 Colour, culture and difference in Australian teacher education: voices from the edge

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Abstract

Purpose – Although much has been written about international students in higher education in Australia, there is a paucity of research and discussion about international academics especially non-whites and their lived experience in the workplace. This paper represents the voices of two academics working in metropolitan universities in Melbourne. The purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of how in spite of all the goodwill and highbrow research, the “corridors of academia” need to be examined in considering the politics of inclusion and internationalisation as the authors still need to address issues of colour as they exist in the academy.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors use narrative inquiry and reflection to tell the story as both phenomenon and method where the phenomenon is the story and inquiry is the narrative.

Findings – The findings suggest student and staff perceptions of difference are mostly theorised but not practiced within the academy.

Research limitations/implications – The paper includes two voices, a limitation in itself, thus generalisations cannot be made to other academics or institutions. The authors recommend more professional development for staff and students alike to embrace issues of colour, culture and difference.

Practical implications – The authors draw attention to the need for academics to reflect on their behaviour within their own academic communities and be more aware of minority groups in academia.

Social implications – By including and listening to issues facing minority groups (academics and students) can only improve the social cohesion of university worksites.

Originality/value – This is an original work carried out by both authors. It raises concerns that may also be experienced international staff and or students.

Keywords Higher education, Internationalization, Teacher education, Critical race theory, Inclusive pedagogy

Paper type Viewpoint

Setting the scene

Higher education (HE) has attracted international students and academics from around the globe over many decades (Yemini and Sagie, 2016; Byram, 2018). The mobility and exchange of international students and staff is “the oldest form of internationalization of higher education” (Huang, 2016, p. 29). Internationalisation in HE constitutes common social and cultural themes relating to national and cultural identity, citizenship development, intercultural understanding and social development (Knight, 2004). Whilst there is a plethora of studies about international students in Australia (Gomes, 2015; Altbach, 2015; Barton and Hartwig, 2017; Le and McKay, 2018; Pham and Tran, 2015; Kelly et al., 2018), there is a paucity of research about academics born overseas working at Australian universities. To a lesser extent, there exists a gap in the literature regarding issues of race with international academics of colour working in the area of “teacher education”. Lander and Santoro (2017, p. 1009) identify that Schools of Education in HE, continue to employ a white majority that reflects the “cultural, values, priorities and practice of that group”. This then marginalises minority groups as “the presence and efforts of race and racism continue to shape the priorities, experiences and outcomes of learners, educators and education researchers” (Vass et al., 2018, p. xii).
Few studies focus on the lived experiences of international academics (Uusimaki and Garvis, 2017; Lander and Santoro, 2017; Hathaway, 2018), academics of colour (Stanley, 2006; Martinez et al., 2017; Dancy et al., 2018) and female international academics (May et al., 2015; Arnoldi and Bosua, 2018). Writing specifically about Australia, Saltmarsh and Swirski (2010, p. 291) identify that “less attention has been paid to the experiences of the international academic”. International academics contribute significantly to the Australian academic workforce, 40.5 per cent were born abroad (Hugo, 2008). This paper adds to the wider body of research about international non-white academics whose work practices are largely constructed by others in the context of what is known as the “Enterprise University” (Marginson and Considine, 2000). The Enterprise University corporate approach to HE is driven by “economic and academic dimensions [that] are both subordinated to something else” and “academic identities, in their variations, are more subordinated” (Marginson and Considine, 2000, p. 5). International academics contribute significantly to the profile of the university. Their intercultural knowledge, skills and understandings enhance and enrich the teaching, research and service profile areas of the university (Thomson, 2014; Hunter et al., 2015).

Dawn and Richard are international academics, in this paper we share our autoethnographic narrative regarding issues of colour, culture and difference working at Australian universities. We like other non-white academics in the USA, for example, function within a hegemonic system of whiteness (Arnold et al., 2016). This exists due to Australia’s past colonial history and as a consequence, the discourse of racism in Australia is diminished and or silenced (Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). We draw on standpoint theory a tenet of critical race theory (CRT) to share a few succinct encounters of our lived experience within the academy. Our “standpoint” provides a space to be heard regarding how “positions of power” in our work milieu offer “a basis for interrogating normalised western perspectives”, and provide us a window of opportunity to be “change agents” (Fernandes-Satar and Aveling, 2018, p. 99). Our voices as insiders is taken from the standpoint of things we know, which others either chose to ignore and or deny (Wylie, 2003; Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017). Our distinctive voices of colour communicate to our “white counterparts matters that whites are unlikely to know. Minority status in other words brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism” (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001, p. 9). As voices from the edge we hold a reputed know-how to discuss matters of race and racism (Horsford and McKenzie, 2008; Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo, 2017).

Introducing ourselves

Author 1 (Dawn) was born in Johannesburg and classified Indian under the old apartheid regime. Under the Group Areas Act, people in South Africa were classified according to their race, she therefore lived in a designated area for Indians (Lenasia, South of Johannesburg). During her schooling all children at the school were Indian and were taught by Indian teachers. She attended so-called “white universities”, where 98 per cent of her lecturers were white academics. As a music teacher, she was the only non-white (Indian) on staff teaching in a multiracial private school in Johannesburg. Dawn completed her PhD in South Africa before immigrating to Melbourne in 2000. Having lived in South Africa for over three decades in a marginalised society she experienced first-hand the repercussions of how colour, difference and culture plays out in society and within educational settings. Dawn has never been to India, nor can she speak, read or write an Indian language. English is her first language and Afrikaans her second. She is fourth-generation South African, brought up in a western paradigm. Her name and surname are English.

Author 2 (Richard) was born in India, and whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the caste system, Richard is classified Indian of Anglo-Indian heritage. Richard
grew up in Kolkata and completed his schooling in a school run by Christian brothers in Kurseong, Darjeeling. Classes were all held in English and his upbringing was largely influenced by western culture, though surrounded by at least nine religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam and Christianity. Richard completed his initial tertiary studies in Kolkata where he was taught by Indian academics. He moved to Australia as a young adult in 1969 and subsequently furthered his studies. Richard completed his PhD in Melbourne whilst initially teaching at Australian secondary schools before starting his academic career at a university. Whilst Richard can speak and read Hindi, English is his first language and his name and surname are Anglo-Indian. Growing up in India and having experienced the caste system within Indian society, Dawn, like Richard, recognises the nuances of marginalisation and segregation within a single race group and also within Australia’s wider society.

Dawn and Richard met in 2001 at their places of work, and over the years they have become colleagues and friends. Whilst working at the same university, some staff and several students commonly assumed that they were married because they both looked “Indian” and worked in the same faculty. Students would say to Dawn “your husband showed us an interesting cartoon in our tutorial today […]” and students would remark to Richard “we saw your wife today, she had on colourful leggings […].” This was always amusing as Richard’s wife worked in the same faculty at the time, albeit the staff display board of photographs included our full names. Richard’s wife is white Anglo-Saxon, born in Australia, and shares the same surname as Richard. The type of confusion continues to play out in multicultural Melbourne when Richard is regularly asked, are you together? (Johnson and Kumar, 2010). The strong suggestion in these deeply held perceptions seems to reinforce a divide based on skin colour.

In this paper we draw on CRT to raise awareness of how, in spite of all the goodwill and well-intentioned research, our perception is that we still need to address issues of colour as they exist in HE. We do not claim overt racism, rather, some of our experiences suggest that the academic fraternity is slow to embrace people of colour. In the spirit of CRT, we voice our lived experience as we identify with minorities speaking from the edge (Crowhurst and Emslie, 2018). In this paper, we argue that voices from the edge are an essential part of teacher education in relation to internationalisation, inclusive practice and race discourse.

**Theoretical perspectives**

The focus of internationalisation is mostly located in course content rather than on internationalised pedagogy (Hellstén, 2008). Thus, an ongoing challenge for tertiary educators is developing a sense of “respect” that is inclusive of all students; one that is not culturally hierarchical (Johnson and Kumar, 2010). Instead, one that focuses on knowledge construction, curriculum and pedagogy (Joseph, 2012) as well as on critical inquiry that includes issues of race (Ohito and Oyler, 2017). Equally relevant is cultivating an academic learning environment that is robust in its recognition of difference. One that encourages reflectivity and inclusivity as issues of race, identity and self are often ignored. Embracing inclusive education and pedagogy teaches us how to engage and interrelate with people whose backgrounds are different from ours (Villegas et al., 2017). Given this remit, it would seem that the standard academic environment of choice and flexibility are eroded. It does not match the tenets of inclusive pedagogy which is ordinarily available to everyone (inclusive of all races), and includes new ways of teaching and learning (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011). In the case of legal scholars in the early 1980s, they argued for a recognition that “racism has been a normal daily fact of life in society […] ingrained in political and legal structures” […] it becomes “almost unrecognizable” (Lynn and Parker, 2006, pp. 259-260).

In Australian education settings, despite the waves of immigration, white values and white national identity dominate and are buttressed by culturally diverse policies that
“Other” non-whites (Lentin, 2005; Santoro, 2007; Walton, 2018). In this way the visibility of dominant groups is connected to power where recognition is acknowledged and is advantageous (Brighenti, 2007; Lewis and Simpson, 2012; Settles et al., 2018). CRT points out that the acceptance of whiteness as the standard is privileged, by which all else is measured (Vue et al., 2017). It has been historically accepted that whites are the “marker of white superiority” and blacks the “marker of black inferiority” (Yancy, 2012, p. 18). This places marginalised groups (people of colour) to go unnoticed in organisations that are “connected to systems of recognition and reward” (Settles et al., 2018, p. 2). In classroom practice, this is played out in power relations where the curriculum is seen as a cultural artefact that is “designed to maintain a white supremacist master script” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18) that perpetuates a western mindset of thinking. Australian universities are supposed to promote cultural diversity within the purview of inclusive pedagogical practices (Australian Catholic University, 2017; Victoria University, 2017), but seldom include race discourse. It would seem that “the weight of Australia’s racialised and racist past weighs heavily on Australia’s multicultural present, both in government policy and in everyday life” (Stratton, 2006, p. 10). In view of this, we question whether sufficient consideration is given to issues of race within the academy.

There is no genetic foundation for race (Gannon, 2016; Kolbert, 2018), rather “race continues to operate in ways that privileges some and discriminates against others” (Vass, 2017, p. 140). Issues of race are raised in relation to prejudice and discrimination based on characteristics such as physical attributes (skin colour), or religious or social affiliations and language, etc. (Berman and Paradies, 2010). Whereas racialisation according to Priest et al. (2016) is the “process by which racial characteristics become meaningful in different social situations”. Leading CRT scholars like Ladson-Billings (2013) note that issues of racism are normal and common to everyday life of people of colour. Within educational contexts, CRT acknowledges people of colour as a concern for social action, and conducting research in this area has relevance and meaning in the hope to provoke change (Lynn and Parker, 2006; Moss and Haertel, 2016; Page et al., 2016).

Situating ourselves within teacher education programmes, we agree with Howard and del Rosario (2000, p. 129) who recognise the need for race-related discourse. They suggest:

[...] preservice teachers need a working knowledge of the role that race has played in the histories and problems encountered by people of color before a sound multicultural curriculum can be implemented [...] there remains a need for discussion of practical ways that the classroom can be transformed into a setting where the learning experience is inclusive.

They go on to parallel our concern:

[...] if teachers themselves do not have experiential knowledge regarding issues of diversity they must have other opportunities to gain this knowledge. Educators often feel inadequately prepared and retreat to the safety-net of practicing “color blindness” – the practice of not acknowledging the racial identity of their students [...].

Whilst the notion of “colour-blindness” has damaging effects on marginalised or minority groups, Walton et al. (2013) point out that not seeing race or racial difference is beneficial to society at large. Giroux (2000) makes a strong case for academic multiculturalism in this context and speaks of cultural capital whereby “schooling often functions to affirm the Eurocentric, patriarchal histories, social identities, and cultural experiences of middle-class students while either marginalizing or erasing the voices, experiences, and cultural memories of so-called minority students [and staff]” (Giroux and Shannon, 1997, p. 233). We relate this to our experience as academics whereby there is a need to recognise “the language forms, style of presentation, dispositions, forms of reasoning, and cultural forms that give meaning to student experience [and academic experience]” (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1993, p. 151). Recent discussions in the Australian popular media have similarly identified
these issues in the general population (Sinha 2016; Soutphommasane, 2016; Switzer, 2016). For instance, Dictionary.com’s word of the year for 2016 was “xenophobia” (ABC News 2016). In a relevant example entitled “Diwali: Time to shine a light on Australia’s ‘bamboo ceiling’”, Sinha (2016) says that she and her peers have faced disillusionment and despair from indirect and/or institutional discrimination. She states that “The debate around diversity must recognise that diverse individuals should be recognised on their merits and not because of their diversity”. Of special note, Hasham (2016) has analysed the work of Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Soutphommasane: he found that no more than 5 per cent of leaders in business, politics, universities and government departments hail from non-European backgrounds, a sobering fact that weakens Australia’s claim to be a multicultural success story (Ozdowski, 2012).

These findings reveal a pervasive leadership bias against those who are of Asian, Indian, Middle Eastern, African, Pacific Island and Latin American descent. Amongst the nation’s 40 university Vice-Chancellors, all are from Anglo-Celtic (85 per cent) or European (15 per cent) backgrounds (Soutphommasane, 2016). At the time of writing the paper, none were Indigenous or non-European. Soutphommasane (cited in Hasham, 2016) observed:

[…] we assume what leadership must look like and sound like, and there are structural barriers to those from culturally diverse backgrounds breaking through into positions of leadership […] having some skin in the game on culture is important, as they are starting to have on gender […] Talking about cultural diversity isn’t always straightforward […] It’s time to think more seriously about the substance of our multiculturalism. Valuing diversity must also mean leaving room for it not only in the lobby or lunchroom but also in the corridors of power.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to address racial concerns in the USA, UK or amongst Aboriginal First Nation people in Australia, Indigenous Australian academics Page et al. (2016) recognise that whilst white privilege underpins structural inequality, they strongly find in their workplaces that they needed to persuade colleagues and students to understand that “race is vital” in HE discourse and that CRT is about embracing change and shifting power relations.

In this paper, we suggest that the “corridors of academia” need to be examined in considering the politics of internationalisation, inclusion and race. The privileged groups need to be named so that they can be seen (Giroux, 2000) and the cultural conditions that generate them need to be challenged.

Methodology
For this paper, we employ a qualitative research methodology (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2014) where we situate our lived experience as an autoethnographic narrative that draws on CRT methodology. As researchers, we do not disguise our identity and feelings in regards to what we experience; more so we were confronted with how much to reveal, and yet maintain the integrity of our current positions (Berger, 2001). Our autoethnography is a form of narrative that explores our subjective experience (Siddique, 2011). Through our narrative we tell our story (Clandinin and Caine, 2012) situating our lived experience within our everyday life-worlds of practice and practitioner (Jasper, 2005; Creswell, 2015). Our narrative helps us to understand the broader social context in which we live and work (Chase, 1995; Thomas, 2012). It helps us tell our story where diversity and inclusion are central issues in narrative inquiry (Saleh et al., 2014). In this way, we share our experience (50 years between us as tertiary educators) as we reflect on our practice, as a way to improve our practice and make a difference (Bulman and Schutz, 2004).

Our story is not unique, it is socially constructed and draws on “personal, relational, and cultural realities, perceptions and experiences” (DeAnne et al., 2004, p. 44). Therefore, by using narrative autoethnography along with the counter-storytelling (a component of
critical race methodology) gives us the chance to highlight issues of race and racism that impact “people of color based on their racial identities” (Hubain et al., 2016, p. 950). Counter-storytelling is a tenet of CRT (DeCuir and Dixson, 2004) in which “voices and experiential knowledge of people of color must be recognized” (Hubain et al., 2016, p. 949). Thus, counter-storytelling is a “tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege” [...] revealing “the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 32). There are three types of counter-stories (personal stories, other people’s stories and composite stories), we draw on personal stories to describe our lived experience (Goings, 2015). In light of this, we draw on Solórzano and Yosso’s (2002, p. 36) notion of counter-storytelling in CRT in that they:

1. can build community amongst those at the margins …;
2. can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society’s centre by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems;
3. can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and
4. can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone.

In keeping with autoethnographic research, we have kept personal notes to reflect on our teaching over many years, and since 2001, have regularly kept in touch (face-to-face and telephone) to discuss critical incidents that have related to issues of colour, culture and difference. Whilst we acknowledge that personal narratives are “the most controversial forms of autoethnography”, we also understand they provide an understanding of self or “some aspect of life as it intersects with a cultural context, […] and call on ‘readers to enter the author’s world’ to learn from the experience in order to make sense of their own lives” (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 279). For this paper we draw on some reflections and anecdotal feedback from students and staff in our findings and discussion. In analysing and reflecting on our personal notes and professional observations, we had many conversations talking through our data. We had different yet similar experiences which we coded making notes before categorising them into common overarching themes (fitting in, sticking out and connection with others). To ensure the reliability of our descriptions, we independently have shared our reflections and incidents with select trusted colleagues (Goings, 2015).

We situate our narrative within the broader domain of standpoint theory where our voice and story are important features of CRT (Page et al., 2016). As a minority group, we are asking questions in a marginalised context (Harding, 2009). Within our teacher education milieus, the vast majority of academics and students are local Anglo-Australians. Greene (1993, p. 216) makes the point that issues of “sex, gender, race, and class are often thought of in terms of narrative practices” and goes on to state that “there are ways of speaking and telling that construct silences, create ‘Others’ [and] invent gradations of social differences necessary for the identification of certain kinds of norms”. This paper only presents two voices, a limitation in itself, therefore generalisations to other institutions, staff and students cannot be made.

Findings and discussion
In this section we discuss some of our challenges and dilemmas regarding our sense of self and lived experience in our workplace. We have known each other for 18 years since working in Australian HE institutes, through our reflections the overarching themes
of “fitting in” and “sticking out” were self-evident as we talked about our experiences. The theme of “connection with Others” worked in our favour as we found we became conduits for “Others”, often of south-east Asian origin, who wished to share their “problems” with us.

Dawn’s voice
Since the start of 2001, I taught music to pre-service teachers at a university in Melbourne, believing that music is an effective platform to transcend barriers of race, ethnicity, language and religion. As a western-trained classical musician I introduced non-western multicultural music like that of African into all my teaching units as a way to celebrate diversity and internationalise the curriculum (see Joseph, 2003, 2011, 2016). This was different and challenging to students and also to staff who were perhaps more accustomed to hearing western music. Hearing the sounds of drums resonating from the music teaching room went against their habitual listening which aligned with a western white perspective (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The teaching about other cultures through music was initially perceived as a “fun” activity. It did not “fit in” to the then school curriculum of 2001; since 2015, the teaching of diverse music and genres is now included in the National Australian curriculum as tertiary educators are expected to prepare pre-service teachers for multicultural classrooms. I wanted my generalist primary education and specialist music students to learn about different music, culture and people as a way to foster intercultural understandings (Joseph et al., 2018; Joseph, 2016). In this way, I promoted intercultural understandings about diverse music, its people and genres and introduced students to issues about race discourse (Howard and del Rosario, 2000; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001; Ohito and Oyler, 2017).

Over the years, I had to learn how to “fit in” rather than “stick out”. From an early start at my job, my teaching content and style were markedly different and so was my dress. Colleagues and students found it challenging as I looked and sounded different. They would comment on my brightly coloured clothes, wearing African fabrics and animal prints. More recently remarks about this are less as staff are cautious about passing comment that may be deemed bias and or discriminatory. The subtle microaggression of verbal and bodily behaviour is part of my experience which Wing-Sue (2010) identifies as a significant reality for racialized people. Diversity initiatives, completing codes of conduct and compliance modules for staff are required by HE institutions to provide safe environments that are meant to be free from harassment and discrimination (Deakin University, 2019a, b). This experience may be comparable to other worksites where non-white people from different countries can often feel marginalised, isolated and victimized (Smith and Calasanti, 2005; Mohamed and Beagan, 2019). In addition the subtle everyday racism of speaking down to a person of colour, using humour and body language have a greater impact than overt racism (Mohamed and Beagan, 2019). To my knowledge, I have been the only full-time brown-faced female of Indian descent in the area of “teacher education” in my faculty. In July 2015, another female academic (originally from India) was appointed as a full-time member of staff. Over the years I had to modify my modus operandi amongst the sea of white faces in order to “fit in” with what may be perceived as “more comfortable” for my Australian tertiary education students and colleagues.

In addition, through end-of-semester student evaluations and general feedback from colleagues, I was confronted to change my mannerisms. Some staff and students found my teaching gestures something they were not used to. The subtle microagression comments meant I had to do a “sanity check” as I self-doubted my ability (Wing-Sue, 2010). Student evaluations encourage students to view themselves as customers/consumers of education (Hornstein, 2017). Students may feel it their right have “a go” at the lecturer in relation to their satisfaction rather than commenting on the teaching competence (Braga et al., 2014;
Research has shown that black faculty members have lower student evaluation scores in comparison to their white colleagues (Arnold et al., 2016). I speak in a rather direct and upfront manner; my tone may come across as harsh to the listener as I often use my voice in a dramatic way. As someone in the performing arts area, I vary my volume and do not use a microphone; often students perceived this aspect of my teaching as “yelling”. Although students said I am “engaging”, “passionate” and an “enthusiastic teacher”, “knowledgeable in the area of teaching”, I come across to them as “unapproachable”, “intimidating”, “rude” and “abrupt in tone”. This may be that my predominantly Anglo-Australian students have not had much experience interacting with lecturers of colour (which is the case in the School of Education) or they do not like it when I speak in a direct manner which is a cultural disconnect (Hubain et al., 2016). When students ask, for example, “when is the assignment due?” or “what is the length of the assignment?” or “who is my tutor?” I generally respond by saying “please look up this information online in the Unit Guide!” Students found this rude and abrupt. To avoid bad student evaluations, I now respond to such information. I do so “in fear” of receiving bad feedback which contextualizes the effect students’ evaluations have on staff (Hathaway, 2018). To date I am reminded by colleagues to be less direct even to the extent of being “softer” in tone in study guides and in e-mails. Many students find my matter-of-fact way confronting; perhaps this is the way South Africans come across. This may also be perceived as indicative of my so-called non-western culture even though I was brought up in a very western culture (see Joseph, 2010).

Over the years, students would ask directly in class, “could you repeat that?” or “what did you say?” and also in the end-of-semester anonymous evaluations students said, “we do not understand her”. Initially, I thought it was the content they did not understand, but realised such comments were a subtle way of students having a go at my “accent” even though English is my first language. This seems to be similar to some staff who ask “can you repeat that?” or “what did you say?” This is never an issue when I speak at national or international conferences or when I am asked to be the reader of scriptures at my local church for major events where the congregation happens to be 95 per cent Anglo-Australian. Having an Indian appearance does not resonate with having a strong Indian accent; as pointed out earlier, I do not speak any Indian language (Joseph, 2010). My forefathers came from India in the 1860s (Brain, 1983; Nair and Naidoo, 2010), I sound distinctly South African. Over the last few years, I have deliberately changed the speed, dynamics and tone of my voice so it is less confronting for students and colleagues. Recently, after taking a lecture in 2016, a colleague remarked, “that was good, you were very reserved and much quieter this time and it went off well”. This comment was patronising, as it appeared to fit in with the white colleague’s perception of “sameness”, aligning to her perception of what “Anglo-Australian” culture is about. This “tunnel vision” way of thinking when interacting with co-worker’s manifest as bias and discriminatory according to McCluney and Rabelo (2018). Research has shown that non-white academics often have to adapt to the dominant white culture and expectations of organisations (Bell, 1990; Parker, 2002; Stanley, 2006). Whilst the notion of internationalisation from when I started my job in 2001 has changed over the years, and the university is proud to pledge its support for “Racism. It stops with Me” (Deakin University, 2018), in reality this is hard to enact. Changing attitudes of colleagues and students is a tall order. Reports show that one in five Australians say they have experienced some form of racism (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017, 2019).

My connection with other non-whites comes naturally to me. As a naturalised Australian citizen, I feel a sense of empathy with them as they work and or study in predominantly white institutes. I find some colleagues and students from other countries speak to me in confidence about settling into their study, HE and into Australian life.
Sharing stories in this way or providing help is always welcomed by both students and staff, though the university does provide support services. Nevertheless, whilst this sense of openness and sharing is accepted, I experience elements of undermining my ability as an academic. This aspect I find most frustrating and wonder whether colour still plays a role, speaking out about these issues would cast me as a problem (Ahmed, 2012; Mohamed and Beagan, 2019). As I lived through the apartheid years in South Africa, I am resolute to run a different race in Australia and within HE. I am not prepared to give up or slack off because of the colour of my skin; rather, I am determined to run a race that passes on a baton to help students and staff gain a better understanding about difference and inclusion in the workplace and in the wider Australian society. Respecting, valuing another and showing understanding works both ways, it helps immigrants like myself to negotiate a sense of belonging in my new-found country and workplace (Sonn et al., 2017).

Richard’s voice
When I first arrived in Australia in 1969 and began teaching, I often got comments about my fluency with the English language. These comments were always phrased in relation to me looking different and therefore the expectation was that I would speak English with a stereotyped Indian accent. The consistent assumption that English was my second language was always puzzling, but in retrospect is more understandable as Australia was still under the White Australia Policy in 1969. For those comments to still continue in 2019 is most concerning. I am still seen as “Other” though I am a naturalised Australian for close to five decades. Staff and students in HE over the many years see me as “fitting in” to their mainstream Australian culture because I have acquired a sense of male “Australian colloquialism”. This resonates with a predominantly white Australian community and academy (Arnold et al., 2016). I am married to a white Anglo-Saxon academic which may enhance my sense of belonging in relation to “fitting in”, though my physical Indian appearance still identifies and marginalises me as “Other” within the academy (Lander and Santoro, 2017). My sense of belonging and identity are embedded in matters that concern race (Valdes et al., 2002; Vass, 2017; Lynn and Parker, 2006).

When applying for my current academic position in 2010, I was asked in the interview to identify the X-factor that I would bring to the university. My upfront response was that my photograph would contribute to the sea of white Anglo-Saxon faces on the noticeboard. This was embarrassing for the interview panel to hear as minority academics remain a subset in HE institutes (Chapman and Bhopal, 2018). As the only person of colour in my faculty at the time, I would have been a collective multicultural representative of the general population in Victoria and Australia. Similar to Dawn, I also work in a minority space feeling isolated where white staff project the attitude that they are making me feel welcome in their space (Turner and Myers, 2008). As “Other”, minority ethnic academics are less likely to challenge negative or racist experiences in the academy (Bhopal, 2016). If universities proceed along the lines of inclusive policy, targeting international students, the academy also needs to employ a commensurate mix of international non-whites staff (Soutphommasane, 2016). My popularity working with international students is well-noted by my colleagues and amongst students. In addition, I have built a strong connection with South Asian communities through my research and teaching. In this way I internationalise the curriculum and foster an inclusive pedagogy (Mansouri et al., 2009).

Following my appointment, a discussion was held with a senior academic regarding my record of academic publication as there seemed to be some doubt about the quality and credibility of my research. This comment aligns with what is deemed to be accepted as the dominant Eurocentric scholarship that is valued, where certain types of research and methods count (Ross and Edwards, 2016). This Mohamed and Beagan (2019) call
“epistemological racisms” where faculty members of colour often feel marginalised in relation to evaluations of their scholarship (Settles et al., 2018). What counts in the eyes of white academics is a major barrier for minority academics as they have a privileged position of decision making (Chapman and Bhopal, 2018). I assured the person that I was on-task with my publications only to be told, “I don’t trust you”. I raised this matter as a formal complaint, identifying it as a racial slur, based on the prejudicial assumption that Indians cannot be trusted. The senior academic perceived my complaint as being dealt with, as it was summarily dismissed by the institution. There was no further discussion as if the issue was “too hot to handle” in the rarefied environs of academia. Theoretically, academics may have opinions about cultural inclusivity, but in practice, it seems just too hard to implement. Whilst the academy implements routine equity and diversity policies, they sometimes mask the day-to-day experiences minority members face (Ahmed, 2012; Henry et al., 2017).

Recently, I was at a university seminar on supervising higher degree by research students. An issue raised was that there had been cases where academic staff had been offered bribes by international students of colour and the discussion was heading towards considering a code of conduct for such behaviour. The discussion was proceeding along the lines of “tut, tut […] this behaviour may be commonplace in some cultures, but we cannot have a bar of it in this country and in our university”. This type of comment aligns with a hegemonic view in HE that perpetuates whiteness as the standard and limits inclusivity (Vue et al., 2017; Villegas et al., 2017). I raised the need to focus our academic attention on the state of desperation that may lead or force a student to behave in such a way. I suggested employing a “Buddhist methodology” where we go within to interrogate the issue and ask: “as a supervisor, what am I doing in my behaviour to prevent students ever being pushed to such extremes that they are forced to offer a bribe?” The response I received from academics attending the seminar was uncomfortable, as the focus then shifted to the pedagogy of the supervisor than blaming the international student. While in certain countries (not cultures) it may be easier to get away with offering or receiving bribes, I strongly felt that academics should not normalise bribery by attributing it to “Other” cultures. Rather, I wanted to align my thinking with CRT that shifts stereotypical thinking to provoke change (Lynn and Parker, 2006; Moss and Haertel, 2016; Page et al., 2016). As an agent of change (Fernandes-Satar and Aveling, 2018), I took the standpoint to shift the discussion for academics to think about ways to support the research and scholarship of the international student’s progress. In the end, all agreed that it was not acceptable behaviour in any culture to receive bribes.

When we do make efforts to embrace difference we find we can reap mutual benefits; for example, when allotted a new PhD student I could tell by his name that he was Muslim. On meeting him I said “As-Salaam-Alaikum”. The PhD student was shocked, embraced me in tears and said, “I did not expect that greeting in an Australian university”. This relationship lasted beyond the successful completion of the PhD thesis and eventuated in a joint publication which contributes to the retention of higher degree students in an Australian university (Naghdi and Johnson, 2016). This type of relationship has successfully demonstrated how an international student can highly recommend in their home country an Australian university where they felt accepted and respected. I feel that I have an empathetic line of communication open with Asian students who request supervision and seek my advice. Like Dawn, I also work in a predominantly white institute, my international students gravitate towards me forming strong relations of trust with me as “Other”. I have established partnerships and student exchanges with schools and universities in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Malaysia as a positive way to internationalise the curriculum within teacher education programmes in HE offering a cultural exchange that promotes diversity and enhances intercultural and cross-cultural understanding (Maasum et al., 2014; Turner et al., 2008; Wertsch and Sarai, 2016).
Conclusion and recommendations

As authors our voices are uncharacteristically negative by the nature of the focus of the paper, thus our sense of self has changed in our environments (Powell, 2009). However, this does not wholly represent our lived experiences in Australia per se. We live here by choice and have never regretted emigrating to Australia. We certainly enjoy our work in HE and in teacher education as we contribute towards internationalizing the curriculum and embrace inclusive pedagogies. In our experience we find that issues of colour and discrimination in the academy are being swept under the carpet in Australia to avoid dealing with uncomfortable realities. This is not a new phenomenon as research has shown that academics of colour encounter multiple marginalities and microaggressions that go unseen (Bhopal and Chapman, 2019; Wing-Sue, 2010; Mohamed and Beagan, 2019). These mainly relate to race and gender (Turner, 2002; Kachchaf et al., 2015), having accents from their country of origin (Baez, 2000); questioning their competency and encountering resistance from students (Martinez et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2008).

Richard working for many more years than Dawn in HE found that academics are more comfortable to discuss, for example, broader social and political issues in the public arena than issues of race and racialisation. Examples of this would include the abhorrent position of Senator Pauline Hanson[1] or the treatment of footballer Adam Goodes[2] but not his own treatment in the academy. That was too close to the bone and too vulgar to discuss. In this context, we wrote this paper to provoke such uncomfortable but necessary conversations so that academics more broadly may be prompted to reflect on their behaviour within their own academic communities. The purpose of this paper was to express our lived experience as two non-white minority academics, where internationalisation and inclusion continue to be banners for courses. We share about matters of race as people of colour in our engagement with our teaching, students and staff, and we raise some issues as they intersect with our sense of self (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Parker, 2015; Page et al., 2016).

We like many other international academics do not seek special consideration or treatment, nor do we want to be identified as “different” by virtue of our skin colour; rather, we wish to be seen and treated equally as academics. Whilst much has been written about whiteness and race in HE (Woodall, 2013; Schulz and Fane, 2015; Bhopal and Chapman, 2019; Mohamed and Beagan, 2019), Australians to a large extent feel uncomfortable to talk about race and find it more acceptable to talk about culture or ethnicity (Innes, 2009). For people of colour in predominately white institutions, non-whites “put up” with the emotional and psychological cost of being different, and in the case of Dawn an added marginalisation of being female (Mirza, 2006).

We seek to add to the body of research by calling for more nuanced awareness of culturally inclusive programmes. One that is “participatory, inclusive and responsive” (Mansouri et al., 2009, p. 11), one that promotes a sense of belonging and not of discomfort or fear (Cochran-Smith, 2004) and one that includes issues of difference and race (Page et al., 2016). Preparing students and staff to be culturally responsive and inclusive can be challenging, complex and demanding (Villegas and Lucas, 2002; Barnes, 2006). Running awareness workshops of other cultures may help promote intercultural and cross-cultural understanding (Maasum et al., 2014). The reality is that it may not reduce racist behaviour (McCluney and Rabelo, 2018; Forscher et al., 2016). Whilst university staff are required to undertake online compliance module training regarding issues of ethics and codes of conduct (Deakin University, 2019a, b; RMIT University, 2019), we agree with Gibby (2019) that more work needs to be done in the area of behaviour controls at management level (e.g. calling someone to account, being open to transparency and discussion, offering clarity on values, responsibilities and behaviour) that may positively impact change in the landscape. The academic environment should promote the value of listening, respecting, engaging and fostering flexibility of delivery that is significant to a global environment. By not highlighting difference of colour/accent/race but looking to the richness that comes from the differences, we have attempted to further enrich the notion of
internationalisation in Australia. We assert that living the internationalised curriculum is not the same as “intellectualizing” about it. If we include more non-white voices, we add credibility at the very least to our claims of inclusion in academia. Therefore, we recommend a pedagogy of respect and understanding towards international staff. They, like international students, lack support from family and friends, they also suffer homesickness and find it difficult to adjust to their new environment (Campbell and Uusimaki, 2006; Brown, 2008; Walters, 2012).

We recommend that local academics be encouraged to undertake international experiences and new international academics undertake local and international teaching and research experiences. This we feel may help improve their professional and personal skills in relation to understanding the notion of internationalisation and inclusive education and the tenets of CRT that discusses inequities in people of colour (Lynn and Parker, 2006; Berman and Paradies, 2010; Priest et al., 2016; Moss and Haertel, 2016; Page et al., 2016). We suggest more professional development and discussions around what academic staff teach, research and practice in relation to student and staff well-being as this may help bridge the cultural and non-white divide. International staff and students need to be more actively involved in the process of working with and advising on the delivery of courses/programmes where selection panels of staff need to be inclusive and transparent. It would also be beneficial for both students and staff if more seminars on issues of race can be more openly discussed as a positive initiative as the media often report negative episodes. Whilst our narrative is personal, generalisations to other academics or institutions cannot be made. It cannot be assumed that all is necessarily well merely because we have an internalisation policy. We hope in our educational settings that we too can be agents of change like Page et al. (2016) to transform established belief systems in HE.

Drawing on the notion of counter-storying telling in CRT (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002) we hope to help shift ways of seeing and thinking, for those “Others” who are a voice from the edge.

A few years ago, whilst Richard was at the Science Museum of Melbourne, he noted a large glass jar with thousands of small white foam balls each representing a human gene responsible for determining the colour of one’s skin. You were meant to look for the genes responsible for representing colour by shaking the jar to reveal the three so-called “culprits” that were red in colour and seemingly lost in the sea of white foam balls. Our narrative, like those red balls, of being conspicuous by being non-white represents our shared professional experience of being “Othered” as workers in a sea of overwhelmingly white-faced academics at two Australian universities. Our narrative is personal, we concur with Germeten (2013, pp. 623-624) that the “changing tides can easily turn the wind and twist the current inclusion efforts backward. Thus, life stories told […] should make us aware of a period we do not want to re-enter”. Our narrative is “neither terminal nor mechanical”; rather it is “emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished” (Denzin, 1994, p. 479). As academics, we agree with Wertsch and Sarai (2016, p. 272) that “diversity of thought and diversity of background add significantly to the strengths to our institutions […] merely increasing the numbers of international students [and staff] from more diverse backgrounds is not enough”. We hope this paper challenges academics and systems in HE to think about new ways of theorising relationships between non-white academics that float within the “white foam balls” so that effective and meaningful change in HE institutions can be realised for all concerned.

Notes
1. Pauline Hanson is Australian Senator representing Queensland. She is publicly regarded as against indigenous, Asian and Islamic people.
2. Adam Goodes is a former professional Australian rules footballer who played for the Sydney Swans in the Australian Football League. On 24 May 2013, during the AFL’s annual Indigenous Round, a 13-year-old Collingwood supporter called Goodes an “ape”. Upon hearing the abuse, Goodes pointed the girl out to security who ejected her from the stadium. Goodes has suffered racial vilification ever since for calling out the racial slur.
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Further reading


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