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Attitudes of Classroom Teachers to Cultural Diversity and Multicultural Education in Country New South Wales, Australia

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Abstract: Views of country school teachers towards multicultural education and anti-racism policy directives are examined against a background of a largely 'white' landscape but increasing numbers of language background other than English (LBOTE) immigrants. A 10 per cent response from a self-administered online survey of government primary and secondary classroom teachers in country New South Wales examines their attitudes to cultural diversity, goals of multicultural education, and anti-racist strategies. Though strongly supportive of attempts to combat racism, implementation in some schools lags behind intention. Whether on cultural diversity, multiculturalism or acknowledgement of racism, teacher attitudes are more tolerant than those in the wider communities the schools serve. But while among teachers and the wider community there is some level of intolerance and discrimination towards Aboriginal and LBOTE Australians, such attitudes do not vary significantly across country areas with different cultural diversity mixes, except for recognition of the needs of Aboriginal students among teachers.

Introduction

In a world where the major immigrant receiving nations are increasingly culturally diverse, schools are often seen as arenas of intercultural tension (Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002). But they can also be important sites of 'ethnic-racial socialisation', where children and adolescents spend a great deal of time interacting with their peers, often in cross cultural circumstances (Guerra, Williams & Sadek, 2011). They are also spaces where children can learn about cultural diversity, their own cultural identity and to develop a sense of belonging within a multicultural society (Patthey-Chavez, 1993; Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Brickwood, Fox & Paradies, 2014). As Priest (2014) has commented:

> *Schools can be a microcosm of society where young people are negotiating intercultural tensions they are seeing within the wider environment [and] can be a very important setting of socialisation in which racist behaviours and attitudes can either be countered or perpetuated.*

As well as potential arenas of intercultural tension, therefore, schools can be pivotal to the development of strategies aimed at multicultural understanding and combatting racism (McLaren & Torres, 1999). Thus a major goal of multicultural education 'is to help students develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function within their own [and] other micro-cultures, and within the global community' (Banks, 2001, p. 25).

In culturally diverse situations, sometimes fraught with racist attitudes (Walton et al., 2014), teachers have an important role in dealing with cultural sensitivities and multicultural values, and in modifying attitudes regarding race and culture within a school system (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). This is especially important for schools in rural and regional (hereinafter referred to as 'country') Australia (i.e. Australia outside the state capitals and major urban centres), set as they are in a largely 'white' (Anglo) landscape, with two minority cultural groups potentially subject to racist attitudes (Forrest & Dunn, 2013). One comprises ethnic immigrants who have in the past largely been restricted to some country towns and areas of intensive agriculture (Hugo, 2000). Into this socio-cultural context the Australian government has in the past two decades pursued policies encouraging LBOTE immigrants to settle in country areas (Hugo, 2008). The other comprises significant elements of Aboriginal Austalians, especially in the north and west of the state, against whom there has long been a significant level of prejudice in the Australian general community (Angelico, 1995, p. 253; Mellor, 2003)[1]. Why then is rural education largely missing from multicultural education textbooks (Ayalon, 2004)?

Any study of a large region like country New South Wales (NSW) implies a need to include a geographical perspective. One reason is the uneven distribution of cultural diversity and the varying nature of the ethnic mix in country Australia (cf. Forrest & Dunn, 2013). Another, linked to the specifics of the ethnic mix in various areas, recognises that some ethnic groups are more socially distant from the receiving society, and therefore 'less welcome' generating stronger challenges in the specific areas where they are resident (Noble, 2005). A third is bound up with teacher' attitudes towards ethnic diversity in the student composition of their schools. These attitudes are influenced by the multicultural education initiatives developed by education authorities since the mid-1990s to counter racism in Australian schools and to inculcate intercultural understanding (Dunn, Lean, Watkins & Noble, 2013; Noble & Watkins, 2013; Watkins, Lean & Noble, 2015). Is there a geography of teacher attitudes to diversity, racism and multicultural education across country NSW (cf. Aveling, 2004), and if so, how does it relate to the broader geography of community attitudes?

To address these issues, we draw upon the first state wide survey of teachers in public schools in NSW, conducted as part of the *Rethinking Multiculturalism, Reassessing Multicultural Education* project (Watkins, Lean, Noble & Dunn, 2013). Focusing on classroom teachers as those most in contact with students (Grant & Tate, 1995), we seek first to understand their attitudes towards multicultural education and anti-racism policy initiatives developed by the NSW Department of Education. Second, we incorporate survey results from the *Challenging Racism* project (2011) and from the 2011 Australian census, to compare country teachers' views with those of the communities that surround their schools, as an indication of the broader anti-racism potential of anti-discrimination policy implementation in schools.

[1]There are Aboriginal education programs and strategies that are separate from those implemented to support LBOTE students and their families and stressing the unique place Indigenous Australians have and the particular needs of these students. However, the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities' approaches to the development of strategies promoting community harmony, intercultural understanding and a culturally inclusive curriculum are intended for all groups, both LBOTE and Aboriginal people, as are anti-racism initiatives. So except for one question on the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in the school curriculum, Aboriginal issues as such are not separately addressed in this study.

Ethnic Diversity, Racism and Multicultural Education

Ethnic Diversity

Ethnic diversity among students in many Australian schools has increased rapidly since World War II, with the arrival of immigrant waves from central, southern, south-eastern and eastern Europe in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s; from the Middle East and Asia with the ending of the White Australia policy in the early 1970s; and most recently from East Africa and the Sudan from the turn of the century (Forrest, Poulsen & Johnston, 2006, pp 443-446; Hugo, 2009, pp 60-63). While these LBOTE immigrants have not settled in country Australia in any significant numbers (less than five per cent of the population in 2011), Missingham, Dibden & Cocklin (2006, pp 131-134) noted Hugo's (2000, not paged) comment that 'there are several country towns [in areas of intensive market gardening, grape growing and horticulture] which have significant ethnic minorities'. In addition, since 1996 a federal government State Specific Migration Mechanism has been successful in encouraging some LBOTE immigrants to settle in country Australia (Hugo, 2008; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Equally important, country New South Wales is home to a significant minority Aboriginal presence comprising five per cent of the population, rising to a third or more in some districts. In these mostly 'white' landscapes, the attitudes of teachers towards cultural diversity and multicultural education are likely to be highly relevant to local community relations and can affect student achievement (Bodkin-Andrews, Denson & Bansel, 2013; Ryan, 2003). We need, therefore, to reflect on how teachers relate to culturally diverse student bodies (cf. Middlekoop, Meerman & Ballafkih 2014; Wiggins & Follo, 1999) in country NSW.

Racism

Australia schools are the most common setting in which children and adolescents experience racism (Mansouri et al., 2009; Priest et al., 2014), defined as behaviour and practices acting to generate avoidable and unfair treatment of groups of people because of their race, ethnicity, culture or religion (Berman & Paradies, 2010). Mansouri et al. (2009) found that racist name-calling affected 38 per cent of respondents among high school students in Australia's east coast states and in the Northern Territory. Both international and Australian research show that racism poses a significant barrier to educational achievement (Ryan 2003; Eccles, Wong & Peck, 2006; Byrd & Chavous, 2009) among youth from minority group backgrounds, particularly Aboriginal Australians (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2013, pp 477–484; Larson, Gillies, Howard & Coffin, 2007), with effects extending beyond educational disadvantage into various forms of morbidity among children (Priest et al., 2014; Priest, 2014). These broad ranging costs of racism have been acknowledged both nationally and globally (Australian Multicultural Advisory Council 2010; United Nations, 2009).

In colonial settler societies like America or Australia, 'white', middle class teachers, have been critiqued for replicating and sustaining dominant patterns of white hegemony (Picower, 2009; Taylor, 2012). In the American context, Yoon (2012, pp 608-609) uses the term 'whiteness-at-work' to capture a notion of whiteness as a process found in daily classroom interactions, shaping assumptions and ways of interacting on the part of dominantly middle class white female teachers. For Australia, Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan & Taouk's (2009, p. 98) finding that the majority of racist incidents affecting young Australians of high school age occur within school settings suggests the importance of targeted anti-racism professional development for teachers.

The importance of schools as sites of interaction, often in cross cultural circumstances, also underscores their potential role in the development of strategies aimed at multicultural understanding and combatting racism (McLaren & Torres, 1999). The capacity

and commitment of teachers to challenge racism, not only in the school, but also in the wider community, is recognised in both overseas (Gillborn, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Pollock, 2008) and Australian studies (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Mansouri & Jenkins, 2010). But just as anti-racism education among children can have a primary effect upon community relations in the future (Raabe & Beelman, 2011; Tredoux, Tropp, Brown, Niens, Noor & T.U.G.E. Group, 2012), so too can community context affect teacher attitudes (Walker, Shafer & Liams, 2004):

> *… teachers' approaches and behaviours toward culturally diverse populations do not exist in a social vacuum; rather they tend to reflect … the norms and values both of the larger society and of the educational settings in which interactions take place (Horencyzk & Tatar, 2002, p. 436).*

However, a similar study of Sydney teachers (Forrest, Lean & Dunn, 2016) found that teacher attitudes were spatially consistent. They had a largely shared training experience, and were almost all tertiary educated. Horencyzk and Tatar's (2002) assertion, that teachers' attitudes will reflect the attitudes of the school community around them, may have more relevance in country areas where communities have greater levels of gemeinschaft.

Multicultural Education

Since the early 1970s, Australia has adopted broadly multicultural policies to promote the integration of ethnic minority immigrant groups (Inglis, 2009, p. 109). Education was one of the main institutional areas chosen to operationalise these policy changes. However, anti-racism initiatives and programmes were not widely adopted within multicultural education in NSW until the 1990s, when the Department of Education developed a policy and methods to address anti-social (racist) behaviour in the state's schools (Inglis, 2009, p. 115).

Multicultural education in Australia embraces a wide range of strategies aimed at achieving two goals: to provide all students with the knowledge, skills and values needed to participate successfully in a culturally diverse society; and to support the specific needs of students from language backgrounds other than English (Bianco, 2010; Inglis, 2009). The Department's policy also provides for anti-racism initiatives. Education authorities in Australia are committed to ensuring that schools should be safe environments where students can learn free from discrimination and bullying (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008). The new National Curriculum in Australia includes Intercultural Understanding as one of seven general capabilities to be studied from pre-school to senior high school (Hilferty, 2008; http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/general_capabilities.html).

However, support for multicultural education and anti-racism in schools is not universal, with disagreement about how best such aims should be approached (Aveling, 2007; Buchler, 2013). The election in 2013 of a Liberal-National (conservative) administration to government in Australia saw the initiation of a debate about diversity and multicultural education, placing a question mark over the future of cross-curriculum initiatives. But in NSW, commitment to multicultural education and anti-racism at the state level remains in place. The Department of Education's 'Racism No Way' campaign and the development of multicultural education (including joint funding of this study) have been driven by the Multicultural Programs Unit[2] within the NSW DEC which develops policy, campaigns and teaching resources, and provides regional trainers to provide in-service training to teachers in the deployment of multicultural education and anti-racism policies in their schools.

[2] In 2012 the Multicultural Programs Unit was renamed the Equity and Multicultural Education Team.

Survey Data

As part of the *Rethinking Multiculturalism, Reassessing Multicultural Education* project conducted by Western Sydney University, the Multicultural Programs Unit in the NSW DEC, and the NSW Institute of Teachers[3], a state wide, online survey was distributed to the 55,000 permanent teachers and executive staff in New South Wales' public schools during Term two, 2011 by email with a link to the survey instrument (Watkins et al. 2013, pp 10–11). The Department promoted the survey on its intranet and through its newsletter. The anonymous, self-administered response rate was just short of 10 per cent. From this data set responses of 688 classroom teachers in country[4] NSW schools were extracted for analysis.

In any survey involving self-selection, results may be biased towards supporters of pro-diversity or pro-multicultural education, or perhaps those with a vested interest against multicultural education. To check this, results were compared with those from surveys of 14 case-study schools (with a 75 per cent response rate) in a later stage of this project, chosen from across NSW and representing varied mixes of socio-economic status and cultural backgrounds. Results from the state-wide and 14 case-study school surveys did not differ (Lean & Dunn 2013). The survey instrument comprised six groups of questions relating to teachers' backgrounds and training, professional learning experience, perspectives on multicultural education in schools and views on diversity and cultural relations (Watkins et al. 2013; Watkins et al. 2015). This study reports briefly on the first three, before focussing upon the last three, for country-based classroom teachers.

Teacher Backgrounds and Training

Among country classroom teacher respondents, 36 per cent were in primary and 53 per cent in secondary schools, with a further nine per cent teaching in combined primary/secondary ('central') schools. Reflecting the feminisation of the teaching profession, 73 per cent of the teacher sample were women, compared with 68 per cent of female public school teachers in New South Wales as a whole. They were predominantly 'white'. Just eight per cent were from language backgrounds other than English, though this compared with five per cent LBOTE across country NSW as a whole. However, less than one per cent were of Aboriginal background, compared with five per cent of the total population (for greater detail on respondent profiles, see Watkins et al., 2013, pp 13–15). At least 80 per cent were 'most probably' from middle class backgrounds (Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training (2007, p. 53); almost all were tertiary educated. They had a median duration of service of 15 years, the same as NSW teachers generally.

All NSW teachers are encouraged to participate in professional learning opportunities in multicultural education (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2009). Half of all country teachers had experienced aspects of this in their pre- and in-service (professional development) training, although in the exact form of that experience varied considerably (Table 1).

[3] The New South Wales Institute of Teachers has now joined with the New South Wales Board of Studies to become the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards.

[4] Following the Australian Standard Geographical Classification 'Sections of State', country New South Wales includes:

- Other Urban – urban centres with 1,000 to 99,999 people.
- Bounded Rural Locality – rural areas with 200-999 people.
- Rural Balance – areas with fewer than 200 people.

Professional learning. Since beginning teaching, has your professional learning included any of the following aspects of multicultural education	Per cent
Teaching English as a second language (ESL)	16.6
Promoting positive community relations	49.3
Developing intercultural understanding	43.9
Teaching a culturally diverse curriculum	53.3
Incorporating anti-racism strategies	51.9
Teaching refugee students	15.4

Table 1. Classroom teachers' professional development, rural and regional NSW.

Nevertheless, in-service training strongly focused on the subject matter most emphasised in the multicultural and anti-racism policy statements: incorporation of anti-racism strategies; teaching a culturally diverse curriculum; and the promotion of positive community relations. On the other hand, perhaps reflecting the small numbers of LBOTE and refugee immigrants in country NSW, professional development training in teaching English as a second language, and in teaching refugee immigrants, had been undertaken by slightly fewer than one in five country teachers.

Teacher Views of Goals and Effectiveness of Multicultural Education

The then NSW Department of Education and Communities' Multicultural Education Policy (2005) emphasised a focus on school practices to provide for integration of students from all cultural backgrounds into all aspects of Australian society and provision of support within schools to assist students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Country teachers agreed with the importance of many of these goals and supported strategies to foster cultural inclusiveness[5]. But the importance attached to different goals and strategies varied, with combatting racism and discrimination the most strongly supported objective. Chief among the goals recognised by country teachers (Table 2A) were academic performance: the development proficiency in English language and literature (89 per cent support), achieving equity in student outcomes (86 per cent) and giving students of every background an equal chance to share in Australia's social, political and economic life (88 per cent). Only two

A. Goals of multicultural education	**Per cent Most Important**	**Component loadings A and B combined**				
		I	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**
Developing shared social values	73.6	0.14	**0.41**	0.21	0.21	0.23
Achieving equity in student learning outcomes	86.3	0.04	**0.45**	0.19	-0.08	**0.56**
Giving students the right to maintain and develop their cultural heritage	70.3	0.26	**0.43**	**0.46**	-0.26	0.10
Giving students equal chances to share in Australia's social, political and economic life	88.0	0.08	**0.68**	0.09	-0.04	0.13
Combating racism and discrimination	89.9	**0.36**	**0.67**	-0.09	0.01	-0.10
Developing students' proficiency in English language and literacy	88.8	0.03	**0.56**	0.10	0.16	0.29

[5] Response were sought on a five-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' through 'disagree', 'neutral', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

Developing harmonious cross-cultural relations and intercultural understanding	85.9	**0.37**	**0.60**	0.11	-0.06	/0.13
Developing commitment to Australian identity	64.5	-0.10	**0.38**	0.06	**0.62**	0.03
Fostering skills in languages other than English	42.9	0.10	**0.33**	**0.69**	0.20	-0.01
B. Effectiveness of strategies: fostering cultural inclusiveness	Per cent Most Effective	I	II	III	IV	V
Increasing parental involvement from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	73.5	**0.45**	0.15	0.15	0.21	0.03
Holding events to celebrate cultural diversity	64.4	**0.65**	0.01	0.11	0.25	-0.10
Including Anglo-Australian heritage more	30.6	0.10	-0.15	0.03	**0.79**	0.10
Implementing anti-racism strategies	73.9	**0.58**	0.28	-0.24	0.13	0.10
Developing cross-cultural curriculum	67.8	**0.60**	0.12	0.14	-0.27	0.13
Improving all students' academic outcomes	77.7	0.16	0.27	-0.04	0.13	**0.83**
Providing bilingual instruction	31.5	0.28	-0.06	**0.69**	0.01	0.06
Improving inter-cultural relations among students	78.2	**0.66**	0.21	0.08	-0.05	0.07
Including Aboriginal perspectives in curriculum	65.9	**0.61**	0.12	0.27	-0.02	0.09
Accommodating diverse cultural learning styles	68.3	**0.60**	0.05	0.29	-0.24	0.21
Per cent variance accounted for		15.69	13.69	8.20	7.66	6.81

Note: Per cent most important or effective derive from levels 4 and 5 on a five point scale; significant component loadings are in bold.

Table 2. Opinions of classroom teachers and combined principal components analysis.

thirds of country teachers supported cultural diversity celebrations and the introduction of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum (cf. Dandy, Durkin, Barber & Houghton, 2015). Such support was even less (53 per cent) in areas with the strongest Aboriginal presence. There was similar support for developing a commitment to Australian identity (65 per cent), but less support for fostering skills in languages other than English (43 per cent). The developing of shared values was seen as important (74 per cent) as was promoting students' right to maintain and develop their cultural heritages (70 per cent).

Country teachers' assessments of the effectiveness of strategies aimed at fostering cultural inclusiveness were weaker than for the goals of multicultural education (Table 2B): support for the principles of multiculturalism exceeded the perceived effectiveness of the strategies to progress inclusiveness. Teachers saw the following strategies as most effective: improving intercultural relations among students (78 per cent), improving students' academic outcomes (78 per cent), implementation of anti-racism strategies (74 per cent) and increasing involvement of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (74 per cent). But as with the goals of multicultural education, attention to activities or actions of a more cross cultural nature were less well supported, including: cross-cultural curricula (68 per cent), holding events to celebrate cultural diversity (64 per cent), accommodating diverse cultural learning styles and the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives (66 per cent) in spite of an emphasis on this in the new National Curriculum. Perceived as least effective were provision for bi-lingual instruction (32 per cent) and inclusion of more than what was presently provided on Anglo-Australian heritage (31 per cent).

Analysis of teacher attitudes in the Sydney metropolitan area (Forrest et al., 2016) suggested that underlying dimensions to these attitudes were shared across groups of teachers. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation towards simple structure (Yaremko, Harari, Harrison & Lynn, 1986) was used to test for this (Table 2). In summary the five dimensions are: I Pro-multicultural education strategies; II. Pro- multicultural values; III. Pro-ESL and bilingualism; IV. Pro Anglo heritage, and; V. Pro-academic basics. Components I and II indicate that the goals of multicultural education and effective strategies are separate dimensions accounting for 16 and 14 per cent of variation among country teachers' attitudes (component loadings of 0.03 or higher are generally considered significant, or at least salient, Kline 2002, pp 52–53); while there was consensus on many of the goals and strategies, the two dimensions were not correlated.

On component I there was strong support for most strategies aimed at fostering cultural inclusiveness except for those which involved inclusion of more Anglo-Australian cultural heritage in teaching, improving academic outcomes generally, or bilingual instruction. On all the other multicultural education strategies teachers with high loadings on this dimension were strongly supportive. Component II brought out shared support for goals of multicultural education, but less conviction for developing a commitment to Australian national identity and English language skills (these loaded on other components).

The other three components highlighted specific aspects of attitudes to goals and effective strategies. Broadly, they bring together attitudes that are pro-language diversity in teaching (component III), component IV that privileges Anglo-cultural heritage, and component V where multicultural education is seen as underwhelming and preference is for academic basics. Component III brought together the fostering of skills other than English and provision of bilingual instruction, and to a lesser extent encouragement of cultural maintenance, areas which received least support overall. Accounting for eight per cent of the variation in attitudes, it highlights what might be called the hyper-multiculturalists'. Their views are consistent with McInerney's (2003) findings from a study of teachers and administrators in 10 NSW schools, where only a minority supported school involvement in maintaining a student's family language and use of community languages for instruction. Component IV brought out two further areas receiving lower levels of support: commitment to Australian identity and celebration of cultural diversity, accounting for 7 per cent of variation among teachers. Finally, component V brought together two aspects of student achievement: effectiveness of improving students' learning outcomes as fostering cultural inclusiveness, correlated with equity in the achievement of learning outcomes among goals of multicultural education.

Attitudes to Cultural Diversity and Racism

The inclusion of anti-racism strategies in school plans is a requirement of the New South Wales anti-racism policy (NSW DET, 2009), committing the department and all staff to rejecting all forms of racism. But while 75 per cent of country teachers reported having read the department's anti-racism policy, with 71 per cent agreeing an anti-racism policy had been put in place in their school, a much lower proportion (42 per cent) reported having read about multicultural education policies with just 37 per cent acknowledging their implementation. Acceptance and implementation of anti-racism strategies is poorly matched by acceptance or implementation of multicultural education policies in many country schools.

Per cent born in:	English speaking background		Non-English speaking background		Australian & Torres Strait Islanders
	Australia	Britain	Europe	Asia, Mid. East, Africa	Aboriginal Australians
Group 1 (Hunter region and southern NSW)	**93.68**	2.23	0.33	0.64	3.14
Group 2 (mainly central NSW)	87.96	**6.59**	**1.12**	**1.24**	3.13
Group 3 (coastal NSW)	89.35	2.79	**1.63**	**2.35**	3.89
Group 4 (across northern half of NSW)	87.03	2.64	0.46	0.79	**9.07**
Group 5 (western and north-western NSW)	65.72	1.64	0.74	0.72	**31.19**

Note: Main loadings are in bold.

Table 3. Entropy analysis of racial/ethnic mix in country New South Wales.

But were these overall attitude results uniform among areas of varying ethnic diversity? To test for this, a diversity map of country NSW based on postcodes was constructed, using an entropy maximising procedure (Johnston & Semple, 1983; Forrest & Johnston, 1981). This procedure groups country postcodes with similar ethnic diversity profiles. The number of groups is determined subjectively when a decreasing amount of variation is accounted for by further increasing the number of groups. For country NSW, five groups of postcodes accounted for 72 per cent of variation across the five main ethnic groups. Postcodes with the greatest proportion of the Australian born (from English speaking backgrounds) are on the left, in mainly central and southern New South Wales (Table 3). Those with larger LBOTE populations in coastal and across northern New South Wales are in the middle columns. Postcodes with high proportions of Aboriginals on the right column are from western and north-western New South Wales.

Entropy groups characterised with main ethnic groups present	My school has multicultural education policies	My school has implemented anti-racism policies
1 Dominantly Australian born	42.1	75.2
2 + Significant British born presence	36.0	73.3
3 + Pockets of European immigrants	35.0	70.0
4 + Pockets of Asians, Mid. Easterners, Africans and Indigenous Australians	39.9	66.2
5 + Significant Aboriginal presence	20.6	58.8

Table 4. Classroom teachers' knowledge of implementation of NSW Department of Education and Teaching's multicultural education and anti-racism policies (per cent) for entropy groups 1-5.

Education and Teaching's multicultural education and anti-racism policies (per cent) for entropy groups 1-5.Teachers' knowledge of local implementation of multicultural education and anti-racism policies varied across these five regions of ethnic mix (Table 4). Responses on the implementation of multicultural education were highest (42 per cent) in strongly Anglo (entropy group 1) areas. Between 35 and 40 per cent of teachers in the other three ESB and largely LBOTE districts (entropy groups 2-4) reported multicultural education policy implementation, but only 21 per cent in group 5 with the strongest Aboriginal presence. Implementation of anti-racism initiatives showed a similar pattern, varying from a high of 75 per cent in strongly Anglo districts through 73 (group 3) and 66 per cent (group 4) in areas with a stronger LBOTE population mix. But in areas where Aboriginal people were a significant part of the cultural mix – group 5 – knowledge of implementation was a relatively low 59 per cent.

Table 5 reveals attitudes towards the need for multicultural education, the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds and responsibility for addressing racism in their schools across the five groups of areas[4]. The data suggest a much greater degree of concern than support for the goals of multicultural education and implementation strategies. In all five areas, acknowledgement of the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds was strong, up to twice as high as reported levels of policy implementation. However, attitudes within entropy groups towards both multicultural education and anti-racism policies were slightly lower in districts where it is probably needed most (entropy groups 4 and 5 with higher proportions of LBOTE residents and Aboriginal residents). This is to suggest a possible need/implementation mismatch, a geography of teachers positioning the least aware or supportive of multicultural education (and anti-racism) in areas of potentially greater need.

But is there evidence of any misplacement between need and teacher disposition? Are teachers with 'wrong attitudes' being placed in areas with greatest need? To test for this, component scores for each of the attitude factors I through V as dependent variable were regressed against four of the five entropy groupings (group 1 – Hunter Valley and southern NSW- was omitted as the reference variable). But only one of the five models was significant, with the R-square value showing only one per cent of variation among teachers

Ethnic mix group characteristics:	**Multicultural education should be in all schools**	**Each school should see to needs of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds**	**Each school is responsible for addressing racism or discrimination in their school**	**Racism is a problem in Australian schools**
1 Dominantly Australian born	81.4	81.4	93.8	60.0
2 + Significant British born presence	78.5	90.0	94.5	60.0
3 + Pockets of European immigrants	78.8	83.9	91.9	57.1
4 + Pockets of Asians, Mid. Easterners, Africans and Indigenous Australians	74.3	76.4	95.3	65.5
5 + Significant Aboriginal presence	79.4	79.4	91.2	73.5
All country NSW	78.3	83.3	93.8	61.2

Table 5. Classroom teachers' attitudes to multicultural education, diversity and racism by entropy groups 1-5: per cent who agree.

accounted for – a weak model. Group 5 (Western and North Western NSW), was associated, though only at the 0.10 per cent level, with component III (fostering non-English language skills and provision of bi-lingual instruction), suggesting some teacher concern for the needs of the large minority of Aboriginal students there. We then undertook logistic regressions of each of the five entropy groups as the dependent variable (coded 1 if a member of each entropy group being tested, otherwise 0) against four of the five factors shown in Table 2 (excluding component I as the reference variable). Two of the models were significant, but again only at the 0.10 per cent level and with R-square values of less than two per cent again indicating very weak models. These were entropy groups 2 (central NSW) and 3 (coastal NSW). Both showed significant relationships with component V, academic achievement and basics. This suggests that teachers there, with higher than average LBOTE populations, were especially concerned with equity and improving basic academic outcomes. We could speculate that teacher concern at ethnic unevenness in educational opportunity can be associated with a positive stance on multicultural education, or an emphasis on literacy basics, or both.

School and Community

Another of the objectives of anti-racism policies in New South Wales schools is fostering tolerant attitudes as a basis for the inculcation of similar values in the communities served by the schools (NSW Whole School Anti-racism Project 1995, 1), a point emphasised in the NSW DEC *Multicultural Education Policy* (2005). 'Schools are places of great influence, both on individuals and the community in general' (Mansouri et al., 2009, p. 109; for discussion in a British context see Gillborn, 1995). But Mansouri and Jenkins (2010, p. 93) also noted the reverse effect, 'a [recent] rise in society-wide intercultural tensions that inevitably permeates the school boundary'. How do the attitudes of country teachers in New South Wales towards diversity, multiculturalism, and racism compare with those in the communities which they serve?

Three questions common to the teacher survey and to a more general survey of racism in NSW (Dunn, Forrest, Burnley & McDonald, 2004)) addressed this issue: 'it is a good thing for society to be made up of different cultures' (pro-diversity); 'Australia is not weakened by different ethnicities sticking to their old ways' (pro-multiculturalism) and 'there is racial prejudice in Australia'. Responses options were: 'agree' plus 'strongly agree' = 1, 'neutral', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' = 0, from the *Challenging Racism Project* survey (2011) were coded to the five groups of postcodes for ethnic diversity in country NSW.

	Pro-diversity %		Pro-multiculturalism %		Society is racist %	
Ethnic mix group characteristics	**Teachers**	**Community**	**Teachers**	**Community**	**Teachers**	**Community**
1. Australian born	94.5	82.3	71.0	66.7	80.0	85.0
2. + British born presence	94.0	83.8	72.0	65.4	78.5	85.8
3. + Europeans	91.3	84.9	73.9	62.8	68.9	88.1
4. + Asians, Mid. East, African and Aboriginal presence	89.2	85.9	66.2	62.0	75.0	89.1
5. + Strong Aboriginal presence	88.2	86.5	79.4	62.2	82.4	91.9
All country NSW	92.2	84.4	71.4	64.2	76.0	87.1
Chi square significance for differences among the five ethnic mix groups.	0.32	0.94	0.47	0.87	0.34	0.61

Table 6. Attitudes to aspects of racism among classroom teachers and members of the wider community in districts of varying diversity in rural and regional New South Wales.

Country teachers were consistently more supportive of student cultural diversity (92 per cent) than were the populations of the communities served by those schools (84 per cent) (Table 6). They were more supportive of multiculturalism (71 per cent) than the community (64 per cent). However, teachers were less inclined to see society as racist (76 per cent) than the community (87 per cent). Other findings, however, suggested some contradictions, though none was statistically significant. Among teachers in the five ethnic mix postcode groups, pro-diversity attitudes decreased, though marginally, with increasing diversity, while those of the wider community moved in the opposite direction. While pro-multicultural attitudes were stronger within the wider community in mainly Australian born or Australian plus British born postcodes, and lower among all other areas of greater ethnic mix, teachers tended in the opposite direction, with greatest support for multiculturalism in postcodes with a large number of Aboriginals, though lower in areas which included people of mixed Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Aboriginal backgrounds. Finally, characterisation of Australian society as racist was stronger among members of the wider community in places of higher cultural diversity, and highest in postcodes with the strongest Aboriginal presence. Teachers, on the other hand, saw society as less racist in areas of some LBOTE mix, but increasing in areas dominated by the Australian born (group 1), except in group 5 postcodes with their substantial Aboriginal minority, where both teachers and community expressed strong levels of acknowledgement of racism.

Conclusions

Racism is commonly conceived as socially constructed. In schools this occurs through everyday racism, where teachers may act to ‘normalise’ behaviours and outcomes in a social context where ‘white’ is commonly the norm and non-white the ‘other’. Equally, teachers can be agents for change through multicultural education and combatting racism through strategies aimed at fostering cultural inclusiveness. Although most classroom teachers in country New South Wales were from ‘white’ (Anglo) and largely middle class backgrounds, there is evidence of strong support for strategies to foster cultural inclusiveness through anti-racism interventions such as improving intercultural relations, implementing anti-racism

strategies, greater involvement of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and using diverse learning styles.

Pro-multiculturalism was stronger among teachers than across the country community. This was especially so in areas with higher Aboriginal presence where it was some 17 percentage points higher than in the wider community. Country teachers were also more positive about cultural diversity in society than the communities around their schools. The exception again was in areas with greater Aboriginal presence where teacher and community approval levels were broadly similar in level of concern. But pro-multicultural attitudes were a bigger discriminator between teacher and community attitudes than pro-diversity per se. Multiculturalism is a successful brand with widespread acceptance. But assimilationist (anti-multiculturalism) discourses have some degree of community purchase (close to 40 per cent). Acknowledgment of racism was stronger in the community than among country teachers. This was also found for teachers across the whole state, and points to a teacher perception that things are perhaps better in society than perceived by the wider community, a view perhaps based on school experiences and their personal experience as professionals. Country NSW schools may be places of relative safety from racism as perceived by teachers, though they are by no means devoid of that scourge.

Geographical analysis of teacher support for multicultural education showed that in areas with greatest need for multicultural education, like those with a larger non-Anglo-Australian presence, were sometimes places where there was least knowledge of multicultural and anti-racism policies being implemented within schools. Similarly pro-multicultural attitudes were less strongly held in areas of greater diversity, especially in Group 4 areas with higher proportions of LBOTE and Aboriginal residents. On the other hand, there was no statistical evidence of any geographical mismatch between the needs of social inclusion (diversity) and support for the goals or strategies. Acknowledgment of racism in schools was strongest in the Group 5 areas with the strongest local Aboriginal presences, along with acknowledgment of racism in society. To that extent, country teacher attitudes follow a geographical pattern that reflects a demographic (cultural mix) need.

Country teachers were generally more accepting of ethnic diversity than the communities surrounding their schools. This replicated findings from previous work in the Sydney urban area (Forrest et al., 2016). In country settings there is a possibility that deeper levels of community (gemeinschaft) and social capital might see local values (including those against diversity) having a greater influence on teacher dispositions. Such is not the case. This is not unexpected, given the relatively uniform educational backgrounds of teachers and the wide range of policy directives and program initiatives coming from the NSW DEC to inform and operationalise multicultural education and anti-racism strategies through pre- and in-service teacher training.

Nevertheless, findings show that country NSW teachers are not as one in their support for the goals and strategies of multicultural education and social inclusiveness. There is not the same level of confidence about the effectiveness of strategies aimed at fostering cultural inclusiveness as there is for the goals of multicultural education. There are variations in attitudes among teachers towards both multicultural values and the strategies by which these goals can be achieved. The minor dimensions on the goals and effective strategies highlighted three sets of minority views that constitute almost half of the attitudinal variation: those who value bilingual skills and instruction to assist with that (a pro-English as second language bias); those who had a strong commitment to Australian identity and the valuing of Anglo-Australian heritage (an Anglo bias); and perhaps most significant, those who prioritised the basics of literacy, and equity of academic outcomes (egalitarianism or a focus on academic basics). Nor was there any consistent overlap among country teachers between support for goals and effective implementation: holders of strong views on goals are not

necessarily those who value the various strategies for effecting cultural inclusiveness. This is to suggest tensions surrounding both goals and strategies which have yet to be resolved, which again emphasise Walton et al's (2014) concern about the importance of teacher attitudes, and implications for education policy, teacher education and teacher practices. Multicultural education means different things to at least five different groups of NSW country teachers. Greater clarity on the goals and strategy components of multicultural education is needed, as well as clear advice for teachers on how these intersect with equity, bilingualism and Anglo privilege.

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