seen as a positive step from council and provided a sense of welcome to Indigenous employees and the community<sup>76</sup>.



**Figure 7-1** The Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags flying outside a government building, Canberra, July 2012. Source: Department of Defence (2015).

Sally asked about the significance of the 'blue and green' on the Torres Strait Islander flag. Tim explained that the colours and design represented connection to water and land. Other members of the group agreed that flags were important and discussed whether Aboriginal flags were installed at other council sites. Kon said that only the Australian flag was flown at the council depot, although he indicated that 'it would be

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<sup>76</sup> As outlined in Chapter 3, most local councils only fly the Aboriginal flag permanently.

easy enough to get another pole'. I noted investigating whether additional flagpoles could be established at other sites as a recommendation of the Workplace Assessment Tool. Although it was a relatively small and symbolic gesture, I anticipated that it might take time and involve some degree of negotiation and effort. However, only a few months later, when I interviewed him, I was surprised when Kon had already taken steps towards implementing the flagpole by setting aside funds within his budget, saying that:

I mean just because I was on [the assessment committee] when we put our budgets together I got the money for an extra flagpole, you can see we've got one flagpole here it's got the Australian flag, so that's ready to go when the budget's launched there'll be another flagpole with the Aboriginal flag on it. It's simple, and so those little things, because I'm on the committee and aware of the issues that have happened. (Senior manger, 13 years at council)

Through his involvement in the assessment process, Kon recognised the importance of symbolism in creating a supportive workplace environment, such as for Aboriginal employees at council. In a later interview with Tim, he also reiterated the importance of flying both flags outside the main council building.

It is wonderful to see that we have both flags out the front, you know...it's fantastic and even the community want to know why is a Torres Strait Islander flag there. Well, what I explain to the community is [that] council supports and works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. So that's their way of showing that. So the environment, the workplace environment's right. (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

For Tim, flying both flags translated into a perception that the workplace environment was 'right'. This supports cultural competency standards outlined above pertaining to the importance of the physical environment in providing a sense of welcome for minority group members. Tim also spoke about the educative role he played in communicating the significance of flying both flags, not only to council employees but also to members of the community<sup>77</sup>. The important, but often demanding educative role that diversity practitioners play, both in the workplace and

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<sup>77</sup> A significance that relates to a large Torres Strait Islander population in many parts of Australia other than just the Torres Strait, including Victoria.

their day-to-day lives, has been recognised by others (Ahmed et al., 2006; Land, 2012) and is discussed further in Chapter 9.

At Corrington Shire, conversations about flying the Aboriginal flag were similar to those observed at Stoneway City Council, although there were some important differences, symbolising different historical and spatial contexts. I recalled the first time I had visited Corrington Shire, when I had parked outside the main building and entered from the front of the building. The Aboriginal flag stood out as a permanent fixture alongside the Australian flag, although there was no Torres Strait Islander flag as at Stoneway City Council.

The next time I visited council, at the beginning of autumn in 2011, I entered from the back of the building and saw three more flag poles, all flying the Australian flag. This particular meeting was one of our first assessment group meetings and like at Stoneway City Council, the purpose of our discussion was to assess the extent to which council provided a welcoming environment for diverse groups. I had arrived early and once inside the council building, Jane, a diversity practitioner, who was chairing the meeting, led me upstairs, past the maze of open plan offices and into what appeared to be a newly renovated section. The space was reminiscent of other government and corporate buildings, comfortable but sparsely furnished, aside from a couple of framed pictures on the wall and a male figurehead statue in the corridor; a past councillor perhaps, or another prominent historical figure known in the area. We met inside a small meeting room, coming off the main corridor. Alongside Jane and myself, Simone (a HR manager), Craig and Andrea (both senior leaders) and Alexandria and Peter (who worked in council officer roles) were also in attendance. Rebecca and Johnny, who had been recently appointed as diversity practitioners to work directly with the Aboriginal and CALD community in the Shire, also attended. Both practitioners were from Anglo-Australian backgrounds.

Our discussion quickly clarified my observations regarding council policy and protocols for flying the flags. Alongside the Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag was flown permanently outside the main council building and in front of the town hospital. The Torres Strait Islander flag was also flown during Reconciliation week

events and NAIDOC week<sup>78</sup>. Alongside what was said during the meeting, through my ethnographic study, I had come to understand the history of flying the Aboriginal flag at Corrington Shire. While the flag had been flown during Reconciliation week and NAIDOC week for some time, requests to fly the flag permanently had been met with resistance. Returning to Schein's (2004) typology, this delay could be due to the existence of underlying assumptions that favoured dominant cultural norms. To some extent, these developments also supported arguments discussed in Chapter 6 about the slower pace of change in rural communities. Nonetheless, the fact that the flag was now flown permanently demonstrated the emergence of new espoused beliefs and values (Schein, 2004) and how support for diversity had changed over time (Orlikowski, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Alongside discussions of flags, the assessment committee considered whether there was specific signage to recognise Aboriginal people on council buildings (see Figure 7.2 for an example). Craig, who had been at Corrington Shire the longest, pointed out that there was a plaque acknowledging Traditional Owners outside the main council building that had been there for over a decade. Peter, however, commented that the sign was not visible to people passing by. Peter reiterated this point later, in an interview:

Yes, the acknowledgement for Aboriginal people, yes. You walk past it every day. Unless you are actually looking for it, you can't actually see it. (Council officer, 6 years at council)

On the one hand, the presence of the acknowledgement sign, as with the flag, demonstrated the visibility of espoused beliefs and values (Schein, 2004). On the other hand, Peta's comments spoke to the invisibility of Aboriginal culture, in contrast to more visible signs of Anglo-Australian culture, signified by the dominance of Australian flags that flew outside the back of the building for most of the year, and the plaque, that was largely hidden from view. As discussed below, an important question is the extent to which the privileging of dominant cultural artifacts in the

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<sup>78</sup> Reconciliation week is held nationally in Australia runs from 27 May to 3 June each year. The dates mark the anniversary of the 1967 constitutional referendum and the High Court Mabo decision (discussed in Chapter 3). NAIDOC (National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee) week is held every year in July to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and achievements and in contributing to Australia society.

physical environment at Corrington Shire is reflective of deeper underlying assumptions within the workplace.

In summary, this section has considered the role of organisational cultural artifacts at the most visible layer of organisational culture (Schein, 2004). I have examined the role of language, the physical environment, ceremonies and rituals. Consistent with other studies (Nelson, 2014; van Dijk, 1992), I found that racism had negative connotations and was considered to be counterproductive in engaging people. Conversely, diversity was perceived as a positive term and linked to notions of inclusivity. The language of diversity also had strategic value, where using a softer message to ‘sell’ the messages of diversity was deemed important in the politics of engagement. Others resisted the need for language to always be appealing, particularly when it worked to deny racism.



**Figure 7-2** Plaque acknowledging Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the Land, Brunswick, July 2014. Source: author.

The data also indicated, as others have showed (Nelson, 2014) that it was important to speak about racism in helping to overcome discomfort and denial. In the context of literature discussed in Chapter 4, the use of language can be associated with

organisational change processes. For example, perceptions of racism as negative and disruptive can be aligned with episodic drivers of organisational change. In other words, the sense of dissonance associated with speaking directly about racism could be described as an episodic driver in the sense that it might prompt immediate action, even if it is reactive.

By contrast, the appeal and pragmatism associated with diversity language and discourse can be linked with continuous change models. Diversity discourse might allow equality issues to not only 'get into' an organisation (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 23), but to encourage more continuous kinds of organisational change over the longer term. However, this is not say that one term should be favoured over another. Indeed, the above section has provided a strong case for using language interchangeably, where a desire for more palatable messages should not be favoured over the need to speak frankly about racism. As discussed further in Chapter 10, it is important to continue to unpack the meaning behind different terms and ensure that key political principles in progressing racial equalities are maintained (Ahmed et al., 2006).

The above section has also looked at other organisational cultural artifacts, including the role of the physical environment and organisational ceremonies and speech acts. Consistent with other studies (T. A. Richardson, 2010), the Sorry Day event provided an opportunity for organisational and local community members to come together and reflect on issues of importance to the community, in this case past injustices perpetrated against Aboriginal people. I have argued that the process of organising the event each year and its ability, over time, to establish a sense of community and improved relations between council and the Aboriginal community was demonstrative of continuous change processes (Orlikowski, 1996; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

The presence of organisational members and leaders at the event indicated a strong sense of organisational commitment to diversity, thus supporting survey findings outlined in Chapter 6. The prominent role of organisational leaders in the ceremony also indicated the visibility of espoused values and beliefs (Schein, 2004). Conversely, the fact that large numbers of staff were not present showed incongruities between

visible cultural artifacts and behaviours and underlying assumptions at deeper levels of organisational culture (Schein, 2004). The important role of organisational leaders in making diversity issues more visible (Ahmed et al., 2006), alongside issues regarding priority and ownership for diversity issues, are discussed further in Chapter 9. Additionally, this section has also shown that the presence of other cultural artifacts in the physical environment, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags and signage acknowledging Traditional Owners, were important in providing a welcoming for diverse groups (Cross et al., 1989; Siegel et al., 2002; Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2008). Conversely, resistance to installing an Aboriginal flag at Corrington Shire and obscured signage acknowledging Traditional Owners, reflected tensions between espoused beliefs and underlying dominant cultural values.

On the whole, and as discussed in the next section, it is important to consider the degree to which the presence of organisational cultural artifacts at both Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire are reflective of espoused beliefs and values, as well as deeper underlying assumptions. Another way to put this is examination of the extent to which organisational commitments to diversity reflect practice (Ahmed, 2006, 2012). For example, there have been critiques regarding the extent to which symbolic measures do more to appease white sensibilities and guilt (Ahmed, 2005; Foley, 2008; Kowal, 2015) or act as a form of political legitimacy (Everett, 2009), rather than address more substantive issues of inequality and injustice.

Everett (2009, p. 55) has written that expressions of recognition and intention that seek to acknowledge 'the original custodians of the land can look very much like the appropriation of this idea for the purposes of enhancing the moral and political ascendancy of the government itself'. Similarly, Dodson (1994, p. 66) has said that while symbolism is important, there is often a juxtaposition between the 'rhetoric of rights and commitment' and 'the lived experience of peoples'. In the next section, and as Schein (2004) has suggested, I test these observations by analysing other levels of organisational culture, such as espoused beliefs, values, norms and day-to-day procedures as well as underlying assumptions.



### 7.3 Espoused Beliefs and Values

At the next level of organisational culture and underlying organisational artifacts and standards of behaviour, are espoused beliefs and values. According to Schein (2004), espoused values and beliefs commonly manifest in the form of goals, strategies and philosophies. However, unlike artifacts and behaviours, they are not always directly observable, yet will predict much of the behaviour occurring at the more visible levels of organisational culture (Schein, 2004). Important here is the extent to which other organisational members support beliefs and values articulated by organisational leaders, such as through shared notions of success (Schein, 2004). Another way to think about this is through Ahmed's (2006, 2012) analysis of gaps between commitments to diversity and anti-racism and practice. Ahmed (2012) has asked why commitment matters in diversity work. She suggests that commitment is commonly linked with the expression 'hearts and minds', which evokes a sense that individuals must incorporate commitment as a personal value (Ahmed, 2012, p. 113). She proposes that expressions of commitment not only relate to individual values, but to broader goals of diversity work, where the aim is to get commitment 'into' an institution, which is often described as having 'a heart and mind of its own' (Ahmed, 2012, p. 113).

Like Schein (2004), Ahmed (2012) has said that organisational commitments commonly manifest in documents, such as organisational statements, mission, values, policy documents and speech acts. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, such commitments are often 'non-performative' in that they, 'do not do what they say: they do not, as it were, commit a person, organization, or state to an action' (Ahmed, 2012, p. 104). As such, in this section, I take up Ahmed's (2006, p. 105) proposition to 'follow' commitments to diversity 'around'. I start by analysing an example of a statement of commitment to diversity within local government in Australia. I then draw on ethnographic and interview data to examine how commitments to diversity are expressed in council values at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Alongside integration of Ahmed's (2006, 2012) research, this section also draws on Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture to further examine the nature of espoused values and beliefs in the context of workforce diversity and anti-racism interventions.

## **Commitments to diversity within local government**

Consistent with the themes discussed above, a useful starting point is to examine how organisational commitments to diversity are expressed within local government. Taking a similar approach to Ahmed's (2006, 2012) analysis of race equality policies in the United Kingdom, I analyse a similar statement of commitment to diversity and anti-racism within local government organisation in Australia, shown below:

[xx] City Council is committed to the continued development of an inclusive, harmonious and cohesive community and to enact a model of best practice in this area. One of the greatest challenges facing Local Governments in view of changing population/demographic trends is its service response to the demands of a culturally diverse society. This involves Council being responsive in the areas of advocacy, planning and delivery of local government council programs and services to improve access and ensure the equal participation of all citizens in municipal life.

Similar to Ahmed's (2012, p. 115) analysis, the above statement positions [xx] City Council as a subject 'with' a commitment 'to' diversity. In this case, the object of the council's commitment is the community, which is positioned as being 'inclusive, harmonious and cohesive'. Underlying this statement, council is already imagined as such (B. Anderson, 1983), albeit with some 'continued development' from council. Moreover, responding to diversity (i.e. 'changing population/demographic trends') is positioned as one of the 'greatest challenges facing Local Government'. This appears to contradict the former statement about the community as already inclusive and cohesive. Council also connects its commitment to diversity to enacting 'a model of best practice' that includes responsiveness in service delivery and principles of equal access and participation. These discursive elements are consistent with key business case arguments for diversity within local government, as discussed in Chapter 6. The use of the term 'enact' also implies some degree of action. However, as Ahmed (2006) has said it is 'non-performative': we need to follow such statements around to see what they actually 'do'. Following on from these themes, this section and draws on Ahmed's (2006, 2012) study and Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture to further examine the nature of espoused values and beliefs in the context of commitments to workplace diversity.

## Organisational values

### *Valuing diversity at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire*

Towards the end of Spring in 2011, the assessment committee at Stoneway City Council met to discuss council's commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination as expressed through council's mission, values and other documents. This time, we met in a small meeting room directly upstairs from council's reception area. Josh and I had arrived early to set up and as we waited for people to arrive, he told me about communicating the workplace survey findings to an area of council that were responsible for managing and enforcing local council laws<sup>79</sup>. Josh said that the manager of the area had asked him to present to his team, following the presentation we had given to senior managers the week before. He told me that the presentation had been challenging as some people had expressed false beliefs about immigrant groups prevalent in public discourse and the media (discussed in Chapter 3). Further, Josh said that many employees within the department were commonly on the receiving end of abuse and complaints in their roles, saying: 'you know we get discriminated against all the time, why should we care about this?'. This demonstrated that workplace harassment was a broader issue for the organisation, particularly for employees who worked in front-line service delivery roles.

During our exchange, Josh was also concerned about how outspoken some people had been and was relieved when a colleague from a Muslim background came up to him afterwards, saying that he had handled the discussion well. Nonetheless, Josh said was exhausted by the process and joked that one almost needed a degree in psychology in his role. On a practical level, we talked about the potential for anti-racism bystander training so that he and other employees could navigate difficult conversations and be able to respond to attitudes and stereotypes in a constructive way. Just as we were finishing our discussion, other members of the assessment committee began to arrive, including Kon, Andrew, Frank, Sally and Victoria. Josh welcomed Kon, who had been unable to attend the last meeting, and Sally who had missed a number of meetings, due to her involvement in an external civil tribunal process. Everyone joked whether this was really where Sally had been or whether she

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<sup>79</sup> According to the *Local Government Act 1989* local councils in Victoria have powers to make and enforce local laws to provide order and public safety in the community.

was just trying to get out of the assessment committee meetings. As Lea (2008) has observed, in this meeting and others, subtle jokes shared by the group helped to set a light-hearted tone for the more serious nature of our discussion. In Chapters 8 and 9, I further discuss issues of resistance to diversity work.

First, and responding to a question from the Workplace Assessment Tool, we discussed how Council's commitments to workforce diversity and anti-discrimination were expressed through 'the organisation's mission, values, goals and other relevant documents'. At Stoneway City Council, valuing diversity was strongly reflected in council's values, where 'valuing diversity' was one of six key values expected of staff. Consistent with literature discussed in Chapters 6, valuing diversity was connected to organisational performance and effectiveness, where diversity was positioned as central to the council's success and engagement with the community (Schneider & Barsoux, 1997; Scott et al., 2003).

During the meeting, Sonia made specific reference to 'cultural' diversity within the value statement, saying that the wording helped to strengthen council's commitment in relation to ethnic/cultural diversity. Importantly, the statement also acknowledged the importance of workforce diversity 'in strengthening and enriching the organisation'. As discussed in Chapter 4, positioning diversity as an asset and valuable resource for the organisation, rather than merely as a way to gain access and legitimacy within a diverse market or clientele has been shown to be more effective in maintaining support for diversity over the longer term (Ely & Thomas, 2001). HR linked council's values to the performance review process, explaining that employees were encouraged to reflect on how they were adhering to council values, including valuing diversity. Kon said that the values helped to 'embed and promote discussion about diversity'. However, he raised an interesting point about how compliance with the values was measured. For example, in his department, they used a simplified version of the performance review process, where managers broke down the review process to make it easier for employees to understand. This included providing concrete examples of what kinds of behaviour were and were not acceptable. Josh asked whether making the process 'less conceptual' could be implemented 'across the whole organisation', such as through providing examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.

Later, I reflected on these discussions, where it became evident that including staff values within the performance review process provided an important mechanism for establishing accountability. As other studies have indicated, establishing accountability is essential to the ongoing success of diversity initiatives (Curtis & Dreachslin, 2008; Kalev et al., 2006; Trenerry & Paradies, 2012). In the context of theory discussed above, embedding council diversity values into the performance review process helped to translate commitments into action (2006, 2012). On the other hand, it was possible that individual managers may deviate from stipulated performance review processes, which could effectively derail efforts to integrate diversity into the workplace, either advertently or inadvertently. Indeed, Frank spoke further about the role of managers in diversity work and implementing programs such as *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Spaces* he said:

[What the program is trying do to] is no different to many other issues in terms of when it comes to people, people issues are the toughest issues, performance is the toughest issue any manager will deal with and particularly crap performance. Most people can't make hard calls, most people can do the nice things but when it comes to the tough, you know "you really need to lift your game, you're slacking off..." whatever it is, the courageous conversations, they're not held. (HR Manager, 7 years at council)

Frank indicated that issues in managing workforce diversity were symptomatic of broader management issues. In particular, he felt that managers were reluctant or ill equipped to deal with performance and behavioural issues. This meant that many managers were unable to make 'hard calls' when needed and the 'courageous conversations' were not held. Similarly, other scholars have articulated the important yet challenging role of managers in diversity work. For instance, in the context of race and racism, Greene (2007) has argued that supervisors 'must be prepared to discuss issues, or even perceived issues...with the understanding that due to the power differential, most staff will be unable to initiate these issues without permission'. As detailed in Chapter 4, power and status differentials can mean that, over time, people in subordinate positions become more constrained and inhibited while those in high power positions become more entitled and assertive (DiTomaso et al., 2007).

In the context of discussions above, this demonstrates the importance of effective anti-racism training, where individual managers might develop the skills and

competencies to respond to issues arising from diversity, including racism, and have the kinds of ‘courageous conversations’ that Frank felt were lacking. The crucial role of managers in influencing and/or resisting cultural change will be discussed further in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

At Corrington Shire, we discussed organisational commitments to diversity and anti-racism the following year, and towards the end of summer in 2011. I’d arrived at council mid-morning to greet Jane who was in a rush and apologised profusely as she would be late in attending the meeting (and in the end did not attend at all). She explained that she had been required to step in for another staff member who was sick in overseeing filming for the social marketing campaign that council was undertaking as part of their involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. This left me to step in to chair the meeting, in addition to my role as note-taker and participant-observer. I headed upstairs with Rebecca to find Craig, Simone, Alexandria and Johnny already there. Jane had arranged some afternoon tea to assist with energy levels. I helped myself to a cup of tea and some cake and waited for Simone to arrive, who had also been caught up and apologised for being late. Like at Stoneway City Council, we discussed how council’s commitment to diversity was reflected in the organisation’s mission and value statements, as well as other documents and policies. Andrea, who had a key role in communications, began discussions, saying that she had read through a range of reports, including the latest Annual Report, which she held in her hand. She said, ‘it’s quite good. It has some really good images on the front of people from multicultural backgrounds as well as statement about recognising diversity’. Earlier that day I had also read through a number of council documents, including annual reports from previous years. I agreed that the current Annual Report included a number of references to diversity, as well as good use of images of local community members from minority-group backgrounds. However, most of the references to diversity were made in relation to the community rather than the workplace. I also noticed that earlier reports had very few references to diversity, but saw this had increased over the years.

During the meeting, I said my reading of council documents reflected the ‘journey the organisation had gone through’. Andrea also made reference to council’s vision statement, which had a small reference to diversity. She indicated that council’s values

of 'respect' could be interpreted as being about diversity, although it was acknowledged that valuing diversity was not very explicit. The group also discussed references to diversity within the council plan, with Andrea mentioning that even though it might be in the plan, things could easily 'drop out' once you get down to the department or team level. As discussed further below, this revealed a gap between policy and action, where a policy statement or commitment did not necessarily reflect what happened in practice. On the whole, and compared with Stoneway City Council, there appeared to be less valuing of diversity at Corrington Shire. This included less emphasis on diversity in the workplace as opposed to community-level diversity. Raising the diversity profile of council within current planning and training processes was noted as an action on the action plan. However, there were also constraints on integrating workplace diversity into council values, where changing council values would be a longer-term process and involve bigger questions for the organisation.

In their study of organisational cultural change in policing, Metz and Kulik (2008) found that alongside changes to organisational cultural artifacts (such as changes to police uniforms and appearances), modification of visions statements and reporting processes was required to 'dislodge old values and substitute a new value system' (Metz & Kulik, 2008, p. 382). Specifically, new organisational values were embedded into the routine behaviour of senior employees and managers and became institutionalised through consistent reinforcement by leaders, organisational members, and external community stakeholders and legislative structures. To some extent, and compared to Stoneway City Council, there was less articulation of workforce diversity within council goals and values at Corrington Shire. On the other hand, and as with flying the flags, it appeared that while change occurred slowly, but had led to changes in the articulation of espoused values and beliefs over time (Orlikowski, 1996; Schein, 2004). These change processes are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

## **7.4 Underlying Assumptions**

### **Accommodating diversity in the workplace**

At the final and most subtle layer of organisation culture, Schein (2004) describes basic underlying assumptions, which are often taken for granted but determine much

of the group's behaviour. As discussed in Chapter 4, these rules and norms are established and reinforced from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values (Schein, 2004). As they continue to 'work', these beliefs and values are gradually transformed into 'nondiscussible assumptions' and taught to new members in a socialisation process (Schein, 2004, p. 29). In contrast to beliefs and values, which can be changed, underlying assumptions gain stability the more deeply they are embedded, and are therefore 'extremely difficult to change' (Schein, 2004, p. 31).

Alongside Schein's (2004) framework, underlying assumptions can be linked more explicitly to diversity issues, such as studies within cultural geography on the racialised nature of space. As discussed in Chapter 2, the racialised nature of space is associated with power and privilege, where it has been argued that dominant cultural groups (e.g. whites) are free to occupy and enjoy certain social spaces that are deemed to be 'neutral' (Bonnett, 1996; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). However, the concept of 'neutral' operates as a normalised category reflective of dominant group values and structures (Ahmed, 2012; Frankenberg, 1993).

Scholars have also shown how the allocation of space to accommodate diversity is commonly resisted (Celermajer, 2007; Dunn, 2001, 2004; Hubbard, 2005). Dunn (2001, 2004) has studied how constructions of Islamic places of worship are commonly contested. However, such contestation draws heavily on perceptions of what constitutes a local citizen and a local community, where 'the presence of the dominant cultural group is universalised, as the norm, with the result that the other culture is sidelined, if not silenced' (Dunn, 2004, p. 334). Similarly, Hubbard (2005, p. 52) has shown how 'otherness' was contested through opposition to asylum seeker accommodation centres in rural areas of the United Kingdom, arguing that resistance to diversity operates through 'not in my backyard' protests, which seek to maintain the privilege and prestige of white spaces. Apart from some exceptions (e.g. Ahmed, 2012), there has been less attention focused on the racialised nature of space in workplace/organisational contexts.

This section draws on this more sparse body of literature, and Schein's (2004) framework to examine the nature of underlying assumptions at Stoneway City Council. Specifically, I focus on council employee discussions of accommodating



diversity in the workplace, including the example of the staff tearoom as a site of contested space discussions and allocating space for an Islamic prayer room and. Prior to this, I describe the internal workplace environment at Stoneway City Council as context for these discussions.

### *The example of the tea room*

The internal workplace at Stoneway City Council followed a similar layout to other local government buildings, with a large reception area at the front as the first point of call for the community and other visitors to council. In the foyer, I noticed a large display on sustainability issues and several flyers outlining council services. Many of these had been translated into languages other than English. Council also advertised their interpreting service, made up of council workers, for community members who spoke languages other than English.

Beyond the reception area, the employee workspaces were largely open-plan, intercepted with small or large meetings rooms and offices for senior managers. In these areas of the workplace, and particularly among ‘community service’ focused teams, I noticed small but visible signs of support for diversity and anti-racism; a filing cabinet with a ‘say-no to racism’ sticker on it; along with individual employee work desks adorned with posters of Aboriginal or multicultural events and images, showing a glimpse into their own professional and personal values<sup>80</sup>. There was a large staff tearoom that catered for the majority of employees who worked there, which large, floor to ceiling windows provided expansive views of a large stretch of grass and gum trees outside. At one end of the room, there was a large pool table, standing next to a set of couches and more comfortable chairs and a small table of with various reading materials. I noticed a stack of sports and fitness magazines as well as some Women’s Day magazines<sup>81</sup>. On the staff noticeboard, there were flyers for various events as well as a picture of a council diversity practitioner being acknowledged for her involvement in organising a community event.

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<sup>80</sup> I recalled having a similar, almost shrine like space above my desk in various places where I’d worked, where I had pinned various memorabilia, such as conference tags, gum leaves from Welcome to Country ceremonies I had attended, quotes and articles and other images that helped to keep me inspired.

<sup>81</sup> Woman’s Day is a popular and high-selling women’s magazine in Australia. Woman’s Day is published weekly and features celebrity gossip, interviews and real-life stories, recipes, beauty, fashion, food, health and family advice.

At an assessment committee meeting attended by Sally, Victoria, Sonia, Andrew, Josh, Anthony, Lynn and myself, our discussion of the internal workplace environment at Stoneway City Council took a different, and more contested turn from previous conversations about the outside physical environment (described in Section 7.3 above). Our discussion focused on how the internal workplace environment, such as signage, décor, reading materials, posters, noticeboard items, staff amenities, prayer rooms and catering options could be more accommodating of its diverse workforce. For example, we discussed how the fairly ‘neutral’ environment of the staff tearoom could be changed:

Sally (Manager): Well they did try for some different reading materials, but stuff got nicked. Who does that?!

Victoria (Diversity practitioner): The staff room is not a very welcoming environment.

Sonia (Diversity practitioner): There’s no signage, it’s all very neutral. Not really any reading materials apart from Woman’s Day

Anthony (joking): And you wouldn’t want to have that changed would you?

Brigid: What about something like the Koori Mail<sup>82</sup>? That’d be fairly easy to implement.

Sonia: Maybe it’s bad Feng Shui.

Josh (Project Coordinator): Maybe we need to ask staff how they feel about the space. Are they happy with it? How could we use the space more strategically? Maybe around different cultural events

Sally: I just want to point out that space is a contentious issue or could be sensitive. Some people don’t even have desks, so is it a priority if some people don’t even have desks.

Andrew (Senior manager): I thought everyone has desks

Sally: I’ve heard that not everyone does (fieldnotes 13/12/10)

As with other discussions, a key theme I observed was the issue of space. Both Victoria and Sonia commented that the space was fairly ‘neutral’ and unwelcoming to people from diverse backgrounds, where for instance there was limited signage and a lack of reading materials other than Woman’s Day. Anthony’s comment about the Woman’s Day magazine (‘and you wouldn’t want to have that changed would you?’) demonstrating that space was gendered, along with being racialised. Underlying his

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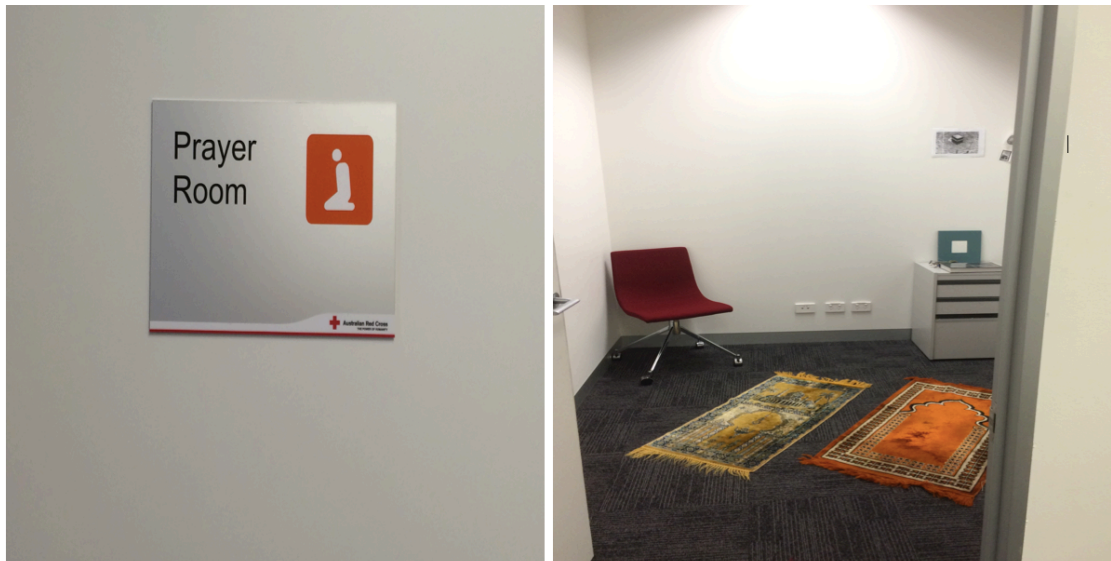
<sup>82</sup> The Koori Mail is a national newspaper focused on Indigenous issues and distributed through paper and on-line formats in Australia.

comment, is the assumption that gender also requires accommodation in the workplace, and could therefore be perceived as a competing interest to other forms of diversity in the context of cultural change. Despite suggestions about changing the space, including a recommendation from Josh that staff could be consulted about the use of the space, Sally said space was a contentious issue, particularly when some people did not ‘even have desks’. Sally’s comments about lack of space, which effectively closed down the discussion, could be perceived as a subtle form of resistance to workforce diversity, where underlying this statement was an assumption that some employees (i.e. dominant cultural groups) enjoyed rights to more freely occupy the space than others. Similar to other social contexts (Dunn et al., 2004; Hubbard, 2005; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000), space operated as a normative category that privileged what was already in place (i.e. dominant group values and norms).

### *The example of the prayer room*

During the same meeting and alongside discussion of general staff amenities, we also discussed to what extent council accommodated religious diversity in the workplace, such as through a prayer room (see Figure 7.3 for an example of a prayer room). Stoneway City council had allocated a dedicated room for Islamic prayer at the main council building, but not everyone knew about it and it was currently being used for other purposes, including breastfeeding mothers. Jack mentioned that there was a prayer room at one of the other council buildings, but that it was called a ‘retreat room’ and operated as a secular space where anyone could go for quiet reflection or time out. Victoria said, more quietly, that ‘there was not a lot of support for the prayer room’. As she did not elaborate, and bearing Jack’s comments in mind, I took this to mean that there was a lack of support for a room that only functioned as an Islamic prayer room.

During the meeting, our discussion about the prayer room mainly focused on use of the space. For example, if the space was being used for multiple purposes, then privacy was an issue and could be resolved through practical measures such as: signage about appropriate use of the space; a lock on the door; and/or a booking system (as was common practice for booking other spaces, such as meeting rooms). We also discussed consulting with staff and the community about protocols and sensitivities to ensure the space was being used appropriately.



**Figure 7-3** Signage on door/inside prayer room at Australian Red Cross, North Melbourne, December 2014. Source: author. Photographs taken with permission.

On the surface level, discussions about accommodating diversity in the workplace focused on practical strategies and procedures to ensure that the space was being used appropriately. On a deeper level, there was contestation about the use of the space, and in particular contention over whether council should have a dedicated space for Islamic prayer. On the one hand, these discussions were fairly reasonable accommodation debates, i.e. given that lack of space was an issue, having a dedicated space for prayer (and it not being used ‘all the time’).

On the other hand, and just as the invisibility of Indigenous people in the workforce manifested in the absence of flags and concealed signs, lack of support for a dedicated Islamic prayer room highlighted the invisibility of Muslim employees in the workplace, where dedicated space could not be justified in the context of small numbers of Muslim employees<sup>83</sup>. Space was also gendered, where it was revealed that breastfeeding mothers (another ‘invisible’ group in the workplace) similarly did not have a dedicated space in which to express milk or feed babies. Akin to discussions about the staff tearoom, different dimensions of diversity intersected and appeared to compete with each other and oscillate around the central theme of ‘space’.

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<sup>83</sup> This is in contrast to other organisations, for example universities who have established rooms and protocols for single-purpose Islamic prayer rooms, due to increasing numbers of Muslim students.

In a later interview, Liz provided further insight into spoken and unspoken challenges of accommodating workforce diversity, saying that:

I think that [our council] is actually really good...like it really is proactive and committed to it. I think sometimes there's room for improvement in particular areas, so - I think - because at the end of the day, it's an organisation that works in a particular way, so it's a political organisation that has systems and protocols, and it's learning those protocols and understanding why you do things in a particular way. There's always the assumption that people have to "fit" into the organisation. The organisation never really looks at itself to look at well actually do we need to change a little bit? But I think it's also, I think that understanding has to go both ways. And an example might be the prayer room. Do you have something like that? We do, but is it functioning? I'm not quite sure it's working all that well. Again, it's more, it speaks more to the fact that we're overflowing, that the building's just not big enough. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

In speaking with Liz, it was clear that council was certainly supportive of workforce diversity and had gone to some lengths to accommodate it. However, as per discussion above, even though a prayer room had been allocated, she recognised that in practice it was not 'fully-functioning'. Like others, Liz confirmed that a lack of space was an issue. However, her comments opened up other possibilities. She recognised that working in local government required working in a particular way, such as understanding protocols and procedures. Conversely, Liz felt that understanding had to 'go both ways'. Importantly, she said there was an underlying assumption that people needed to 'fit' into the organisation. For Liz, cultural change might then mean that the organisation had to change in order to accommodate diversity, rather than the other way around. However, as Schein (2004) has discussed, underlying assumptions are usually taken for granted and more difficult to change. As I have shown in this section, changing organisational culture, such as through accommodating workplace diversity, commonly resulted in resistance, an issue I discuss further in Chapters 8 and 9.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the role of organisational culture in workforce diversity and anti-racism initiatives through application of Schein's (2004) model of organisational

culture and other literature, such as critical theory (Ahmed 2006, 2012) and studies from human geography (Dunn, 2001, 2004; Hubbard, 2005). At the first and most visible level of organisational culture, this chapter examined the role of organisational cultural artifacts such as language, the physical environment, and organisational symbols, ceremonies and rituals. In terms of language, I found that racism generally had negative connotations, while diversity was perceived as a positive term and linked to notions of inclusivity. I have discussed the benefits of both terms, where the language of diversity had strategic value and in creating buy-in for diversity issues, while speaking about racism helped to overcome discomfort and denial. I have linked these discussions to organisational change processes, where perceptions of racism as negative and disruptive could be considered an episodic driver of change. By contrast, diversity language and discourse can be linked to continuous change models, in the sense that it might not only allow diversity issues to 'get into' an organisation but enable integration over the longer term. However, I have argued that there is utility in using both terms interchangeably, provided that key political principles in progressing racial equalities are upheld (Ahmed et al., 2006).

This section has also shown how support for diversity at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire was made visible through flags, acknowledgement signs, public ceremonies and speech acts that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and traditional landowners. Consistent with cultural competency standards, the importance of the physical environment and symbolic practices in creating a welcoming environment for diverse groups was confirmed. At Stoneway City Council, I found that events (e.g. Sorry Day event) created opportunities for the community to come together and reflect on issues of importance (T. A. Richardson, 2010), where the presence of organisational leaders and resources demonstrated organisational commitment and the visibility of espoused beliefs and values (Schein, 2004). However, I argued that lack of employee attendance at the Sorry Day event indicated inconsistencies between visible cultural artifacts and underlying assumptions. Similarly, at Corrington Shire, resistance to installing an Aboriginal flag and obscured signage acknowledging Traditional Owners, reflected tensions between espoused beliefs and values and underlying assumptions regarding dominant cultural values. As discussed below, it was necessary to test these observations through consideration of other levels of organisational culture (Schein, 2004). On the whole,

there were important contextual variations, where support for diversity manifested differently at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire and also changed over time.

At the second level of organisational culture, I discussed the role of espoused beliefs and values through analysis of statements of commitment to diversity and council values that support workplace diversity at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. To introduce these concepts, I looked at a statement of commitment to diversity within local government, which highlighted potential contradictions between what an organisation says and what it does (Ahmed, 2006, 2012). Following on from these themes, I found that valuing workplace diversity, when instilled in council values and integral to performance review processes, was important in establishing accountability for council's commitments to diversity at Stoneway City Council. However, given that individual managers were often responsible for implementing performance review processes, the extent to which accountabilities in council's commitments to diversity were upheld was less clear. Indeed, interview data revealed that performance management issues were symptomatic of broader management issues.

In the context of literature discussed in this chapter (i.e. Schein, 2005) and following commitments to diversity around (Ahmed, 2006), there was a degree of inconsistency between espoused values and beliefs and underlying assumptions and behaviours. At Corrington Shire, there was less articulation of workforce diversity within council values, than at Stoneway City Council. However, I have argued that change, while slow, could lead to changes in the articulation of espoused values and beliefs over time (Orlikowski, 1996; Schein, 2004). These change processes are discussed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

Finally, at the third and most subtle level of organisational culture, this chapter has considered the role of underlying assumptions in workforce diversity initiatives. Through discussions of the staff tearoom and a prayer room at Stoneway City Council, I observed how space was racialised and gendered. Akin to other contexts (Dunn, 2001, 2004; Hubbard, 2005), space was fought over and contested. For example, discussion about making the staff tearoom more inclusive of diverse groups

was met with resistance in the context of broader space issues. Similarly, discussion of the prayer room at Stoneway City Council was also contested, where there was limited support for a room that only functioned for Islamic prayer. Further, it was revealed that the prayer room was also being used for breastfeeding, which highlighted intersections between different dimensions of diversity. The lack of support for an Islamic prayer room highlighted the invisibility of Muslim employees in the workplace, while the needs of breastfeeding mothers were also obscured. Conversely, discussions about the extent to which diversity should be accommodated in the workplace, where space was already lacking, are reasonable accommodation debates. In Chapter 10, I further examine the notion of ‘reasonable’ accommodation of diversity in the workplace, or alternatively how the fact that diversity needs to be ‘accommodated’ might highlight racial privileges that are already in place.



# Chapter 8

## Structure: Employment Barriers and Strategies

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### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of employment barriers for people from minority-group backgrounds. Specifically, it draws on recruitment practices and shows how recruitment can disproportionately affect applicants from minority-group backgrounds.

First, this chapter presents analysis of interview data to investigate how recruitment barriers operated at the interpersonal and systemic level through key practices such as organisational gatekeeping, standardised and onerous application processes, preferences for workforce homogeneity and implicit bias and discrimination in selection processes. I also examine the ambiguous nature of racism in selection processes.

The second section of this chapter draws on ethnographic data to investigate the nature of employment barriers and strategies to address them at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. Specifically, I outline observations of the job advertisement and application process at Stoneway City Council and continue to 'follow' commitments to 'diversity' around (Ahmed, 2006) through discussion of measures to increase workforce diversity at Corrington Shire. In doing so, I highlight important variations in the nature of employment barriers and strategies between the two council sites.

### 8.2 Recruitment Barriers

Recruitment involves the process of attracting, selecting and hiring a person for employment. In local government, as in other public sector agencies, recruitment is underpinned by legislative requirements that support principles of equal opportunity and access (i.e. merit-based). However, in this study, as in others (Bertone et al., 2005; Booth et al., 2009), recruitment practices emerged as a key systemic barrier for people from minority-group backgrounds seeking employment. This section draws on interviews conducted with council employees to examine how established recruitment

practices can disadvantage/privilege job seekers from varying racial/ethnic backgrounds.

### **Recruitment as a form of organisational gate keeping**

Participants described recruitment practices within local government as largely confined by legislative requirements under the *Local Government Act 1989*. For example, Paul said:

Actually, one of the things, see we've got legislative constraints in terms of our Act. Recruitment has to be on the basis of transparency, merit... We are still very much mono-culture, mono-stuck, it's ingrained, recruitment for example in responding to [key selection criteria]...now that's a gate keeping thing really, that's not about securing and recruiting the very best person for the role. That's about can you comply and you know, conform to our requirements, which is the very first test because that's the cultural more that's required for survival in local government. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Paul prefaced his discussion about employment barriers by stating legislative requirements of merit and transparency under the *Local Government Act 1989*. At the same time, he said that recruitment practices had become ingrained within bureaucracies such as local government. Paul's choice of words ('mono-culture' and 'mono-stuck') suggested a tendency for homogeneity within recruitment practices (Brief et al., 2005; Essed, 2005). Specifically, he said that current practices were 'ingrained' and had become a *modus operandi* that was both routine and relatively unquestioned. As Paul explained, recruitment practices had taken on a 'gate keeping' function that reflected organisational culture, where passing the initial 'first test' (the interview stage) was important for later survival in local government. While this phenomenon is not unique to local government, it could be described as assimilationist, where there is an expectation for applicants to fit into predefined cultural norms.

In their study into equal opportunity within the Victorian public sector, Bertone et al. (2005) found that specific 'cultural know-how' was required in navigating employment processes, and working in Australian workplaces. This included knowing

how to access the job market and apply for jobs, presentation within application and interview processes, along with behaviour, performance and etiquette within the workplace. Although such practices may be largely unconscious (fitting within Schein's (2004) framework of 'underlying assumptions'), they can place applicants from minority-group backgrounds at an unfair and inequitable disadvantage (Paradies, 2006b) to those from majority-group backgrounds. These issues are discussed further below.

### **Standardised and onerous application processes**

As with other studies (e.g. Noon et al., 2013), standardised recruitment practices, particularly those that included onerous job applications processes, were seen as another key barrier for applicants from minority-group backgrounds. For instance, Manika, who had recently immigrated to Australia, discussed her experience of navigating public sector employment processes, saying that:

[The application process] puts off people applying because it's so cumbersome looking...The terminology used [in responding to key selection criteria] is so, I think they must keep it in accordance with the job. But I don't think there has ever been a review of these things, it's just dished out from the past centuries I think and it's still going on...I'm not doing one per cent of what [the job description] wanted me to [do]...(Diversity Practitioner, 2 years at council)

Manika described the process of responding to selection criteria as unnecessarily complex. Specifically, she said that terminology, despite being standardised and 'in accordance with the job', was difficult to understand and out-dated ('dished out from the past centuries') and generally did not match requirements for the job. Similarly, Noon et al. (2013) found that a tendency towards 'hyper-formalisation' in recruitment practices. Although standardised practices had developed alongside legal regulations to establish fairness and equity in recruitment, the authors found there was an increasing tendency for managers to circumvent procedures and 'undermine fairness, either intentionally or inadvertently' (Noon et al., 2013, p. 333). Similarly, Bertone et al. (2011) found a tendency for recruitment and selection processes to be fairly uniform across state and local government organisations, where applicants were required to respond to lengthy selection criteria, a process that many new immigrants were unfamiliar with, having had no such experience in their home countries.

Specifically, applicants lacked knowledge about how to write in a format that was acceptable to government bureaucracies, including understanding of ‘bureaucratic lingo’ (Bertone et al., 2011). Similarly, as Manika said, the process of responding to lengthy selection criteria through standardised recruitment processes was perceived as onerous, particularly in light of inconsistencies between job descriptions and job roles. Barriers within job application and selection processes are discussed further in Section 8.3 below.

### **Implicit bias/discrimination in selection processes**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the non-recognition of overseas qualifications has been recognised as another key employment barrier for job seekers from minority-group barriers (Berman et al., 2008; Bertone et al., 2005; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006, 2007). Similarly, in this study, council employees discussed challenges in the recognition of overseas qualifications. For example, Mark said:

I imagine some managers will look at a resume and even though someone’s got a right to work in Australia would say well they’ve got no local experience in this market. (HR Advisor, 6 months at council)

Mark attributed challenges in employing newly arrived immigrants/migrants to lack of local work experience. On the one hand, having local work experience is favourable to employers where experiences in working within Australian workplaces and ‘job-ready skills’ might translate into enhanced employment outcomes. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 and despite a national policy emphasis on ‘skilled migration’, there is evidence that immigrants/migrants from non-western backgrounds face particular challenges in having overseas skills and experiences recognised (Bertone et al., 2005; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2006).

The non-recognition of overseas qualifications has also been linked to discrimination in some studies. For example, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) found that Black Africans (a visible minority group in Australia) expressed concerns when equivalent overseas experience, however impressive and well regarded, was not considered in job application and selection processes. By contrast, studies have shown that immigrants from English-speaking backgrounds fare better in the labour market,

which has been attributed to qualifications that can be more easily recognised (Bertone et al., 2005; Cobb-Clark, 2000; Hugo, 2004; S. Richardson et al., 2004). As discussed further below, such practices can be attributed to implicit bias and/or more direct forms of discrimination, where people from western countries have relatively unquestioned mobility in the western labour market (Sassen, 1998).

Alongside the non-recognition of overseas qualifications, participants gave examples of other forms of implicit bias in selection practices. For example, Simone spoke about a tendency for managers to recruit employees from similar backgrounds.

If someone leaves [a team leader or manager] will say we need another person just like that. Well, do we? Do we really need the exact same demographic, age, gender, nationality or do we need someone who's really going to mould that position and what do we want from that person? (HR manager, 1 year at council)

Simone described how implicit bias could operate in selection practices. Importantly, she indicated that managers were likely to select applications from similar backgrounds (such as age, gender and nationality) to those already employed in organisation. In her work on gendered and racialised norms within racialised space, Essed (2005, p. 228) has used the concept of cultural 'cloning' to describe a preference towards 'sameness' within recruitment practices. She argued that 'cloning' is 'a well-established practice for securing privilege', particularly among top managers who consciously or unconsciously recruit and mould people like themselves (Essed, 2005, p. 228). Similarly, other scholars have argued that a preference for sameness within recruitment is a form of subtle discrimination, where employers commonly recruit applicants by word-of-mouth referrals and networks (Brief et al., 2005; Rangarajan & Black, 2007). On the other hand, there was a degree of ambiguity about the nature of bias and racial discrimination (either implicit or explicit) in recruitment practices. For example, Sonia and Josh said:

Sonia: I think it happens, it definitely happens, yeah. It happened. I was part of a process where it did happen, whether it was because of racism I don't know... (Diversity practitioner, 7 years at council)

Josh: It can be quite hard. That person didn't get the job. Well was it based on their skills? Did they not meet the requirements of the job? Were there better candidates? It can be very hard to identify that they didn't get the job because it was based on discrimination. (Diversity practitioner, 2 years at council)

Josh and Sonia spoke to difficulties in proving cases of racial discrimination in selection/interview processes. As discussed in Chapter 2, employment discrimination can be difficult to prove, where, in the Australian context, the burden of proof rests with plaintiffs, who are required to provide evidence that discrimination has occurred (Hunyor, 2003). As Josh said, identifying racial discrimination in employment is particularly difficult, where discrimination (i.e. making distinctions between candidates on a range of characteristics) is common practice. Craig provided a more direct example of how discrimination might operate in selection processes:

I've been pushing very, very hard to be able to be allowed to use Congolese, Afghans, whoever that come here to put them on as full time employees. Our systems don't allow that to be done very easily, and I'm right in the middle of one of those right at the moment, where I've got a guy who'll be sitting at this table next Monday for an interview...Like he should get the job, but he won't...Because his interview technique will be terrible, because of his English and so forth...But he's a magnificent worker (Senior manager, 10 years at council).

Craig spoke about difficulties in moving casual employees into permanent and or/full-time employment. Specifically, Craig said that lack of English-language proficiency prevents candidates from recently arrived immigrant/migrant backgrounds in performing well in formal interviews. Importantly, this was despite the fact that the employee was already casually employed within council and had demonstrated his capability ('he's a magnificent worker'). Similarly, other scholars have found that high levels of English proficiency were often expected, even when such skills were not required for the role. For instance, in a study of unemployment among immigrants in Finland, Valtonen (2004) found that an over-emphasis on English language proficiency functioned as a monopoly type mechanism that worked to reinforce labour market exclusion. As Craig indicated, similar mechanisms were also at play within local government, where current interview processes included significant barriers for applicants from minority-group backgrounds in seeking

permanent employment ('our systems don't allow that to be done very easily'). Given these issues, Craig offered an alternative selection process based on performance.

Well we've got to change our work, our interview practice. Maybe if we got them out there to dig a hole, so there's the shovel, go dig a hole. I know who'll win...So we've got to change our interview technique, not just have them sitting in here under pressure asking white man questions. (Senior manager, 10 years at council)

Craig said that interview practices had become overly formalised and confined to dominant cultural norms (i.e. high pressure environments with 'white man questions'). Similarly, Noon et al. (2013) found that standardised recruitment practices had led to over-cautiousness among managers, who have become more concerned with getting the process right, which ultimately worked against intended aims of merit-based recruitment. Similarly, Craig argued that current interview practices needed to change ('we've got to change our interview technique') in order to provide improved access to people from minority-group backgrounds in employment. As discussed further below, Craig's approach also aligned with more moderate forms of positive discrimination that encourages managers to consider 'what really constitutes the job requirements' (Noon, 2010, p. 732) so that candidates are assessed on their skills and abilities (i.e. suitability for the role) as opposed to acceptability (i.e. perceptions of 'organisational cultural fit').

On the whole, this section has examined a number of employment barriers within local council. Specifically, I found that despite an emphasis on merit-based recruitment, selection practices could function as a form of organisational gate keeping. There was also an expectation that candidates would 'fit-in' to predefined cultural, which were described as being ingrained within large bureaucracies such as local government. Standardised recruitment practices, such as responding to lengthy selection criteria, also presented barriers for job applicants from minority-group backgrounds, as has been observed in other research (Bertone et al., 2011). This was seen as particularly concerning when selection criterion did not match requirements for the job role. Other participants considered a tendency for managers to favour applications who had experience in working within Australian workplace contexts. However, I have proposed that such requirements may be more readily applied to applicants from non-English speaking countries. As several studies have shown,

immigrants from western countries have greater mobility in the labour market (Sassen, 1998), due to qualifications and experience that can be more easily recognised (Bertone et al., 2005; Cobb-Clark, 2000; Hugo, 2004; S. Richardson et al., 2004). In the context of workplace survey data outlined in Chapter 6, immigrants from English-speaking countries were significantly over-represented at both Stoneway City Council and Council Shire, in contrast people from non-English speaking countries. Although more research is needed to examine why this is the case, these data suggest a tendency for requirements of local work experience to be unfairly applied to applicants from non-English speaking countries.

This section has also considered other forms of bias within recruitment practices. For instance, participants indicated that managers were likely to select applications from similar backgrounds (such as age, gender and nationality) to those already employed within council. I have linked this phenomenon to Essed's (2005, p. 228) concept of cultural 'cloning', along with other literature (Brief et al., 2005; Rangarajan & Black, 2007), which has defined a preference for sameness within recruitment as a subtle form of discrimination. On the other hand, there was ambiguity about what constituted racism and discrimination in recruitment processes, where making distinctions between candidates is common practice. Despite these ambiguities, it was evident that newly arrived immigrants, despite being casually employed within council, were unlikely to gain permanent employment due to lack of proficiency in English-language skills. While these requirements could be attributed to deficiencies in human capital, the fact that the applicant was already employed casually within council (and considered by the manager to be the best person for the role) indicates that high-level English language skills were not required for the role and/or could be learned or improved on the job as with other skills. Currently, however, a reliance on English-language proficiency within current interview practices unfairly disadvantaged applicants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Consistent with other studies (Noon et al., 2013), I have proposed that standardised recruitment practices can work against intended aims of merit-based recruitment, themes that are examined further in the next section.



### **8.3 Strategies to Address Employment Barriers**

This section draws on ethnographic observations of implementing the Workplace Assessment Tool at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, along with interview data. It aims to provide further insight into the nature of employment barriers within public sector organisations such as local government, alongside strategies to address them. Specifically, I discuss job advertisement, application and selection practices at Stoneway City Council and discussion of strategies to increase workforce diversity at Corrington Shire.

#### **Advertising practices at Stoneway City Council**

At Stoneway City Council, we began discussions of recruitment practices towards the end of spring in 2010. We met in one of council's larger meeting rooms, with a large, wooden table that could seat around 20 people. Josh, Tim, Victoria, Sonia, Frank, Andrew and Mark were there, along with Allison from communications, Lynn, Anthony and me. The aim of the meeting was to discuss barriers in recruiting applications from minority-group backgrounds, along with strategies to address them.

Starting with the job application process, HR explained that Stoneway City Council, like many other large bureaucracies, had recently started using Internet-based job application tools. This meant that job seekers needed to apply for roles via an online application system, although applications were still received by email. Reception staff had also been instructed to direct enquiries about the application process to the job application website. Andrew explained that a separate application process was in place for selected council roles (e.g. school crossing supervisors and some outdoor roles). These alternative recruitment channels included holding information nights for prospective candidates and allowing those interested in positions to complete application forms on the night or post them in at a later date. Allison added that due to the community-facing nature of such roles, applications from people who spoke a language other than English were well regarded. Nonetheless, application via the Internet was the preferred way to deal with the majority of roles within council and an increasing number of job applications received by council.

For some of the diversity practitioners in the room, this approach was problematic, where the introduction of complex online application systems had inadvertently and disproportionately affected job seekers from minority-group backgrounds. Victoria, who worked closely with the community and had been building links with local employment agencies to assist people in accessing and applying for jobs, said that the current system ‘was not working well’ for diverse communities. She indicated this was not just evident in council, but was a problem among a range of employers within the area. Tim mentioned that travel was an issue for the Aboriginal community, and was commonly not taken into consideration. Frank recognised the importance of considering such barriers, though explained that a significant amount of work had already been invested in ‘streamlining’ the application process through the online site. He also reiterated that HR had limited resources to deal with the ‘overwhelming’ number of applications. Frank’s comments spoke to realities within the labour market (i.e. increasing job applications) and resource constraints in managing increased labour market flows. However, such practices, which have elsewhere been described as the ‘hyper-formalisation’ of recruitment (Noon et al., 2013), had the potential to create further barriers for members of minority groups, who lacked familiarity with complex on-line application processes.

Following from the discussion about barriers introduced by the online recruitment system, the assessment committee explored alternative strategies to support greater accessibility and inclusion among diverse groups, such as:

- Including images of people from diverse backgrounds in promotional material.
- Introducing statements of commitment to diversity in job advertisements.
- Targeting Indigenous and ethnic press and radio.
- Expanding email advertising of job vacancies through local networks and job service providers.
- Reassuring jobseekers that applications can be taken manually (not just on email or via the online system).
- Encouraging applicants to seek assistance through direct contact or by telephone.
- Transferring enquiries from reception to staff members rather than directing

candidates to the website.

In relation to job advertisement processes, HR indicated that it was unusual to include images when advertising positions. However, the group agreed that workforce heterogeneity could be better represented on the council website, such as through inclusion of staff from minority group backgrounds on the job application site. There is evidence that similar advertising strategies have had effectiveness in increasing employment among people from minority-group backgrounds (Avery, 2003; Gelfand et al., 2005; L. A. Perkins, Thomas, & Taylor, 2000). For example, Perkins et al. (2000) found that depicting racial heterogeneity within job advertisements (see Figure 8.1 as an example) influenced perceptions of job seekers, including feelings of compatibility with the organisation. Specifically, these effects were more pronounced among black rather than white applicants. Importantly, the authors found that introducing racial heterogeneity within job advertisements may be a useful strategy for employers wanting to increase workforce diversity without creating backlash effects amongst majority group members (e.g. whites) (L. A. Perkins et al., 2000).

In another study, Avery (2003) found a similar link between heterogeneous job ads and organisational attractiveness. However, in this case, black applicants were only attracted to organisations that depicted heterogeneity at supervisory levels. These findings indicate that black applicants may be more sensitive to the actual versus perceived commitments to diversity (Ahmed, 2012), as reflected through representation of workforce heterogeneity at all levels of the organisation (Avery, 2003). Similarly, displaying employee profiles of staff from minority group backgrounds on the job application website was important in establishing Stoneway City Council's commitment to workforce heterogeneity, although degree to which profiling of workforce diversity extended to employees in managerial roles was less clear.



**Figure 8-1** Job advertisement featuring an employee from a minority-group background.  
Source: SEEK (2014).

Along with including images of people from minority group backgrounds in recruitment advertising, the assessment committee considered where jobs were being advertised. Andrew indicated that due to the cost of print media, the large majority of council roles were advertised through online media. However, he added that a number of roles were still advertised in the local newspaper as well as mainstream newspapers, a process that was largely determined by managers and departmental budgets. Andrew also said that some roles were advertised through non-mainstream media outlets, such as the Koori Mail. Josh asked whether this applied only to jobs that were ‘identified’<sup>84</sup> or had a direct role in working with the Aboriginal community. Andrew responded that yes, this was generally the case, thereby reflecting a common phenomenon within public sector agencies where targeted recruitment strategies rarely extended beyond community-focused (and in many cases, non-managerial) roles.

Kalev (2009) found a tendency for women and people from minority-group backgrounds to be concentrated in lower-level jobs due to a range of factors, including recruitment processes. She found that such practices commonly produced ‘glass cages’ that worked to ‘institutionalise informal barriers to advancement’ through limiting visibility and the establishment of networks among women and

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<sup>84</sup> Identified positions are positions where an employer can identify that a position is filled only by a person with a particular attribute, such as an application from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background (Australian Public Service Commission, 2015).

minority-group members (Kalev, 2009, p. 1592). Additionally, Kalev (2009) found that the segregation of job roles often worked to reinforce stereotypes about the competencies of employees in lower status roles, as has been shown in other research scholars (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Ridgeway, 2001). Similarly, and despite the fact that Stoneway City Council had made some important strides in advertising roles in non-mainstream media channels (such as the Koori Mail), restricting such targeted recruitment strategies to only community-focused positions had most likely limited workforce heterogeneity in other areas of the organisation, including in senior roles (Avery, 2003).

Leading from these discussions, Tim suggested that a good way of reaching the Indigenous community was via community radio. Although announcing jobs on the radio was unconventional within mainstream contexts, Tim explained that it was fairly ‘common practice’ within Indigenous networks. Similarly, I proposed that HR could expand current email networks as a further, and largely inexpensive, strategy to access closely networked groups. Following from our conversations, promoting council roles through community broadcasters and expanding current email networks<sup>85</sup> became action items on the Workplace Assessment Tool. Adopting non-conventional recruitment strategies, such as using community radio and email networks to promote council jobs, appeared to be a simple, yet relatively powerful practice in attracting applicants from minority-group backgrounds to work at council. Further, as discussed in Chapter 4, such mechanisms have the potential to disrupt dominant routes of power and privilege that reinforce workforce homogeneity (Brief et al., 2005; Essed, 2005; Gelfand et al., 2005; Rangarajan & Black, 2007).

### **Selection processes at Stoneway City Council**

A further meeting was scheduled a couple of weeks later, in the same meeting room, to continue discussions about recruitment practices at Stoneway City Council. In contrast to the last few meetings, less assessment committee members attended. However, there was still a strong presence from HR, including Andrew and Frank, along with diversity practitioners Josh, Victoria and Sonia. This time, discussion focused on selection processes at Stoneway City Council. Frank explained that the

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<sup>85</sup> A specific example included adding Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse agencies and networks to a council newsletter that was circulated to employment networks on a weekly basis.

process for shortlisting applications could be improved, although resources were an issue. Specifically, he gave the example of a recently advertised reception/customer service position as a way of demonstrating how bias could be inadvertently introduced into the selection process due to a lack of resources. The role was a permanent part-time position, which he said was particularly popular for women and that council had received hundreds of applications. He explained that because of the high volume of applications, those that were not well presented or had not adequately addressed the selection criteria would have been eliminated during the short-listing process.

Frank's comments seemed to confirm studies discussed earlier which identified that skilled migrant workers feared any small errors in their applications would be seen by employers as a sign of incompetence and result in their applications being immediately rejected (Bertone et al., 2011). Frank suggested that council could make improvements to the short-listing process, such as adding a statement of commitment (later noted in the action plan as a 'one-liner') to diversity in council's recruitment and selection policy. Frank also suggested introducing training in implicit bias reduction within existing recruitment training for managers.

Another more contentious strategy discussed at the meeting involved de-identifying job applications, including removing demographic information (such as names, age, and gender) from job applications prior to the shortlisting process. This approach was included in the Workplace Assessment Tool in response to research (outlined in Chapter 4) demonstrating evidence of discrimination in selection processes (Booth et al., 2009). During the meeting, Josh and I drew on this research to provide a rationale for de-identifying job applications during shortlisting processes. However, some members of the group questioned removing identifying material from job applications. They articulated that they did not see value in removing candidate names because they did not agree that bias had been occurring on the basis of surnames. For example, some members of the group said, 'but surely that's not what happens at Stoneway City Council?'. Such reactive sentiments have been alluded to in other research, where speaking about racism has a tendency to cause defensiveness and result in a process of place defending (Nelson, 2013). Josh and Sonia suggested that the process could be trialled and reminded the group that the goal of the

assessment process was to trial innovative approaches that would both increase workforce diversity while simultaneously addressing racism. However, both at the time, and later, strategies such as de-identifying job applications, were met with resistance.

I observed that resistance, both to this strategy, as well as others discussed as part of the Workplace Assessment Tool, was particularly evident toward the end of the assessment process, when it came down to allocating tasks on the action plan. This was demonstrated during one of our last assessment committee meetings, attended by Andrew, Frank and Mark (from HR), along with Josh, Victoria, Tim and Sonia (diversity practitioners) and Lynn and Anthony (senior managers). Just before people began to arrive, Josh and I waited outside the meeting room, held in a large council room with bi-folding doors and an attached kitchen that could cater for hundreds, waiting for the projector to be fixed. As we talked, with a cup of tea and biscuit in hand, it was clear that Josh was exhausted, not just as a result for the assessment process but other aspects of implementing *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*. Josh had met earlier with HR and gone through the draft version of the action plan, which had also been circulated to other members of the assessment committee. In particular, he felt despondent about the low priorities given to some of the action items. Looking at the draft plan, I also noticed that HR had written emphatically ‘no, not possible’ against the action item of de-identification in a draft version of the action plan. I was eager to know more, but with the projector now working and people starting to arrive for the meeting, we made our way inside.

During the meeting, I sensed that energy levels were beginning to wane. This was not altogether surprising, given that some participants, particularly HR and the diversity practitioners in the group, had been involved with the initial piloting of the Workplace Assessment Tool (discussed in Chapter 5). Therefore, for these participants in particular, the process had stretched over months not weeks. Despite his own energy levels, Josh did his best to rally the group, saying ‘we’re nearly there!’ and using jokes and to lighten the mood and work through people’s resistances. Lea (2008, p. 218) has talked about the role of ‘professional camaraderie, banter and mild-mannered brinksmanship’ in institutional life where joking and banter occurs alongside more ‘hard going and...gruelling’ moments within bureaucratic processes. However, it seemed that despite Josh’s best efforts, it was evident that some of the

more contentious strategies (such as de-identifying job applications) were not going to be supported. Although arguments made against such strategies, such as resource issues, were valid, it was also evident that some of the group were not convinced that discrimination on the basis of surnames was occurring at Stoneway City Council. In the end, it was decided not to implement strategies to de-identify of candidate details during selection processes and instead focus on providing further training to managers on implicit bias.

### **Strategies to address employment barriers at Corrington Shire**

At Corrington Shire, we commenced discussions about employment barriers during the peak of summer. One such meeting was held on a typically scorching hot summer's day in February 2011. I had left early for Corrington Shire to beat the heat and arrive in time for the meeting, which was located a few hours journey from Melbourne. As I made my way to the council offices on the train, I noticed a group of young people dressed in shorts and free flowing clothing; possibly backpackers on their way to earn some extra money through fruit picking or farm work. Seated across from me was an Afghani or Iraqi man and next to him, sat an African mother and her two young children. The children had already become restless as we waited for the train to depart from the station.

About an hour into the journey, an older man of European heritage sat down next to the woman and her children and started a conversation in English. He asked about her travels and the woman replied that she had been in Melbourne to visit her sister who was sick. The man asked her if she was employed in fruit and vegetable picking. She replied 'no, but my husband does'. Fruit and vegetable picking is a common occupation in rural and regional Australia and has long attracted people from a range of backgrounds, including new immigrants to Australia, travellers and young people seeking to earn money or experience farm life. According to the Australian National Harvest Guide (2014), harvesting of fruit and vegetable crops can provide 'an opportunity to combine seasonal harvest work with travel around Australia'. However, the guide also warns that such work 'can be repetitious and tiring', where the majority of harvesting work is conducted 'outdoors with little or no protection from the weather' and in locations where 'extremely high temperatures are common' (National Harvest Guide, 2014). These are conditions that many, including newly



arrived immigrants and foreign workers on temporary short-term visas<sup>86</sup>, are willing to tolerate. As Corrington Shire was a major employer in the area, I reflected on discussions I had overheard on the train. I considered how employment practices in fruit and vegetable picking differed from the council's. Were they a model for non-standard practices that the council could follow? Or were workers from diverse backgrounds forced into unsafe and unprotected industries like fruit picking because of employment barriers at places like the council?

As we neared our destination, I received a text from Jane saying she would pick me up from the station, a welcome gesture given the increasing heat outside. On the way to the council offices in the car, Jane spoke about recent flooding in the area. Despite it being summer, there had been higher than average rainfall that had led to flooding in a number of areas, including in town. Jane said the flooding had had a significant impact on the community and indicated that council had played a key role in responding to the floods. In turn, these factors had slowed down implementation of *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*.

Once inside, I made myself a cup of tea before returning to meet Jane who led me upstairs to our meeting room. The meeting was well attended. Alongside Jane and myself, Simone, Craig, Andrea, Alexandria, Peter, Rebecca and Johnny were also in attendance. Much like the meetings that had taken place at Stoneway City Council, the purpose of our discussion was to examine the nature of employment barriers at Corrington Shire and strategies to overcome them. However, there were also some important contextual differences between the council sites. For instance, during this meeting, as with others, senior leaders were the first to admit that the largely Anglo-Australian demographic of council was not currently representative of the diversity in the community. However, it was clear that this was something that Corrington Shire desired to change. For example, Craig spoke passionately about his vision for making some of his casual workers from newly arrived immigrant backgrounds into permanent and/or full-time employees. Specifically, he was eager to get other senior

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<sup>86</sup> There are conflicting views on the employment of foreign workers on temporary short-term visas to address labour shortages in rural industries such as agriculture. Some people are supportive of these moves (Gill, 2015) while others, such as unions, have come out strongly against further changes to facilitate more temporary visas for foreign workers, given their preference to maintain jobs for Australian workers (Medhora, 2015).

leaders on board to develop a policy to positively discriminate<sup>87</sup> in favour of people from minority group backgrounds, like his casual workers. Further, and in the context of barriers discussed in Section 8.2 above, Craig expressed a need to consider alternative recruitment strategies for employees who lacked English proficiency and skills in interview techniques, to not have to ‘go through the normal system’.

Simone from HR agreed that more could be done in terms of ‘thinking outside the box’ to ensure that recruitment practices did not disadvantage applicants from minority-group backgrounds. Craig pre-empted potential resistance during the meeting, saying that council would need to send a message to employees ‘that we’re fair dinkum<sup>88</sup>, we have a policy on that and we will stand by our policy.’ As discussed in Chapter 7, Craig’s comments indicated the criticality of espoused values and beliefs, where leadership and a strong sense of organisational commitment to workforce diversity could help to counter resistance (Schein, 2004).

### **Support for and resistance to positive discrimination at Corrington Shire**

Following the meeting at Corrington Shire, I reflected on how verbal commitments expressed by senior leaders, such as to increase the diversity of the largely Anglo-Australian workforce via a positive discrimination policy, might be translated into practice. As Craig indicated, a possible route might include translating commitments to diversity into writing (Ahmed et al., 2006), such as through developing a positive discrimination policy that was endorsed by council and then implemented. Both historically and recently, positive discrimination (also termed affirmative action) has provoked strong opposition, in contrast to other ‘softer’ measures (S. M. Collins, 2011; Noon, 2010).

As discussed in Chapter 4, part of the appeal of diversity management discourse and practice is its use of ‘softer’ language and its emphasis on the inclusion of all groups (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000). However, a shift in language and terminology has also raised concerns about the extent to which diversity management has detracted from ‘harder’ practices, such as positive discrimination (Noon, 2010; Wrench, 2005). In the

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<sup>87</sup> Noon (2010, p. 730) defines positive discrimination as measure to redress disadvantage based on a range of characteristics (such as sex, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and age) in the decision-making processes.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Fair dinkum’ is an Australian colloquium that relates to being ‘fair’ or ‘true’.

context of persistent inequality and injustice, which Winant (2006, p. 988) has described as a ‘contradictory combination of progress and stasis in racial institutions’, scholars such as Noon (2010, p. 728) have re-articulated the case for positive discrimination<sup>89</sup> as ‘a viable and necessary policy intervention’ needed to speed up progress in workplace equality. In line with these issues, in a later interview, Craig restated his intention to develop a policy that would allow council to positively discriminate in favour of under-represented groups:

[Policies would] definitely need the structural support all the way from the top, from the councillors. That's the only way the union will agree with me. The union said, if you put in a council policy that says you can [positively] discriminate against one per cent, he said then I'll back off...So he's given me a bit of lee way that way, so and I just haven't got time, it's not my area to be out there fighting policies like that. That's where it's up to [the program coordinator]. But [the union official] would back off if we wrote it in as a council policy, that we do have that sort of latitude. So you do need that support right from the councillors, and obviously the CEO needs to be on board with it as well. (Senior manager, 10 years at council)

As shown in this statement, Craig’s personal commitment to workforce diversity was evident. Indeed, Craig indicated that he had already taken steps toward developing a positive-discrimination policy, such as through speaking to the CEO and union representatives. The role of unions in supporting or impeding diversity policies has been recognised in other research. For example, in their study of organisational barriers to workforce diversity, Rangarajan and Black (2007, p. 256) found that unions were strong supporters of civil service regulations mandating hiring and promotion based on ‘objective’ testing. However, the authors have argued that such practices presented barriers for managers trying to implement strategies to employ minorities (Rangarajan & Black, 2007). Similarly, Craig said that the union representative would be opposed to policies that favoured a particular racial/ethnic group, however he indicated that the representative would ‘back off’ if the policy were supported by council ‘all the way from the top’.

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<sup>89</sup> Noon (2010) has made an important distinction between positive discrimination and positive action, where the latter approach includes strategies aimed at supporting under-represented groups in the workplace, such as targeted recruitment (discussed in Section 8.2). According to Noon (2010), the two concepts are often conflated, where there is generally more support for positive action than positive discrimination.

Despite Craig's commitment and active role in initiating discussions among other senior leaders and external bodies (such as unions), he also implied that progressing the policy was not part of his role ('it's not my area to be out there fighting policies like that'). Rather, he saw this as a role of the program coordinator, whom he identified elsewhere in the interview as a 'champion' and better placed to undertake such work. However, it was interesting that Craig did not see himself as a diversity champion, given his enthusiasm, vision and seniority for a positive discrimination policy within council. As discussed further in the next chapter, organisational leaders and managers, along with other change agents, such as diversity practitioners, played a crucial role in supporting diversity initiatives, thus demonstrating the important role of agency, along with structural mechanisms such as policies as Craig indicated.

In the context of Craig's comments and commitments made by other senior leaders to increase workforce diversity at Corrington Shire, I was keen to 'follow' these statements of commitment 'around' (Ahmed, 2006) these issues in interviews with other council employees. Specifically, I was interested to understand the extent to which alternative recruitment strategies and/or positive discrimination policies might be more broadly supported, or alternatively, resisted at Corrington Shire. In the context of these questions, Paul and Simone, both senior leaders at Corrington Shire, said:

Paul: I think that...the secret to successful local government is I think for us to become more representative of the communities we serve...I'm not advocating quotas, but what I do think is that we need to be far more inclusive of that, because that will then enable us to then hopefully provide services in a much more reflective way. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Simone: Well, the Local Government Act says that everybody employed at council should be employed on merit based...I think the resistance might come from the fact that people would think well, I had to go through this process, I had to sit there with three people. So it's about getting them to see that what we want is for a more diverse workplace we have to consider that there are some roadblocks for certain people to go through that process. (HR manager, 1 year at council)

Consistent with arguments presented in Chapter 6, Paul agreed that council should be more representative of the community, even positioning this as the ‘secret to success’ within local government. However, despite his vocal support for increased workforce diversity, Paul indicated that he was not ‘advocating quotas’. These comments were followed by the somewhat less robust assertion that ‘being inclusive’ would ‘hopefully’ lead to enhanced service delivery. Ahmed (2010, p. 200) has used the term ‘hopeful performative’ to describe a phenomenon drawn from positive psychology whereby subjects repeat happy words in order to talk themselves into being happy. Elsewhere, Ahmed (2012, p. 67) has linked this to diversity practice, where she has said that, ‘diversity, as a speech act might be understood as generating its own promise’. A similar aspiration was evident in Paul’s statement, where support for ‘harder’ measures such as quotas was replaced with notions of inclusivity and hope. However, Paul’s statement was ‘non-performative’ (Ahmed, 2006, p. 104), where a desire for inclusion was unquestionably linked with enhanced effectiveness and service delivery, with no mention of how such a state would be achieved and maintained, such as through policy and program measures.

Paul’s comments also highlighted a common misconception that positive discrimination is only about enforcing quotas, including related assumptions that, ‘an unqualified (or less qualified) person from an under-represented social groups will be given preferential treatment over a more qualified person from a dominant social group’ (Noon, 2010, p. 730). Noon (2010, p. 731) has argued that such misconceptions neglect new and more moderate forms of positive-discrimination, such as the ‘tie-break’ and ‘threshold’ systems. Under the tie-break system, applicants from under-represented groups are only favoured when there are two or more equally qualified candidates, while in the threshold system, all candidates are required to achieve minimum qualification standards, whereby managers can then opt to favour candidates from disadvantaged groups (Noon, 2010). In both approaches, principles of ‘merit-based recruitment’ are maintained. Simone stated that ‘merit-based’ recruitment was a legislative requirement within local government. Like Craig, she anticipated that alternative recruitment practices (e.g. not having to sit through a formal interview process) would be met with resistance. Therefore, Simone considered that such strategies would need to be accompanied by strong leadership and communication in order to counter resistance among employees (‘it’s about

getting them to see that what we want is a more diverse workplace’). As discussed further in the next chapter, the engagement of senior leaders, managers and other change agents is critical in countering resistance to workforce diversity initiatives and maintaining change. However, as I discuss, agents can also influence change in negative ways, such as through active and passive forms of resistance.

### **Progressing change or getting stuck in the process?**

This section has focused on observations of council employee discussions about strategies to address barriers in employment for under-represented groups. In particular, I have discussed job advertisement, application and selection practices and other strategies to increase workforce diversity, including positive discrimination, at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire.

At Stoneway City Council, alongside healthy and robust debates and long lists of action items, the conversation had stalled during several stages of the assessment process. In particular, attempts to change current recruitment practices (and particularly those requiring additional resources or structural level change) were met with resistance, or a definite ‘no’ (i.e. trialling a process of de-identifying job applications). Such resistance stemmed not only from concerns about additional work loads/and or resources but denial about racism, such as through repeated assertions that discrimination on the basis of surnames ‘did not happen’ at Stoneway City Council, despite it being prevalent elsewhere (Booth et al., 2009).

Additionally, and although a range of alternative strategies to promote access and equity in recruitment processes were proposed and supported, these measures were generally less resource intensive and focused at the individual level (e.g. training). For example, according to the draft action plan, actions included adding diversity profiles to the council website, increasing email networks, adding a ‘one-liner’ to council’s recruitment and selection policy and conducting diversity training on implicit bias for managers. On the one hand, a preference for actions that could be more easily implemented (i.e. more ‘do-able’ (Prasad et al., 1997)) reflected realities within the labour market (i.e. an increasing volume of job applicants) and related resource constraints. On the other hand, while technological advances had helped to alleviate some of these pressures (such as through the introduction of online job application

systems), it seemed that the standardisation of recruitment practices presented new barriers for applicants from minority-group backgrounds. On the whole, training in implicit bias reduction was favoured over more systemic practices such as de-identifying job applications. While changing attitudes and behaviours at the individual level is important, research has shown that efforts to moderate managerial bias through diversity training are only effective when other accountability mechanisms are established (Kalev et al., 2006; Prasad et al., 1997; Trener & Paradies, 2012).

Despite these challenges, I also observed high levels of commitment to workforce diversity at Stoneway City Council. Commitment to diversity was evident in the fact that senior leaders continued to attend meetings and demonstrated their support through the provision of additional resources. For example, the employment of a diversity practitioner (from a minority-group background) within HR to further Stoneway City Council's goals towards workforce diversity was implemented as a key action arising from the assessment process. There was also a sense that resistances intensified as the group moved from abstract aims and aspirations to the 'messiness' and realities of 'doing' diversity in practice (Prasad et al., 1997). In other words, resistance was not necessarily problematic in itself, in that it provided an avenue through which the tensions associated with diversity may be worked through and potentially overcome. On the whole, and as discussed further in the next chapter, I found that visible commitment by leaders and other diversity champions, along with the allocation of additional resources, had the potential to create more systemic level change over the longer term (Orlikowski, 1996).

At Corrington Shire, I observed that different geographical and social-economic contexts impacted on the nature of employment barriers, as shown through my observations of conversations about fruit and vegetable picking that I had overheard on the train. Given that Corrington Shire was a major employer in the area, I considered how harvesting practices differed from those within council, asking whether such practices were a model for non-standard practices that the council could follow, or whether workers from minority-group backgrounds were forced into unsafe and unprotected industries because of potential barriers at council. As with Stoneway City Council, I found that standardised recruitment practices at Corrington Shire (such as formal interview practices) disadvantaged applicants from minority-

group backgrounds who lacked English skills. As such, these practices impacted on their ability to gain permanent and/or full-time employment at council. Like at Stoneway City Council, I also observed high levels of commitment, such as support from senior managers to alter current recruitment practices and introduce policies such as positive-discrimination to increase the largely Anglo-Australian composition of the workforce.

In some ways, the buoyant optimism expressed by managers at Corrington Shire contrasted with the more 'gruelling' nature of discussion and resistances that had emerged at Stoneway City Council (Lea, 2008). Conversely, despite stated commitments by senior leaders at Corrington Shire, there were a number of unanswered questions about the extent to which policies such as positive discrimination would be supported, where the policies themselves and related politics of resistance (as observed at Stoneway City Council), still required a considerable degree of 'working through'. For example, would the whole leadership team support a positive discrimination policy? How would it be communicated to the workforce, whose composition currently was largely Anglo-Australian? Would resistances emerge in the hard slog of implementing the policy, as had been the case at Stoneway City Council? Returning to Ahmed (2006), there was a need to continue to follow commitments to diversity around in order to establish where they would end up. On the whole, I observed that presently, there were gaps between statements of commitment and practice, where it was unclear who would drive policy development and implementation and counter strong forms of resistance that policies of policy discrimination commonly provoke (S. M. Collins, 2011; Noon, 2010).

## **8.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the nature of employment barriers at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire, with a focus on recruitment. It has also examined strategies to address current employment barriers through observations of implementing the Workplace Assessment Tool at both councils.

At both councils, interview data revealed that employment practices fell heavily on the mantra of 'merit-based' recruitment (i.e. selecting the 'best person' for the job regardless of race, ethnicity, age etc.). While such approaches have traditionally been



established in response to equal opportunity agendas, consistent with other studies (Bertone et al., 2011; Noon, 2010), I found that standardised recruitment practices commonly disadvantaged applicants from minority group backgrounds. Further, selection often functioned as a form of organisational gate keeping, where there was an expectation that candidates would 'fit-in' to predefined cultural norms.

This chapter revealed other forms of bias in the recruitment process, including a preference for candidates with 'local' work experience and a tendency for recruiting people from similar backgrounds to those already employed within council. It was also evident that newly arrived immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, despite being casually employed within council, were unlikely to gain permanent employment due to poor English-skills that was needed to succeed in standardised interview processes. In the context of literature discussed in Chapter 3, I have considered that such disparities could be attributed to shortages in human capital, however the fact that employees were already casually employed within council, indicates that other factors, including subtle or indirect forms of discrimination, were at play. Moreover, I have questioned to extent to which justifications about local work experience might only extend to people from non-English speaking countries, who generally have less mobility in the labour market (Sassen, 1998).

This chapter has also drawn on observations of discussions of strategies to address employment barriers at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire. At Stoneway City Council, discussions focused on the job advertisement, application and selection process. I observed that while a number of alternative recruitment strategies were proposed and supported, attempts to substantially alter current practice were met with resistance. Partly, such resistances reflected realities in the labour market (e.g. increasing number of job applications) and technological changes (e.g. moving job application processes on-line), where resistance stemmed from concerns about additional work loads/and or resources. There was also denial about racism within selection processes. I have argued that strategies that were less resource intensive and worked at changing individual attitudes and behaviours were favoured over more systemic types of actions. Conversely, I found high levels of commitment among senior managers, who continued to attend meetings and provide additional resources to support organisational diversity goals. The critical role of leaders, managers and

other change agents is supporting workforce diversify and anti-racism is discussed in the next chapter.

This chapter has also shown important contextual variations between the council sites. For example, at Corrington Shire, discussions about employment barriers and strategies reflected different geographical and socio-economic contexts, where senior leaders were the first to admit that the council workforce was not currently representative of the diversity in the community. Therefore, strategies to address employment barriers at Corrington Shire included commitments to change the largely Anglo-Australian workforce demographic, such as through alternative recruitment strategies and positive-discrimination that would allow council to increase employment of under-represented groups. However, I observed that there were gaps between statements of commitment and practice, where it was unclear who would drive policy development and implementation and counter strong forms of resistance that policies of policy discrimination commonly provoke (S. M. Collins, 2011; Haley & Sidanius, 2006; Noon, 2010). Tensions between structure and agency are discussed further in the next chapter, Chapter 9.

## Chapter 9

# Agency: The Role of Organisational Leaders, Managers and Diversity Champions

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### 9.1 Introduction

So far, this thesis has established the case for change and examined the role of organisational culture within workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. It has also examined the nature of employment barriers, particularly in the area of recruitment, and potential strategies to address these barriers. This chapter draws on interview and ethnographic data to consider the role of agents in supporting and/or resisting organisational change at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire.

The first section of this chapter examines the role of organisational leaders in the change process, including the role of senior leaders in making support for diversity visible and advocating and allocating resources in support of diversity initiatives. The critical role of managers in influencing cultural change is also discussed.

The second section of this chapter investigates the role of other change agents and champions, particularly diversity practitioners employed at council in community-based positions. As will be discussed, diversity practitioners face unique challenges as change agents due to a desire to maintain close ties with diverse communities while navigating and seeking to create change within bureaucratic systems.

Finally, this chapter examines the process of creating broader support for workforce diversity and anti-racism through the notion of ownership. Specifically, I discuss challenges and possibilities for establishing responsibility and ownership for diversity issues among organisational members.

## 9.2 The Role of Organisational Leaders and Managers

The importance of senior leaders and managers in organisational change, including in workforce diversity, has been recognised across a broad range of disciplines (Ahmed, 2012; Bazzoli et al., 2004; Dreachslin, Weech-Maldonado, & Dansky, 2004; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Schein, 2004). In traditional change models, organisational leaders often initiate change and play a key role in developing and communicating goals, strategies and plans and associated change processes. Managers also play a critical role in influencing and embedding cultural change and countering resistance (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). For example, managers are commonly responsible for the successful implementation of change and often act as agents for building support and reducing resistance internally (Kotter, 1996). However, as this section will show, managers can also influence cultural change in a negative direction, through engaging in active and passive forms of resistance. Therefore, this section investigates the role of organisational leaders and managers in supporting, or alternatively, impeding workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention.

### Getting diversity issues on the agenda

Consistent with literature discussed above, a number of council employees spoke about the role of organisational leaders in harnessing support for diversity initiatives. For example, Liz acknowledged the role of councils in driving diversity agendas.

I don't know the history...but we've got some pretty active councillors...I think they've been probably one of the main drivers behind the work that we do. They really put it on the agenda and made important decisions. So in a local government setting, I think that that political will is important. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

According to Liz, politically active councillors played an essential role in getting diversity issues 'on the agenda' and were deemed important in driving change. The importance of external influences and political mandates in establishing and communicating a need and vision for change and overcoming resistance has been well established in academic literature (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Kezar, 2008; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Paradies, 2005). For example, in building support for anti-racism, Paradies (2005, p. 22) has argued that substantial 'political will' is required to

overcome opposition from powerful sections of the community who ‘currently benefit from racism’. Similarly, Kezar (2008) found that leaders with a high degree of influence and authority were critical to the institutionalisation of diversity agendas. In addition to establishing diversity agendas, leaders played a key role in supporting and establishing change coalitions and allocating resources, rewards and incentives (Kezar, 2008). However, Kezar (2008, p. 407) also found that while leaders can understand, advocate for and support diversity agendas, they are often not well equipped to dealing with the ‘politics of diversity’ including ‘trenchant resistance’ by other leaders and organisational members with differing interests and/or values. These issues are discussed further below.

### **Establishing visible support for commitments to diversity**

Many of the opportunities and challenges discussed in the previous section were evident in discussions held with council employees. Participants spoke about the importance of political will and active involvement by councillors as well as that of senior leadership. The CEO was viewed as critically important in leading change and elevating the visibility of council’s commitment to diversity. As Liz and Andrea explained:

Liz: I think the whole management team and one of the things from [the program] is that because we've had [the CEO's] support right from the beginning; he's been our biggest champion. That means a lot. So in some ways, the organisation can't question our commitment to it. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Andrea: I think they've been really good with it. Because we've had a CEO change it could really railroad it. Like if you've got the wrong CEO coming in afterwards, after a CEO who had been so embracing of this, that if you got someone in after that just went, ‘oh no, we don't need to do that’, then what are we doing? (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Liz identified the importance of having the whole senior leadership team on board from the very beginning. Additionally, Liz proposed that personal commitment by the CEO translated into organisational commitment (‘the organisation can’t question our commitment’). For Liz, the CEO’s advocacy helped to embed organisational commitments to diversity into existing values and beliefs (Schein, 2004). In this way,

she proposed that the CEO's commitment to diversity had permeated into other aspects of organisational culture (Ahmed, 2006). Ahmed (2006) has written that organisational commitments commonly manifest in documents. Elsewhere, Ahmed et al. (2006, p. 114) have said that if key goal of diversity work is to seek commitment to diversity 'in writing', it usually takes more 'commitment' by individuals, such as organisational leaders and diversity practitioners to turn these statements of commitment into action. The authors have argued that this 'catch up' game is one of the 'loops' and difficulties in intervention, where 'achieving commitment depends on commitment' (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 114).

In some ways, Liz's statement reflected the circular nature of organisational commitments to diversity, where essentially organisational commitment to diversity was somehow 'held' in place by the personal commitment of the CEO. Like Liz, Andrea found senior management to be supportive ('they've been really good with it') but considered that a change in leadership could stall workforce diversity goals. She gave the example of a new CEO coming into the organisation who might not see the value of diversity work ('if you got someone in after that just went, oh no, we don't need to do that'). Andrea's comments demonstrated that while individual commitment to diversity is important to organisational change, changes in leadership could affect the degree to which diversity is advocated. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2006, p. 114) have argued that while having leaders committed to diversity is critical within diversity work, finding leaders with the required level of commitment was often 'a matter of chance'. The authors have suggested appointing leaders on the basis of their commitment to workforce diversity, such as through including 'valuing' diversity as a requirement for appointment at senior levels, could be one approach to embed organisational commitment. As discussed below, such principles should also extend to managers who have an important, if not more vital, role in influencing cultural change.

Modelling visible support for diversity and anti-racism is a further way organisational leaders can initiate cultural change. As discussed in Chapter 7, visible support for diversity includes behaviours such as personally attending events and demonstrating actions to other employees that are consistent with organisational commitments to diversity. Scholars have noted the importance of visible support by senior leadership

in workforce diversity initiatives (Cox, 1993; Dreachslin, 1999; Narine & Persaud, 2003; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). According to Cox (1993), leaders can champion diversity by taking a strong personal stand on the need for change as well as role-modelling behaviour among other employees. Similarly, in this study, a number of council employees spoke about the importance of senior leaders role modelling the organisation's commitments to ant-racism and diversity. As John and Jane said:

John: Let's take a really easy example, where I think a few months back one of the groups tried to organise a morning tea or a lunch, which was multicultural where people brought different foods and I thought that was a great [idea], though unfortunately I couldn't make it. But it would be an expectation from the CEO down that the CEO would go and that his team would actually go and put in an appearance and actually partake. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Jane: I think managers need to lead by example as well. They need to walk the talk. They need to be setting an example and living by the values. (Diversity Practitioner, 4 years at council)

John gave the example of a multicultural morning tea where it was expected that the leadership team would attend. He indicated that the presence of leaders, including the CEO, would set an example to other employees about organisational values and expected behaviours. However, John was unable to attend the event, where his sense of regret revealed expectations about his own role as a senior leader and a gap between his commitments and actions ('unfortunately I couldn't make it'). Similarly to John, Jane felt managers needed to role model behaviour for other employees. Jane linked this to organisational values, where individual commitments derived from 'living by the values'. Ahmed et al. (2006, pp. 107-108) have argued that what matters with commitment is action, where 'action means that you do not stand apart from your commitment: if you are committed to something, then that something becomes integral to what it is that you do'. As shown above, John's actions were not aligned with his commitments, although his sense of regret showed that he was aware of this disjuncture.

Liz provided a more direct link between commitment and actions, saying that:

Because we've got the engagement of the CEO, and some of the directors are really very engaged...it's really opened the doors to [diversity issues]. It's on the agenda and that makes it easier for us, if we're wanting to, say, develop some other project that might also address similar issues. It's already now accepted that this is a setting that we're working in. Because if you think about just from a resource point of view, a lot of what we do is we have budgets that we run to, and it's very competitive. (Senior manager, 5 years at council)

Liz said that engagement by senior leaders had 'opened the doors' and put diversity issues 'on the agenda'. This led to broader commitment across the organisation and, importantly, translated into acceptance of the need to allocate ongoing resources to diversity work. Allocating resources to support diversity initiatives is recognised as an important measure of commitment to diversity (Ahmed, 2012; Cox, 1993; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006). Liz indicated that resource allocation was critical in local government, due to budget constraints and competing priorities. Liz's comments highlight important contextual variations in relation to commitments to diversity across local councils in Australia. I discuss this theme further in Chapter 10.

### **The role of managers in influencing/embedding cultural change**

Alongside the role of organisational leadership, managers play an essential role in implementing organisational objectives and influencing cultural change (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1947; Narine & Persaud, 2003). In Ahmed's (2012, p. 134) study, diversity practitioners emphasised the importance of having champions 'in the middle' of the organisation. She argued that managers are often tasked with implementing organisational objectives and policies and played a key in influencing and embedding cultural change. However, there was often 'a gap between the enthusiasm of the bottom and the visionary statements of the top' (Ahmed, 2012, p. 134). As Kon said:

Yeah look it's about this culture change issue, how do you embed culture within an organisation? And you know there's that leadership aspect and so you know we talk about managers but managers have a really you know probably [have more of a role] than directors to tell you the truth...because they can influence through leadership so it's the actions, it's the symbols, it's the seriousness you take it with in discussions with your team...(Senior manager, 13 years at council)



Kon acknowledged the importance of senior leaders in creating change, but felt that managers had a more direct role in influencing and embedding cultural change. As discussed in Chapter 4, the role of managers in fostering a supportive environment for diversity has been well documented, particularly in the context of team dynamics (Ely et al., 2012; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Greene, 2007; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2009). Organisational change theory also demonstrates the importance of managers and change coalitions to entrench cultural change and counter resistance (Cox, 1993; Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Schein, 2004). Similarly, Kon described how managers could influence cultural change through exhibiting leadership and action, such as through the sincerity of their engagement with diversity issues and communication with their teams. To further illustrate this point, Kon returned to the example of installing an additional flagpole at one of the council sites to provide a sense of welcome for Aboriginal employees (discussed in Chapter 7):

Kon: So doing that sort of stuff you know, flying the Koori flag, it will be a change, people will come in here and say 'this is political correctness gone mad'... So yeah we'll have those comments but I mean as a manager staying true to the cause, you know being firm in and resolute in a view when these actions occur, helps bed that down through the masses so they'll say ok no this is serious stuff, he hasn't blinked an eye lid, he's not doing it because it's political correctness gone mad...

Brigid: So do you think people understand that or get the message?

Kon: Look they'll get the message, the message will be the message and so we we're talking about how they interpret the message. Well that's where I say management and leadership comes in so the message could be political correctness gone mad or the message could be look we're trying to create an inclusive work environment. (Senior manager, 13 years at council)

Kon anticipated that installing an Aboriginal flag would be met with resistance ('this is political correctness gone mad'). However, he conceded that managers could address tensions and resistances through leadership and clear and consistent communication. Additionally, Kon linked commitment to diversity with action (Ahmed et al., 2006). His statement almost took on an embodied quality (A. Wise, 2005), where employees might visibly see his commitment through his mannerisms and body language ('they'll say ok no this is serious stuff, he hasn't blinked an eye

lid'). Kon anticipated how a message could be interpreted and proposed that how the message was communicated would have a significant impact on how it would be received by other employees. Returning to Schein (2004), Kon's leadership style had the potential to counter resistance and bridge gaps between articulated beliefs and values and underlying assumptions.

### **Advocates or detractors? Active and passive resistance by managers**

Above I discussed how managers could influence culture in a positive way. However, there was also recognition that managers who were unsupportive of diversity initiatives had the ability to undermine change processes. For example, Sonia said:

Just reflecting on cultural awareness training and the types of, and the people and the staff who do that training, there's always a couple of people who kind of don't get it or have their own opinion and are very strong minded and if they're in a leadership role, I think they can actually make others follow that kind of mentality. (Diversity practitioner, 7 years at council)

In her experience of conducting cultural awareness training, Sonia found that when in a leadership role, managers could influence others to follow 'that kind of mentality'. Sonia's view is widely supported by academic literature, which has shown that managers have the potential to influence others due to power and status differentials (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Essed, 2001; Greene, 2007). For instance, Essed (1991) has argued that racist practices undertaken by individuals with more power will have more impact than those undertaken by individuals with less power. Similarly, other studies have confirmed that prejudice and racism are strongly influenced by social norms (Crandall & Stangor, 2005; Paradies et al., 2009; Pedersen et al., 2011). In particular, there is evidence that people who are prejudiced are more likely to believe that others share similar views and are more confident in expressing their attitudes than those who hold less-prejudiced views (Hartley & Pedersen, 2007; Pedersen, Griffiths, & Watt, 2008). As such, there is often a readiness to share opinions, which when in a management position, can be highly influential. As Sonia pointed out, such dynamics played out in workforce diversity initiatives (such as cultural awareness training), where strong-minded managers had the potential to influence other employee behaviours and by extension, organisational cultural norms.

Andrew also talked about the role of managers in supporting diversity issues. He said that managers often took ‘their lead from the top’, where genuine commitment by senior leaders translated into managers finding time and resources to support diversity work:

Well they’ll take their lead from the top I guess, so if they’re, I think if they’re, you know, as long as they’re able to discern that the senior manager is serious about it, I think they’ll find the time and resources to help support it. It’s always hard for managers because they are, again, pretty busy with a range of things. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

As with senior leaders, Andrew identified that support for diversity was tenuous and reliant on managers needing to prioritise a range of tasks, given that they were often ‘pretty busy with a range of things’. Later in the interview, Andrew spoke more directly about the potential for managers to resist to diversity work:

I suppose there’s going to be some managers who probably don’t, again, are very busy doing things and they probably just, not so much they’re against it, they probably just, maybe [say], ‘it’s not my problem or I’m too busy, I’ve got other things to do’, you know, very operationally focussed. (Senior manager, 3 years at council)

Somewhat reluctantly (‘I suppose’), Andrew conceded that some managers would not be supportive of diversity initiatives. However, rather than saying so explicitly, Andrew qualified these comments with repeated assertions that managers were ‘very operationally focused’ and ‘very busy’. He was quick to downplay any suggestion of active resistance to diversity (‘[it’s] not so much they’re against it’ but that they were ‘too busy’ or felt it was ‘not [their] problem’). While Andrew framed manager behaviours around the notion of competing priorities, the subtext was that managers lacked ownership for diversity initiatives. Andrew’s comments also created a questionable dichotomy between diversity-related activities and operational activities, which assumed that diversity cannot also be operational or that operations cannot be improved through diversity. As other scholars have observed, such justifications (workload pressures, resources, competing priorities) could be described as passive

forms of resistance to workforce diversity (Allison, 1999; Johnstone & Kanitsaki, 2008).

In their study of diversity training, Johnstone and Kanitsaki (2008) observed both active and passive forms of resistance to diversity among managers. Passive forms of resistance included problematising the allocation of resources to prevent staff from supporting diversity initiatives and attending diversity-related forums. More active forms of resistance included a deliberate refusal to support diversity initiatives and hostility towards diversity imperatives (Johnstone and Kanitsaki, 2008). In the context of power and status differentials discussed above, resistance by managers, whether active or passive, has the potential to impact the success of diversity initiatives over the longer term (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Ely & Thomas, 2001). For example, DiTomaso et al. (2007, p. 491) have argued that the longer-term bases of inequality impact on group relations through the process of competition for resources and other 'day-to-day mechanisms at the workplace that reinforce privilege or disadvantage'. Andrew's comments that diversity is not considered a priority among managers may indicate a desire to preserve rather than challenge existing power dynamics and privileges.

### **Raising awareness and developing skills and competencies**

Despite these challenges, during the course of participating in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*, some managers developed skills and competencies that enabled them to change their practice. For example, Kon noted his feeling of discomfort when he observed that some members of his team had displayed the Australian flag on council vehicles<sup>90</sup>:

I've noticed you know our guys, we've got three trucks around and they've put the Australian flag on their back window. Yeah alright they're proud of Australia and all that but that's grated at me for a little while thinking it doesn't look professional to start with so that was the angle I took and I talked to the coordinator and I asked [him] 'what's the go with these Australian flags...should they be here, he said no, no they've got to go you know because it doesn't look professional.' And I never really

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<sup>90</sup> In some contexts, overt displays of the Australian flag, such as on cars or draped on bodies, has come to be associated with exclusionary nationalism. See for example Fozdar, Spittles and Hartley (2014).

did anything about it. I thought I'll bring it up with the guys and I'll launch that but having [been involved in the program] and the impact of this symbolism and stuff I thought they've got to go... And you know these Australian flags they might piss off a lot of guys here and it's a big symbol you know and no-one's doing anything about it, the management's not doing anything about it so it's an accepted you know. (Senior manager, 13 years at council)

Kon expressed his discomfort about the Australian flag being displayed on council vehicles and raised his concern to another manager, who agreed that the flags 'didn't look professional'. However no immediate action was taken ('I never really did anything about it'). Nonetheless, Kon said that his involvement in the assessment process had raised his awareness about the importance of symbolism and given him the skills and confidence to address the issue. Specifically, he acknowledged that blatant displays of 'Australian' national identity (Fozdar, Spittles, & Hartley, 2014) could be interpreted as a sign that employees from minority-group backgrounds were not welcome or that the council was not welcoming of other forms of diversity in the community. Ultimately, Kon demonstrated awareness about a potentially exclusionary practice, where his actions had the potential to challenge underlying assumptions that privileged dominant cultural values and norms (Schein, 2004).

In summary, this section has examined the role of organisational leaders and managers in workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. Specifically, and in the context of local government, I found that active councillors and senior leaders played a vital role in gaining political support for diversity issues. Consistent with literature discussed in Chapter 7, organisational leaders were instrumental in establishing the visibility of espoused values and beliefs (Schein, 2004). I found that their influence is most powerful where there is a sense that they are personally committed to diversity (Ahmed et al., 2006). Strong indications of personal commitment also translated into broader organisational commitments. However, given the role leadership plays in determining and advocating change, a change in leaders can also mean a change to commitments to diversity. Therefore, as Ahmed et al. (2006) have suggested, commitment to diversity might become more deeply embedded in an organisation through appointing leaders on the basis of their commitment, rather than it being left to 'chance' (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 114).

This section has also shed light on the role of organisational leaders in making commitments to diversity visible, such as through role modelling expected behaviours. Ahmed et al. (2006, pp. 107-108) have proposed, commitments to diversity are shown through action and not standing ‘apart from your commitment’. This section has highlighted inconsistencies between articulated beliefs and values and underlying assumptions, when people do not ‘do’ what they ‘say’ (Ahmed, 2006; Schein, 2004). Additionally, it has shown how the allocation of resources can assist in translating commitments to diversity into action.

Along with considering the role of senior leaders, this section has also examined the role of managers in organisational change processes. As other studies have shown (Cox, 1993; Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951; Metz & Kulik, 2008), some participants in this study felt that managers played an even more important role in influencing and embedding cultural change than senior managers. Importantly, it was noted that managers played a critical role in implementing organisational objectives through their role modelling and direct engagement with their teams. However, there was also evidence of active and passive forms of resistance by managers. Specifically, when in management positions, employees who held prejudiced views had the potential to significantly influence others through their position and status within the workplace (Essed, 1991; DiTomaso et al. 2007). Conversely, through increased awareness, managers gained confidence in challenging and changing those dominant cultural norms with the potential to exclude employees from minority group backgrounds.

### **9.3 Diversity Champions and Change Agents**

Within organisational behaviour and human resource management literature, the role of champions in harnessing support for organisational change and overcoming resistance has been well established (Schon, 1963). Specifically, champions help to keep initiatives alive and establish coalitions and resources for change, usually through informal channels (Cox & Blake, 1991; Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Kanter, 1977; Rogers, 1995). While champions and change agents in non-leadership roles<sup>91</sup> are often not considered as leaders in a traditional sense, Ahmed et al. (2006) have challenged this assumption by suggesting that leadership for diversity involves a

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<sup>91</sup> Here, I make a distinction here between champions and change agents in non-traditional leadership roles. As this chapter has discussed, senior leaders can also be diversity champions but commonly have a different, more visible and arguably more politically complex role (see Kezar (2008)).

different form of leadership than may be conventionally understood. In particular, the authors have proposed that leading for diversity commonly involves ‘some form of social proximity to learners, communities and other institutions’ (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 54). As this section will discuss, such proximity often implies shared experience with and/or knowledge of the struggles that oppressed or disadvantaged groups face.

### **Antecedents of championing behaviour**

In the context of diversity issues, Cunningham and Sartore (2010) have identified several antecedents of championing behaviour, including gender, race, personality, levels of prejudice and support from others. Consistent with Cunningham and Sartore’s (2010) description, Frank provided the following account of a person he considered to be a diversity champion within council, saying that:

[She] is full of energy, always pushing the rights of the battler I suppose is what I’d call it in some ways, certainly most people really have an influence and they have a certain power and they have a little bit of leadership, [she] is not known as a leader as such but she’s known as a crusader for the cause and people such as myself, people go “why do I have to do that”, and [she’ll] say, ‘well this is the reason why you have to do that and this is why’ and relate it back to a personal sort of level. (HR Manager, 7 years at council)

Frank asserted that diversity champions (although not commonly seen as leaders ‘as such’) still played a leadership role by exerting ‘influence’ on others. Frank described his co-worker as ‘full of energy’ and a ‘crusader for the cause’. Similarly, Cunningham and Sartore (2010) found that extraversion, including enthusiasm and assertiveness, was positively associated with championing behaviour. In addition to personality traits, co-worker support for diversity was also linked to championing diversity (Cunningham & Sartore, 2010). Similarly, Frank indicated that his colleague played a motivating role, where she helped to embed a sense of personal responsibility by relating his involvement in diversity initiatives ‘back to a personal sort of level’. In their research, Cunningham and Sartore (2010) found that diversity champions were more influential amongst their peers than their managers. The authors suggest that could be due to more time spent with co-workers resulting in a greater potential to build alliances and collaborative relationships over time.

## Maintaining proximity to diverse communities

Ahmed et al. (2006, p. 57) have described the work of diversity champions as a 'brokering' role where 'leading for equalities is a constant struggle between maintaining proximity, or bridging a lack of proximity for others...but not doing too much risky work'. In other words, diversity champions provide a link between the community and decision makers who may be 'a million miles removed' from the communities they serve' (Ahmed et al., 2006, p. 57). As described above, proximity to diverse communities is not necessarily physical but commonly involves a sense of shared experience of difference and/or knowledge and understanding of the issues that minority communities face. In alignment with this description, in this study, I found that diversity champions often had close relationships with diverse communities and/or personal experiences of difference. For example, a number of diversity practitioners I interviewed had previously worked directly with the community before transitioning into local government. As Tim said:

I suppose for me I've done front line work and worked at the coal face for a long time so I think I've served my community so I want to serve them in a different way... So I suppose, but yeah it's a culture clash and the culture shock of moving away from that kind of work into working in a big organisation like this...And look I felt very isolated even though I had flags out there, I really didn't understand this place, I had a different way of working so...And for me look [at] this place, look we've got that many resources at our finger tips, it's just the transition from working from community in a big agency. (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

Tim traced his own journey of working for a 'long time' in 'front line' work with the community before working in local government. He described this transition as an opportunity to continue to serve his community, albeit in 'a different way'. Tim's initial experience of working in local government was however one of 'cultural shock' and isolation. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags outside the building had helped to make him feel welcome<sup>92</sup> but he lacked guidance on how to work within a large bureaucracy. Conversely, he said that having more access to resources was a key benefit of working for the council. However, as Tim went on to say, he had to adjust to working within a more corporate environment:

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<sup>92</sup> Thus further demonstrating the importance of symbolic support for diversity as discussed in Chapter 7.



Because I tell you, look I have to change the way I speak sometimes. This is a big corporate agency and it's massive and some of the work that it's doing and then we're... sort of talking that speak to local community groups. Now we don't want to lose or have them not understanding what we're about so how is it that we maintain that corporate standard but be able to communicate with groups in a way that maybe best suits them. (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

Due to the more corporate workplace environment within local government, Tim said he sometimes had to 'change the way I speak'. As discussed in Chapter 7, these bureaucratic constraints affected how he engaged with the community ('we're sort of talking that speak to local community groups'). Tim struggled with the possibility that this might impact his own and council's relationship with the community ('now we don't want to lose or have them not understanding what we're about'). A key tension for Tim was his ability to maintain the corporate standards of the organisation while still being able to communicate in a way that resonated with the community. As discussed in Chapter 10, Tim's comments highlighted the importance of language as an aspect of organisational culture (Schein, 2004) that can demonstrate support for diversity and anti-racism.

### **Challenging the status quo: 'my role is to rock the boat'**

Sonia, also a diversity champion, had a similar experience to Tim, in that it had taken time for her to find her place within Council. As she said:

Local government is still an organisation, it's still a bureaucracy in itself, it's still very much based on the system, around the system that you're a part of and [our team] within that, we're kind of a misfit in a sense because our role is to create, but also to fit into a system...But that's part of what it means to work in an organisation, is that you are part of something, it's not about you, well it is and it isn't, it's about the organisation. At the same time, my role is one that is a change agent. It's about, and so of course we're going to have conflicts with the system, but I actually see that as my role, that's what I'm here to do, to rock the boat. If we don't, if we don't have people like that, won't we just become, you know, machines, we'd just be doing, you know, it's to challenge what's seen as normal. (Diversity practitioner, 7 years at council)

Sonia described tensions between working within a government bureaucracy, while at the same time seeking to create change. In particular, she described her role (and that of her team) as being a ‘kind of a misfit’ within broader institutional structures. However, she had come to understand that part of working in an organisation is learning to fit into that structure (‘it’s bigger than you’). At the same time, Sonia described herself as a ‘change agent’ (i.e. as someone whose role it was to ‘rock the boat’). Importantly, she understood that this might create conflict, but conceded that this is what was needed to create change and disrupt the status quo (‘to challenge what’s seen as normal’). Importantly, Sonia articulated complexities in being a change agent, while also working within institutional systems to create change. As discussed in Chapter 2, such complexity or ‘dissent’ in diversity work is not necessarily problematic but part of what it means to challenge institutional practices/structures and racialised social relations (Ahmed, 2006; Kowal, 2008; Lentin, 2008).

### **Establishing ownership for diversity issues**

Alongside championing diversity, establishing a sense of ownership is seen as essential for diversity work, where successful change involves broader acceptance and ownership of diversity issues (Ahmed et al., 2006; Cox & Beale, 1997; Gilroy, 2002; Griffith et al., 2010). This view was supported by a number of council employees I interviewed. For example, Mark said:

You need champions who are trustworthy, who have people’s respect and admiration and time to initiate and embed the first branch of change. But the idea of any good change initiative is it becomes business as usual so those champions should drop off when it becomes status quo and that’s the risk we run in this organisation because things are seen as someone else’s responsibility. (HR Advisor, 6 months at council)

According to Mark, champions played an important role in initiating the ‘first branch of change’. However, this needed to be balanced against broader cultural change over the longer term. Mark’s suggestion that champions needed to be ‘trustworthy’ is interesting and again points to the bridging nature of the role, where diversity champions must maintain close ties with communities as well as council. Whereas Sonia’s comments suggested that the role of champions and change agents is to

'[rock] the boat', Mark injected a notion of risk, where underlying his comments was an assumption that 'we don't want the boat to be rocked too much'. Mark also suggested that diversity champions should 'drop off' when the change process becomes 'status quo'. Again this statement is interesting, because it implies that change will occur in a finite way, which as I discuss below, is in many ways contrary to what happens in practice, where change is commonly resisted and often difficult and slow. Nonetheless, Mark's suggestion that diversity issues were often seen as being 'someone else's responsibility' was a view held by many others, including diversity practitioners. For example, Sonia talked about challenges in getting individuals within the organisation to take responsibility for multicultural issues. She gave the following example:

[Another organisation] came to me to have a conversation around engaging the multicultural communities in playing tennis, but [another department] are the ones that run the tennis clubs, so they could actually do the work, but they didn't do anything because they thought it was my job. But why couldn't we work on that together, that's kind of like, 'oh no, I couldn't possibly', it's kind of like, 'no I can't do anything', so there's this real, people put up their own barriers and in terms of working together, there isn't a culture here of collaboration...All they had to do was write a letter to say 'yes we can participate, no we can't', and we left it with [the other department] to do that body of work, but in the end I don't think anything happened. (Diversity practitioner, 7 years at council)

Sonia described the process of trying to engage another department within council to support multicultural communities to play tennis. However, even though the other department was responsible for the activity (i.e. running the tennis clubs), it was assumed that organising the tennis was part of Sonia's role. Sonia's comments reflected a common phenomenon in diversity work, where 'diversity' related tasks are often pushed back on to employees who have an obvious diversity role within the organisation (Ahmed, 2012; Allison, 1999; Dunn et al., 2001; Trenerry et al., 2011). This can affect the potential for broader cultural change where other employees fail to develop necessary skills to respond to diversity issues, and issue that was identified in the workplace survey findings in Chapter 6. As Mark suggested, 'things are seen as someone else's responsibility'. In Sonia's example, even a relatively simple task ('all they had to do was write a letter to say 'yes we can participate, no we can't') was met

with resistance and when left with the department to follow up, nothing happened.

Sonia also linked this interaction to a more general lack of collaboration within the organisation's culture. Collaboration has been identified as an important aspect of organisational culture, where some degree of cooperation and collaboration is necessary for organisations to be successful in what they do (Detert, Schroeder, & Mauriel, 2000). Deter et al. (2000) have argued that shared responsibility and coordination of work tasks can be linked to the degree to which control is concentrated or shared among employees. They assert that in organisations in which control and decision-making are less tightly concentrated and centralised, there is more flexibility and workers have greater autonomy. This can lead to greater acceptance and support of organisational goals and values, where goals become shared and aligned to individual actions (Detert et al., 2000). In Sonia's example, ownership of diversity issues might be symptomatic of broader issues, such as the extent to which employees are engaged in meaningful decision-making processes.

Like Sonia, Tim expressed his frustration in having to respond to all issues that dealt with the Aboriginal community.

But the thing is it's assumed that we know everything about all Aboriginal issues regardless if they're health, social justice or whatever it's like yeah, you can come to an Aboriginal officer and they'll know. Well hang on a sec guys some people choose to work in certain areas and it's about other people. Because you can't claim ignorance anymore, we're a very clever organisation and company and you know...we've got reconciliation on the agenda and it's about everyone being a part of that journey. (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

Tim explained that due to his role in working with the Aboriginal community, staff commonly assumed that he could advise on 'all Aboriginal issues'. This worked to neglect the diversity of issues within Aboriginal communities (e.g. 'health' versus 'social justice') and differing areas of expertise. Further, Tim said that the organisation had stated commitments to Indigenous issues ('we've got reconciliation on the agenda') as well as high levels of expertise and resources ('we're a very clever organisation'). This meant that the organisation could no longer 'claim ignorance'. This is an important point that relates to analysis above about organisational

commitments to diversity, where Tim highlighted a gap between organisational statements of commitment and practice where despite having a reconciliation plan, knowledge of, and responsibility for, Indigenous issues still mainly fell on Aboriginal officers. A possible explanation for this gap, as discussed in Chapter 6 and above, is a general lack of skills and awareness coupled with feelings of discomfort in responding to workforce diversity and racism.

In her work on the politics of solidarity with Indigenous struggles, Land (2012) found a desire among many non-Indigenous people to want to 'help' but not always knowing what to 'do'. Land (2012, p. 138) citing Margaret (2010, p. 201) has suggested that a common dilemma for 'would-be allies'<sup>93</sup> is to be 'immobilised' by feelings of guilt or denial or "not knowing" what to do', where 'white people like to be comfortable and "right" in their actions'. To counter such feelings and discomfort, Margaret (2010, p. 201) has suggested that: 'It is important to act and actions can be small'. Both authors provide practical examples of what people can 'do' to support diversity and anti-racism<sup>94</sup>. Such actions include becoming educated through joining established anti-racist collectives and then sharing learning with others. This helps to relieve some of the burden on Indigenous people and other minority groups, who as Tim pointed out, are often expected to 'know everything'. As Tim further said:

And you sort of, and what I want to say in defense of Aboriginal officers is we're the 711's if that's the right word, we're like...like we don't get to switch off so 5:00pm we're still going, it's still happening, so it's all our lives. (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

Here, Tim highlighted the everyday nature of having to deal with issues affecting the Aboriginal community. Unlike others, Aboriginal officers did not get to 'switch off' from their educative and community work, which commonly extended into their daily lives. As discussed throughout this thesis, for many minority group members, experiences of racism are often not confined to the workplace but extend into other aspects of the 'everyday' (Essed, 2001; Greene, 2007; Sue et al., 2007). Conversely,

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<sup>93</sup> Bishop (2002) defines an ally as a person who is committed to social justice, recognises the nature of privilege and takes responsibility for changing patterns of injustice and oppression.

<sup>94</sup> As drawn from a long genealogy of black consciousness movements in the United States and Australia.

due to the privileging effects of whiteness (McIntosh, 1990), many white people, even those who are professionally committed to diversity and racial equality, often have the luxury of ‘switching’ off from issues to do with race and racism in their personal lives. This reinforces the importance of workplaces, where many people spend a large proportion of their time (Trenerry et al., 2010) as being culturally safe (Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, 2008) and inclusive and environments that respect the multifaceted struggles that minority group members can face. Aside from these challenges, Tim demonstrated how his educative work had translated into a sense of ownership among other employees. He gave the following example of a manager asking for his advice on the protocol for acknowledging Traditional Owners.

I got a phone call just to check on protocols around acknowledgement and his query was quite specific. It was, it was oh just a lovely phone call, [he said] ‘I rang to find out about protocol and use around acknowledgement and...do we just do it at the start of the meeting, or everyone does it before they speak?’ I said look at the start of the meeting should be alright because you need to get on and do your work. So we had a bit of a laugh. But I think as everyone owns it, individuals will take it upon themselves to do that so we shouldn’t put off by that, it’s just that how do people choose to participate in meetings, and yeah... (Diversity practitioner, 3 years at council)

It was clear that Tim’s exchange with his colleague around the protocol was positive (‘it was oh just a lovely phone call’). Although Tim did not state so explicitly, his colleague’s honesty and willingness to take action, despite initial uncertainty about what to do, could be seen as a moment of solidarity (Land, 2015). Tim’s practical suggestion (i.e. ‘look at the start of the meeting should be alright because you need to get on and do your work’) and both employees’ ability to ‘have a bit of a laugh’ had provided needed lightness to an interaction that could otherwise have been strained by a fear of not ‘getting it right’. As others have pointed out, there are downsides in always trying to be ‘politically correct’ (Kowal, 2015; Norton et al., 2006), where fear of not ‘getting it right’ can immobilise needed action. Indeed, Tim linked his colleague’s actions to ownership, where he said that as individuals ‘took it upon themselves’, this would further a notion of shared responsibility for diversity issues. Tim’s suggestion that people ‘shouldn’t [be] put off’ further reflects the importance of politically engaged action, even though actions may be small (Land, 2012; Margaret, 2010). Tim’s comments also resonate with organisational change literature

discussed in Chapter 4, which has emphasised the importance of ‘small wins’ in organisational change processes (Kotter, 1996; Orlikowski, 1996), where change is often comprised of many micro-events and grounded in everyday practice.

In summary, this section has considered the role of diversity champions and change agents, such as diversity practitioners, who commonly have a direct role in working with diverse communities. As shown in other research (G. B. Cunningham & Sartore, 2010), it was clear that diversity champions influenced other employees in taking responsibility for diversity issues and therefore played an important accountability role. Similarly to other studies (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2006), I observed that diversity champions were proximate to diverse communities and played an important brokering role in establishing relationships with the community. However, there were also tensions in working within large bureaucracies and corporate cultures. Nonetheless, practitioners had learnt how to working within ‘the system’ while still seeking to challenge the status quo and create change. As discussed further in the next chapter, these findings highlight the critical role of diversity champions in supporting workforce diversity and anti-racism initiatives.

This section has also considered the importance of establishing ownership of diversity issues among other organisational members. A number of council employees expressed concerns that diversity work were often seen as ‘somebody else’s responsibility’ and provided examples where tasks that had a diversity-focus were commonly referred to those in diversity-related roles. I found that too much reliance on diversity practitioners to constantly respond to diversity-related issues led to inaction and creating additional burdens for those in diversity-roles, whose educative roles commonly extended into their daily lives. Conversely, practitioners gave examples of positive interactions with other employees who showed initiative in taking responsibility for diversity issues. As discussed below and in Chapter 10, this highlights the importance of small, everyday actions in organisational change.

## **9.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the role of agents, including organisational leaders, managers and other change agents in workforce diversity and anti-racism intervention. Specifically, it has drawn on interview data with council employees at

Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire to examine the role of leaders, managers and diversity champions in creating buy-in for workforce diversity and influencing cultural change. It has also examined the process of establishing broader acceptance and ownership of diversity issues.

As shown in other research (Cox, 1993; Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1951), the role of organisational leaders and managers was seen as critical in getting diversity issues on the agenda, making commitments to diversity visible and influencing cultural change. However, despite evidence of commitment to diversity among senior leaders, including CEOs, there was also a sense that such commitment was tenuous on the appointment of senior leaders who were personally committed to diversity issues (Ahmed et al., 2006). Moreover, while there was recognition that leaders should role-model expected behaviours, this did not always occur in practice, which I have described as inconsistencies between articulated beliefs and underlying assumptions, or gaps between what people 'do' and 'say' (Ahmed, 2006; Schein, 2004). Conversely, the allocation of resources assisted in translating commitments to diversity and anti-racism into actions.

Managers also played an important, if not more vital role, in influencing and embedding cultural change. Conversely, through increased awareness, managers gained confidence in challenging and changing dominant cultural norms that had the potential to exclude employees from minority group backgrounds. However, despite the potential for managers to implement workforce diversity objectives and engage with their teams, managers also resisted diversity work. Active forms of resistance included voicing prejudiced views, which had the potential to influence others. More subtle forms of resistance included lack of prioritisation for diversity issues, as has been observed in other contexts (K. M. Thomas & Plaut, 2008). As discussed further in the next chapter, due to status and power differentials within organisations, the role of leaders and managers in issues of race, racism and anti-racism are particularly important (DiTomaso et al., 2007; Essed, 1991). Thus, given that leadership turnover can be detrimental to long-term diversity efforts, embedding commitment among the 'rank and file', such as middle-managers is also important, as discussed below.



This chapter has also examined other diversity champions and change agents, who are commonly in diversity-related positions and have a direct role in working with diverse communities. Consistent with other studies (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2006), I found that diversity practitioners, while often not in traditional 'leadership' roles, played a critical role in establishing accountability for diversity issues. This role was often guided by being in close proximity to diverse communities, which had both benefits and challenges. Specifically, there were tensions in working within large bureaucracies and corporate cultures, whilst being responsive to the needs of diversity communities. Importantly, some practitioners saw their roles as change agents, whose role it was to 'rock the boat' and challenge what was seen as 'normal' (i.e. the status quo), whilst working within the system to create change.

Finally, this chapter has discussed the issue of ownership and considered how others, such as majority group members, might take more ownership for diversity issues. Specifically, I have reflected on what members of majority groups (e.g. whites) can do to relieve the educative burden of difference that commonly falls on minority group members (Land, 2012). Despite feelings of discomfort, I saw that engagement with diversity need not always be difficult or immobilising, where skills and competencies in responding to diversity can be developed over time. As discussed in Chapter 10, a key principle of diversity and anti-racist practice could involve shifting the onus of responsibility often placed on employees with diversity roles.

# Chapter 10

## Conclusions

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### 10.1 Introduction

This thesis arose from my involvement in *Healthy and Diverse Communities: Safe and Inclusive Places*, a program aimed at supporting diversity and addressing racism within a range of settings across two localities in Victoria, Australia. Within this broader program, this study has examined the implementation and reception of the workforce orientated aspects of the program within Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire.

This chapter pulls together the key findings of this study. I demonstrate how the project met the research aims and objectives and demonstrate the key contributions made by the research to existing literature. I also discuss the strengths and limitations of the research methodology and outline implications for future research.

### 10.2 Responding to the Aims and Objectives of this Research/Contributions to Existing Literature

The aim of this research was to study the nature of and responses to institutional racism and diversity within workplace/employment contexts. A further aim was to understand the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity and anti-racism practice. Alongside this broad aim, three more specific research questions/objectives were investigated:

- How does institutional racism manifest within workplace/employment contexts?
- What are the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity within local government in Australia?
- What are the advantages and challenges of workplace anti-racism?

This section summarises how the aims and objectives of the study were met and key contributions made by the research in the context of existing literature.

### **1. How does institutional racism manifest within workplace/employment contexts?**

Given the focus of this study on racism in workplace/employment settings, the concept of institutional racism has been reviewed and deployed. Chapter 2 reviewed research showing how racism operates in relation to ideology, power and privilege and is deeply embedded within dominant social discourses and institutional processes (Essed, 1991; Omi and Winant, 1994; Paradies 2005). It also examined critiques that institutional racism has been narrowly defined as a structural problem, which neglects the role of human agency (Berard, 2008). I have also drawn on the work of Essed (1991) and Paradies (2006b) to highlight that institutional racism can be largely unintentional and can operate through non-human agents such as policies and practices.

Additionally, Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on institutional racism, including how the concept has been studied in different institutional settings (Came, 2012; Holdaway & O'Neill, 2007). I have argued that this body of literature shows that institutional racism is a highly contextual phenomenon and likely to manifest differently according to various institutional settings. Finally, in Chapter 2, I defined institutional racism as the influence of attitudes, behaviours, cultures, practices, requirements, conditions, policies or processes that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities in power, resources and opportunities across groups in society based on race, ethnicity, culture and/or religion (Paradies et al., 2009). This definition draws on previous scholarship; however, it includes the neglected role of organisational culture in current definitions of institutional racism.

The existence of both interpersonal and institutional forms of racism in workplace/employment settings has been established throughout this thesis. Chapters 3 and 4 outlined literature on the nature of workplace racism and labour market discrimination, both in Australia and in workplaces generally. In Chapter 6, surveys conducted with council employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire revealed that about one in ten participants had experienced or witnessed racism.

While these experiences were relatively low in contrast to other research (e.g. Cunningham & Paradies, 2013; Dunn et al., 2005; Ferdinand et al., 2012, 2013), this could be linked to the small sample sizes for minority group members as well as difficulties of data collection and analysis (discussed further below). Moreover, other surveys have looked at experiences of racism in workplace settings generally, while the council workplace surveys examined experiences in one organisational context. Additionally, local government, as a largely white-collar industry, may be different from your 'average' workplace (see for instance Dunn et al. (2011) by comparison). Finally, studies have shown that racism is under-reported and downplayed, so as to avoid potentially negative social repercussions (Biddle et al., 2013). These denial effects could be enhanced in workplace contexts due to perceived threats to employment status. Another form of interpersonal racism (discussed in Chapter 4) is the notion of 'stereotype threat' (Steele et al., 2002), which can lead to anxiety and poor performance (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). In Chapter 6, interview data revealed that different perceptions in relation to work ethic had the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes among workers from minority group backgrounds and thus contribute to stereotype threat.

Institutional forms of racism were observed in employment practices, such as in the area of recruitment. Chapter 8 revealed that standardised recruitment practices, such as on-line application processes, responding to lengthy selection criteria and uniform interview practices, currently disadvantage applicants from minority-group backgrounds. More subtly, selection processes functioned as a form of organisational gatekeeping, where applicants were expected to fit into predefined notions of organisational culture. Other forms of implicit bias within recruitment practice included a preference for selecting candidates with 'local' work experience and from similar backgrounds to those already employed within council, thus reinforcing workforce homogeneity. While these practices could be attributed to shortages in human capital, I have questioned the necessity of standardised interview practices, particularly when high levels of English language skills are not required for the role (and when applicants are already casually employed within the council). I also examined whether arguments about a need for local work experience are unfair towards people from non-English speaking countries, who generally have less mobility in the labour market (Sassen, 1998).

To determine the extent to which recruitment practises could be described as racist, it is necessary to return to theories established in Chapter 2, specifically Essed's (1991) theory of everyday racism, as well as Paradies' (2006) definition of racism as unfair and avoidable. Essed (1991) has argued that at the macro-level, racism exists through a system of structural and historical inequality, where these same processes are created and reproduced through routine, everyday practices at the micro level. Importantly, Essed (1991, p. 39) maintains that while the structures of racism cannot exist independently of agents (i.e. 'they are made by agents'), in order to be identified as racist, such practices must be shown to contribute to existing inequalities in the system. Linking this to the present study, and its focus on recruitment, I conclude that recruitment practices at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire (and arguably other local councils and organisations that employ similar practices) could be described as racist (i.e. unfair and avoidable) to the extent that they consistently disadvantage/privilege candidates from minority/dominant group backgrounds, reinforcing uneven power dynamics and workforce homogeneity (Essed, 1991; Paradies, 2005). However, as discussed below, these effects are contextual and influenced by organisational structures and cultures as well as the actions of individual agents, where research can measure these varied impacts over time and space.

More subtly, racism was culturally embedded at the organisational level and commonly manifest as resistance to diversity and anti-racism, including contestation over space. Drawing on Schein's (2004) model of organisational culture, I found that resistance to diversity and anti-racism was manifest in the use of language and the design of the physical environment. As shown in other research (Nelson, 2014; van Dijk, 1992), terms such as racism and racist had negative connotations and were perceived to be counterproductive to engaging people in anti-racist initiatives. Alongside language, resistance to diversity was manifest in the physical environment and in organisational ceremonies. These included, for example, low employee attendance at a Sorry Day event at Stoneway City Council, historical resistance to installing an Aboriginal flag and an obscured sign acknowledging Traditional Owners at Corrington Shire. These limits reflected tensions between organisational cultural artifacts, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions.

Finally, I have argued that less articulation of espoused beliefs and values in support of workforce diversity suggested a lack of prioritisation of workforce diversity, particularly at Corrington Shire. A lack of priority for workforce diversity has been described as a subtle form of organisational resistance (K. M. Thomas & Plaut, 2008). Conversely, I found that valuing workplace diversity, when instilled in council values and as part of performance review processes, was important in establishing accountability for council's commitments to diversity at Stoneway City Council. On the other hand, given that individual managers were often responsible for implementing performance review processes, I questioned the extent to which such practices were consistently upheld, where interview data revealed that performance management issues were symptomatic of broader management issues. At the most subtle layer of organisational culture, there was contestation over accommodating diversity in the workplace, particularly in relation to space. As in other spatial contexts (e.g. Dunn 2001, 2004; Hubbard, 2005), space was racialised and gendered, where altering the workplace space (e.g. a staff team/inclusion of a prayer room) were met with resistance. I have argued that space operated as a normative concept that commonly privileged dominant cultural values and norms (i.e. whiteness) (Ahmed, 2012; Frankenberg, 1993). On the one hand, such accommodation debates are reasonable, particularly in the context of competition over resources and space (e.g. having a dedicated prayer room). Conversely, the fact that diversity needs to be 'accommodated' highlights certain privileges that are already in place, where some groups are more readily accommodated than others.

## **2. What are the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity within local government in Australia?**

The second objective of this research was to examine the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity within local government in Australia. In this study, there was strong recognition of the benefits of workplace diversity. In Chapter 6, the majority of survey respondents at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire agreed that workforce diversity was beneficial to an organisation and preferred to work in a diverse organisation. Similarly, interview data revealed a high degree of support for diversity in the workplace. Akin to other studies (Adler, 1997; Cox, 1993; Richard, 2000), workforce diversity was linked to enhanced organisational effectiveness and

service delivery. Specifically, council employees recognised that changing community demographics provided a rationale for council workforces to be more representative of the communities they served, thus aligning with principles of representative bureaucracy (Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Selden, 1997).

Increased productivity, debate and creativity were also cited as benefits of workforce diversity, effects that have been recognised in other studies (Berman et al., 2008; Burton, 1995). Alongside economic and organisational benefits, council employees also spoke about the social benefits of workforce diversity. For example, making workforce diversity a priority provided an opportunity for local government to model inclusive recruitment practices and be part of the 'solution' to socio-economic disadvantage in the community. Moreover, diversity provided an opportunity for people to come together and establish social bonds, both within the workplace and during community events held by council. For example, diversity related events (such as a Sorry Day ceremony at Stoneway City Council) created opportunities for council employees and community members to reflect on issues of shared importance, as has been observed in other studies (e.g. T. A. Richardson, 2010).

In relation to other organisational cultural effects, such as language, diversity was perceived as a positive term and commonly linked to notions of inclusivity. In particular, the language of diversity had strategic value in establishing buy-in and gaining broad level engagement for diversity issues. I have linked diversity discourses to continuous change models, where the strategic use of diversity language helped garner support for diversity issues and potentially enabled diversity issues to be integrated within more corporate forms of organisational culture over the longer term. However, as discussed below, using diversity discourse strategically requires a commitment to key political principles needed to progress issues of racial equality within institutions (Ahmed et al., 2006).

Alongside recognition of the benefits of diversity in the workplace, this study sought to understand related challenges. This approach responded to literature reviewed in Chapter 4, which articulated a need for more attention to the common dilemmas and tensions of workforce diversity. One such issue is the extent to which diversity management discourse and practice has detracted from 'harder' measures advocated

by equal opportunity, affirmative action and anti-racism agendas (Ivancevich & Gilbert, 2000; Noon 2007; Prasad et al., 1997; Wrench, 2005).

A number of challenges to workplace diversity have been presented in this thesis, including discomfort with diversity, tensions regarding the accommodation of cultural difference, prejudiced/racist attitudes and racism. Survey data and interviews revealed discomfort with diversity (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005) and resistance to the accommodation of cultural difference (Thomas & Plaut, 2008). In Chapter 6, a large minority of employees at Stoneway City Council and Corrington Shire were uncomfortable with having a manager from a 'diverse' background. At Corrington Shire, there was also less preference to work in a diverse organisation and denial about the existence of racism. Similarly, interview data revealed tensions about the extent to which diversity should be accommodated (e.g. such as through the segregated use of council-run swimming pools). Support for diversity was also contingent upon it being the 'good' versus the 'bad' type, where some people felt that new immigrants should leave any 'problems' behind when they came to live in Australia. I have argued that this positions Australia as a place that is culturally 'good' to begin with, free of any of the troubles or complications that diverse 'newcomers' may bring. Moreover, I have proposed that such attitudes place a heavy burden on new immigrants to not be 'troublemakers', where any sign of trouble would likely confirm pre-existing stereotypes and false beliefs about people from minority-group backgrounds (Pedersen et al., 2005; Sidanius et al., 2001).

In relation to team dynamics, there was ambiguity about the benefits of working in diverse teams, an issue that has been studied more extensively elsewhere (Ely et al., 2012; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Jackson et al., 2003). However, it was clear that conflict due to cultural difference and/or racism had the potential to impact negatively on team dynamics, where council managers saw or anticipated challenges in managing tensions among staff. For example, differences in work ethic were raised as a source of potential conflict. Although this view was problematic in positioning good work ethic as an 'Australian' (i.e. western) value, it also highlighted differences in work ethic that might need to be accommodated in the workplace. Therefore, such perceptions could be honest observations of perceived cultural difference, which presents complexities in labelling tensions about cultural difference in the workplace



as racism. As discussed below, tensions about the accommodation of difference in the workplace were consistent themes in this research.

### **3. What are the advantages and challenges of anti-racism?**

The third and final objective of this study was to investigate the advantages and challenges of anti-racism within workplace settings. Chapter 2 introduced the concept of anti-racism, finding that there has been less theoretical and practice based attention to anti-racism than to racism. The heterogeneity of anti-racism was outlined, including tensions between grassroots anti-racism versus forms of anti-racism adopted or developed by states (Gilroy, 1992; Lentin, 2008). It has been argued that these developments have posed dilemmas about the extent to which anti-racism can challenge more embedded forms of racism, such as those arising from bureaucratic processes and practices (Ahmed, 2006; Gilroy, 2012; Kyriakides, 2008). For example, in the United Kingdom, there have been debates about the effectiveness of requirements for public bodies to develop race equality plans and policies (Ahmed, 2006; Creegan et al., 2003; Gillborn, 2006; Hussain & Ishaq, 2008). Central among critiques is a perception that ‘the language has changed but not the reality of race inequality’ (Gillborn, 2006, p. 15). Given that the non-performative nature of anti-racism is a key challenge for institutional anti-racism, a key task of this thesis was to ‘follow’ commitments to anti-racism ‘around’ to examine the extent to which statements of commitment led to action (Ahmed 2006, 2012).

This study revealed both opportunities for and challenges to anti-racism. In Chapter 7, commitment to anti-racism was evident through aspects of organisational culture, as categorised by Schein (2004). These included organisational cultural artifacts, including language, the physical environment and organisational ceremonies. For example, practitioners saw value in speaking directly about racism, where using the term helped to acknowledge the historical basis of racism and overcoming discomfort in talking about issues of race and racism. Moreover, practices such as flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, signage acknowledging Traditional Owners and community ceremonies (such as a Sorry Day event) helped to create an inclusive environment for members of diverse groups and provided an opportunity for council and the community to come together and reflect on issues of importance to the community, including past and present injustices perpetrated against

Aboriginal people. Support for workforce diversity was also articulated in council values, particularly at Stoneway City Council. In particular, embedding discussion about council values within performance review processes was an important mechanism for establishing accountability for diversity issues (Kalev et al., 2006; Trenerry & Paradies, 2012) and thus an important anti-racism mechanism. From a 'following around' of anti-racism, it was clear that non-performative anti-racism (Ahmed, 2006) was being performed. Despite a desire for anti-racist practice, gaps between statements of commitment to workforce diversity and anti-racism practice were evident. For example, despite stated aspirations, local councils were generally not representative of the diverse communities they served. This was particularly evident at Corrington Shire, which had a largely Anglo-Australian workforce composition. In Chapter 8, positive discrimination was presented as a potential strategy to increase workforce diversity at Corrington Shire. However, consistent with other studies, (e.g. Noon, 2010), positive discrimination was narrowly defined in relation to 'quotas' and related assumptions that less qualified applicants would be given preferential treatment. Additionally, legislative requirements for 'merit-based recruitment' were presented as a key argument why policies of positive discrimination would not be widely supported. However, these arguments neglected other approaches to positive-discrimination, such as the 'tie-break' and 'threshold' system, where principles of meritocracy are maintained (Noon, 2010).

This study has revealed both support for and resistance to anti-racism. On the one hand, council employees recognised that recruitment practices currently disadvantaged applicants from minority-group backgrounds and supported strategies to alter recruitment and selection processes, attempts to significantly alter current practice, particularly through structural level interventions (such as de-identifying job-applications) were met with resistance. Such resistances stemmed from concerns about additional workloads/and or resources as well as denial of racism, such as through assertions that discrimination on the basis of surnames did not occur, despite it being prevalent elsewhere (e.g. Booth et al., 2009). Although a range of alternative strategies to promote access and equity in recruitment processes were proposed and supported, these measures were generally less resource intensive and focused at the individual level (e.g. conducting training on implicit-bias reduction).

On the other hand, resistance existed alongside strong support for diversity and anti-racism by senior leaders at both councils. For example, senior leaders continued to 'show up' such as through attending meetings and allocating resources for diversity work. Similarly, interview data revealed that leaders and managers helped to get diversity issues on the agenda, make support for diversity and anti-racism more visible and allocated resources for diversity work. Through increased awareness, senior managers also gained confidence in challenging and changing dominant cultural norms. However, there was evidence that managers also resisted change through active and passive forms of resistance, such as voicing prejudiced views and not prioritising all diversity issues, as has been observed in other research (Thomas & Plaut, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 8, the role of leaders and managers in handling issues of race and racism are particularly important due to status and power differentials within organisations (DiTomaso et al. 2007; Essed, 1991).

Given that commitment to diversity among organisational leaders and managers are tenuous, Chapter 9 examined the role of other diversity champions and change agents. Diversity champions commonly had a direct role in working with diverse communities, where this proximity played an important role in establishing relationships with the community (Ahmed et al., 2006). There was also evidence that diversity practitioners often championed diversity in the workplace and influenced others in taking responsibility for diversity issues. Similarly to other research (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2006), diversity practitioners articulated tensions in working within the constraints of institutional systems to create change, while being responsive to diverse communities. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, such complexity or 'dissent' in diversity work is not necessarily problematic but part of what it means to challenge institutional practices/structures and racialised social relations (Ahmed et al., 2006; Lentin, 2008). These findings highlight the critical role of diversity champions in establishing accountability for organisational commitments to diversity.

Alongside these findings, Chapter 9 reported on issues of ownership and considered how majority group members might take more ownership for diversity issues. Specifically, it reflected on what majority group members (e.g. whites) can do to relieve the educative burden of difference that commonly falls on minority group members (Land, 2012). Despite feelings of discomfort, engagement with diversity

need not always be difficult or immobilising, where such skills and competencies can be learned. This finding responds to a key barrier of anti-racism practice identified in Chapter 2, specifically a need for awareness of the politically complex and confronting nature of anti-racism (Came, 2012; Kowal et al., 2013; Land, 2012).

### **10.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Research Methodology**

This research has taken a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of racism, diversity, and anti-racism in the workplace and used multiple methods of data collection and analysis. In Chapter 2, I outlined important contributions to the study of racism made across multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, political science and critical discourse studies, amongst others. Additionally, the workplace focus of this study required knowledge of literature from fields such as human resource management, organisational psychology and behaviour and cultural competency.

This study has utilised multiple methods of data collection and analysis, including surveys, participant observation, key informant interviews and document analysis. As discussed in Chapter 5, the use of multiple methods helped to triangulate research findings and include a broad range of council participants in my analysis. Survey data helped to provide context to key themes that were then examined in depth through qualitative methods. Participant-observation provided an opportunity to observe implementation processes as they were unfolding in ‘real-time’ and in the context of ‘everyday’ workplace dynamics and interactions. Key informant interviews allowed me to follow up on themes observed during the first phase of the research and discuss implementation and organisational change processes in depth. On the whole, the diverse range of literatures and methods used in this study has been both a challenging and novel approach to the study of workplace racism, diversity and organisational cultural change and been valuable in generating a rich, ethnographic study of institutional life.

The study design posed a number of challenges. As discussed in Chapter 5, there were delays in gaining access to the research sites as well as ethical concerns in conducting participant-observation, particularly in informal contexts. I have also discussed potentially uneven power dynamics (Kvale, 2006) in conducting interviews

with executive males and participants from minority-group backgrounds. Like Pini (2005), I have proposed that other female researchers should pay attention to gender dynamics in interviews and use strategies to challenge dominant male-female patterns of interactions (Winchester, 1996), while at the same time not undermining the perspectives of participants (Schoenberger, 1991).

Differences in the racial/ethnic background between interviewer and interviewee also have the potential to reinforce uneven power dynamics. I sought to address these dynamics through principles of authenticity, reflexivity and reciprocity (Lather, 1986; Lincoln and Guba, 1986) such as disclosing my background and personal commitment to anti-racism and using more unstructured forms of interviewing. Keeping a journal was another reflexive tool used in this study and proved to be a useful mechanism through which to navigate my own senses of energy and paralysis in undertaking this study (Lather, 1995).

This study has also unearthed challenges in the collection and analysis of data on race and ethnicity in local government workplaces. At the time of the study, both local councils did not collect workforce demographic data on race and ethnicity. However, improving data collection on race/ethnicity was a key action coming out of the Workplace Assessment Tool at both councils. Demographic data were collected in the workplace surveys undertaken at both councils, where respondents were able to self-identify by racial, ethnic or cultural background. However, as discussed in Chapter 6, self-reported data posed some challenges for data analysis, where there were difficulties in coding and categorising data without reinforcing dominant assumptions about identity (e.g. whiteness) implicit in those categorisations (e.g. assuming 'Australian' meant Anglo-Australian).

In this study, there were also difficulties in comparing council comparing workforce data with community demographics, where data on country of birth and other racial/ethnic attributes (e.g. language spoken at home) collected in population surveys are not adequate indicators of race/ethnicity (Jupp, 1995). As discussed in Chapter 6, this practice is in contrast to other contexts (such as the U.S and the U.K) where more overt data collection on race and ethnicity can support monitoring of different forms of inequality, such as health disparities and health care effectiveness (e.g.

Kelaher et al., 2012; Wynia et al., 2010). Similarly, improved data collection and monitoring of race/ethnicity within the workplace is needed, where such practices would be important mechanisms to hold organisations to account for stated commitments to workforce diversity and anti-racism, as discussed above.

#### **10.4 Implications of the findings: the importance of context, culture, structure and agency**

This study has contributed to literature on institutional racism, workplace diversity and anti-racism and brought together these interlinked concepts in an organisational level analysis and in the context of Australian local government for the first time. It has revealed the importance of context, culture, structure and agency in understanding institutional racism, diversity and anti-racism practice.

Situated in the context of local government in Australia, this study has highlighted important contextual variations when assessing the benefits and challenges of workforce diversity. As noted above, there was less preference to work in a diverse organisation and more denial about racism at Corrington Shire. In the context of other research, where fear, anxiety and hostility are more pronounced when others are perceived as a threat (DiTomaso et al., 2007; K. M. Thomas & Chrobot-Mason, 2005), I proposed that diversity-threat effects would be more pronounced in organisations that have higher compositions of in-group (e.g. majority) members. I found some evidence of this dynamic at Corrington Shire. While reports of racism (discussed above) were relatively consistent across both councils, when these data were analysed by background (e.g. minority/majority group), there were higher reports of racism among the minority group at Stoneway City Council. These findings suggest that workforce heterogeneity leads to increased racism. Higher levels of racial literacy and/or stronger anti-discriminatory mechanisms could also explain higher reports of racism among minority-group members at Stoneway City Council. More research is needed to understand these potentially contrasting effects.

Interviews revealed regional variation in acceptance of diversity and the nature of prejudiced attitudes. In particular, less tolerance of diversity in regional areas was associated with lack of exposure to diversity. However, I have argued that lack of

exposure to diversity did not explain the persistence of negative attitudes towards members of some minority groups (such as Indigenous people, who generally make up large populations in regional/rural areas). Rather, drawing on other studies (Stolle et al., 2008; Wicks et al., 2014), I have proposed that less tolerance for diversity in regional/rural areas could be due to lack of opportunities for positive intergroup contact, alongside more contention over resources (such as land and employment), which could enhance diversity-threat effects. On the whole, these findings highlight the importance of contextual variations in workforce diversity initiatives. Contrasting dynamics of action and resistance, and the importance of place, need to be taken into account in anti-racism intervention. In particular, in places where Anglo-Australian privilege is entrenched, the effects of change may evoke an even greater 'sense of loss' (Narine & Persaud, 2003; Scott et al., 2003, p. 114).

This study has also highlighted important contextual differences in anti-racism practice between the two council sites. Chapter 8 revealed the resistance to diversity at Stoneway City Council and how it intensified as they moved from abstract aims and aspirations to the 'messiness' and realities of 'doing' diversity in practice (Prasad et al., 1997). Anti-racism provided an avenue through which the tensions associated with diversity could be worked through and potentially overcome. Moreover, despite resistance and denial about racism, visible commitment by organisational leaders and other diversity champions had the potential to create more systemic level change over the longer term (Orlikowski, 1996). By contrast, at Corrington Shire, there appeared to be less resistance during the workplace assessment process, where I observed strong support for altering current recruitment practices and introducing positive-discrimination policies to increase the cultural diversity of the workforce. I have said that the buoyant optimism expressed at Corrington Shire contrasted with the more 'gruelling' (Lea, 2008) nature of discussion and resistances that unfolded at Stoneway City Council. However, unlike at Stoneway City Council, commitments to diversity at Corrington Shire were not yet fully articulated within council values. Utilising Schein's (2004) categorisation of organisational culture and Ahmed's (2006; 2012) notion of non-performative anti-racism, I have concluded that discrepancies in organisational values and underlying assumptions have the potential for delayed forms of resistance, given that the gap between statements of commitment and practice are more pronounced.

In addressing institutional racism, it is clear that systemic, cultural change is needed. Indeed, a key finding of this study has been the important role of organisational culture and the role of structure and agency in understanding racism, diversity and anti-racism practice. Rather than being episodic, change was often subtle and grounded in the everyday and routine actions of individuals, whose actions, over time, had the potential to produce, reproduce or alter existing organisational structures and processes (Giddens, 1984; Orlikowski, 1996). The prospects of such change processes are neither dystopic nor utopic. Change does require a preparedness to work through various forms of resistance in enabling and embedding change. The inclusion of organisation culture in understanding and defining institutional racism is another contribution of this study, where more ethnographic studies are needed to further understand the role of organisational culture in institutional racism. Further research can also focus on how institutional racism manifests differently within various settings, such as in the workplace/employment versus justice versus education etc.

Finally, this study also provides a strong case for workforces to be more representative of the diverse communities they serve. Local council workforces must adapt, change and innovate in order to thrive and be more responsive to increasing diversity in the community. Further, local government, as the level of government closest to the community, may be particularly well placed to deal with some of the more challenging aspects of diversity, such as racism, tensions regarding the accommodation of difference and losses to white privilege. However, there is a need to further bridge the gaps between commitments to diversity and actual anti-racism. This includes the removal of structural barriers to employment as well as 'harder' measures such as positive-action/positive-discrimination. Improved data collection and monitoring of workforce data would help to create accountabilities around commitments to workforce diversity and anti-racism. There is also merit in 'following anti-racist rhetoric around' the organisation as a reality check of its implementation in practice.



## 10.4 Concluding remarks

The findings of this research, including differences between the case study sites, underscore the importance of context, culture, structure and agency in understanding institutional racism and adopting workplace diversity and anti-racism approaches that build on local, contextual factors. These contextual factors can generate different and changeable outcomes and create the potential for distinct possibilities over space and time. Diversity and anti-racism co-exist with institutional racism. Despite its structural and universal drives, institutional racism can be disrupted through the presence of diversity in the workplace and inclusive workplace structures, cultures, policies and practices that support and sustain normative commitments to diversity and anti-racism.

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## Cases



*Mabo and Others v. Queensland (No.2)* (1992) 175 CLR 1

### **Legislation**

*Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1979* (NT)

*Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (Cth)

*Local Government Act 1989* (Vic)

## APPENDICES

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**APPENDIX A: Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool**

# **Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool**

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## Introduction

The demographic compositions of Australian workforces are changing. Victoria is one of the fastest growing and most diverse states in Australia. Harnessing diversity is therefore essential to facing new challenges in terms of productivity, skill shortages, global labour market competition and an ageing population.<sup>i</sup> Evidence has shown that racial diversity supports creativity and innovative thinking, greater employee commitment and team performance, larger market share, and better customer and client satisfaction.<sup>ii</sup>

There is also an increasing need to respond to issues of race-based discrimination in the workplace. Race-based discrimination has negative outcomes for individuals and society, resulting in considerable social and economic costs. There is strong evidence of a link between race-based discrimination and ill-health, especially mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.<sup>iii</sup>

In the workplace, where many people spend a large proportion of their time, race-based discrimination is associated with increased blood pressure, poor job quality, reduced organisational productivity, commitment, trust, satisfaction and morale as well as increases in cynicism, absenteeism and staff turnover.<sup>iv</sup> Loss of productivity, skills and innovation are also major costs arising from discrimination in the workplace.<sup>v</sup>

## Why Focus at the Workplace Level?

Workplaces have been identified both as places where race-based discrimination occurs as well as a priority setting where anti-discrimination and diversity can be supported and enhanced.<sup>vi</sup> Workplaces provide a natural environment for contact between people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, workplaces can play an important role in modeling and enforcing anti-discrimination standards.

New legislative requirements under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006 and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010 now include obligations for employers and workplaces relating to race, ethnicity and religion. This provides a strong case for taking a more proactive approach to responding to diversity and discrimination in the workplace.

## Benefits of Conducting a Workplace Assessment

Undertaking a workplace assessment is a proven approach to supporting best practice in workplace diversity and anti-discrimination.<sup>vii</sup> Conducting a workplace assessment provides a process for reviewing and planning for improved practice across a range of organisational functions. The assessment process gathers baseline information from which to plan for diversity and anti-discrimination and against which progress can be measured. Therefore, the process functions as both a planning tool and as a means to establish organisational accountability. The very process of undertaking a workplace assessment makes a strong statement to your workforce, clients and community that your organisation values diversity and is committed to creating a workplace environment that is free from discrimination.

## Purpose of the Workplace Assessment Tool

The Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool has been designed to guide organisations through a series of best practice statements and examples. The tool has been structured to assess current policy and practice through the involvement of an internal Assessment Committee consisting of representative from key organisational areas, including human resources, senior leadership, community services, administration, finance, communications and policy and planning, as well as individuals whose job roles are directly concerned with diversity issues. Senior leadership and other employees are also encouraged to support and participate in the process.

While the tool functions as a standalone self-assessment process, there is also the opportunity to bring in support of external parties to provide additional expertise and prevent bias. For example, external parties might include experts who have a strong understanding of workplace diversity and anti-discrimination issues who can provide advice, facilitate meetings and keep discussion on track. Researchers could also be engaged to conduct formal interviews and focus groups with employees so that issues about current policy and practice can be aired freely. Through the assessment process, the tool collects important information about current policy and practice from a variety of sources, including organisational documents, discussion or formal interviews and focus groups with employees. Findings and recommendations from the assessment process inform the development of an action plan.

The tool has been developed in the context of internal workplace and employee issues and does not focus on organisational functions relating to service delivery or external community engagement. The tool also focuses at the level of organisational policy and practice. Additional

information about individual employee attitudes, behaviours and experiences can be gathered through other evaluative tools, such as employee surveys, which are provided as part of the resource toolkit that accompanies this tool.

## Committing to an Ongoing Process of Assessment

The process of organisational assessment should be viewed as an ongoing process. This toolkit recognises that some organisations will be further along in this process while others may just be beginning. Whichever stage your organisation is at, the tool provides an opportunity to engage in an ongoing process of assessment and planning which can be reviewed according to organisational needs, for example annually or biennially.

The tool functions as a guide to generate discussion and reflection, rather than as a measure of organisational or individual performance. A key purpose of the tool is to identify key organisational strengths, as well as opportunities for continuous learning and improvement. As a planning tool, the assessment also provides the opportunity to set realistic goals for progressing issues of diversity and anti-discrimination within the workplace, over both the short and long term.

## Development of the Workplace Assessment Tool

The Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool has been developed following a comprehensive review of global literature on how to best assess workplace policy and practice in relation to diversity and anti-discrimination.<sup>viii</sup> A key finding of the review was that a tool to assess diversity and anti-discrimination workplace practices within an Australian context was not currently available, which led to the development of this tool.

The tool was developed for organisations taking part in a place-based pro-diversity and anti-discrimination program being supported by [REDACTED].<sup>ix</sup> The tool has been piloted with two local government councils in Victoria. Based on this piloting the tool has been refined for use within other organisational settings.

## How to Conduct the Assessment

The following acts as a guide to the number of steps involved in conducting a workplace assessment.

<b><i>Suggested Steps in Conducting a Workplace Assessment</i></b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Purpose/Further Details</b>	<b>Suggested Steps</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Communication</b>	Board, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Senior Leadership	Support from the Board, CEO and senior leadership is critical for the gaining support for the assessment process.	Support for the workplace assessment can be shown through written or verbal communication to staff and ensuring that necessary time and resources are available to conduct the assessment (e.g. before the assessment is undertaken, the CEO or Board member could issue a general announcement to all staff about the purpose of the assessment, what may be expected of staff, and what the organisation will do with the findings).
<b>2</b>	<b>Establish an Assessment Committee</b>	Assessment Committee  Input from CEO and Senior Leadership	This working group takes central responsibility for coordinating and providing oversight to the assessment process.	An Assessment Committee of approximately 6 to 8 people is established to lead the assessment process. This includes staff representing key functions within the organisation such as human resources, senior leadership, community services, administration, finance, communications and policy and planning, as well as individuals whose job roles are directly concerned with diversity issues. The team itself should reflect the diversity of the workforce. Person(s) who are well positioned within the organisation and sensitive to diversity issues should be appointed to lead the assessment process and chair Assessment Committee meetings. Alternatively, external parties who have a strong understanding of workplace diversity and anti-discrimination issues may be invited to facilitate meetings and help to prevent bias.
<b>3</b>	<b>Identification of</b>	Assessment	Organisational	The Assessment Committee identifies key organisational documents to

	<b>Documents</b>	Committee	documents provide an indication of organisational policy and practice and support responses on the Assessment Tool.	be reviewed in the Assessment process, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission, vision, values statement</li> <li>• Organisational website</li> <li>• Staff, board and volunteer orientation materials</li> <li>• Annual reports</li> <li>• Strategic plans</li> <li>• Multicultural, diversity and reconciliation plans</li> <li>• Human resource strategic plans, policy and procedures manual</li> <li>• Copies of current and recent job postings, with associated position descriptions</li> <li>• Dissemination policies and procedures for job postings</li> <li>• Selection, recruitment and interviewing guidelines</li> <li>• Performance evaluation guidelines</li> <li>• Data on race, ethnicity, culture, religion and/or spoken languages collected in Human resource management systems</li> <li>• Other relevant documents</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Completing the Assessment Tool</b>	Assessment Committee	Through a process of discussion, the Assessment Committee identifies current policy and practice for each question on the assessment tool.	The Assessment Committee reviews documents before meeting to work through the assessment tool. Based on these documents, the committee works through each question in the assessment tool. Key discussion points and responses are recorded in the assessment tool. Other staff may be approached to assist with data gathering activities. This could include discussion with key staff or formal interviews/focus groups conducted by an external party so that issues can be aired freely and to prevent bias.
<b>5</b>	<b>Finalising the Assessment Tool</b>	Assessment Committee	The Assessment Committee finalises responses in the Assessment Tool.	The Assessment Committee should now be in a position to finalise responses in the Assessment Tool, including recommendations and priorities for further action.



6	<b>Action Planning and Communication to Staff</b>	Assessment Committee	Involving the Board and/or senior leadership in the development of the action plan and communicating it to all staff provides ongoing accountability to the assessment process.	In the final stage of the assessment process, assessment committee members develop an action plan. The Board and/or senior leadership should be involved in developing and endorsing the action plan and communicating the plan to all staff.
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## How long does the Workplace Assessment take?

Depending on the size of the organisation and the complexity of the issues discussed, the assessment process can be completed over a half or full day meeting of the Assessment Committee or over a number of meetings. An initial meeting should be held to introduce members to the assessment tool and process and to identify organisational documents. Sufficient time should then be provided for members to read through organisational documents before meeting to work through items in the tool. Assessment committee members should be encouraged to read through all documentation and attend all meetings.

## Further Recommendations for an Effective Assessment Process

To ensure that the process of assessment is effective in improving workplace diversity and anti-discrimination, further recommendations include:

- Engage the Board and/or senior leadership early on to endorse and support the assessment process (e.g. senior leadership may be approached to nominate and approach employees for their involvement on the Assessment Committee. The Board and/or senior leadership should again be engaged in developing the action plan and communicating findings to all staff.
- If feasible, engage an independent skilled facilitator who has a strong understanding of workplace diversity and anti-discrimination issues to guide the process and keep discussion on track.

- Assessment committee members should be encouraged to read through all documentation and attend all meetings. If feasible, structure meetings to include a longer half-day or full-day meeting to ensure all members are in attendance and that momentum is maintained.
- Manage group dynamics and potential resistances by reinforcing that the assessment is not about individual or organisational performance but a commitment to addressing gaps in practice and policy.
- Ensure that the people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds are well represented on the group as these individuals may have a clearer understanding of how process and policies create unfair treatment and inequality.
- Be realistic in setting of actions and priorities according to organisational needs and priorities.
- Provide opportunities for Assessment Committee members to reflect on how the process has changed their own thinking and practice. Changes to individual practice are another important outcome of the assessment process.

## Other Resources in this Tool-Kit

The Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool is part of a tool-kit of resources which includes:

- Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Employee Survey
- Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Action Template
- Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Case Studies

## Glossary of Terms

**An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person** is someone who:

- Is a descendent of the First Peoples of Australia
- Identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person
- Is accepted by the community in which they live as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person

**Anti-discrimination** refers to treatment which results in equal power, resources or opportunities across people from different racial, ethnic, cultural and/or religious backgrounds.<sup>x</sup>

**Diversity** is used to describe variation between people in terms of a range of factors including ethnicity, national origin, gender, ability, age, physical characteristics, religion, values, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, or life experiences.<sup>xi</sup> For this resource, 'diversity' is used as a shorthand term and refers to racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and/or linguistic diversity. The term is inclusive of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

**Race-based discrimination** refers to those behaviours or practices that result in avoidable and unfair inequalities across groups in society on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture and/or religion.<sup>xii</sup>

# Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool

## Structure of the Tool

The tool is structured according to five domains representing key organisational functions, as outlined below.

### **DOMAIN 1 ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE**

**Pages 12-13**

This domain provides a profile of the organisation, including the extent to which a commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination is reflected in organisational goals, values and statements and the physical environment. Organisational goals, values and statements provide information on organisational commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination, while the physical environment, including signs and symbols and other measures to accommodate diversity in the workplace, help to provide a welcoming environment for people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. The physical environment can be assessed through a walk through of the organisational buildings, office and meeting spaces and staff amenities.

### **DOMAIN 2 DIVERSITY PLANNING AND RESOURCES**

**Pages 14-16**

This domain assesses whether the organisation has a workforce diversity plan and other resources to support diversity and anti-discrimination in the workplace. Key questions include the extent to which the organisation plans for and sets goals for increasing the diversity of the workforce; has policies and procedures for addressing race-based discrimination in the workplace and makes resources available to support diversity and anti-discrimination activities.

### **DOMAIN 3 COMMUNICATIONS**

**Pages 17-18**

This domain assesses organisational communications and the extent to which the organisation provides guidelines, protocols and other resources for staff for communications in relation people from diverse backgrounds. Organisational communications, such key publications and the organisational website, provides important information about the organisation and the extent to which the organisation supports diversity and anti-discrimination. Simple measures such as ensuring that organisational publications contain images of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, are free from bias and use appropriate terminology can enable people from diverse backgrounds to feel welcome and included. The development of guidelines and protocols also provides important information to staff about how to communicate in relation to people from diverse backgrounds.

#### **DOMAIN 4 HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Pages 19-25**

This domain assesses key human resource and employment policies, processes and practices to support the employment and retention of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, as well as opportunities for training and rewarding staff performance in relation to workplace diversity and anti-discrimination. This includes recruitment and selection processes, the involvement of managers and retention processes, diversity and anti-discrimination training programs for staff and managers, performance review and exiting process. Human resource and employment practices are essential to increasing and managing workforce diversity. This is especially important given that significant barriers exist for people from diverse backgrounds in seeking and gaining employment. Many of these barriers are hidden and subtle, such as recruitment practices that are inaccessible to people from diverse backgrounds and biases in selection.<sup>xiii</sup>

#### **DOMAIN 5 DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING**

**Pages 26-27**

This domain assesses the collection and monitoring of employee data; compliance with anti-discrimination regulations and laws; monitoring of complaints of race-based discrimination in the workplace; and the evaluation of diversity initiatives and programs. The collection and ongoing monitoring of employee data provides important information about the composition of the workforce, where the diverse composition of the workforce is an important indicator of organisational commitment to diversity. Ongoing data collection and monitoring, including of complaints of race-based discrimination, as well as the evaluation of diversity initiatives provides an important foundation from which to measure progress in relation to workplace diversity and anti-discrimination.

## Instructions for completing the table

The table comprises five columns, which can be completed as follows:

- **Column 1** – Item description (not to be completed).
- **Column 2** – Examples of best practice to guide discussion of the Assessment Committee (not to be completed).
- **Column 3** – Record key discussion points of current policy and practice through the Assessment committee process.
- **Column 4** – List supporting documents, including policies, procedure(s), publications or website materials. Documents can be attached or saved in an electronic file with the final version of the Assessment Tool.
- **Column 5** – List recommendations for further action and note the priority for each action item on the scale (from 1 lowest to 5 highest) or not applicable (N/A).

## DOMAIN 1. ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

This domain provides a profile of the organisation, including the extent to which a commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination is reflected in organisational goals, values and statements and the physical environment.

<b>Valuing and Commitment to Diversity and Anti-Discrimination</b>				
<i>Item</i>	<i>Best Practice Examples</i>	<i>Current Policy and Practice</i>	<i>Supporting Documents</i>	<i>Recommendations and Priorities for Further Action</i>
1.1. The organisation is committed to diversity and anti-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>A commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination is an explicit part of the organisation's mission, values, goals and other relevant documents</i></li> <li><i>Organisational commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination is regularly communicated and promoted to staff</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i></p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Low.....High</p>
<b>Creating a Welcoming Environment</b>				
1.2. The organisation acknowledges and provides a welcoming environment for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>There is a policy or acknowledgment statement recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as First Peoples and</i></li> </ul>			

<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities</p>	<p><i>Traditional Owners of the land</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There is specific signage and symbols of welcome in recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities (e.g. flags, acknowledgement plaques, posters, artwork etc.)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>
<p>1.3. The organisation provides a welcoming environment for people from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The physical environment reflects the diversity of the workforce and local community or service population</i></li> <li>• <i>Examples include signage, décor, reading materials, posters, noticeboard items, staff amenities, prayer rooms, catering options</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>



## DOMAIN 2. DIVERSITY PLANNING AND RESOURCES

This domain assesses organisational communications and the extent to which the organisation provides guidelines, protocols and other resources for staff for communications in relation people from diverse backgrounds.

Diversity Planning				
Item	Best Practice Examples	Current Policy and Practice	Supporting Documents	Recommendations and Priorities for Further Action
2.1. The organisation plans for workforce diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Workforce diversity plans specify goals for the composition of the workforce and strategies for achieving those goals</i></li> <li>• <i>Workforce diversity planning is linked to strategic planning processes</i></li> <li>• <i>Senior leadership and managers are actively involved in workforce diversity planning and communicating plans to the workforce</i></li> <li>• <i>Workforce diversity plans have been developed in consultation with staff, including staff from diverse</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i></p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>N/A</p>

	<i>backgrounds</i>			Low.....High
2.2. The organisation has specific policies and procedures on responding to race-based discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Policies and procedures include procedures on anti-discrimination code of practice and consequences for staff engaging in discriminatory practice and behaviour</i></li> <li>• <i>Policies and procedures include a process for making and responding to complaints of race-based discrimination</i></li> <li>• <i>Policies and procedures include examples of discriminatory practice and behaviour</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i></p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Low.....High</p>
<b>Organisational Resources</b>				
2.3. The organisation allocates adequate resources to workforce/workplace diversity and anti-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>There is a position(s) designated to handle workforce/workplace diversity issues</i></li> <li>• <i>A committee of key people within the organisation, including senior managers, coordinates and oversees workforce/workplace diversity issues</i></li> </ul>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Internal and external diversity expert(s) are consulted in developing or modifying the organisation's workforce/workplace diversity practices when needed</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>  1 2 3 4 5 N/A  Low.....High</p>
<p>2.4. The organisation has a calendar of significant cultural and religious observances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The calendar is regularly maintained and communicated and promoted to staff (e.g. the significance of certain days or periods)</i></li> <li>• <i>Significant days or periods are taken into account when planning meetings and other events (e.g. catering requirements)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>  1 2 3 4 5  N/A  Low.....High</p>

## DOMAIN 3. COMMUNICATIONS

This domain assesses organisational communications and the extent to which the organisation provides guidelines, protocols and other resources for staff for communications in relation people from diverse backgrounds.

Communications				
Item	Best Practice Examples	Current Policy and Practice	Supporting Documents	Recommendations and Priorities for Further Action
3.1. The organisation has a process for communications in relation to people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The organisation has a process, protocol or style guide for all communications in relation to people from diverse backgrounds</i></li> <li><i>Processes and protocols have been developed in consultation with people from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds to ensure appropriate terminology is used (e.g. for the local area)</i></li> <li><i>Processes and protocols are communicated to all staff</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>                      1 2 3 4 5                      N/A                      Low.....High</p>
3.2. Organisational publications contain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The organisation maintains a library of images of people</i></li> </ul>			

<p>references to and images of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds</p>	<p><i>from diverse backgrounds to include in publications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A diverse range of images are used on all publication, including the organisational website and other promotional material</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>
<p>3.3. There is a process for monitoring policies, communications and publications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Written policies and publications are monitored to eliminate bias and ensure inclusive language</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>

## DOMAIN 4. HUMAN RESOURCES

This domain assesses key human resource and employment policies, processes and practices to support the employment and retention of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds, as well as opportunities for training and rewarding staff performance in relation to workplace diversity and anti-discrimination.

Recruitment				
Item	Best Practice Examples	Current Policy and Practice	Supporting Documents	Recommendations and Priorities for Further Action
4.1. Job advertisements and application information is accessible to people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Job advertisements are written in plain English</i></li> <li>• <i>Job application information includes a statement regarding organisational commitment to diversity, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity</i></li> <li>• <i>Job application information include a plain English guide on how to apply</i></li> <li>• <i>Images of people from diverse backgrounds are included in promotional material</i></li> <li>• <i>Jobs are advertised through culturally and linguistically</i></li> </ul>			

	<p><i>diverse media outlets (e.g. ethnic community newspapers, Koori Mail, radio etc.), formal and informal community organisations and networks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The organisation engages and advertises jobs with employment agencies who specialise in finding candidates from diverse backgrounds</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>  1 2 3 4 5  N/A  Low.....High</p>
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<p>4.2. Position descriptions and selection criteria are relevant and accessible to people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Position descriptions and selection criteria are written in plain English</i></li> <li>• <i>Selection criteria are clear and realistic and include only the skills, qualifications and experience required for the job</i></li> <li>• <i>The number of selection criteria are reduced or prioritised according to the requirements for the job</i></li> <li>• <i>Valuing diversity and working in a diverse workforce is specified in position descriptions and/or selection criteria</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>
<p>4.3. The organisation provides work experience opportunities and employment pathways to support the employment of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious</p>	<p><i>Examples include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Work experience, work placement or work ready programs</i></li> <li>• <i>Traineeships, cadetships and graduate programs (e.g. linking with Australian Public Service programs)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5</p>



and linguistic backgrounds				N/A Low.....High
<b>Selection</b>				
4.4. The organisation is committed to breaking down barriers in selection process for applicants from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>All qualified applicants with eligibility to work in Australia are considered (e.g. regardless of local work experience)</i></li> <li>• <i>Shortlisting processes include measures to monitor bias towards applicants from diverse backgrounds (e.g. identifying information is removed from applications before assessment)</i></li> <li>• <i>Interview panels are aware of discriminatory practices in selection and are aware of the barriers in selection processes for people from diverse backgrounds</i></li> <li>• <i>Interview panels include people from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds</i></li> <li>• <i>Measures to positively</i></li> </ul>			

	<p><i>discriminate towards applications of equal merit from diverse backgrounds are considered in order to build a diverse workforce</i></p>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>
<p><b>Retention and Management</b></p>				
<p>4.5. The organisation actively supports the retention of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The organisation has a formal plan and process for retaining staff from diverse backgrounds</i></li> <li>• <i>Where necessary, there is a position(s) with responsibility for retaining staff from diverse backgrounds</i></li> <li>• <i>The organisation has a mentoring program</i></li> <li>• <i>The organisation supports informal or formal networking groups for employees from diverse racial, ethnic and culture backgrounds</i></li> <li>• <i>The organisation supports English language courses for employees not proficient in English</i></li> <li>• <i>Where necessary, the organisations provides</i></li> </ul>			

	<p><i>documents in languages other than English to assist employees not be proficient in English (e.g. employment forms, policies)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Significant cultural and religious observances are accommodated through leave and flexible working arrangements</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>  1 2 3 4 5  N/A  Low.....High</p>
<p>4.6. The organisation requires active support from managers in the employment and retention of people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The organisation considers specialised training for managers in valuing diversity and non-discrimination, including awareness of employment barriers for people from diverse backgrounds, and process for responding to complaints of race-based discrimination</i></li> <li>• <i>Managers support opportunities for staff from diverse backgrounds to develop new skills and gain practical experience working at higher levels (e.g. acting temporarily in these roles, secondments etc.)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>  1 2 3 4 5  N/A  Low.....High</p>

<p>4.7. The organisation recognises and rewards performance in relation to diversity and anti-discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Performance review guidelines include adherence to organisational values such as valuing diversity and non-discriminatory standards</i></li> <li>• <i>Employee practice and behaviour in relation to diversity and anti-discrimination is acknowledged and rewarded (e.g. acknowledgement at meetings, diversity awards or other incentives)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>
<h3>Training</h3>				
<p>4.8. The organisation provides induction and ongoing training to all employees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The induction program for new employees and ongoing training covers organisational commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination</i></li> <li>• <i>Induction and ongoing training covers procedures on anti-discrimination code of practice and consequences for staff engaging in discriminatory practice and behaviour as well as the process for making and</i></li> </ul>			

	<p><i>responding to complaints of race-based discrimination</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Additional training is provided for staff in working with people from diverse backgrounds (e.g. cultural competency training)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>
<p><b>Exiting Processes</b></p>				
<p>4.9. The organisation provides an exist process for all employees, including staff from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Exiting processes are appropriate for people from diverse backgrounds (e.g. an interview is conducted rather than a survey; interview is conducted by someone other than the employee's immediate supervisor)</i></li> <li>• <i>Exit processes include questions about experiences of the working in a diverse workplace and experiences of unfair treatment</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5            N/A            Low.....High</p>

## DOMAIN 5. DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING

This domain assesses the collection and monitoring of employee data; compliance with anti-discrimination regulations and laws; monitoring of complaints of race-based discrimination in the workplace; and the evaluation of diversity initiatives and programs.

Data Collection and Monitoring				
Item	Best Practice Examples	Current Policy and Practice	Supporting Documents	Recommendations and Priorities for Further Action
5.1. The composition of the workforce includes people from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The workforce composition represents staff from a diverse range of backgrounds (e.g. HR employee data)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i></p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 N/A</p> <p>Low.....High</p>
5.2. The organisation monitors employee data in line with workforce diversity goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Workforce composition data matches Census data for the local community or service population</i></li> <li><i>Data is monitored and compared for retention, promotion, seniority and turnover rates across diverse groups</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i></p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 N/A</p> <p>Low.....High</p>
5.3. The organisation is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The organisation reviews its</i></li> </ul>			

<p>compliant with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislative and policy requirements and reviews complaints of race-based discrimination</p>	<p><i>compliance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity regulations and laws</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The organisation regularly reviews complaints of race-based discrimination to identify any recurring or ongoing problem areas</i></li> <li><i>The organisation regularly reviews processes for receiving and responding to complaints of race-based discrimination</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5 N/A            Low.....High</p>
<p>5.4. The organisation evaluates diversity and anti-discrimination initiatives and programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>The organisation documents employee feedback and suggestions in relation to diversity and anti-discrimination initiatives and programs in terms of employee involvement and satisfaction and effectiveness in meeting established goals</i></li> <li><i>The organisation formally evaluates diversity and anti-discrimination initiatives by using multiple methods (e.g. surveys, employee interviews)</i></li> </ul>			<p><i>Priority</i>            1 2 3 4 5 N/A</p>

	<i>and focus groups)</i>			Low.....High
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## APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule

### THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

#### Interview Schedule

**PROJECT TITLE:** Building Inclusive Organisations: Moving from Evidence to Practice

- *Signed consent form/tape recorded.*
- *Interview will go for 1 hour. More of a conversation about [REDACTED] and knowledge translation as well as the process of organisational change, drawing on some of the themes that have come up through the audit process.*

#### Background questions

*So before getting into that, I just wanted to start with a couple of background questions...*

1. First of all, if you just wanted to talk about your background (e.g. how you came to work in this role/local government/previous experience in working on diversity/anti-discrimination issues?)

#### [REDACTED] general questions

*So in terms of general questions about [REDACTED] ...*

2. Did you want to talk first of all about [REDACTED] generally, how you think it has been going overall? What have been some of the benefits in being involved in the program? What have been the main challenges?
3. What would you say are some of the key messages of [REDACTED]? How well do you think the key messages of [REDACTED] have been received across the organisation?
4. People involved in [REDACTED] have talked about initial difficulties in getting people to understand conceptually what the program is trying to achieve (such as addressing racism/changing attitudes in mainstream settings rather than helping “disadvantaged” communities). What are your thoughts on this?
5. So in terms of terminology, people use different terms such as racism, anti-racism, race-based discrimination, diversity, cultural competency, equal opportunity etc. What terminology do you like to use and why?

## Knowledge Translation

*Ok so now turning to knowledge translation, which is really looking at how researchers and practitioners work together as well as the process of using research evidence to inform practice...*

6. What have been some of the benefits in having such a strong focus on research/evaluation in [REDACTED]? Have there been any challenges in having such a strong focus on research? (E.g. too much complexity? Has research delayed action?)
7. How well do you think the research-partnership has worked in practice? How it has evolved over time? Why has it worked (e.g. X) or not worked (**prompt:** *resources/time constraints, competing priorities for practitioners*)?
8. Using the framework as an example of knowledge translation, can you talk about how this has been “translated” into practice? Why has it worked (e.g. X) or not worked? How has people’s understanding of it evolved over time?
9. To what extent do you think are differences between the research “world” and the kinds of issues that people implementing programs face? How might these differences best be bridged?
10. The audit tool, including its development (which you were involved in) is a good example of knowledge translation. What has been your experience of this process? How has it been useful and relevant to your work, in what ways was it not useful and relevant? To what extent do you think it was a good use of time and resources? How would you do it differently?
11. To what extent do you think research might help to embed a program like [REDACTED] into the organisation or create better program outcomes in the community?

## Organisational Change

*So now I want to discuss what [REDACTED] is trying to achieve within the Council setting and the process of organisational change...*

12. What do you think are some of the benefits in having a diverse organisation? (**prompt:** *creativity and innovation, greater employee commitment and customer satisfaction*)?
13. What do you think are some of the challenges? (**prompt:** *reduced staff morale and productivity, conflict between employees and managers*)
14. What kind of journey do you think the organisation has gone on in terms of a commitment to diversity? What do you think have been the main driving factors (e.g. CEO/leadership, other individuals, programs, resources)?

15. To what extent do you think (in programs like [REDACTED] or other multicultural/diversity initiatives) is it challenging to engage people and get them on board. Can you think of any examples where this has been a challenge?
16. To what extent do you think managers are important to making progress on diversity and equality issues? In your experience, how do you best engage/train managers?
17. What about the role of individuals in supporting diversity within organisations? Can you think of examples where individuals have acted as champions and influenced others in achieving change? Or on the other hand, can you think of any examples where particular individuals have been a barrier to progressing diversity issues?
18. What are some of the objections people have voiced about the [REDACTED] program or diversity more broadly? Why do you think people have these kinds of concerns?
19. In the sense that [REDACTED] has been trying to address both more subtle forms of race-based discrimination, how well do you think this has been/is being achieved? What are some of the challenges in operating in this space?
20. What about the more systemic forms of discrimination which [REDACTED] is trying to achieve. How well has this/is this being addressed?
21. In you in the work that you do, what kinds of strategies do you use to deal with the kinds of attitudes people have? Why do you think people have these attitudes?
22. To what extent do you think [REDACTED] has helped to establish non-discriminatory standards and a valuing of diversity at council? If so, how? If not, why not?
23. Aside from these factors, what else do you see as important mechanisms for progress and change on diversity issues
24. What kind of impact do you think a 3-year funded program like [REDACTED] is going to have within the organisation over the long-term?
25. Has [REDACTED] changed your thinking and practice? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
26. How do you maintain your own energy and motivation in this kind of work – what keeps you going?
27. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## APPENDIX C: Council workplace Survey

### Council Setting Survey

#### 1. Demographics

1. Are you a man or a woman?

Man

Woman

2. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

University degree or higher

Other Tertiary qualifications

Trade or TAFE qualifications

Higher School Certificate (Year 12 / 6th Form) or equivalent

School certificate (Year 10 / 4th Form) or equivalent

Primary school (Completed Year 6)

No formal qualifications

**Other (please specify)**\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which area of work best describes your current job role?

Director/ Manager

Supervisor/ Coordinator/ Team Leader

Officer

Trades/ Outdoor

Customer Service/ Administration

Home Support Worker

School Crossing Supervisor

**Other (please specify)**\_\_\_\_\_

4. How long have you worked in this organisation?

Less than two years

Between 2 and 5 years

More than 5 but less than 10 years

More than 10 but less than 20 years

More than 20 years

5. What is your racial, ethnic or cultural background? You can have more than one answer.

6. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes

No

7. What country were you born in?

8. If you were not born in Australia, how long have you lived here, in Australia?

9. What language or languages other than English do you speak at home?

10. What is your religion?



## Council Setting Survey

### 2. Diversity and/or cultural awareness training

Please indicate whether you have had the following opportunities to participate in cultural awareness and/or diversity training in the last five years and whether each opportunity has developed your skills and knowledge in the area.

1. Have you participated in cultural awareness and/or diversity training in this organisation?

Yes

No

2. If you answered yes, how much has this opportunity increased your skills and/or knowledge?

A lot

Moderately

A little

Not at all

3. If yes, please note when you last participated in such training and how long the training was.

4. Have you participated in cultural awareness and/or diversity training provided by a previous employer?

Yes

No

5. If you answered yes, how much has this opportunity increased your skills and/or knowledge?

A lot

Moderately

A little

Not at all

6. Have you participated in any other cultural awareness and/or diversity training in the past five years?

Yes

No

7. If you answered yes, how much has this opportunity increased your skills and/or knowledge?

A lot

Moderately

A little

Not at all

# Council Setting Survey

## 3. Your workplace environment

Strongly agree    Agree    Neither agree nor disagree    Disagree    Strongly disagree

My organisation is committed to providing a workplace environment that is welcoming, safe and inclusive for people from varied racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Within my organisation, there are inadequate policies, practices and processes in place to address race-based discrimination.

There are people I can turn to for help if I've witnessed or experienced race-based discrimination.

Within my organisation, there are no clear consequences for engaging in racially discriminatory behaviour.

I feel I have the skills and ability to address racial discrimination and promote diversity in the course of my work role.

In my opinion, all employees in this organisation, regardless of racial, ethnic, cultural or religious background, have equal access to training and development opportunities.

In my opinion, all employees in this organisation, regardless of racial, ethnic, cultural or religious background, have equal opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

In my opinion, all employees in this organisation, regardless of racial, ethnic, cultural or religious background, have the same chance of being promoted, for example into more senior roles.

Where I work, people from different racial, ethnic, cultural or religious groups do not get along well with each other.

I am uncomfortable with having a manager from a different ethnic, racial, cultural or religious background.

# Council Setting Survey

## 4. Your experiences and opinions

1. Please indicate how often you have had the following experiences in the past year.

Very often    Often    Sometimes    Rarely    Never

I have witnessed situations where staff at my workplace were treated unfairly because of their race, ethnicity, culture or religion.

I have witnessed situations where customers or clients of my organisation were treated unfairly because of their race, ethnicity, culture or religion.

I have observed policies or practices at my workplace that exclude or negatively affect people from minority racial, ethnic, cultural or religious groups.

I have observed policies or practices at work that exclude or negatively affect me because of my race, ethnicity, culture or religion.

My training, development opportunities and/or participation in decision-making at my workplace has been unfairly limited because of my race, ethnicity, culture or

Very often      Often      Sometimes      Rarely      Never

religion.

I have felt left out or avoided at my workplace because of my race, ethnicity, culture or religion.

I have had someone treat me as less intelligent, or inferior, because of my race, ethnicity, culture or religion at my workplace.

I have been ignored, treated with suspicion or treated rudely at my workplace because of my race, ethnicity, culture or religion.

2. Please indicate the appropriate option that best reflects your response to the following statements.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neither agree nor disagree      Disagree      Strongly disagree

Racial discrimination is a problem in Australia.

Organisations, such as workplaces, play an important role in setting non-discriminatory standards.

I prefer to work in a racially, ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse organisation.

Strongly agree      Agree      Neither agree  
nor disagree      Disagree      Strongly  
disagree

Racial, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity is beneficial to an organisation.

I experience anxiety or discomfort around people from other racial, ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds.

Australia is weakened by people from various racial, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds sticking to their old ways.

**3. Is there anything else you'd like us to know?**

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*Thank you for participating in our survey!*



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<sup>i</sup> Berman, G., Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, & Victorian Multicultural Commission. (2008). *Harnessing diversity: addressing racial and religious discrimination in*

<sup>ii</sup> Paradies, Y., Chandrakumar, L., Klocker, N., Frere, M., Webster, K., Burrell, M., and McLean, P. 2009. *Building on our strengths: A framework to reduce race-based discrimination and promote diversity in Victoria*. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

<sup>iii</sup> Paradies, Y. 2006. A systematic review of empirical research on self-reported racism and health. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 35 (4):888-901; Williams DR & Mohammed SA. Discrimination and racial disparities in health: evidence and needed research. *J Behav Med* 32(1):20-47.

<sup>iv</sup> Trenerry B, Franklin H, Paradies Y. 2011. *Preventing race-based discrimination and supporting cultural diversity in the workplace: An evidence review*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>v</sup> Trenerry B, Franklin H, Paradies Y. 2011. *Preventing race-based discrimination and supporting cultural diversity in the workplace: An evidence review*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>vi</sup> Trenerry B, Franklin H, Paradies Y. 2011. *Preventing race-based discrimination and supporting cultural diversity in the workplace: An evidence review*. Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>vii</sup> Trenerry, B., Franklin, H., and Paradies, Y. 2010. *Review of audit and assessment tools, programs and resources in workplace settings to prevent race-based discrimination and support diversity*: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton, Australia; Trenerry, B., & Paradies, Y. 2012. Organizational Assessment: An Overlooked Approach To Managing Diversity And Addressing Racism In The Workplace. *Journal of Diversity Management* 7(1).

<sup>viii</sup> The Workplace Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Assessment Tool was developed through an integration of key theoretical concepts and best-practice examples following a review of global literature and approaches to organisational assessment (see Trenerry, B., Franklin, H., and Paradies, Y. 2010. *Review of audit and assessment tools, programs and resources in workplace settings to prevent race-based discrimination and support diversity*: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Carlton). While the development of the tool encompasses a broad spectrum of theoretical issues considered in this review, specific items were drawn and adapted from the following sources, based on their suitability for Australian workplace settings: Bowen, S. 2004. *Assessing the responsiveness of health care organizations to culturally diverse groups*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba; Department of Immigration and Citizenship. 2008. Executive Leadership Foundation. 2003. *ProMosaic™ II, Diversity/Inclusion Assessment Tool*: Executive Leadership Foundation, Available from <http://www.promosaic.org/>; Merri Community Health Services, the University of Melbourne and the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health. Unpublished document. Cultural Competency Organisational Review (CORE): Building and strengthening organisational cultural competence; Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, and Women's Health Goulburn North East. 2008. *Making Two Worlds Work: building the capacity of the health and community sector to work effectively and respectfully with our Aboriginal community*. Wodonga, Victoria: Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation, and Women's Health Goulburn North East (facilitated by Kim Jenkins, Karin McMillan, Kylie Stephens), Available from [http://www.whealth.com.au/ourwork/mtww/mtww\\_about.html](http://www.whealth.com.au/ourwork/mtww/mtww_about.html).

<sup>ix</sup> [REDACTED]

<sup>x</sup> Paradies et al. 2009. *Building on our strengths: A framework to reduce race-based discrimination and promote diversity in Victoria*.

<sup>xi</sup> Bowen, 2004. *Assessing the responsiveness of health care organizations to culturally diverse groups*.

<sup>xii</sup> Paradies et al. 2009. *Building on our strengths: A framework to reduce race-based discrimination and promote diversity in Victoria*.

<sup>xiii</sup> Dipboye, R. L., & Colella, A. M. (2005). *Discrimination at Work: the psychological and organizational bases*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates