Turning the lens: Indigenous perspectives on race-relations and on building White capacity for constructive relations in Australia

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

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Statement of Co-Authorship

The following people and institutions contributed to the publication of work undertaken as part of this thesis:

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Contribution of work by co-authors for each paper:

Paper 1: located in Appendix 1

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This publication was based on the data and theoretical analysis used in Chapter 8 of the thesis. Author 1 is therefore the primary author of the paper, contributing approximately 75% to the paper.

Author 2's principal contribution to the paper was to reframe the thesis material into a publication which involved some clarification and extension of the argument. She contributed approximately 25% to the paper.

Chapter 8 of the thesis relies on the same data and arguments of the publication together with additional analysis authored by the candidate. It is therefore exclusively the work of the candidate.

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- 'Dot', one of the older participants in the research, full of wit and wisdom. At one point in the interviews she turned to me and said:

'And all this information I'm giving to you, I'm hoping it does work for all of us. I hope the person, whoever reads it, comes up and says, "Whoever you are, thank you very much for the information that I've been given..." And maybe it changes their mind. I'll try that you know, you can always try it.'

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Abstract

This research investigates how White capacity for constructive race relations is perceived from an Indigenous standpoint. It explores the potential for the capacity in the White Australian population for constructive race relations to be developed as a critical but largely overlooked dimension of strategies for rectifying Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. The thesis argues that the contribution of White capacity building to such strategies has been obscured by the colonised nature of public and policy discourses, which are commonly framed by a discourse of Indigenous deficit. It utilises a radical application of Sen's capability approach to development, together with critical race and decolonising ideas, to explore questions about White capacity. Such questions are commonly overlooked by racist and colonised assumptions about what constitutes an advanced society. The research relies on and centres Indigenous knowledges and experiences as a source of expertise. These too are commonly overlooked by the same colonised assumptions, which ascribe Indigenous knowledge low value and high subjectivity. The investigation focuses on White capacity for constructive race-relations. This is because of the established links between race-relations and Indigenous wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes.

In their focus on 'social problems' the social sciences have traditionally focused on the experiences and choices of the socially disadvantaged. There is limited literature on how the choices and behaviours of privileged groups reproduce both the disadvantage of others and their own advantage. Recent theoretical advances in Whiteness studies have challenged this perspective by showing how dominant racial groups are implicated in the maintenance of the racial status quo. This approach gives particular weight to the subaltern voice and its insights into White behaviour, yet there has been little in-depth investigation of how Indigenous people view White Australian people and culture and their impact on Black/White race-relations.

In the thesis, I undertake thematic analysis of secondary data from 180 in-depth interviews with 44 Indigenous people in Darwin in the Northern Territory on the subject of White Australian people and culture and the race relationship. I adopt a social constructivist epistemological position and apply a critical race and decolonising lens to the data. I use a radical extension of Amartya Sen's capability approach to structure the analysis.

The research finds that the Indigenous respondents perceive many White Australians lack

the capability to engage fairly with Indigenous people. They believe many White Australians see Indigenous people unfairly, treat them unfairly and that most White Australians fail to take their fair share of the responsibility for improving race relations. I develop the concept of deep recognition to argue passive goodwill is insufficient to improve race relations and that profound change is necessary within White Australia's institutions and culture. The findings reveal how ignorance about Indigenous people, together with cultural values of individualism, have significant, deleterious impacts on the capability of White people to engage fairly with Indigenous populations. I conclude that ameliorating the ubiquity of these features of White culture warrant consideration in strategies to reduce Indigenous disadvantage. These findings therefore subvert assumptions about whose ignorance and incapacity must be dealt with in order to progress national goals of justice and equality for Indigenous people.

Critical race theory, recognition theory and Sen's capability approach all contribute to the understandings advanced in this study. In turn, this study contributes in small ways to each of these theories. It reduces the pessimism of critical race theory by strengthening and developing spaces for human goodness and positive developments. It develops recognition theory as a pathway to decolonisation and, by applying Sen's capability approach to a dominant and privileged race group, it extends the possibilities for this evaluative model as a decolonising device.

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thine heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

~ Baha'u'llah

Chapter 1: Reframing the 'problem' of 'Indigenous disadvantage'

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about the situation of Indigenous[1] people in Australia. But it is not about Indigenous people. It is about White Australians[2]. White Australians are not the usual focus of discussion in this country on the subject of so-called 'Indigenous issues'. The dominant public discourse is instead resoundingly one of Indigenous deficit (Fforde et al. 2013). It is either focused on the well-established and oft-cited statistical evidence of Indigenous inequality in the form of problematic socio-economic outcomes, or it is focused on what needs to be done in Indigenous communities for these statistics to be rectified and to 'close the gap'. There is limited evidence of the effectiveness of such measures despite decades of programs and the billions of dollars spent.

The dominant public discourse locates 'the problem' within the Indigenous population. This is despite well-established links between the ways in which hegemonic racial and cultural groups engage with minorities, and the wellbeing and socio-economic situation of those minorities (see, for example, Ferdinand, Paradies, and Kelaher 2012; Cunningham and Paradies 2013; Priest et al. 2014; Temple, Kelaher, and Paradies 2019; Paradies 2018; Honneth 2001). These links suggest that White Australian people, as the dominant racial and cultural group, are a highly relevant subject for these discourses. They are not, however, what is talked about. They also are not, on the whole, what is studied (as also noted by Pease 2010; Kowal 2015b). The prevalent assumption would appear to be that White Australians

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[1] 'Indigenous' refers here to Australia's First Nations peoples as a generic category. In utilising this term I acknowledge its failure to convey the significant diversity in culture and language both within the Aboriginal population, and between mainland Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I also acknowledge that the use of the term Indigenous is associated with the language of government and for some Indigenous people it is not their preferred descriptor.

[2] The term 'White Australian' refers to Australia's majority population who are of predominantly Anglo-Celtic and/or European descent. Using the term 'White' helps to counter the invisibility of race within the dominant population that is implicit in terms such as 'non-Indigenous' or 'mainstream'. In this thesis it is not a reference to skin colour and refers to a wide diversity of ethnic groups, some of whom might not consider themselves to be 'white'. This is discussed in more depth in section 3.6.1.

are the builders of Indigenous capacity for improved lives, not that White Australians might be in relative need of capacity building and improvement themselves. Such colonised assumptions limit the questions asked, whose expertise is turned to, and the solutions that even make it onto the agenda to address the disadvantage of Indigenous people in Australia.

This research seeks to disrupt the colonised assumptions that shape current discourses around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage (e.g. Fforde et al. 2013; Macoun 2011; Lovell 2012; Fogarty, Bulloch et al. 2018; Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018; Howard-Wagner 2012; Altman 2014). Its purpose is to investigate, from an Aboriginal standpoint, opportunities to build latent White Australian capacity for constructive race relations. The research argues that White capacity building is a critical dimension of strategies to rectify the ongoing situation of Indigenous people that has been masked or sidelined by the colonised nature of that discourse. The research investigates Indigenous perspectives on White Australian people and culture and what these reveal about opportunities for building capacity within the White Australian population for more constructive relations with Indigenous people. It does this through the analysis of qualitative interviews with Indigenous people on the subject of White Australian people, culture and race-relations.

Indigenous perspectives tend to be marginalised in public discourse about their situation. By privileging Indigenous perspectives and expertise, this research yields insights that are not commonly heard. This displaces the White standpoint from its self-assigned and unwarranted position as the natural, neutral, common sense centre (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.85). The research applies Sen's capability approach (Sen 1992) to this data to explore questions of White capability and where efforts might be targeted to improve their capacity for more constructive race-relations.

The research findings point to the need for deep change within the White Australian population and for White Australians to be agents of that change. The interview data suggests that many White Australians may be hindered by White ignorance (Mills 2007; 2008; Proctor 2008) and White cultural values from engaging constructively with Indigenous people. The analysis shifts assumptions about what questions are asked and who is authorised to answer them. It reveals the one-eyed nature of our current discourses and capacity building efforts. It shows that systematic capacity building within the White Australian population for constructive race-relations warrants greater public policy attention as a critical component of advancing reconciliation and ensuring justice and equity for Indigenous people.

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1.2   Reframing the problem

It is largely uncontested that Indigenous people in Australia overwhelmingly occupy its 'lowest socio-economic rung' (Walter 2009, p.2; Productivity Commission 2020). The statistics justifying such claims paint a picture of immense suffering and privation in this segment of the Australian population within an otherwise relatively safe and wealthy country. It is also largely uncontested that almost no progress has been made against these socio-economic indicators in recent decades. This is despite buckets of money and rafts of policy being thrown at 'the problem'. Moran cites figures of $5.6 billion spent annually on Indigenous specific programs and services, rising to $30 billion dollars when costs to mainstream services are taken into account (Moran 2016, p.3). What 'the problem' is understood to be is the subject of significant public, policy and scholarly debate. Analysts of Indigenous affairs policy write in terms of swings between two fundamental ideological positions: a pro-rights liberal left, supporting self-determination strategies and accommodating difference; and a pro-responsibilities conservative right, supporting assimilation (Altman 2014, p.121; Pearson 2007). Sanders frames Indigenous public policy as cycling between three competing principles that form different alliances at different times. These principles are the importance of equality; of freedom and choice to live Indigenous difference; and of appropriate government guardianship of vulnerable populations. In his analysis these principles compete for policy supremacy, fuelling an ongoing process of policy debate and adjustment (Sanders 2009). In essence these ideological struggles, however framed, are over what needs to be done in the Indigenous population and who should be assigned the authority and control to make it happen.

Absent from these debates is any consideration of what interventions might be necessary in relation to the non-Indigenous population. In this thesis, I argue that it is not sufficient to debate how much and in what way mainstream Australia should intervene/not intervene in Indigenous people's lives. Beyond the deeply colonised and problematic assumption that White dominated institutions are best placed and entitled to make these decisions is the fact that any society is an inherently interdependent entity (Glenn 1999; Pease 2010). Rightly or wrongly, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people share one landmass, and interact together in ways that impact on one another's lives. This means that it is not only government policy that affects Indigenous people. White Australians, as the dominant population numerically and culturally, impact Indigenous lives simply by being here, living their own lives, and thinking and acting the way that they do.

The vast body of empirical evidence around the impacts of racism tells us that the attitudes and behaviours of White Australians towards Indigenous people matter. At both the state and interpersonal levels, recognition theory explains the debilitating wounds carved by persistent failure to recognise the inherent equality of the Other, their particular needs and valuable contributions, and the denial of the validity of their inherited cultures (Honneth 2001). Australia is a majority rule democracy. Regardless of the degree of direct daily interaction between White Australians and Indigenous people, how White Australians think (or don't think) about Indigenous people has consequences. Yet, as the Indigenous affairs ideological pendulum swings around in public debate and government policy over how, and in what ways Indigenous people should change, rarely is it considered if it would be helpful for White Australia itself to submit to a systematic program of cultural change.

Central to this imbalance in the public discourse is the fact that White voices, life experiences and perspectives dominate it. White Australian people and culture dominate Australian parliaments, media, judiciary and academic institutions (Soutphommasane et al. 2018; Mack and Roach Anleu 2008). Constructive race-relations necessarily involve understanding both perspectives but Indigenous life experiences and perspectives are largely absent from and silenced in these key locations of social discourse and power (Bretherton and Mellor 2006; Larkin 2011; Soutphommasane et al. 2018). Although much is known about the perspectives of White Australians on Indigenous people, there is a dearth of qualitative research on Indigenous perspectives on White Australian people and culture (Dunn et al. 2010; Goot and Rouse 2007; Mellor 2003; Walter 2012). This is despite the particular value placed on the perspective of Gramsci's subaltern in Whiteness, decolonisation and critical race theory as a means of challenging hegemonic White narratives (Moreton-Robinson 2004a; Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Delgado and Stefancic 2017).

1.3   A critical race and capability approach

Critical race theory illuminates the largely invisible but sizeable contribution White people's choices and behaviours make to the situation of Indigenous people in Australia. It also accounts for the over-emphasis on Indigenous choices and behaviours and under-emphasis on White choices and behaviours in discourses around racial inequality. I use critical race theory, together with a bricolage of related theories and concepts, such as recognition, Whiteness and decolonisation, to explain the race-relations landscape in Australia and to interpret the data used in this research.

Whiteness in particular is a central focus of both critical race theory and this research. 'White Australian' is not a simple reference to skin colour but to a more complex White identity that encompasses a particular structural location, standpoint and set of cultural practices (Frankenberg 1993, p.6). This concept is not unproblematic. It raises questions of the essentialisation of White people and perpetuation of the colonially constructed and oppressive race binary (Walter et al 2011, p.15). I address these matters in Chapter 3, where I conclude that, at this point in time, it remains a useful analytic category that reveals more than it obscures.

Critical race theory also has limitations stemming from its somewhat pessimistic outlook. A central tenet is that White people are more likely to use their disproportionate power to serve their own interests and maintain their race advantage than to engage constructively with Indigenous people towards race equity (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Bell Jr 1980). This places efforts to improve the situation of Indigenous people in a Catch-22 situation. Those with the most power to transform problematic social structures and White Australian attitudes and behaviours are those least motivated or likely to do so. Critical race theory frames society as a competition of racially aligned interests. White people, as the group with the most power, are able to rig the rules and exploit their unearned advantage to ensure further outcomes in their favour. On this view, the reproduction of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage is an almost unassailable, self-perpetuating cycle.

This theoretical position is supported by empirical evidence. This includes Bonilla-Silva's extensive analyses of White discourses around race matters in the United States. His work reveals that, regardless of any consciously held support for race equality, White people's actual actions and beliefs about race overwhelmingly tend to align with whatever justifies and maintains their race privilege (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Analyses of Australian discourses around reconciliation and race-relations make similar findings (Green and Sonn 2005; Augoustinos, Tuffin, and Rapley 1999). Also relevant, however, is the contrasting evidence highlighted by Pease that many White people do strive to prioritise principles of justice over self-interest, and that many more might if they understood their complicity in race inequities (Pease 2010). National surveys, such as the Australian Reconciliation Barometer, report that the majority of White Australians recognise constructive race-relations with Indigenous people as important and claim to aspire to them (Nelson 2018, pp. 11, 89–91). The heavily structuralist bent of the explanation offered by critical race theorists for White behaviour tends towards denying White people the agency to prioritise principles of race justice over self-interest.

By reframing Sen's capability approach to development (Sen 1985, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2003; Robeyns 2005) I offer an alternative explanation of White behaviour for consideration. Sen's capability approach breaks with traditional definitions of poverty as the result of a lack of resources. Sen defines poverty as a lack of capability to live the life one values and has reason to value. Sen's theory explains that an individual or group's possession of the requisite resources to achieve an aspiration is not an effective measure of quality of life. This is because those resources are only meaningful if the group or individual is able to convert them into the capabilities necessary to live their desired life. In this case White Australia has the resource of immense power to impact race-relations and Indigenous wellbeing, but this does not mean it has the capability to impact race-relations and Indigenous wellbeing *constructively*. A central premise of Sen's approach is that where an individual aspires to a way of being or doing in their life, but does not achieve that aspiration, then a lack of capability can be assumed to be a factor. The suggestion is that, without denying the sound points made by critical race theorists, there is room to consider the role of White capability in shaping a widespread failure by White Australians to engage constructively with Indigenous people.

To focus on White capability is not to excuse or defend White culpability for the current situation of Indigenous people. This approach does not absolve White people of their particular responsibility for patterns of exploitation and reproduction of race advantage and disadvantage. I suggest it does the opposite. It turns the critical gaze back onto White Australians by privileging the discourses of Indigenous people about White Australians. It seeks to investigate Indigenous people's perceptions of White Australians and how these perceptions can be interpreted to reveal the capacities necessary in White people to achieve constructive race-relations. It asks, what capacities do White Australians need to build in themselves, and in the social structures in which they hold disproportionate power, to enable the constructive engagement with Indigenous people that is conducive to the justice and equity for Indigenous people so many White Australians claim to endorse. Exploration of problematic White behaviours as a capacity issue does not let White people off the hook. It allocates responsibility where it belongs and raises the bar. The identification of capacity-building opportunities within this population helps to draw a line under any claims of White innocence in the context of future inaction or inadequate action. In her famous account of the 'knapsack of White privilege' McIntosh states that, 'Describing White privilege makes one newly accountable' (McIntosh 1989, p.10). I suggest that so too does identifying rectifiable White capacity deficits.

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Although critical race theory paints White people as acting almost universally to maintain their position in the race hierarchy, it does leave space for the unintentional reproduction of White privilege by White Australians in that this is not always a conscious or deliberate act. Accordingly, the possibilities highlighted by Sen's approach can be understood as complementary to critical race theory. This research is located within this space in critical race theory. I use Sen's capability approach to expand and populate this space by exploring what is needed to support White capability for constructive engagement with Indigenous people. Capacity building is already a key feature of efforts to improve the situation of Indigenous people. This is largely in the form of efforts to build Indigenous capacity to be better agents of economic productivity. This study concerns the capacities needed within the White Australian population to enable more constructive engagement with Indigenous people. I pursue this by seeking answers to the following questions:

a) What behaviours do Indigenous people identify in the White Australian population as obstacles to and enablers of constructive race-relations?

b) What conversion factors must be in place to enable capability for constructive race-relations in the White Australian population?

c) What are the implications for advancing reconciliation in Australia and, therefore, justice and equity for Indigenous people?

1.4 Methods

To answer these questions, I analyse 180 in depth, semi-structured interviews with 44 Indigenous people from diverse backgrounds on the subject of White people, culture and race-relations. In these interviews the respondents describe their experiences with White Australians, their views on mainstream Australian culture and suggest measures for the improvement of race-relations. The use of the interviews in this way locates the respondents as authorities on Whiteness in line with a critical race approach and decolonisation principles. The interpretation and analysis of these experiences and perspectives by a White researcher who is located in a White-dominated academy raises particular ethical considerations around researcher bias and re-colonisation of Indigenous knowledge. These are addressed in detail in Chapter 4. The analysis of the data and the layout of this thesis are guided by the framework provided by Sen's capability approach to development. Sen's capability approach is an evaluative framework that is used throughout the world to identify the development needs of materially impoverished populations. Its application to identify the development needs of a relatively materially privileged population, such as White

Australians, is a radical application of Sen's theory. It is utilised in this way primarily as a decolonising device.

The interview dataset is part of the Telling It Like It Is (TILII) research project in Greater Darwin that investigated Indigenous perspectives on the subjects of White people, culture and race-relations through interviews, surveys and Facebook interactions during 2014–2016. Although the researcher was heavily involved in that research, its design and its data collection process, the interview dataset is treated as secondary data for the purposes of this study[3]. Darwin is an excellent site in which to examine Indigenous/White race-relations. The high numbers of Indigenous people residing in and visiting this unique capital city as a major service centre make it a key site of daily Indigenous/White interactions. Race-relations challenges are highly visible and are the subject of everyday discussion.

Research involving Indigenous populations must always be mindful of the immense cultural diversity within this population across Australia and the limits on generalisations that can be made from research generated from one location (AIATSIS 2012, p.4). Despite this diversity, commonalities do exist due to the ubiquitous nature of colonisation across the whole of Australia. Further, the focus of this research is on the White population. The diversity within the White Australian population is not strongly identified with their geographical location in the same way that it is for many Indigenous people, and I would argue that many of the findings that concern the White population are likely to have application throughout Australia. At the very least, the 'local talk' (McCallum 2003) of this research highlights factors in the race-relationship worthy of further investigation nationally. I discuss the applicability of the findings beyond the field research site of greater Darwin in more depth in Chapter 4.

1.5   Relocating the solution

The research finds that there are indeed some critical changes that the respondents perceive as necessary within the White population for improved race relations. Specifically, White ignorance and White individualism are important target areas for capacity-building

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[3] The data is used as secondary data because the research questions of the original TILII study differ to those investigated in this thesis and because a team of researchers undertook data collection for the TILII study. Only part of the data collected is analysed for this thesis.

measures within the White population. While not comprehensive, these findings nevertheless raise questions about whose capacity must be developed in order to effectively address Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. They confirm the one-eyed nature of public discourses that focus on Indigenous dysfunction as central to the reproduction of ongoing Aboriginal disadvantage/White advantage (Gorringe et al. 2011). They highlight instead that a significant part of 'the problem' is located within the broader population, which suggests that that is where it must be addressed. The research points to the need for both change within the White population and their active participation in that change. Passive goodwill is not enough. It demonstrates the importance of meaningful dialogue between Indigenous people and White Australians in order to dispel myths and to generate effective understanding by both parties of the factors contributing to the maintenance of Indigenous disadvantage.

The primary focus of this study is on advancing social change rather than social theory. Even so, it contributes to several of the theories that inform its theoretical framework. It reduces the pessimism of critical race theory by strengthening and developing the small spaces permitted within it for human goodness and positive developments. It develops recognition theory as a pathway to decolonisation. Finally, it applies Sen's capability approach in a radical way to a dominant and privileged race group, extending the possibilities for this evaluative model as a decolonising device, albeit one limited by its Eurocentric epistemological and ontological roots.

1.6 Researcher positionality

Social constructivist epistemology and critical race and decolonisation theories all emphasise the inherent subjectivity of the researcher (Moreton-Robinson 2004a; Darlaston-Jones 2007). This research seeks to contribute to a decolonising agenda. Accordingly, it is important that I begin by locating myself in relation to this research and this research in relation to myself (Sium 2012, p.2). In this section I will show how my social location has contributed to the impetus for this research and inform its theoretical framework. In Chapter 4, I address the ways in which my standpoint is a limiting factor in the research and a source of ethical conundrums.

I am a White, Baha'i, middle-class, feminist woman. I have lived in Darwin for 12 years, where many of my friends, neighbours and colleagues are Indigenous. These social factors all contribute to my standpoint, axiology and ontology as a researcher. My Baha'i beliefs significantly shape my ontology and axiology. As a Baha'i I believe my life has a dual

moral purpose. Firstly, it is to strive to become the best version of myself through the development and application of personal spiritual qualities such as love, justice, kindness, courage and truthfulness. Secondly, it is to make an active contribution to the advancement of humanity towards a more just, harmonious and flourishing world civilisation. Inherent in this is the belief that there is the capacity for goodness and nobility in all human beings and that it is both necessary and possible for humanity to achieve far greater heights of social justice and unity that embrace its rich diversity. I was raised in a Baha'i family and taught to apply a critical feminist and social justice lens to the world in which I moved as a privileged, highly educated, relatively wealthy White woman.

Although I knew that racism was wrong, my awareness of race justice issues was very low until I relocated to Darwin in my late 20s. I had grown up in Tasmania in the 1980s when its population was almost entirely white – in my school of 1,200 students there was one international student from China, two Australian students of colour and roughly 1,197 white students. I attended university in Sydney to study law and, although my social circles became more diverse, race and race justice were rarely discussed and my knowledge of Indigenous people remained largely theoretical. I arrived in Darwin with superficial, and somewhat paternalistic, progressive liberal views about the situation of Indigenous people in this country. This included the assumption that someone like me was more likely to be part of the solution than the problem.

In Darwin Indigenous people make up nearly 10 per cent of the resident population (ABS 2016). Many others visit regularly from remote communities (Habibis 2011). Indigenous cultural and linguistic differences from the dominant population, high degrees of poverty and homelessness, and persistent racial profiling by the police/security guards, are all highly visible features of daily life. Race and race-relations are a matter of everyday discussion and debate. I worked predominantly for Indigenous-run organisations and was quickly exposed to Indigenous perspectives, cultures and experiences. My radar for social injustice inevitably developed to include a more critical race and decolonising lens. I began to glimpse the profound depth of the injustice that has occurred in this country, how it is perpetuated and the ways in which I am implicated in that. I became acutely aware of my Whiteness in all of the senses to which Frankenberg refers in her definition of Whiteness: as a location of structural advantage and privilege; as a particular standpoint or perspective on the world, myself and other people; and as a set of cultural practices that are normalised, unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg 1993, p.6). At the same time, I was also increasingly aware that I had little to offer Indigenous people who did not need or want me to launch myself into their lives as a self-sacrificing White saviour come to 'fix them' and 'their' problems. Yet passive

withdrawal from the arena was also not an option. Pease speculates that there is a level of awareness of social injustice beyond which an individual can no longer turn away from the moral imperative it signifies (Pease 2010). This was certainly true for me. I became increasingly conflicted as to what my role should be in response to this gross and long-running injustice of which I was both witness and beneficiary. Black consciousness leader Steve Biko states that, 'white liberals must leave blacks to take care of their own business while they concern themselves with the real evil in our society – white racism' (cited in Milazzo 2017, p.563). I reached a similar conclusion – that my most useful contribution would be to direct my energies towards the dominant racial and cultural group in Australia, of which I am a member, and focus on the shifts required within that group to enable justice and equity for Indigenous people. This research is one of the ways in which I have attempted to bring that intention into action. It is unapologetically rooted in a social change agenda.

There is a long-running debate on the role of sociology and its branches of pure and applied sociology. Pure sociology has no motive other than to advance sociological knowledge, whilst applied sociology is about using sociological investigation to further particular goals (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2013, p.195). Accordingly, one framing of this debate is over whether sociological investigation is appropriately used only to determine what aspirations for society are possible based on what society is doing now, or also to determine what society needs to do now in order to make an aspiration for society possible. In this debate I have picked a side. Accordingly, ideas from critical race and decolonisation theory inform the questions posed by this research and aspects of its methodology.

1.7 Outline of the thesis

The structure of this thesis draws on the framework provided by Sen's capability approach. An adaptation of Robeyns (2005) schematic representation of Sen's approach is provided in Figure 3.1 and explained in detail in Chapter 3. Over the course of the thesis, I gradually populate this schema, drawing initially on what is known from the literature, and then on the findings as they unfold from my analysis of the data.

In chapters 2 and 3, I provide a review of the empirical and theoretical literature that establish the central premises of this thesis and the evidence for the preliminary assumptions I apply to Sen's framework. These preliminary assumptions are:
   a) White Australians have the resource of disproportionate legal, social, economic and political power relative to Indigenous people; and

b) White Australians value, and have reason to value, the achievement of constructive race-relations with Indigenous people.

In Chapter 2, I present the literature that establishes White people's engagement with Indigenous people as a key contributing factor to their wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes. I lay out the contemporary situation of Indigenous people in Australia and the race-relations landscape that surrounds it. I also review the literature that exposes the disproportionate attention paid to Indigenous people's choices and behaviours.

Chapter 3 sets out the theoretical and conceptual framework on which this thesis relies. I describe critical race theory and pay particular attention to the ways in which it explains the persistent over-emphasis on Indigenous choices and behaviours and the under-emphasis on White choices and behaviours in public and scholarly discourses. I identify some of the limitations of this theory and its pessimistic outlook. I show how this thesis seeks to address them using Sen's capability approach. Recognition theory is used to reinforce the research premise of the critical importance of constructive race-relations for justice and equity for Indigenous people. I also define some of the concepts and processes central to the thesis questions and analysis such as Whiteness, decolonisation and reconciliation. It is here that I address the contradictions inherent in research that seeks to deconstruct the harms of the colonially established race binary whilst also relying heavily on race-based analytical categories.

In Chapter 4, I outline my methodological approach from a social constructivist epistemological position. I spend significant time on the ethical issues and contradictions that arise when White researchers like myself attempt to interpret non-White experiences and to interrogate Whiteness from a standpoint of Whiteness. I describe in detail the steps taken to manage the sizeable secondary dataset on which this research relies and the way in which I apply the principles and concepts of Sen's capability approach to the data to support my analysis of it through a critical race and decolonising lens.

Chapters 5 and 6 and the first half of Chapter 8 are dedicated to presenting direct excerpts from the data relevant to the first and second research questions. I dedicate significant space to this in the thesis to forefront the respondents' perspectives. This paints the picture as much as possible in the respondents' own words before exposing the readers to my interpretations. Social constructivism explains that the subjectivity of the researcher means any meanings researchers derive from their data are necessarily co-creations with the research participants (Darlaston-Jones 2007). Chapter 5 presents the data on White attitudes

and behaviours that are viewed as obstructive to constructive race-relations. Chapter 6 presents the data relating to attitudes and behaviours that respondents suggest would enable constructive race-relations. Together, these two chapters address the first research question.

In Chapter 7, I use recognition theory to demonstrate the harmful and divisive consequences of the barriers and enablers identified in chapters 5 and 6. The ability to engage fairly with Indigenous people emerges as a key capability that respondents perceive as essential to constructive race-relations but which is largely absent in the White population. Chapters 8 and 9 report the capacity-building opportunities in the White population for fairer engagement with Indigenous people that arise from the respondents' observations. Chapter 8 focuses on White ignorance, while Chapter 9 focuses on White individualism. The findings in Chapter 9 give rise to a deeper consideration of recognition theory and how it can better serve processes of decolonisation.

In Chapter 10 I bring together the core findings of the thesis and consider how they contribute to an understanding of the role of White Australians in reconciliation and the closely related goal of justice and equity for Indigenous people. Specifically, I consider the depth of change that Indigenous people perceive as necessary within that population and the proactivity such change will require from White people, both within their own community and in how they engage with Indigenous people. I place particular emphasis on the importance of equal, deep and ongoing dialogical exchange. I point to the significant opportunities for improvement and capacity building within this population that warrant further investigation and strategic measures for change. Chapter 10 is, in substance, where I present the mains conclusions of this study. In Chapter 11 I address some remaining points relating to the limitations of the research, its theoretical implications and its implications for further research.

Chapter 2: Race-relations and the socio-economic position of Indigenous people in Australia

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the literature that describes and explains the situation of Indigenous people in Australia today. The picture of deprivation and injustice that it paints is an important premise of the research questions. It underscores the questions' significance as a topic for investigation. The chapter goes on to outline the historical context for the situation described. It reviews explanations for why Indigenous disadvantage persists despite the policy emphasis in recent decades on 'closing the gap' in socio-economic statistical disparities. The literature highlights that the way White Australians relate to Indigenous people is a critical factor in the outcomes and wellbeing of Indigenous people. This points to the need to examine White attitudes and behaviours and to understand Indigenous people's experiences of them more deeply. I will show that, despite multiple empirical studies describing race-relations between these groups as problematic, White attitudes and behaviours are not the focus of the dominant public and policy discourse around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. Instead, this discourse frames the complex causes of entrenched Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage in a narrative of Indigenous deficit and culpability. The chapter concludes that the singular focus on the need for change within the Indigenous population misses an important opportunity for effective solutions.

2.2 The socio-economic position of Indigenous people

The stark disparities in socio-economic indicators between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia are well known. They have been referenced by the United Nations as a blight on Australia's national human rights record (see, for example, Special Rapporteur 2017) and are regularly measured and cited domestically. Although statistical pictures can never properly convey the lived human reality represented by cold numbers, they can still deliver a compelling and important message. Accordingly, I share a selection in the following paragraph.

Six per cent of all Indigenous deaths are by suicide; Indigenous people die nearly a decade earlier than their fellow Australians; their rate of disability is 30 per cent higher than the general population, with one in four living with a disability; 20–25 per cent of Indigenous children do not meet the minimum national literacy and numeracy targets for their age groups; Indigenous child mortality is nearly double that of non-Indigenous children; the average Indigenous household lives on just two-thirds of the income of the average Australian household; only 47 per cent of the adult Indigenous population is employed, compared to 72 per cent of the broader population, and they make up 38 per cent of the prison population despite making up only 3.2 per cent of the general population, with Indigenous children 22 times more likely to be in detention than their non-Indigenous counterparts (AIHW 2019, 2020, 2021; ABS 2018; Australian Government 2020).

On almost every measure Indigenous people occupy the lowest rung of the Australian socio-economic hierarchy (Walter 2009, p.2). As you read this all-too-familiar list of statistics, note their failure to really shock, or even surprise. Walter suggests that the situation of Indigenous people in this relatively peaceful and prosperous country is largely normalised and expected. Though normalisation may dull emotional responses to it, there can be little doubt about the magnitude and seriousness of the problem and the human suffering it represents.

2.3 Inequality enshrined in law and policy: A brief history

These statistics are unsurprising in light of Australia's law and policy history. From the start of the colonisation process in 1788, racial inequality was accepted as the natural order of things and enforced by law. In contrast, there was little enforcement of state protection for Indigenous people from discriminatory and violent treatment by the growing White population. Until as late as the 1930s, White colonists wielded 'the power of life and death' over Indigenous people with virtual impunity (Reynolds 1999, p.122). The widely accepted and scientifically endorsed race hierarchy of the time assigned Indigenous people to the lowest rung of evolution (Bretherton & Mellor 2006, p.82). As an inferior race they were expected to 'die out' (Behrendt 2007, p.12). Prevalent beliefs of White supremacy justified the patterns of exclusion and control that mark the various stages of government Indigenous policy from the point of White arrival. What follows is an outline of these policy stages from arrival to the turn of this century. It is provided to show how successive government

policies have enforced inequality, stripped Indigenous people of agency and contributed to the situation of Indigenous people today.

The 'doctrine of discovery' (Miller 2010, cited in Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018, p.1) and accompanying declaration that the Australian continent was *terra nullius*, or 'nobody's land', were the first in many overt denials of Indigenous humanity (Bretherton and Mellor 2006, p.82). This denial was repeated 100 years later with the explicit exclusion of Indigenous people from the Federal census (Howard-Wagner 2012, p.225). The advancement of the colonial frontier throughout this time was accompanied by widespread violence. Though its degree is contested (Windschuttle 2002), there is increasing evidence that this included hundreds of massacres, many of which were undertaken with impunity, if not state endorsement (Reynolds 1999; Ryan 2021).

By the late 1800s, following a dramatic decline in the Indigenous population from both violence and introduced disease, a paternalistic approach of 'protection' was adopted in Indigenous policy. This manifested in several states as tight legislative control of Indigenous people's lives, including who Indigenous people could marry, where they could live, where they could go and for whom they could work. Indigenous people were moved off their land and on to government and church mission–controlled settlements. Boarding houses were set up for 'half-caste' children to remove them from Indigenous cultural influences and teach them White ways. Limited education was provided – in line with their expected trajectory as servants and labourers for the White population.

Traditional ways were systematically destroyed in many of the settlements, or at best tolerated, while being actively discouraged and undermined (ALRC 1986, para.25). In this way, the social fabric and economies of Indigenous communities were disrupted, people were disconnected from their land, families and traditions, and a dependence on the colonisers was fostered. Van Krieken describes this development as the 'replacement of the race-based bloody frontier violence by race-based cultural violence of policies of segregation and exclusion' (van Krieken et al. 2014, p.233).

By the 1930s, the Commonwealth government had taken on greater responsibility for Indigenous affairs. Social tolerance of the poor conditions under which many Indigenous people were forced to live had diminished. It was clear Indigenous people were not going to 'die out' as expected, and there was a national policy shift to 'assimilation'. Although ostensibly about achieving equal rights and privileges for Indigenous people, the premise of assimilation was White social, cultural and economic superiority and the accompanying

duty to 'civilise' a less-evolved race (Griffiths 2014, p.347). Many protection and control mechanisms continued and even escalated within this shift in policy. For example, under 1953 legislation, all Indigenous people in the Northern Territory were assigned the status of wards of the state, essentially infantalising them. In what is now known as the 'Stolen Generations', tens of thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their parents throughout this time and placed in institutions and White homes to facilitate White enculturation. The associated intergenerational trauma and cultural destruction is well documented (HREC 1997). Expenditure on health, housing, education and training programs for Indigenous people rose as traditional social structures were further broken down, and dependence on the state was further increased (ALRC 1986, para. 26).

By 1965, in line with the social trend of increased civil rights and respect for Indigenous cultures, a policy of 'integration' was introduced. This was in response to growing opinion that Indigenous people should have more control over their lives and to allow for their cultural differences (ALRC 1986, para. 27). During the 1970s, policies of 'self-management' and 'self-determination' for Indigenous people were announced. The intention was that Indigenous people should have the power to decide the pace and nature of their own development. This was, however, only within the legal, economic and social frameworks of mainstream Australia. The 'backwardness' of Indigenous people, their need for development and the superiority and authority of the White system remained unquestioned (Moreton-Robinson 2009, p.66).

The sudden withdrawal of direct and comprehensive White control of communities failed to take account of how much support such a transition would require. Traditional systems of governance had been systematically broken down and could not resurrect themselves quickly, if at all. In addition, only some elements of traditional systems were considered acceptable by the state. Traditional systems were, in general, a poor fit with the western bureaucratic requirements to which they were still answerable. This gross policy failure was a major contributing factor in the sharp decline in living standards and social control in Indigenous communities observed over the next three decades to the turn of the century. For the bulk of the Australian population, unfamiliar with these contextual details, the decline under the policy of 'self-determination' had the appearance of Indigenous laziness and incompetence (Sutton 2001, pp. 128–135). Indigenous people were painted as responsible even for policy and programming failures in areas still administered at this time by mainstream government departments (Moreton-Robinson 2009, p.66).

This is a barebones chronology of policy developments, social attitudes and their consequences over the first 200 years of colonisation, but it demonstrates how Indigenous inequality has historically been enshrined in law and laid the foundation for the situation of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage today. Historical policy and social attitudes are widely recognised both in scholarship and amongst the broader Australian public as playing a central role in, amongst other things, the development of high levels of Indigenous dependence on the state, low accumulation of intergenerational wealth, limited participation in higher education and widespread intergenerational trauma, all of which are implicated in the statistical picture painted earlier (see, for example, Campbell et al. 2020, p.68; Gray and Sanders 2015, p.5; Chesterman and Galligan 1997).

2.4   Law and policy today

Australian policy and social attitudes towards Indigenous people appear to have come a long way since the flagrant oppression of early colonisation. Indigenous people enjoy formal equality under the law. State and federal anti-discrimination legislation has been enacted. Deaths in custody make headlines and rarely avoid some degree of scrutiny. The Australian Reconciliation Barometer, a large-scale national biennial survey, has repeatedly reported that the vast majority of Australians categorically reject notions of White superiority to Indigenous people (Nelson 2018, p.45). Figure 2.1 below shows that a large and growing majority of the Australian population is supportive of maintaining or increasing government spending and investment in the wellbeing of Indigenous people (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.4).

Figure 2.1: Trends in views on government help for Indigenous people as reported in the Australian Election Survey 1993–2014
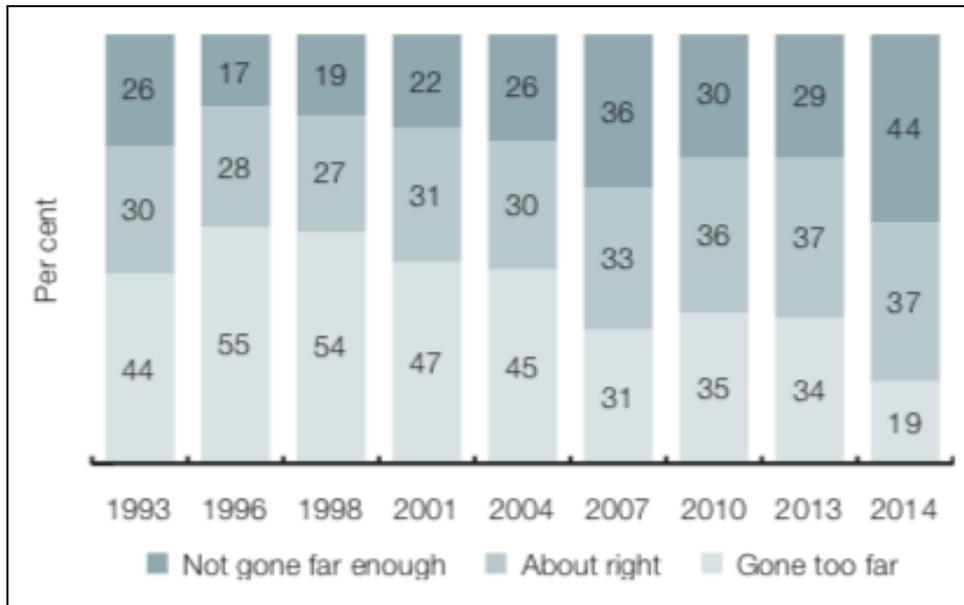
Source: (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.4)

Both conservative and progressive governments now consistently articulate a policy position of socio-economic parity for Indigenous people and policy measures that are couched in terms of Indigenous wellbeing. Closing the Gap is a high-profile commitment by the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) to measurably and significantly reduce the gap in statistical Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. It is widely supported both politically and by the broader public. A separate but related social campaign has attracted pledges of formal support for its aspirations from close to 250,000 individual Australians[4]. Closing the Gap is in effect Australia's current Indigenous policy (Strakosch 2014). The ideological policy contest is no longer about whether or not Indigenous people are entitled to equality but is centred on what this is and how it is to be achieved (Sanders 2009).

Towards this end, billions of dollars are spent annually on countless programs, services and research in, for and on Indigenous populations, ostensibly in pursuit of this equality. Moran cites figures of $5.6 billion spent annually on Indigenous specific programs and services, rising to $30 billion when costs to mainstream services are included in the calculations (Moran 2016, p.3). Yet despite all the effort and investment of recent decades, limited progress has been made. Gross socio-economic disparities continue unabated (Australian Government 2020). It is not reasonable to expect the damaging legacy of historical policy

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[4] https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/indigenous-australia/close-the-gap/ [accessed 20 July 2021]

and social attitudes to be completely overcome in a single generation, but the question of why there has been so little progress - and in some areas measurable regression - must be asked.

2.5 White behaviour and attitudes: The missing link in addressing Indigenous disadvantage

The persistence of Indigenous disadvantage is well known and well documented, its complex causes less so (Walter 2009, p.2). Statistics on disadvantage only map symptoms and 'do not capture the dispossession and overrunning of one by the other' (Nakata & Maddison 2019, p.413). In many discussion spaces, analysis is cloaked by a 'discourse of Indigenous deficit' that emphasises Indigenous responsibility for the circumstances in which they find themselves (Fforde et al. 2013). Walter writes that Indigenous poverty has a particular character and is far from fully explained by a lack of material resources. In addition to inherited poverty, she identifies three other categories of factors. These are: repeated experiences of loss, such as of land and family; low Australian regard for Indigeneity in the form of racism and denigration of Indigenous cultures; and exclusion from White discourse spaces, including locations of power and influence (Walter 2009). Similarly, the Productivity Commission's 2020 report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* identifies five characteristics of approaches that it states 'appear to be successful in improving outcomes for Indigenous people' (Productivity Commission 2020, p.2). Although government investment is one, it also lists rectifying detrimental laws and policies; addressing racism and discrimination; enabling shared decision-making; and access to culturally safe services. These analyses highlight that while access to material means is an important factor in Indigenous disadvantage, how non-Indigenous people relate to Indigenous people is also a critical factor in Indigenous socio-economic outcomes and wellbeing.

The distribution of power in Australian society is central to why this is so. Indigenous people may enjoy formal legal equality in Australia but significant power discrepancies persist. Here I define 'power' in Giddens' terms as 'transformative capacity' or 'the capacity to achieve outcomes' (Giddens 1984, p.15). The Indigenous population is located far from the power bases that shape and steer Australian society. They make up 1.5 per cent of Commonwealth parliamentarians, 0.2 per cent of judges and none of Australia's ASX200 CEOs, university vice-chancellors or deputy vice-chancellors, free-to-air television news directors or federal and state government departmental heads. White Australians make up the overwhelming majority of judges (96.4%), federal parliamentarians (94.4%), university

vice-chancellors (97.4%), ASX200 CEOs (96%), state and federal government departmental heads (99%) and free-to-air national television news directors (100%) (Soutphommasane et al. 2018; Arvanitakis et al. 2019; Mack and Roach Anleu 2008). Further, Australia is governed by a system of majority-rule democracy in which White Australians make up 76 per cent of the population and Indigenous people 3 per cent (Soutphommasane et al. 2018)[5]. In the Australian democratic system, public opinion has strong influence on governance decisions. This includes how the state recognises and responds to Indigenous people (Goot and Rouse 2007; Moran 2016, p.6). Even in terms of simple buying power, the average weekly income of non-Indigenous Australian households is 1.5 times that of Indigenous households (AIHW 2019). It is clear that White Australians as a group have a particular and disproportionate power to shape and steer Australian society and to impact its Indigenous members. Accordingly, White Australians get to set the terms of engagement. Povinelli (2002) and Hage (2012) both observe that White Australian people and culture largely determine, and perceive themselves as entitled to determine how society is run and the outer limits of what cultural values and practices are acceptable in 'multicultural' Australia (Povinelli 2002, p.12; Hage 2012, p.18). I explore this dynamic in depth in the next chapter when I review the literature on Whiteness and critical race theory. For now, it is sufficient to point out that the ubiquity of this power differential is an ever-present backdrop to, and dimension of, Indigenous/White relations.

2.5.1 Racism and the production of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage

In this section I present the well-documented negative consequences of racism for Indigenous people. Rothenberg (2000 as cited in Pease 2010, p.110) defines racism as 'prejudice plus power'. I use the literature around racism to demonstrate that how White Australian people relate to Indigenous people from their position of relative power is implicated in ongoing Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. The link between dominant group racism and poor outcomes for subordinate race groups is well established (e.g. Fuentes et al 2019; Krieger 2014; Harris et al 2006). Graves asserts that membership in a socially defined race may have 'more important impacts on an individual's health and wellbeing, and ultimate evolutionary fitness, than any genomic characteristic' (Graves 2015, p.482).

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[5] I rely here on the statistics provided by Soutphommasane rather than directly on ABS data because Soutphommasane uses ABS data in combination with other methods to provide a sophisticated breakdown of ethnic diversity in Australia (Soutphommasane et al. 2018, p.7).

Empirical studies in Australia have repeatedly documented the sizeable impacts of racism and stigma on the wellbeing of Indigenous people across various indicators. Some of the specifically documented health impacts include increased rates of asthma, cardiovascular disease, obesity, blood pressure and poor oral health (Larson et al. 2007; Paradies, Harris, and Anderson 2008; Paradies 2016, 2018; Temple, Kelaher, and Paradies 2019). These health impacts are explained, in part, by elevated cortisol levels associated with chronic stress caused by racism, avoidance of health services that are sites of racist treatment, and the adoption of physically harmful coping behaviours (Larson et al. 2007; Paradies 2018). Racism is similarly implicated in the elevated rates of poor mental health and suicide in the Indigenous population. Studies associate experiences of racism with psychological distress, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (Priest et al. 2013; Priest et al. 2011; Paradies 2018). Racism negatively affects self-esteem (Spalding 2010, cited in Shirodkhar 2020). A 2011 study of New South Wales Indigenous entrepreneurs comprehensively analysed factors in Indigenous business success rates. Overt racism from suppliers and customers was found to be a 'serious issue and a great hindrance' to business survival (Shoebridge, Buultjens, and Peterson 2012, p.20). The stress, distress and withdrawal triggered by interpersonal racism has a measurable effect on Indigenous educational attainment (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2013, p.43), substance abuse (Zubrick et al. 2005, p.252) and employment levels (Hughes and Davidson 2011). Recognition theory offers compelling explanations as to why racism has these consequences. It identifies racism as a form of misrecognition, which it implicates in reduced self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence (Honneth 2001). Empirical evidence of the harms of racism lend weight to Shirodkhar's suggestion that Australia's failure to achieve meaningful progress against many of the Closing the Gap indicators in over 15 years may be partly attributed to widespread implicit bias within the White population against Indigenous people (Shirodkhar 2020). How White Australians engage with Indigenous people matters.

How White Australians do not engage with Indigenous people also matters. Empirical studies persistently associate racialised social segregation with the perpetuation of race inequalities (Priest et al. 2014, p.31). Regardless of whether or not they are in a direct daily relationship with each other, all Indigenous people and White Australians are in a relationship by virtue of their shared membership of Australian society. White choices therefore have an impact on Indigenous people. The dismissal of Indigenous people and culture as less worthy than White people and culture, and associated attitudes that the views, concerns and experiences of Indigenous people do not matter and are not worthy of attention, has been referred to as 'the burden of disregard' that is carried by Indigenous

people (Sheehan 2007, cited in Walter 2009, p.7). The theoretical literature addressed in the next chapter helps to further explain the harms of this disregard.

I have shown in this section that how White Australians engage with Indigenous people is critical to the achievement of good socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous people and for their wellbeing. In the next section I review the literature that assesses the state of race-relations between Indigenous people and the White Australian population.

2.6 The problematic nature of Indigenous/White relations in Australia

The literature overwhelmingly reports that the relationship between Indigenous people and White Australians is problematic, with both White and Indigenous people repeatedly stating this. The Reconciliation Barometer reports that close to half of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people feel there are high levels of prejudice between White Australians and Indigenous people and low levels of trust (Nelson 2018, pp. 25–26 and 49). The 2015 TILII survey of 474 Indigenous residents of Darwin reports that three in four rate the relationship with White Australians as 'not good'. Underlying this are perceptions by more than half of the respondents that White people do not want Indigenous people in Darwin (Habibis et al. 2016b, pp.13–14).

Another indicator of sub-optimal race-relations is the significant level of social segregation that characterises the relationship throughout Australia. The vast majority of White Australians report never or rarely mixing socially with Indigenous people, and at rates lower than with any other major cultural group (Nelson 2018, pp. 21–22; Walter 2012, p.25; Walter 2009, p.6). Since the vast majority of Indigenous people reside in urban locations this cannot be entirely attributed to geographical distance. Indigenous people and White people are therefore 'in the same places but not the same spaces' (Walter, Taylor, and Habibis 2011, p.9).

The relationship is further marked by patterns of racism and prejudice. A swathe of studies on the Indigenous population report that experiences of racism and discrimination are part of the lived daily experience of Indigenous people (Campbell et al. 2020; Habibis et al. 2016b, p.17, Nelson 2018, pp. 51–57; Paradies 2018; Paradies and Cunningham 2009; Temple, Kelaher, and Paradies 2019, Larson et al. 2007). A staggering 97 per cent of respondents in the Darwin TILII survey report that White people act like they are better than Indigenous people, with 94 per cent reporting that White people speak to Indigenous people like they do

not matter (Habibis et al. 2016b, p.14). Temple's national survey of over 11,000 Indigenous people found one in three had experienced racist comments and unfair treatment within the last 12 months (Temple, Kelaher, and Paradies 2019, p.41).

These experiences are triangulated by studies measuring racist attitudes in the White population (eg Pedersen et al 2006; Balvin & Kachima 2011). Beyond Blue's[6] national survey of non-Indigenous attitudes to Indigenous people found a prevalence of discriminatory attitudes. One in five respondents admitted they would move away if an Indigenous person sat near them and would monitor them in a retail setting (Beyond Blue 2014). Shirodkhar's study of implicit bias in the Australian population analyses a sample of over 8,500 White individuals. Implicit race bias is automatically activated race bias of which the person themselves is unaware. Accordingly, measures of implicit race bias can be particularly telling in settings where openly racist attitudes are socially undesirable – as is increasingly the case in contemporary Australian society. Shirodkhar's study found that 75 per cent of White Australians manifest an implicit bias towards Indigenous people (Shirodkhar 2020, p.14).

Qualitative studies of the race-relationship from both perspectives, ranging from Cowlishaw's 2004 study of race-relations in the conservative country town of Bourke (Cowlishaw 2004) to Land's 2015 study of liberal White 'allies' in Indigenous activist spaces in south eastern Australia (Land 2015), describe a relationship burdened by colonial White behavioural patterns of dominance, control and assumptions of superiority. The evidence in the literature overwhelmingly indicates that race-relations between Indigenous people and White Australians are currently sub-optimal. Given the equally overwhelming evidence of the impact of poor race-relations on Indigenous life outcomes, it is logical to conclude that White attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous people should be a key focus of research and policy efforts to improve the situation of Indigenous people, yet this is not the case.

2.6.1 White Australian attitudes to improving race-relations

Alongside these damning assessments of the state of the relationship, the Reconciliation Barometer has repeatedly found that the majority of non-Indigenous Australians think the relationship with Indigenous people is important and want it to be better (Nelson 2018, pp.11, 89–91). These sentiments are not limited to general statements of goodwill in an

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[6] Beyond Blue is an Australian mental health and wellbeing support organisation.

online biennial survey. A quarter of a million Australians marched in support of reconciliation in 2000. It was at the time the largest political demonstration ever held in Australia[7]. Thousands march annually on Australia Day to protest the date's insensitivity to Indigenous citizens[8]. A majority of the Australian public, if not its political leaders, expressed immediate support in national surveys for all three of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart[9] proposals (Brown, Kildea, and Parkinson 2017; Markham and Sanders 2020). There would appear to be clear support for an improved relationship. This begs the question of why, if White Australians have so much power in Australian society, and so many want to have constructive race-relations with Indigenous people, the race-relations reality for large segments of the population is one of mutual distrust, ubiquitous racism and social segregation.

The Reconciliation Barometer shines a small light on this when it reports that 54 per cent of Australians personally want to do more for reconciliation, but only 29 per cent think they know *what* they can do for reconciliation (Nelson 2018, p.89). This is an important finding, but other empirical studies indicate that the explanation is likely to be more complex. It may be that White Australia's race-relations goodwill should be understood as somewhat conditional. Alongside the widespread aspirations for more constructive race-relations, are confused and often contradictory constructions of Indigenous people and of their place in Australian society. There is a tendency in segments of the non-Indigenous population to romanticise traditional Indigenous culture, equate this with 'true' Indigeneity and treat it as a prerequisite for attracting respect for their status as the First Australians (Walter 2012, p.19). Great emphasis is placed on its preservation. At the same time, Indigenous people are judged for, and expected to abandon, any cultural norms that are repugnant to present-day White culture and people (Povinelli 2002). As Langton puts it, 'The varied, unstable and contested thing called Aboriginality is made up of contradictory elements of the romantic and the grotesque, the deprived and the despised, the noble and the savage" (Langton 1997, cited in Cowlishaw 2004, p.8).

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[7] https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/walk-for-reconciliation

[8] See, for example https://www.sbs.com.au/news/australia-day-of-shame-thousands-march-in-invasion-day-protests

[9] The Uluru Statement from the Heart was the statement delivered to the Australian people by the 2017 Constitutional Convention of more than 250 Indigenous leaders at Uluru. The Statement called for three key measures to be implemented – a 'Voice to Parliament', a Truth Telling Commission and a Treaty.

Australian attitudes to Indigenous people would appear to be marked by a deep ambivalence. In the 2014 ANU Poll, four-fifths of Australians agreed that Indigenous people should be able to decide their own way of life. At the same time, a third believed that the government has not intervened enough in Indigenous communities. Three-fifths agreed that, in the long run, it would be best for Indigenous Australians to be completely assimilated into mainstream Australian culture (Gray and Sanders 2015). It is notable that these glaringly contradictory beliefs are all expressed by one set of respondents within the one study. This ambivalence and conditionality also surrounds perceptions of Indigenous deserving. Although there is widespread support for an improved situation for Indigenous people, this wanes in the face of proposals for specific special measures such as affirmative action. Such measures are commonly painted as 'undeserved and unearned' (Walter 2012, p.15). Indeed, national surveys indicate that close to a third of Australians believe Indigenous people have equality now and injustices are a thing of the past (Gray and Sanders 2015).

Mainstream media representations of Indigenous people are an important dimension of this picture. Analyses of media representations of Indigenous people indicate that mainstream media commonly operate on racist stereotypes that lack compassion and complexity. It plays to the 'national preoccupation of worrying about the Aborigines' (Cowlishaw 2004, p.2) Proudfoot and Habibis undertook analysis of media around the Northern Territory Emergency Response[10], which was a major policy development in Indigenous Affairs in 2007. They found that News Ltd papers with wide readership represented Indigeneity as, among other things, a threat to Australia's moral order (Proudfoot and Habibis 2015, p.183). The media's representation of Indigenous people is important because large segments of the public rely on the media as their primary source of information about Indigenous people (Elder 2007; Nelson 2018, p.43) At the same time, such coverage can be understood as a reflection of the population to which it speaks and the messaging to which those populations are receptive. The anti-Indigenous sentiment that persists in the mainstream media is publicly condoned (Walter 2012) and has been found to reflect a low empathetic public concern for Indigenous people (Proudfoot and Habibis 2015).

In sum, displays of support for better race-relations coexist with anti-Indigenous sentiment in the Australian public. The indications are that the obstacles in the White population to

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[10] The Northern Territory Emergency Response, also referred to as "The Intervention", was a swathe of controversial measures enacted by the Commonwealth Government in 2007 in response to a report outlining allegations of widespread child abuse and family violence in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory

constructive race-relations are complicated and run deep. This literature highlights the importance of constructive race relations to the achievement of justice and equity for Indigenous people. White attitudes, behaviours and choices are implicated in the sustainment of Indigenous disadvantage and White advantage. Yet this is seldom the focus of national debate (Shirodkhar 2020, p.3). The contribution of White attitudes, behaviours and choices rarely features in the public and policy discourse nor addressed in high profile, big-spending policy measures. Instead, public and policy discourse is persistently one of Indigenous deficit (Fforde et al. 2013; Macoun 2011; Lovell 2012; Fogarty, Bulloch et al. 2018; Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018; Howard-Wagner 2012; Altman 2014).

2.7   The discourse of Indigenous deficit

Kerins defines discourse as 'systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of actions, beliefs and practices that shape reality by systemically constructing the subjects and the worlds of which they speak' (Kerins 2012, cited in Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018, p.2). A discourse of Indigenous deficit refers to the framing of Indigenous people in a narrative of 'negativity, deficiency and failure'. The concept does not refer to establishing evidence of the relative disadvantage of large parts of the Indigenous population. It refers to narratives of failure and inferiority that conflate the problems Indigenous people experience with Indigeneity itself, so that Indigenous people themselves come to be perceived as the problem to be fixed (Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018, p.2; Fforde et al. 2013). The premise of the NTER in 2008, for example, was that of completely failed Indigenous communities in need of rescue by distinctly non-Indigenous outside intervention (Lovell 2012; Altman 2014; Howard-Wagner 2012). Indigenous people have been defined by a discourse of deficit since White arrival (section 2.3; Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018, p.1). Dornan writes that there is an eternal focus on Indigenous capacity deficit and that Indigenous 'capacity' is 'invariably settler driven and defined' (Dornan 2020, p.101). The public discourse continues to be dominated by White voices and White standpoints, be they of the media, scholars or government representatives[11].

Discourses of Indigenous deficit are inherently counterproductive, not least because of the psychological injury they do to Indigenous agency (Fforde et al. 2013; Gorringe, Ross, and Fforde 2011, 4). They result in one-eyed approaches focused on the Indigenous population (Gorringe, Ross, and Fforde 2011, p.4). Measures targeting the broader population, such as

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[11] In making this observation I acknowledge the irony of the author's own Whiteness. This is discussed in Chapter 4.

building capacity for more constructive race-relations, have attracted relatively little attention and funding. Public policy and spending is instead dedicated to measures deployed within the Indigenous population to close the gap on statistical indicators of disadvantage (COAG 2008). These measures target a perceived need to build Indigenous capacity as economic actors (eg Australian Government 2015, p.1; Habibis and Walter 2015, p.261) and provision for the material needs of Indigenous people represented as helpless and unable to provide for themselves (Howard-Wagner 2012, p.221). White capability for constructive race-relations with Indigenous people is not a government priority. It is excluded from the auspice of well-funded government agencies and left to modestly funded toothless non-government organisations, such as Reconciliation Australia, the peak national body for measuring and advancing race-relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians[12].

The focus areas of the Closing the Gap initiative are also telling. Bond points out that this centrepiece of efforts to improve the situation of Indigenous people is almost singularly focused on 'black bodies and behaviours' with the exception of some slippery, low-profile, unquantified commitments to address racism in the broader community (Bond 2020). This is emblematic of the imbalance in the public discourse around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage more broadly, and in the measures to address Indigenous disadvantage that spring from it. Despite evidence that aspects of the problem are firmly located in the non-Indigenous population, this is not where efforts to rectify it are currently directed.

2.8 Conclusion

The literature establishes that the way in which White people relate to Indigenous people is a central factor in ongoing Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. This suggests that the single-minded attention paid in public discourse and policy to rectifying perceived Indigenous capacity deficits is disproportionate and that it may miss the mark altogether. If the contribution of White attitudes, behaviours and choices to the situation of Indigenous people is so established, and if the majority of White people think race-relations are important and want them to be better, and if White people have the power to shape and steer

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[12] Note the telling contrast between Reconciliation Australia's $6 million total national operating budget for 2018/19, of which government funding made up a little over half (https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ra-annual-review-2018_19_web.pdf), and the, for example, $28 million of federal funding allocated in 2013 to the placement of truancy officers in 40 remote communities (https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/abbott-government-to-spend-28m-on-truancy-officers-to-help-raise-aboriginal-school-attendance-20131220-2zorj.html). That was a single program in a raft of measures serving the single policy area of Indigenous educational disadvantage.

society, then why are the public discourse and policy and funding priorities so consistently silent on possible White capacity deficits such as the capacity to engage in constructive race-relations? After all, Indigenous people have repeatedly reported that race-relations are problematic and impacting on their lives.

Critical race theorists offer an explanation for this. In the next chapter, I explore how these, and other theorists, account for the under-emphasis on the role of White Australians in Indigenous disadvantage, and the over-emphasis on the need for change within the Indigenous population.

Chapter 3: Shifting the focus to White Australia

3.1   Introduction

This research aims to reveal strategies for rectifying Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage that have been obscured by the colonised nature of public and policy discourses. It utilises a radical application of Sen's capability approach to development, together with critical race and decolonising ideas, to explore questions about White capacity. Such questions are commonly overlooked by racist and colonised assumptions about what constitutes an advanced society. The research relies on and centres Indigenous knowledges and experiences as a source of expertise. These too are commonly overlooked by the same colonised assumptions, which ascribe Indigenous knowledge low value and high subjectivity. The investigation focuses on White capacity for constructive race-relations. This is because of the established links between race-relations and Indigenous wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes.

The research adopts an interpretivist social constructivist epistemological position. I explain this further in the next chapter. The emphasis of social constructivism on the subjective standpoint lends itself to a critical theoretical framework. Critical frameworks emphasise social structures and subjective cultural assumptions as causes of social problems. The theoretical framework of this thesis is informed by critical race theory (CRT), supported by a bricolage of closely related theories and concepts such as recognition theory, Whiteness and decolonisation. In this chapter I use these to explain, firstly, how White people are implicated in Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage; and secondly, how Australia has come to have an under-emphasis on the role of the contemporary White Australian population in Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage and a corresponding over-emphasis on the need for change within the Indigenous population.

I open with recognition theory in section 3.2 to explain how White attitudes and behaviours impact Indigenous wellbeing and justify the research focus on White capability for constructive race-relations. In section 3.3 I outline the central tenets of CRT to explain why the dominant discourse of Indigenous deficit persists and why Indigenous perspectives are largely excluded from that discourse. The CRT explanation includes factors such as the historical construction of the race hierarchy to justify colonisation; the subsequent universalisation of Whiteness as the measure of an evolved human being; the normativity,

and therefore invisibility, of racism; and the ongoing vested interest White people have in maintaining their racialised structural advantage. CRT's strong structuralist orientation lends itself to a somewhat pessimistic outlook in terms of the possibilities for a meaningful shift in the situation of Indigenous inequality, dependent as it is on White choices. It tends to essentialise White people as self-interested and implies that the only population sincerely motivated to implement social change for race justice is the population with the least power to bring that change about. The CRT perspective leaves little space for human goodness and race-relations progress. I show how a reframing of Sen's capability approach to development points to White capability as a factor in the widespread failure to act effectively for race justice. I explain that Sen's framework is complementary to the CRT framework and show how it operates within and expands the small spaces for optimism the CRT framework permits. I conclude the chapter by defining the key concepts and processes used to support the analysis of the data throughout the thesis. These include Whiteness, reconciliation, decolonisation and White ignorance.

3.2   White misrecognition and Indigenous disadvantage

In the previous chapter, I outlined the sizeable empirical evidence of the harms caused to Indigenous people by racist attitudes and behaviours. Recognition theory accounts for the connections between race-relations and Indigenous wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes. Recognition theorists assert that appropriate recognition is fundamental to the achievement of a just society. The theory is rooted in Hegel's understanding of human beings as essentially social creatures whose sense of self is shaped dialogically with others. They are, therefore, profoundly impacted by social interactions and the norms and institutions of the community in which they live (Honneth 2001). Formal equal rights embedded in law are understood to be important, but insufficient. Recognition theorists explain that just and ethical societies are dependent on the achievement of a social solidarity beyond formal equality. This social solidarity is, in turn, dependent on appropriate recognition. Overt racism is just one particularly crude form of what recognition theorists term 'misrecognition', i.e. a failure to recognise an individual or group's inherent equal rights and status as fellow human beings ('universal recognition') or their unique needs, value and contribution to society ('particular recognition') (McBride 2013, pp.2-4, 36).

There are two currents in recognition theory, stemming from the work of Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth. Taylor explains that particular recognition is important because cultural diversity is inherently valuable to society (Taylor 1994). Honneth utilises a critical theory

approach that focuses on the importance of both particular and universal recognition to personal agency and freedom (Honneth 2001, 2003). Honneth's theoretical focus is pertinent here. He identifies three types of recognition essential to individual self-realisation and a just society. These are the recognition and valuing of each member or group's (i) needs and aspirations, (ii) rights, including to universal and equal treatment, and (iii) contribution to society. He argues these forms of recognition have consequences for the generation of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem respectively. Persistent misrecognition, or the denial of any of these, therefore causes actual harm. Honneth asserts this compromises self-realisation and limits the participation by the misrecognised group in the full benefits and responsibilities of citizenship (Honneth 2001, p.5). Unmet reasonable expectations of any of these three forms of recognition are experienced as a sense of injustice and obstruct the social conditions necessary to individual flourishing or achieving the 'good life' (Honneth 2003, pp. 151–154). The way in which White Australians, as the dominant racial/cultural group, recognise (or misrecognise) Indigenous people is a factor in their wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes.

Recognition theory has problematic features that limit its utility as a pathway to race justice. It has been critiqued as a race justice strategy on various grounds (see for example Fraser 1995; Bauman 2001b; Povinelli 2002; Fanon 1963, 1968) with particular criticism by some Indigenous scholars of its efficacy in colonised contexts (see for example Coulthard 2014). Coulthard draws heavily on the work of Fanon in articulating his concerns. His primary concern is that the attainment of recognition has the appearance of progressing race justice whilst in fact affirming the racialised power hierarchy of colonisation. He, and many others, point out that struggles for recognition affirm rather than disrupt the colonisers' authority and entitlement to give or withhold validation of the Indigenous population's value, ways of knowing, doing and being and entitlement to land and power (Coulthard 2014, Fraser 1995, Povinelli 2002; Fanon 1963, 1968).

Closely related is the concern that race justice is dependent on a dual process of transformed attitudes and transformed material conditions in relation to Indigenous people. Coulthard and Fraser point out that although recognition may achieve the former, it does not guarantee the latter. Coulthard observes that recognition is commonly granted only in ways that are not disruptive to coloniser priorities, with a particular emphasis on the colonial project of land acquisition/dispossession. "Colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not throw into question the background legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself." (Coulthard 2014, p.41). Both Coulthard and Fraser go further to suggest that recognition can

inhibit redistribution of power and resources. Coulthard asserts that conciliatory processes of recognition sustain the subordinate status of the colonised, the colonial structure and its project of domination and dispossession. Fraser preceives public policy measures for increased recognition as the consolation prize in societies unwilling to address structural inequalities and proactively redistribute wealth and power in a racially equitable way (Fraser 1995). Honneth counters that recognition helps to foster the social conditions for this redistribution to occur (Honneth 2001). Coulthard concedes a role for recognition in fostering conditions conducive to redistribution of land and power, but for different reasons. He cites Fanon who validates struggles for recognition as an essential, albeit transitional step in the process of decolonisation and the dismantling of White domination. This is because struggles for recognition from the dominant group (as opposed to the achievement of the recognition itself) fosters the self-recognition that is critical to the shedding of subordinate identities internalised by the colonised population. Self-recognition empowers Indigenous people to stand up to colonial domination and fight with confidence for structural transformation (Coulthard 2014). Struggles for recognition can only be a transitional step because recognition operates within, rather than directly confronting and remedying the racialised power imbalance.

Other weaknesses in recognition theory include Kymlicka's observation that the equality promoted by 'universal' recognition is normative to the hegemonic group (in this case White Australian culture) (Kymlicka 1995, cited in McBride 2013, p.16). Conversely, advocacy for 'particular' recognition can operate to reify race identities and entrench race-based divisions (Fraser 2000; Bauman 2001b). It affirms rather than disrupts the divisive colonially constructed race binary that gives Whiteness and 'blackness' meaning and which has been central to Indigenous oppression (Coulthard 2014; Fraser 1995; Gandhi 2006). In his seminal work *Orientalism,* Said asks:

> Can one divide human reality… and survive the consequences humanly?
> By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is
> any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men
> into 'us' (Westerners) and 'they' (Orientals) (Said 1978, p.53).

Further, the reification of racialised group identities can trap subordinate groups in a rigid and unrealistic identity space that prevents them from thriving and adapting (Coulthard 2014; Povinelli 2002, p.6; Kowal 2015a).

Coulthard's response to the limitations of recognition theory is to reject it as a solution in its current form. He argues that instead of seeking recognition from the coloniser state and

society, Indigenous people must 'turn away', demand recognition on their own terms through the pursuit of "a resurgent politics of recognition premised on self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices" that at once directly challenges settler-colonial structures of power and offers alternatives (Coulthard 2014, p.24).

Fraser's response is to seek to identify what forms of recognition support redistribution and social equality. This leads her to coin the concept of transformative versus affirmative recognition measures. Affirmative recognition remedies are 'aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without disturbing the underlying framework that generates them'. They operate within and affirm the categories of the race-binary. Transformative recognition remedies are 'aimed at correcting inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework'. They disrupt the categories of the race-binary changing 'everyone's sense of belonging, affiliation, and self' (Fraser 1995, pp. 82–83). She illustrates the concept using the problem of homophobia and heterosexism. In this case, an affirmative remedy would be to shift the social value applied to homosexual identity, while a transformative remedy would be deconstruction of the homo-hetero dichotomy as per queer theory. Her concept of transformative recognition measures enables some of the pitfalls of identity-based recognition measures to be sidestepped in theory. Fundamentally, she considers identity-based, or affirmative recognition measures, to be incompatible with optimal redistribution measures for a just society. She also considers them to be incompatible with transformative recognition. She acknowledges that the concept of transformative recognition is theoretically interesting but practically remote given the value placed by subordinate groups themselves on identity and the profound social shifts transformative measures require (Fraser 1995).

The limitations of recognition theory largely concern the extent to which recognition can progress race justice. Its failure to overthrow the relationship of domination inherent to the colonial structure places a firm outer limit on what it can achieve. This, however, does not mean that it fails to progress race justice at all, invalidate its importance or diminish the significance of recognition for addressing Indigenous disadvantage highlighted by Honneth's (2001) analysis. I agree that recognition theory does not offer a complete solution to the race injustices that are so deeply rooted in Australian society, it does however help to clarify how and why White Australian attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous people are central to ongoing Indigenous disadvantage.

3.3 Critical race theory and the absence of public discourses around Whiteness

3.3.1 Critical Theory

CRT has its roots in critical theory. The express aim of critical theory is the emancipation of all human beings from all forms of exploitation, domination and oppression. It is premised on the understanding that the norms and structures that shape contemporary society and its associated injustices are not immutable. Instead, it asserts, society can be changed through activism if individuals can be freed from ideological illusion. Where traditional theory simply seeks to explain society, critical theory seeks to change it and its power structures. Critical theory developed out of the Frankfurt School as an interpretation of Marxist theory. It encompasses two critical approaches. One is based on external moral standards (extrinsic critique) and the other is in relation to the object's own values or what it represents itself to be (intrinsic critique) (Adorno 1973, cited in Billings and Jennings 2001). This latter intrinsic approach has particular relevance because of the disconnect between expressions of White commitment to an improved situation for Indigenous people and White failure to focus on remedies within their own population that would advance this goal. Many 'critical theories' in the broader sense have sprung out of critical theory (Billings and Jennings 2001; Bohman 2019). CRT, with its specific focus on the interplay between race and power, is one of these.

3.3.2 'Critical race theory', 'critical theories of "race" ', or ' "race" critical theory'

CRT was first developed in American law schools in the late 1980s as a form of counter-legal scholarship. It was a response by African American scholars to the shortcomings of liberalism as a pathway to race justice. Its critique of liberalism is a central theme. Early scholars aimed to reveal how the law, contrary to its perceived neutrality, plays a constitutive role in race categories and unequal racialised power relationships (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). They drew on their experiential knowledge as African American scholars to decolonise and critique racial hegemony. CRT has since broadened in focus from its narrow legal beginnings. There have been four waves of CRT in the United States. The most recent wave is focussed on how Whiteness functions in a range of institutional and every day settings and in different national contexts. Some scholars distinguish its application and development within disciplines other than law. They criticise the tendency to bring theory that focuses more on broader historical, economic and sociological factors under the CRT

umbrella, preferring terms for this such as ' "race" critical theory' or 'critical theories of "race" '(Bessone 2013; Hylton 2009, p.26). Despite such distinctions, there are clear points of convergence between the two positions. I consider these distinctions to be a distraction for the purposes of this research and, like many scholars, use the term CRT to refer to scholarship across all disciplines that theorises racial injustices from a critical perspective.

3.3.3 The five central tenets of critical race theory

Tenet 1. Race is a social construction

Delgado, one of the founding scholars of the CRT movement, identifies CRT as consisting of five central tenets (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 8). The first four are discussed in detail in this section. The fifth tenet relates to the concept of intersectionalism, which I discuss in relation to the concept of Whiteness later in this chapter.

The first tenet is that 'races' are social constructs that 'are invented, manipulated and retired by society when convenient' (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p.10; Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.76). Science has established that there are no definable races by any biological measure (genetic lineage, physical features, genetic similarity). There are only superficial physical variations across a single human race[13]. The clustering of arbitrary physical features as 'races' overlooks the gradations between these constructed categories (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p.9; Graves 2015). In popular and scholarly discourses, references to 'race' can also be used to encompass features of ethnicity such as culture and religion (Priest et al. 2013; Smedley and Smedley 2005). The work of Bhabha and others suggests that cultural categories, as a means of defining group membership, are as arbitrary, elastic and impossible to delineate as essentialist biological categories. Bhabha notes that there is often greater cultural diversity within culturally defined groups than between them (Bhabha 2004, cited in Land 2015, p.85; Hunt 2006). By way of further evidence of their constructed nature, scholars point to the ways in which race categories and stereotypes regularly morph in line with their utility to the dominant group (see for example Brodkin 1998; Hage 2012; and Moreton-Robinson 2004a). CRT's assertion that races are a social construct, rather than a description of an objective and immutable reality, is now widely accepted and largely uncontested in both the social and physical sciences (Bonilla-Silva 2006, p.8). This suggests

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[13] Advances in genetic and evolutionary sciences have reopened speculation that specific propensities may be able to be genetically identified and ultimately correlated with phenotypes of humans from specific geographic areas. This potential development is of limited consequence for the validation of existing racial groupings and stereotypes, which do not align with these scientific categories.

that there is potential for this social construct to be deconstructed, along with its harmful effects.

Tenet 2. Race was constructed to serve White interests

A second tenet of CRT is that the illusory concept of distinct races was socially constructed to serve White interests, and persists, in part, because it continues to do so (Delgado & Stefancic 2017, p.9). The more influential theories on the origins of race constructs emphasise them as a relatively recent social phenomenon. Historical analysis suggests that race constructs were developed largely as enablers for European colonial expansion. The moral legitimacy of the entire colonial project depended on claims of the inherent inferiority of the colonised populations. Colonial practices, such as slavery and the violent oppression and exploitation of Indigenous inhabitants of colonised regions, were endorsed at a time when the dominant political philosophy emphasised a universalist humanism that preached equality, civil rights, democracy, justice and freedom. Principles of human equality posed a significant ethical problem to colonial practices but this was circumvented through the categorisation of human beings by race. White scientists and philosophers hypothesised about a race hierarchy that became socially, legally and scientifically endorsed. This hierarchy identified White people as the pinnacle of human evolution and assigned Indigenous people its lowest human evolutionary rung (Moreton-Robinson 2009, p.64; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Smedley and Smedley 2005; Graves 2015). There were two distinct branches of colonial thought around the evolutionary pecking order. The 'naturalists' believed the race hierarchy was an inevitable reality arising from inherent and unrectifiable differences in capacity between the races. The 'historicists' viewed the differences as a lack of development that could be resolved with appropriate education and control. The first view justified violence and exploitation of a sub-human population. The second justified their complete domination and control (Bretherton and Mellor 2006, 83). Either way, the White 'race', with its self-assessed superiority, had a moral right and duty to regenerate the inferior 'races' they encountered and to help them to live better lives (Said 2000, p.418). Australia, as a nation, was built on the premise of White superiority and Indigenous deficiency.

Australian scholars observe that colonial patterns of enacting White domination and self-interest, framed as benevolent concern for the best interests of Indigenous people, are not restricted to early colonisation. Rather, they continue uninterrupted today. The Commonwealth government's Northern Territory Emergency Response is commonly regarded by Australian theorists as a telling example (see, for example, Howard-Wagner 2012; Altman 2014; Moreton-Robinson 2009; Hinkson 2007). It has attracted significant

scholarly attention because it represents a government intervention of a scale that exceeds that of any other policy declaration in Indigenous affairs in the past four decades (Hinkson 2007, p.1; Proudfoot and Habibis 2015, p.171). The NTER was framed as the response of the Commonwealth government to the results of an inquiry into the protection of Indigenous children from sexual abuse (Wild and Anderson 2007). It enacted only two of the report's 97 recommendations and implemented a raft of measures in remote communities not contemplated by the report. These included the suspension of race discrimination legislation, changes in land tenure over Indigenous controlled land and partial quarantining of income for all Indigenous welfare recipients in the Northern Territory[14]. The income quarantine measures had the effect of dictating where Indigenous people could spend their welfare payments and on what (Hinkson 2007).

Howard-Wagner's (2012) analysis suggests that the Northern Territory Emergency Response was in fact less of a response to the inquiry's findings and more a response to the current White cultural agenda of neo-liberalism being at odds with Indigenous communal property rights and self-determination. On this view, the Inquiry's findings simply provided a means for White priorities to be overtly pursued while being presented in a more palatable way as 'for the good of Indigenous people'. She notes the language of government representatives describing the NTER as 'a difficult process' but 'the moral and right thing to do' (Howard-Wagner 2012, p.221). She shows that, in framing the child abuse in Northern Territory Indigenous communities as a sudden humanitarian crisis, the Federal government was able to portray the enforcement of a program of White dominance, control and assimilation as the benevolent state coming to the rescue and aid of deficient Indigenous people unable to help themselves (Howard-Wagner 2012).

Colonisation is a structure not an event
Howard-Wagner and other scholars such as Moreton-Robinson (2009) show that colonial attitudes and power relations continue to pervade public and policy discourses. Decolonisation theorists use CRT principles to explain that colonisation should be understood as a structure rather than a discrete historical event (Mignolo 2011; Wolfe 2007, cited in Tuck and Yang 2012, p.5). Framing it as a period in history is, in any case, problematic in contexts like Australia because the colonisers never left (Altman 2014, p.115). Quijano describes this structure as 'the colonial matrix of power' that establishes and

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[14] Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 (No. 129, 2007).

sustains itself through 'control of the economy, of authority, of gender and sexuality, and of knowledge and subjectivity' (Quijano 1992, cited in Mignolo 2011, p.8). Embedded within it are assumptions about what constitutes knowledge, 'who qualifies as a person and what society should look like' (Chalmers 2017, p.106). Mignolo describes the colonial matrix as a structure of colonial logic that 'underlines the totality of Western civilization' and that has now 'gone beyond the actors who have created and managed it' to manage everyone. Everyone, he says, is 'in the matrix' (Mignolo 2011, p.16). This is important because, although the impact of Australia's history of colonisation on Indigenous people today is increasingly recognised by White Australians, its impact on White Australians is not widely appreciated. Unlike historical events, structures continue until they are displaced or dismantled. Accordingly, the race binary and its assumptions of Indigenous deficiency and of White cultural superiority, which are so embedded in the foundations of the structure of colonisation, also continue.

In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) explains some of the dynamics of this colonial matrix of power relating to authority and the production of knowledge. Said's stated goal was to identify how the concept of Orientalism was a construct that served French and British imperialist agendas and how that construct self-perpetuates enabling its unbroken continuity. His work has broader application to colonised contexts generally.

Said explains that the White colonisers, as the conquering group, defined themselves as the producers of knowledge. The White standpoint for knowledge production, their perspective and experience, was assigned the status of objectivity, when it was in fact self-interested. A generalised superiority was assumed on the basis of the colonisers' ability to physically conquer and subdue much of the globe. The perspectives and experiences of all other groups were lesser truths that were at best relative and highly subjective. Using their power to control knowledge production, the White colonisers created an 'us' and 'them' race binary of Whiteness and Indigeneity. This clumped a complex group of people together under the category 'Indigenous', dehumanised them and removed their power to speak for themselves. This limited and distorted representation of Indigenous people made them appear more knowable to White colonisers while denying Indigenous agency and integrity. It was not knowledge but a self-reinforcing and closed system of representation that shored up perceptions of White superiority. In this system Indigenous people were represented and essentialised by the White colonising population in terms of their difference. If Whiteness represents the pinnacle of human civilisation, then any difference from this is not simply difference, it is, by definition, inferiority (Said 1978).

Indigenous people, defined almost solely by their difference from White people, are therefore inherently inferior or deficient. The White coloniser is not subject to their own critical gaze because Indigenous people serve as a kind of reverse mirror. In projecting onto the 'Other' everything they do not like to think they are (backward, dirty, immoral), the colonising power maintains its self-view, without further examination, as the human cultural ideal (civilised, clean, virtuous) (Kowal 2015b, p.53). Similarly history is recorded and framed in distorted ways that present the colonising population favourably. This is why revisionist history, or the re-examination of history to replace 'comforting majoritarian' (or coloniser) versions of events with versions that more closely reflect the experiences of minorities (or the colonised), has been identified as a 'hallmark' theme of CRT (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p20). Said suggests that such representations, rendered unassailable, become normalised and accepted 'facts' through hegemonic processes. They impact the coloniser's self-perception and also, in line with recognition theory, the self-perceptions of the colonised. In this way, the constructed race binary ensures that the project of native improvement is never complete and the superiority of the coloniser, together with its entitlement to dominate, control and correct, is permanently reproduced and unexamined (Said 1978).

Tenet 3. Race inequality is 'business as usual'

What cannot be seen, cannot be criticised
This brings us to Delgado's third tenet of CRT. It explains that race privilege and racism are so pervasive, systemic and embedded in the structures of society as to be completely normalised, self-reproducing and rendered invisible. They are experienced as 'business as usual'. CRT reveals that racism is not aberrational, it is ordinary (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p.8). Here I use the term 'racism' in a broad sense, meaning any practice, belief or social structure that, intentionally or unintentionally, perpetuates race inequality. I also use 'social structure' in the broad sense, to mean collective attitudes and behaviours as well as institutional arrangements (Eddo-Lodge 2018). The normativity of Whiteness, White privilege and advantage means that many White Australians are genuinely unaware of the racism inherent in their attitudes and actions. Just as oppression can be internalised by the oppressed, so too can domination be internalised by the dominant group (Tillner 2000, cited in Pease 2010, p.4). Race inequality is structural and systemic. The system is designed to serve the interests of its creators. Yet, as we are all now living 'in the matrix', the White bias of the matrix is not always readily perceivable.

The invisible ubiquity of Whiteness

Moreton-Robinson (2004a) uses Montag's (1997) concept of the universalisation of Whiteness to explain this third tenet of CRT in the Australian race-relations context. Moreton-Robinson's basic assertion is that the universalisation and normalisation of Whiteness, together with its unearned privilege, renders it invisible and protected from scrutiny. Before elaborating on her analysis of the Australian context, I will outline Montag's concept of the universalisation of Whiteness. Montag explains that modernity identified humanity as a single species distinct from animals. This development universalised human status for all of humanity. The concurrent identification of White people as the pinnacle of human evolution means it is more accurate to say that it was Whiteness that was universalised. He suggests that the universalisation of humanity did not make Whiteness one race among many, it made White people and culture the measure of what is truly human for all humanity. Non-Whites were not animals but were also not quite as human as their more evolved White counterparts (Montag 1997). As Dyer puts it, 'Other people are raced, [White people] are just people' (Dyer 1997, p.1).

Moreton-Robinson explains the fruit of this is that Whiteness, as the measure of humanity, is therefore not measurable itself. It serves as the human norm, a non-race, unmarked and unseen (Moreton-Robinson 2004a). Within this, as observed by Said (1978), the White perspective and experience acquires the status of objectivity, whilst the perspectives and experiences of all other groups become highly subjective, lesser truths. This principle can be seen to operate in the 1998 Yorta Yorta native title claim[15], for example, in which the court assigned greater authority to written outsider observations by European colonists about Indigenous land and practices than to Indigenous oral testimony about their own culture (Buchan 2004, p.4). Green and Sonn term this phenomenon 'White enculturation', whereby the power of Whiteness is both ubiquitous and denied (Green and Sonn 2005, p.480). In this way White Australian culture dictates and defines the ordinary, the moral and the common sense, without necessarily even perceiving itself to be doing so (Moreton-Robinson 2004a; Montag 1997; Said 1978; Green and Sonn 2005). In contrast, departures from hegemonic White normativity are automatically deviant, inferior and open to scrutiny and correction (Said 1978).

Povinelli's work demonstrates how, even in the consciously multicultural context of contemporary Australia, this unspoken assumption of advanced social evolution and cultural superiority plays out in the form of the White Australian value system serving as arbiter of what is most correct and civilised in situations of cultural clash. She shows how mainstream

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[15] Members of the Yorta Yorta Indigenous Community v Victoria [1998] FCA 1606, Federal Court.

White culture delineates the limits of what practices and beliefs are acceptable in multicultural Australia and which of them are morally repugnant. Rational, critical cultural reflexivity on the part of White Australians is neither demanded nor triggered by this largely emotional process of navigating cultural difference, yet the limits set by White Australia are experienced by the dominant group as a rationally arrived at and common sense outcome (Povinelli 2002, p.12).

White western neo-liberalism and pathologies of Indigenous deficiency
Neo-liberal values are a prime site of the universalisation of Whiteness (Moreton-Robinson 2009). I use the next few paragraphs to demonstrate how this example of the universalisation of Whiteness operates to pathologise Indigenous people.
Harvey defines neo-liberalism as:

> A theory of political economic practice proposing that human wellbeing can be advanced by the maximisation of entrepreneurial freedoms within a state-enabled institutional framework characterised by individualism, private property and (unencumbered) free markets (Harvey (2007), cited in Altman 2014, p.122).

The neo-liberal value of individualism can be understood as one of the unmarked and unseen White-centric measures of true human evolution against which Indigenous difference is marked as deficient. By the 'value of individualism' I mean the belief that the general interests of society are subordinate to the freedom and self-realisation of the individual; that independence and self-reliance are commendable; and that competition and self-interest are rational and natural behaviours that are valued as productive. Individualism has been increasingly endorsed in western society, from classical liberal theory through to the vigorous promotion of homo-economicus in contemporary neo-liberal thought and policy (Lukes 1971; Williams 1999; Weigratz 2010). Individualistic behaviour is now widely assumed in White western societies to be human nature and common sense. To the extent that White people recognise that the value of individualism is not common sense in the sense of 'shared' sense (in that it is known to be different from other cultures), they assume it to be superior (Karlberg 2004, p.36; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998).

There is plentiful evidence of the universalisation of this White cultural value at both the global and domestic levels. The apparently neutral analytical cultural categories of 'individualist' and 'collectivist' mark an inherently loaded and colonised distinction. In the dominant global discourse, neo-liberal individualistic values are generally associated with 'progress' and 'modern' or 'developed' societies. Collectivist values are commonly

associated with 'traditional', 'undeveloped' societies and failed communist states (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998, p.2; Greif 1994, p.913; Altman 2014, p.123). The hegemonic mode of discourse of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation is neo-liberalism (Harvey 2005, 3). Their programs of 'structural adjustment' and reform that have forced the uptake of individualistic values by relatively collectivist cultures have been imposed in the name of 'development', though Harvey and others suggest they might better be understood as imperialism (Harvey 2005, p.195; Spector 2007). Analyses of recent Australian policies targeting remote Indigenous communities highlight how the imposition of neo-liberal individualistic values on these communities is repeatedly and explicitly framed as a project of 'development', 'advancement', 'improvement' and 'normalisation' (Altman 2014; Moreton-Robinson 2009; Fogarty, Lovell et al. 2018; Howard-Wagner 2012). Such framings of individualism provide little cause for the average White Australian to critically examine and understand the relative nature of their own cultural attachment to it.

So universalised is this White western cultural value that assumptions of its rationality, and its status as a mark of evolution, persist despite its multiple documented weaknesses. There is a sizeable body of theoretical and empirical research that demonstrates that the neo-liberal project of 'radical individualism' (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2013, p.596) has had significant adverse social and economic impacts for all except an elite minority. In *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism*, Harvey states that he is putting neo-liberalism 'on trial' (Harvey 2005, p.152). He examines the empirical evidence and establishes that neo-liberalism has not delivered on its theoretical promises of economic growth, material wellbeing and individual freedom. Analyses of societies where the influence of neo-liberal individualism has been greatest indicate that it does not generate new wealth but redistributes wealth from the poor to the rich (Harvey 2005, p.152; Ritzer and Stepnisky 2013, p.600). It is associated with, among other things, an ever-increasing and flagrant social inequality (Manne 2010, pp. 18–19), a greater social and moral tolerance of this inequality (Taylor-Gooby and Leruth 2018, p.2), a reduced empathy and regard for the common good (Harvey 2005, p.82, Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020), increasing acceptance of amoral and immoral business practices (Weigratz 2010), environmental destruction (Harvey 2005, p.176; Manne 2010, p.34) and reduced quality of life, including lower levels of social connection, happiness, physical and mental health with increased levels of stress, loneliness and depression (Pusey 2010, p.132; Habibis, Taylor, and Ragaini 2020; Lane 2000; Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). So invisible and universalised is this culturally specific value that its negative social, environmental and economic consequences are widely understood as inevitable facts of life rather than the product of a mutable culturally specific value.

The universalisation of the White-centric values associated with neo-liberalism marks Indigenous people as deficient in two distinct ways. The first is by virtue of their failure to conform to the radical individualism of neo-liberalism's homo-economicus. The concept of homo-economicus is responsive to an assumption that economic growth and material wellbeing are fundamental requirements of human nature (Holcombe 2006, p.82). In this view, self-realisation is achieved through individual activity in pursuit of the economic wellbeing of oneself and one's immediate family (Rose 2004, p.145). Notions of poverty and disadvantage are defined and measured by capitalist indicators and, under this framework, 'non-capitalist' actors come to be defined as deficient (Holcombe 2006, p.82). A moral dimension springs from this concerning the characteristics of the 'good citizen', namely, one that is individualistic, self-reliant and economically productive (Rose 2004, p.164, Moreton-Robinson 2009). Following this logic, the suffering and disadvantage of Indigenous people is the product of a lack of individualism, self-reliance and economic productivity. Accordingly, Indigenous hardship is most effectively addressed through a project of improvement that addresses their cultural 'deficiencies' as citizens and as economic actors. The assumption is not that the system needs to change to better suit Indigenous people, it is that Indigenous people must change to better suit the system (Altman 2014, p126).

Recent Indigenous affairs policy offers ample evidence of the persistent pathologising of Indigenous people as inherently deficient in their failure to conform to White western homo-economicus ideals (eg Howard-Wagner 2012, 2015, 2019; Moreton-Robinson 2009; Altman 2010; Hinkson 2007; Altman and Hinkson 2007; Dornan 2020; Strakosch 2015). Perhaps the most flagrant of these policies is the Northern Territory Emergency Response with its focus on 'improving' and 'normalising' Indigenous people through income management and changes in land tenure that were openly designed to coerce more individualistic homo-economicus oriented engagement with land and money (Dornan 2020, p.106; Howard-Wagner 2012; Hinkson 2007; Altman 2014). Other examples include the policy development of reciprocal or mutual obligation agreements. These emphasise Indigenous incapacity while compelling Indigenous individuals and communities to 'embrace settler values, norms and structures in exchange for welfare payments and services' (Dornan 2020, p.120). Even the apparently benign Closing the Gap targets belie a neo-liberal agenda in their focus on Indigenous material disadvantage and Indigenous health, educational and employment deficits rather than political redress (Strakosch 2015, Altman 2010).

Aside from their failure to conform, individualism marks Indigenous people as deficient in the way it masks racialised social and structural barriers to equal opportunity (Moreton-Robinson 2009; Mills 2015; Howard-Wagner 2019). Neo-liberal thinkers assert that the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is constructive even if it results in social inequalities. This is because society is strengthened if the stronger competitor is permitted to win without the propping up of weaker competitors by outside interference (e.g. by government). This is fair to the individual and to society (e.g. Hayek 1976). CRT contests this, asserting that the playing field is uneven and outcomes are determined less by desert than by pre-existing structural advantages. Neo-liberal individualism defaults to the invisible, universalised and normalised White experience. It denies the relevance and difference of black histories and contemporary social location (Mills 2015; Moreton-Robinson 2004b, p.vii; Howard-Wagner 2019, p.2). In removing considerations of context, it rationalises Indigenous poverty as cultural dysfunction and individual failure (Moreton-Robinson 2009, p.68). The flipside of this is that individualism also masks the particular sacrifices by Indigenous people of their land, labour and autonomy that have contributed to the contemporary wealth and lifestyles of many White Australians. The relative privilege of many White Australians appears as individual successes for which White people are individually responsible and to which they are therefore entitled. Contrary to the assumptions underlying classical and neo-liberal theory, the 'best man' does not necessarily win, especially when the competition is waged in a context of the cumulative effects of historical racial discrimination (Moreton-Robinson 2009). An uncritical acceptance of the rationality of individualism contributes to perceptions of Indigenous deficiency and White competence in explaining the lack of equal opportunity.

Privilege as the invisible problem

CRT explains that part of White normativity is the normativity of White privilege. Pease (2010) explains that because privilege is normalised and advantage is perceived as desirable, disadvantage presents as the problem to be solved. This places the focus on the disadvantaged group and locates the problem within the disadvantaged population. He points out that advantage and disadvantage, privilege and under-privilege, are, by definition, correlates of each other. Whether based on race, gender, ability, ethnicity or sexual orientation, they are two sides of the same coin and are inseparable as social phenomena. Accordingly, Indigenous disadvantage has been called the 'Siamese twin' of White advantage (Tannoch-Bland 1998, p.33). On this basis, Indigenous disadvantage can be understood as the failure of White people to resist the structural and personal reproduction of their unearned privilege. In fact, this can be understood as the larger part of the problem, given that White people are in a better position to resist reproducing their privilege than

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Indigenous people are to resist reproducing their disadvantage. Australian society is structured in such a way that White privilege is reproduced unless its reproduction is actively resisted (Pease 2010; Delgado & Stefancic 2017, Moreton-Robinson 2004a). The normativity of White privilege means that White people do not perceive their unearned advantage as contributing to Aboriginal disadvantage. Accordingly, the focus remains on investigating and rectifying the ways in which Indigenous choices, capacities and behaviours reproduce their relative disadvantage.

White fragility and the intuitive wrongness of White deficiency

DiAngelo (2011) points out, however, that it is not sufficient to bring these things to the attention of White people. White privilege and normativity results in a low ability of White people to engage with information that racialises them and causes them racial discomfort. This information might, for example, challenge an unexamined racialised sense of superiority or entitlement, be a cultural criticism or expose latent racism. DiAngelo suggests that White privilege, including White cultural hegemony, protects White people from race and ethnicity-based criticism. This leaves White people with an undeveloped skill set for dealing with challenges to their understandings of race. In contrast, people of colour face race-based criticism on a daily basis and so they must develop this skill set from an early age. DiAngelo terms this undeveloped skill set 'White fragility'. It refers to the limited tolerance White people have for the discomfort of having their race and cultural beliefs challenged or critiqued. This unfamiliar experience feels intuitively 'wrong'. Rather than engaging with challenging information, White people find ways to dismiss, diminish or shut it down in order to restore their comfort zone (DiAngelo 2011). The implication is that, even when they are exposed as complicit in Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage, White fragility will trigger denial behaviours and White Australians will consciously or sub-consciously move to refocus the discourse back onto the safer and more familiar territory of Indigenous deficiency.

White people will act to protect their race advantage

I have shown how the third tenet of CRT – the normalisation of race privilege and racism – operates in multiple ways to make Whiteness invisible to the White critical gaze while sustaining the focus on Indigenous people as deficient. The second tenet of CRT – that race was constructed to serve White interests – asserts that the bottom line is that race constructs continue to have currency in contemporary Australia because they continue to serve White interests. The suggestion is that White people do not want to relinquish their race privilege and therefore are not genuinely interested in overcoming race inequities (Delgado & Stefancic 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2006).

It is well-established that socio-economic advantage/disadvantage is broadly distributed along race lines in Australia. CRT reveals the causal relationship between Whiteness and this pattern of distribution. It highlights that society is deeply racialised in a way that favours White people and delivers them significant race dividends. The early American writers in CRT suggest that these dividends have both psychic and material dimensions (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p.9). In *Whiteness as Property*, Harris (1993) explains that race is accompanied by a kind of material determinism. She points out that, prior to technical legal race equality Whiteness served as a shield from slavery. In this way, it delivered a range of racialised rights and privileges. She describes these as the 'property of free human beings'. The uneven distribution of the rights, privileges and material wealth accrued by Whiteness are, she says, 'affirmed, legitimated, and protected' by the current legal system. These patterns can also be seen in the Australian legal system and the double standards inherent in White law that work to protect and prioritise White property rights over Indigenous land rights (Behrendt 2007).

Another way in which the law preserves White privilege is under the guise of equal treatment and 'colour blindness' (Harris 1993). 'Equal treatment' in an unequal context means the legal system operates to perpetuate this unequal distribution rather than work to undo it. These ideas are illustrated by Duster's (1995) analogy of a poker game. In his imaginary game, one player cheats shamelessly for the first three hours. After accumulating most of the chips they are finally successfully called out on their cheating. They admit to playing unfairly and agree everyone should play by the rules from now on. Suggestions that they should redistribute their unfairly accrued chips are rejected, as that would be contrary to the established rules of the game by which everyone has now agreed to play. Demands for redistribution are denied on the basis that that would be 'reverse-cheating' (Duster 1995). Howard-Wagner (2019) and Moreton-Robinson (2009) touch on these dynamics in the Australian context in their critique, outlined above, of the ways in which neo-liberal principles of individualism mask the uneven playing field on which Indigenous people are forced to compete.

Du Bois ((1935) 2007), and Roediger (1999), write about the psychic or non-monetary compensations delivered by Whiteness to the working classes. These 'wages of Whiteness' are paid in the form of a valuable social status derived simply from not being black. Du Bois explains that this status serves as a form of 'compensation' for the lower classes that are more subject to the exploitation of capitalism than to its potential material benefits. He also points out that the value of this status is dependent on the assignment of a 'badge of

inferiority' to blackness. McIntosh famously characterises the diverse dividends of Whiteness as an 'invisible knapsack of privilege'. This knapsack is 'an invisible package of unearned assets [White people] can count on cashing in each day' (McIntosh 1989, p.1). While some of these forms of privilege are desirable for everybody, some can exist only by depriving others. This includes such privileges as the entitlement to dominate and control. The White knapsack of privilege applies equally in the Australian context (cf Bennett 2013). Accordingly, CRT asserts that White Australians continue to have a vested interest in maintaining race inequality.

CRT further suggests that the vested interest White people have in maintaining race inequality means there is little incentive for them to eradicate it. CRT asserts they generally only act to do so when it serves their own interests, behaviour that has been called 'interest convergence' (Bell Jr 1980). The concept of 'interest convergence' is one of the hallmark themes of CRT (Delgado and Stefancic 2017 p.18. In his research, Bell demonstrates that what appear to be major advances towards race equality are likely to be either hollow in substance or deliver a clear benefit to White people, or both. Bell's research context is America and he draws on American case law – *Brown v The Board of Education* – as evidence for his theory. However, analysis of the landmark land rights case *Mabo v Queensland(2)* demonstrates the applicability of Bell's insights to the Australian context (Griffiths 2014; Watson 2014, p.510). Walter's analysis of a national survey on social attitudes similarly identifies the workings of interest convergence around attitudes to Indigenous inequality in Australia (Walter 2012). The implication of Bell's theory is that, no matter what White people say they believe, unless structural factors shift that change to align with their material interests, they will not support substantive change towards race equality. White people may be invested in perceiving themselves as 'good' White people committed to race justice, and in the virtue signalling of public statements and gestures indicating a desire to end race-based inequities, but they are not invested in actually ending race inequality. It serves White interests to appear to *want* to rectify race inequality but not to *actually* rectify race inequality. Accordingly, many are not interested in undertaking a clear-eyed examination of how their attitudes, choices and behaviours contribute to the situation of Indigenous people in Australia and this is why they do not do it.

Subconscious complicity and the 'new racism'
Despite these assertions by CRT, neither CRT nor I suggest it is reasonable to conclude that all White people can be essentialised as cynically insincere in their expressed support for a better situation for Indigenous people. As I explain in Section 3.6.1 below, Whiteness and White people are not the same thing (DiAngelo 2011, p.56; Pease 2010, p.120; Mills 2007,

p.22). Nevertheless, regardless of conscious ideology, there is evidence that the attitudes and behaviours of many White people are fundamentally determined by structural factors of which they may not be consciously aware (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Bonilla-Silva uses discourse analysis to show how White people are able to sustain the cognitive dissonance between their stated intolerance of racism and race inequality and their alignment with racist beliefs and policy measures that reproduce their race privilege. His research context is the United States, but multiple smaller studies confirm his findings in the Australian context (Walter 2012; Riggs and Augoustinos 2013; Green and Sonn 2005). He points out that analyses of White discourses on race matters indicate that even resoundingly White-serving views are not necessarily coupled with racial hostility. An individual's views on matters of race equality do, however, generally correlate with that individual's position in the racial hierarchy. The evidence is that White people will, consciously or subconsciously, tend to hold the views of race-relations and structural arrangements that support their privileged position in that hierarchy. Both Walter and Bonilla-Silva point out, for example, that within a single survey, majority expressions of support for race equality quickly dissipate in response to proposals for more specific and concrete lines of action that diminish unearned White advantage. Bonilla-Silva and Walter's survey participants perceive their objections as rational and explicable and the explanation is never racism (Walter 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2006).

New Racism

Bonilla-Silva terms this dynamic 'new racism'. New racism rationalises racial inequalities in more sophisticated but equally racist ways. New racism practices are subtle, institutional and 'non-racial', as opposed to traditional racism, which is direct, overt and relies on (now) socially abhorrent claims of White biological superiority (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Moreton-Robinson 2004a). New racism enables White Australians to protect and reconcile their advantage without challenging their perception of themselves as moral individuals committed to race equality and justice. In Bonilla-Silva and Walter's findings, for example, a majority of White respondents support the elimination of race inequity but, at the same time, the majority do not support affirmative action measures. The 'non-racist' justification for this position is that they are committed to living in a post-racial, colour-blind society. Akin to Duster's (1995) analogy of the poker game, this apparently noble individualistic approach masks structural racism and the fact that Australians do not live in a colour-blind meritocracy. The consequence of colour-blind approaches is the reproduction of White privilege. In any case, it is the lived experience of people of colour that colour-blindness is not practised in reality by significant segments of the White population (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Eddo-Lodge 2018).

Bonilla-Silva explains that new racism works by attributing the symptoms of race inequality to anything but racism in order to protect the social structures and practices that maintain the social order in favour of Whiteness. He identifies four attitudinal categories amongst White people that exculpate them from responsibility for the situation of people of colour and thus perpetuate the racial order. These are: (i) minimising racism; (ii) identifying racialised practices and outcomes as natural social processes; (iii) attributing disadvantage to imputed cultural norms and practices of the subordinated group; and (iv) applying liberal principles, such as self-responsibility and equal treatment, without regard to the broader context of inequality. He argues that the last of these is the most important as it forms the foundation of new racism. New racism works by taking the elements of traditional liberalism (work ethic, equal opportunity, individualism, rewards by merit) and 'applying them towards racially illiberal goals' (Bonilla-Silva 2006)[16]. New racism masks White culpability and justifies the focus on Indigenous deficit, particularly as it relates to a failure to conform to (White) liberal principles.

Tenet 4. Indigenous people as experts on Whiteness

I have presented here, in its many dimensions, CRT's explanation for the over-emphasis on Indigenous choices and behaviours and the under-emphasis on White choices and behaviours. Pease draws heavily on CRT in his argument that one factor may be that many White people are not only unaware of the ways in which they are complicit in race injustice, but also of the ways and degree to which Australian society is racially unjust (Pease 2010). CRT emphasises that ending unearned race privilege and undeserved race disadvantage requires White people to actively resist the reproduction of their race privilege and to be conscious of how they use their race privilege. Pease and Land both emphasise the importance of White people engaging in a deeply reflexive process to be able to do this (Land 2015; Pease 2010). Pease suggests that it is more important for the privileged to focus their efforts and critical reflection on themselves than to work with underprivileged groups to alleviate their disadvantage. He does not suggest that White Australians can give up their privilege, but that they can make choices to challenge it (Pease 2010, pp.3-5, 31).

This brings us to the fourth tenet of CRT. I earlier noted the hermeneutical injustice Indigenous people suffer in the dominant public discourse. Their experiences are obscured from the collective understanding by virtue of their position of social powerlessness and

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[16] I have touched on many of these ideas already throughout this chapter, particularly in the section on neo-liberalism.

consequential inability to influence that discourse (Mason 2011, p.295). The fourth tenet of CRT asserts that minority perspectives can deliver particular insights on Whiteness and the functioning of society. These insights can help to challenge master narratives established from a White standpoint. Such insights have particular value because they are less likely to be perceived and known from within the dominant White standpoint (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p.11). This is a recurring theme throughout the Australian CRT literature. Moreton-Robinson points out that Indigenous people, by virtue of necessity, are experts on Whiteness – expertise derived from learning, responding and adapting to living with the colonisers (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.85). Land points out that 'those who are located outside privilege and feel the effects of its exclusions are better placed to have a clearer view of its workings' (Land 2015, p.88). Land and Pease both assert that access to this standpoint gives White people insight into their privilege and can create an imperative to act (Land 2015; Pease 2010).

There are similarities between this argument and Gramsci's concept of the subaltern. The term 'subaltern' has complex and contested implications that are the subject of a significant body of scholarship. Here I use it in its simplest sense to refer to a specific population or group that is excluded from the socio-economic institutions of society and whose voice, agency and contrasting perspectives are therefore also diminished (Spivak 1988). In light of the invisibility of Whiteness and the importance of its unmasking, CRT identifies the voice of the subaltern as critical to the process of achieving constructive race-relations conducive to justice and equity for Indigenous people. Yet thick descriptions of Indigenous perspectives on White Australian culture and on race-relations have not been widely documented and are not well known (Dunn et al. 2010, Mellor 2003).

3.4   The catch-22 of critical race theory

CRT is optimistic in the sense that it understands race as a social construct. This suggests that this construct can be deconstructed and the relationship between race and power dismantled. This implies there is potential for racialised social divisions and inequities to be rectified (Hattery, McGettigan, and Smith 2014). But CRT is also pessimistic because it asserts that both White advantage and the structures and processes that produce it are not only self-reproducing, but are so deeply embedded and normalised in society that their inherent injustice is rendered invisible to those with the most power to change them. Further, it asserts that White people have little incentive to do so because they have a vested interest in retaining their dominant power position and the unearned privilege it delivers. CRT suggests any shifts in race-relations, positive or negative, are more likely to reflect the

interests of the dominant race group than ideals of justice. This rendering of White advantage/Indigenous disadvantage as unrelentingly self-reproducing does not provide a hopeful outlook.

CRT offers a powerful articulation of race dynamics in Australia that is supported by strong empirical evidence. It points to many critical truths about White conscious and subconscious complicity in ongoing Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. However, this position is overly deterministic about White people's capacity to care about the wellbeing of others and to align their actions with principles of justice. The pessimism of CRT reflects low expectations of White people that arguably underestimate them and their potential to prioritise the interests of others. I suggest these low expectations may be a misreading of White people and this is counterproductive to CRT's goals since they hold White people to a low bar.

3.4.1 Disputing White self-interest as inevitable

In this section I present a selection of the literature that refutes CRT's fatalistic framing of White people as incorrigibly self-interested. Firstly, CRT does not adequately account for the long tradition of pro-social social theory that emphasises the capacity and desire of human beings to prioritise the welfare of others over their own. Even Marx, who interprets history through the prism of conflict, does not paint human beings as inherently and entirely self-interested. Rather, he asserts that social structures inhibit our capacity for cooperation and mutualism (Karlberg 2004, p.84). Feminist theorist Carol Gilligan similarly points to structural factors inhibiting natural tendencies to care. Her research finds that humans are born relational. She further finds that understandings of humans as primarily self-interested are a distortion arising from the dominance of patriarchy. So profound is this structural distortion of natural human capabilities for care, that she suggests the question for investigation is not, 'How do we gain the capacity to care… [or] learn to take the point of view of the other and overcome the pursuit of self-interest?'. Rather, it is, 'How do we come to lose these innate propensities?' (Gilligan 2013, p.13). Bauman's analysis suggests humans are inwardly directed to moral behaviour. His view is that the self cannot be completely egoistically driven due to its infinite responsibilities to 'the other' (Bauman 1993, cited in Habibis, Hookway, and Vreugdenhil 2016). In *Rational Fools*, philosopher and economist Amartya Sen rejects as patently false the view of humanity promoted in economic models that 'every agent is actuated only by self-interest' (Sen 1977, p.317).

Beyond this there have been many theorists who, in line with Gilligan, have demonstrated that economic framings of human beings as rationally self-interested have led to systems and policies that actively reward and foster this behaviour, distorting our natural instincts to care for the other (eg Giroux 2016, p.2; Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020; Karlberg 2004; Weigratz 2010). Also relevant are empirical investigations of the drivers of specific caring behaviours such as kindness (Habibis, Hookway, and Vreugdenhil 2016) and altruism (Monroe 1998), that clearly identify these behaviours as at least partly a response to interiorised sources of moral authority and perceptions of a shared humanity. CRT appears to deny this agency or capacity in White people. I tend to agree with Lynch when she asserts that the salience of self-interest for social-scientific investigations can 'conceal the role that moral motivations and other-centredness can play in directing human behaviour politically, particularly if mobilized and organized' (Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020, p.252).

Secondly, in essentialising White people as inevitably, and almost universally, acting to maintain their race advantage, CRT denies the evidence that many do not and that others may not if they were made aware of their complicity in this injustice. History has documented many instances where principles of justice have driven the actions of dominant groups in movements for social change. There are multiple examples of the middle class supporting the rights of the working class, Whites opposing slavery, men supporting women's rights and heterosexual people opposing homophobia at no particular advantage to themselves (Pease 2010, pp.3-6). This is also demonstrably true within the Australian race-relations landscape. White Australia is not homogenous. See, for example, Land's study of White activists in Indigenous issues in south eastern Australia (Land 2015) and Kowal's work on White anti-racists in the Northern Territory public health system (Kowal 2015b). The widely supported 2008 Apology and the 2000 Walk for Reconciliation have been criticised for being empty symbolic acts that asked little of their supporters, but were also opportunities that could have been tapped into and capitalised upon, representing a sincere, if somewhat naïve, commitment on the part of many Australians to a more just and equitable situation for Indigenous people (Maddison 2012). Similarly, the record-breaking support for the 1967 referendum represented a vote for Indigenous equality by Australians more than a vote for poorly understood amendments to Australia's obscure founding document (Behrendt 2007).

Further, there are multiple polls demonstrating increasing support by White Australians for spending and measures towards equality (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.4), acknowledgement of the role of non-Indigenous attitudes in Indigenous disadvantage (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.5), and beliefs in the importance of improved race-relations with Indigenous people

(Nelson 2018, p.11; pp. 89–91). This is in addition to the hundreds of thousands of Australians who have signed up to the pledge to 'close the gap' in statistical disadvantage[17]. Although CRT warns against uncritical acceptance at face value of what White people say their views are on matters of race, these expressions of support cannot be written off as entirely meaningless and as representing only superficial, cynical or self-conscious, politically correct bluster. Nine in ten Australians report that they do not consider themselves superior to Indigenous people (Nelson 2014, p.29). This points to the possibility that at least some may be willing to address attitudes and behaviours shown to be out of line with this consciously held belief. Importantly, the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the invitation that it throws out to ordinary Australians can be understood as an expression of a belief by Indigenous people that Australians are capable of care, respect and justice.

3.4.2 Structure vs agency as the primary driver of human behaviour

There is a long-running debate in the social sciences over structure versus agency as the primary determinant of individual behaviour and social change. Structural determinism has been identified as one of the 'hallmark themes' of CRT (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p. 25). Archer describes it as 'the basic issue in modern social theory' (Archer 1988, cited in Ritzer and Stepnisky 2013, p.510). In simple terms, the debate is over whether an individual is shaped and directed by their environment, or whether individuals' choices collectively shape and direct the social environment. This debate is relevant because CRT describes race-relations and White behaviour in profoundly structuralist and deterministic terms. My suggestion that there is evidence of a genuine commitment to race equality in at least some segments of the White population is irrelevant if White people are simply bearers of structures, rather than acting as reflexive agents in line with their beliefs, as implied by CRT. This is the argument outlined by Bell, whose convergence theory argues that race segregation in education in America was not ultimately ruled unlawful for ideological reasons, nor in response to black activism and awareness raising, but because shifts in international relations meant that maintaining formal segregation was coming at too high a cost to the White elite. The catalyst for change was structural (Bell Jr 1980). By positioning itself along the structural axis of the agency/structure continuum, CRT can be critiqued as being overly deterministic. It identifies the structural dimensions of White engagement in race-relations but appears to deny White people the agency to be responsive in their beliefs and actions to principles of human rights and social justice. CRT leaves little room for the

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[17] https://www.oxfam.org.au/what-we-do/indigenous-australia/close-the-gap/ [accessed 20 July 2021]

potential for attitudinal change within the White population other than as a result of underlying, structural economic factors.

3.4.3 The 'soft bigotry of low expectations'

I suggest that CRT's assessment of White people's ability and willingness to change holds the White population to a low standard. Noel Pearson's reference to the barrier to social progress of the 'soft bigotry of low expectations' (Pearson 2007) should not be limited to low expectations of Indigenous people. Low expectations of White people also limit the options on the table, blocking serious consideration of what White people must strive to do and be in order to engage constructively with Indigenous people and enable change. bell hooks states that to deny that White people can change from racist to actively anti-racist is to 'collude with White domination' (hooks 2003, p.57). This reading of CRT places Australia's aspirations for an improved situation for Indigenous people in a bind. It identifies White people as at once critical to the process of advancing race justice, yet largely incapable of and unwilling to engage with Indigenous people in ways conducive to justice and equity. This precludes the possibility of significant advances in the wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

However, within CRT's framing of the race-relations landscape there is some limited space for a more generous interpretation of White choices, attitudes and behaviours insofar as CRT argues that to some extent White complicity in the perpetuation of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage is subconscious or unintentional (Bonilla-Silva 2006). This allows for this complicity to be partly understood as a symptom of incapacity that can be rectified rather than incorrigible self-interested choice and revealed preference. This research is located in that space. Sen's (1985,1993,1999, 2003) concept of capabilities provides a means of exploring this idea. The capability approach offers a framework that can be used to investigate, expand and populate the space permitted by CRT for questions of White capacity. The capability approach interprets the failure of an individual or group to achieve a valued aspiration as implying a lack of capability. I use Sen's framework to investigate what, if any, capacity building may be necessary within the White Australian population for White Australians to be better able to engage constructively with Indigenous people. I explain Sen's approach in the next section.

3.5 Disrupting the Whiteness of 'capacity building': Sen's capability approach

3.5.1 Introduction

In this section I outline economist and philosopher Amartya Sen's theory of a capability approach to human development (1983, 1985, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2003; Robeyns 2003, 2005). Sen's capability approach offers 'a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual wellbeing and social arrangements, the design of policy, and proposals about social change in society' (Robeyns 2003, p.5). The capability approach has been used extensively in development programmes throughout the world, including by the United Nations Development Programme (Fukuda-Parr 2003). In this section, I explain why this approach may be helpful in explaining and potentially addressing, the contradiction that I established in Chapter 2, between White support for progressive measures to address Indigenous disadvantage, and their failure to take responsibility for measures to address it within their own population.

3.5.2 Converting commodities to capabilities: Sen's approach

Sen's capability approach is about ensuring that people have the maximum opportunity to live the kind of life they value and have reason to value. A premise of the approach is that if a person is not living the life they value and have reason to value, this implies they may lack the capability to do so. Sen's framework seeks to identify the cause of that lack of capability so that it can be rectified and the individual's freedom and quality of life maximised. The figure below is an adapted version of the schematic representation of the capability approach developed by Robeyns (2005).

Figure 3.1: Schematic representation of the capability approach developed by Robeyns

Individual resources		Individual capability set		Individual Achievement
Commodities (Characteristics)	Conversion factors →	Potential Functionings	Choice →	Achieved Functioning
Means to Achieve		Freedom to Achieve		Achievement
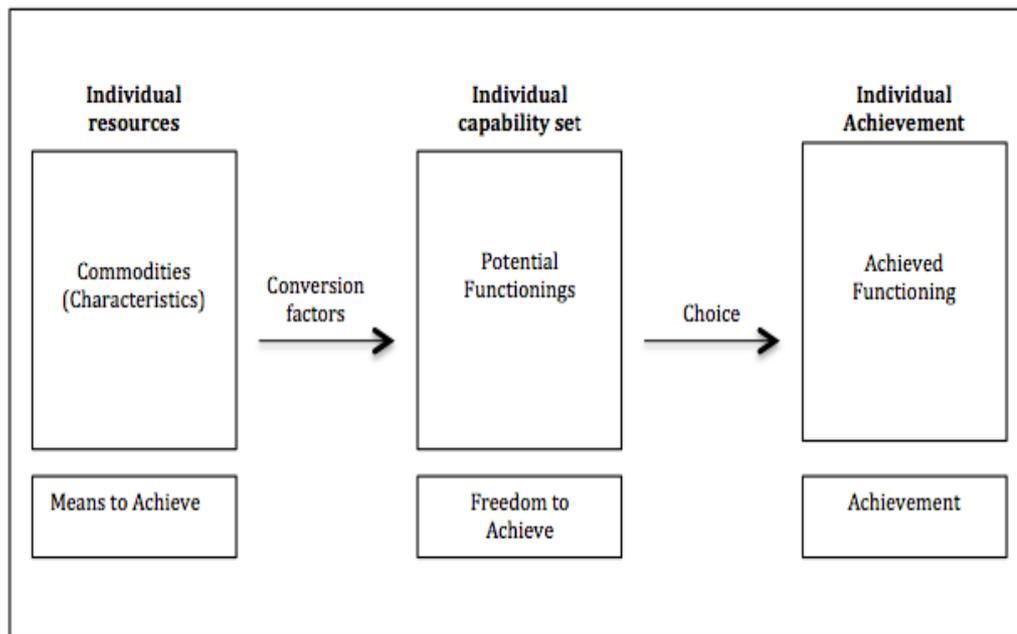
Source: Adapted from Robeyns 2005, p.98.

An individual's capability set is made up of what Sen terms 'potential functionings'. An individual's potential functionings are what they are able to 'do or be' at a given point in time. It is what they have the immediate capability to do or be. This can be distinguished from their 'achieved functioning', which is what they actually choose to do or be from the range of potential functionings available to them in their capability set. The aim of Sen's capability approach is to identify what needs to be in place for an individual to have the potential functionings, and therefore the capability, to live the kind of life they value and have reason to value. Accordingly, 'development' in Sen's approach is not understood as an increase in commodities but in capability. Commodities are the resources to which an individual has access. Sen explains that commodities are only valuable in so far as they are able to be converted into potential functionings/capabilities of value to that person. A commodity may have the characteristics of a capability but should not be equated with that capability. A bicycle, for example, has the characteristics of a mode of transport, but possession of a bicycle should not be equated with the capability to transport oneself from A to B. This is because a person's potential functionings are determined, not only by the particular resources available to that person, but also by the individual, social and environmental conversion factors that enable the person to convert those resources into valuable potential functionings (Sen 1992; Robeyns 2005).

Sen explains this using the example of a woman who needs the capability to transport herself from A to B to live her best life. The woman may have access to a bicycle (her

commodity/resource), but be unable to use it due to lack of sufficient health and fitness (individual conversion factor), sexist laws or social conventions that prohibit her from riding the bike (social conversion factor) or roads that are too dangerous for bike riders (environmental conversion factor). She has a means of transport but cannot convert it into the capability to transport herself. This will be so, no matter how many bicycles she has, unless all of these conversion factors are addressed (Sen 1983, p.160). Sen's framework helps to focus attention on where efforts can most effectively be targeted to improve a person's capability to live the kind of life they value and have reason to value.

'Achieved functionings' are the potential functionings the individual chooses to enact from the options available to them in their capability set. It is what they choose to do and be. 'Choice' in the framework represents individual agency and freedom. Just because a person has a capability of value to them, does not mean they will always want to use it. The woman with the bicycle, for example, may have all the individual, social and environmental conversion factors in place to convert it to a means of transport but choose to catch the bus, or rearrange her life not to travel from A to B, because of simple preference. Sen's framework aims to increase her agency and freedom to live the life she has reason to value by increasing the range of valuable potential functionings in her mobility capability set from which she can choose (Sen 1992; Robeyns 2005).

Sen's capability approach offers a new evaluative framework for interrogating White Australians' opportunity or capability to live the kind of life they value and have reason to value. This is highly relevant to this research. Its overarching question is based on two assumptions established in the literature review. The first of these is that for many White Australians what they say they 'want to do' and 'who they want to be' includes achieving a more constructive relationship with Indigenous people. At the very least, the majority of White Australians claim to aspire to be part of a nation that delivers better outcomes for Indigenous people, and I have demonstrated that this is reliant on constructive race-relations. The second assumption is that White Australians collectively possess the 'commodity' of a majority stake in the legal, political, economic and social power in this country. Power can be understood as a resource or commodity because, akin to money, it is valuable because of what people can do with it (Rawls 2001, pp. 169–176). Their collective commodity of multidimensional, compounding and disproportionate power is relevant because it enables the White population to engage with Indigenous people in a way that impacts on race-relations. This, however, does not automatically mean White Australians have the capability to have a *constructive* impact on race-relations. The power to influence race-relations can only be converted into the capability for constructive race-relations if the

necessary conversion factors are also present. What those conversion factors might be is one of the questions investigated by this study through analysis of Indigenous peoples' experiences with White people and culture.

3.5.3 The capability approach and decolonising research agendas

My aim in applying Sen's capability approach to Australia's dominant racial group is its potential to reconfigure the discourse of Aboriginal deficit and advance a decolonising agenda. In doing so, I acknowledge there are limitations to its decolonising potential. It is in some ways aligned with a decolonising agenda and in other ways not. It is a decolonising device in the sense that it is used to disrupt and expose the colonised nature of the public discourse. It also, however, has core elements deeply rooted in a White western worldview. Not least amongst these is its assumption of the rationality of an individual-centred approach. In section 3.6.3 I define decolonisation and highlight that not all western-constructed methodologies are inherently colonising. In this vein, I cite theorists that suggest that the litmus test of whether a methodology is colonising is whether it challenges or reproduces the colonial order. Sen's framework does both. I use it for the simple ways in which it helps to advance a decolonising agenda while acknowledging that, at the same time, it reinscribes as natural, aspects of a colonial worldview and value system. This includes, for example, the framing of wellbeing in terms of the individual rather than relationally. The benefit of Sen's approach is in the conversations and joint learning processes it enables. Fundamentally, I believe Sen's approach does help to advance decolonising agendas and that this is borne out in the fruit its use bears in this study.

Sen's capability approach is used to support all three aims of this study. Firstly, it opens up and decolonises the discourse of Indigenous deficit by permitting a broader concept of what constitutes a 'developed' society. Sen's approach has been described as 'the most influential contender to the dominant neo-liberal understanding of development' (Shilliam 2012, p.331). The capability approach explicitly rejects as inadequate, narrow western-centric (White) definitions of 'developed' societies, framed in terms of access to fiscal wealth and technology. It does not define development in terms of resources but in terms of capability. Poverty is defined as a lack of capability to live a good life. Here, the 'good life' is understood as the life that an individual or group values and has reason to value (Sen 1992). Importantly, in defining developed societies on these terms, Sen's approach does not lend automatic support to assumptions that wealthy, technology-laden White western societies are the most advanced. It opens up space for the discussion of questions on which dominant

discourses are currently silent. This includes the ways in which White Australian society might be assessed as relatively backward or impoverished and why the opening up of this space is important to both White Australian and Indigenous wellbeing.

Secondly Sen's approach provides an analytical framework that is used to loosely structure this study and its analysis of the data. The capability approach is widely accepted in the development field as a useful framework to 'identify inadequacies, diagnose their specific causes, and recommend how they might be ameliorated' (Davis and Wells 2016, p.368). This makes it well suited to this study's broader research aims of exploring capacity-building needs within the White Australian population that relate to potentially overlooked elements of the solution to ongoing Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. Specifically, this study uses the principles and concepts of that framework to help explore, from Indigenous perspectives, opportunities to build White capacity for constructive race-relations.

The lacuna of capacity building the materially advantaged

Although Sen's framework is liberated from traditional restrictive definitions and assumptions around the concept of development, a review of the literature indicates that it has rarely been applied to investigate the development needs of a materially wealthy population. It has been applied *within* materially wealthy societies but primarily in relation to the development needs of materially impoverished segments of those societies (Robeyns 2005, p.94). This includes its previous application within Australia to Indigenous populations by Noel Pearson and others (see, for example, Panzeroni 2010; Klein 2016; Pearson 2010). Noel Pearson talks about deploying the capability approach within Indigenous populations as a component of policy approaches of self-responsibility and self-determination (Pearson 2010, p.11). Panzeroni applies it to the question of Indigenous health outcomes and the idea of human rights as capabilities (Panzeroni 2010). In both cases the concern is with Indigenous capability. In one notable exception, Walker (2012) explores its application to building moral capability within South African professional groups. Her aim is to enhance their motivation to better serve underprivileged populations. She applies Sen's approach on the basis that this is a capability she has determined *a priori* that they *should* have. Her real focus is the enhancement of the formal and informal welfare system for the materially impoverished rather than enrichment of the access of the privileged group to the life they value but cannot achieve. Although she applies Sen's approach to a markedly privileged population, she uses it in a questionable and narrow conceptual way that skips over key elements of the framework and does not utilise it to advance a decolonising agenda in the way that this research aims to do.

This lacuna in the application of Sen's framework is reflective of a broader pattern in the social sciences around the study of social disadvantage/advantage. Pease points out that there is a tendency in the social sciences to problematise and study disadvantage but not advantage. Accordingly, he observes, the literature is dominated by interrogations of how the choices and capacities of disadvantaged populations reproduce their disadvantage, with relatively little work on how the choices and capacities of advantaged populations reproduce their advantage, and therefore the disadvantage of others (Pease 2010). Kowal similarly points out that, despite the centrality of Whiteness as a factor in race-relations and race inequality, it is not what is being studied in the intercultural field in Australia (Kowal 2015b, p.32).

This is not to suggest that the literature is entirely silent on White capacity in the area of constructive race-relations. Ad hoc references to aspects of this capacity can be found scattered throughout the international literature. An example of this is DiAngelo's concept of 'White fragility'. Though framed in different language, it refers to an under-developed capacity in White populations to engage with information that challenges their racialised understandings (DiAngelo 2011). These kinds of ad hoc findings help to shed light on the unique Australian race-relations context but are not derived from it. Further, they amount to incidental comment on capacity within the White population rather than a systematic examination of it.

The literature on intercultural competence and effective intercultural communication is directly concerned with building White capacity for more constructive race-relations. In Australia, the cultural competency literature is primarily focused on enhancing the capacity of non-Indigenous service providers to more effectively deliver essential services within the health and education sectors. This has undeniably delivered many benefits. Ensuring service providers are culturally competent is critical to Indigenous well-being and improved access to health and other social services (Productivity Commission 2020; Paradies 2018). There is an increasing emphasis in policy frameworks on cultural competence amongst teachers and health workers (eg Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2020; Commonwealth of Australia 2014), and this is a significant development. Access to culturally safe services is one of the five supportive factors in reducing Indigenous disadvantage identified above by the Productivity Commission (2020).

Cultural competency is an important piece of the puzzle but does not comprehensively cover the terrain of White capacity and the transformation of race-relations. Riley points out that

cultural competence training delivers the collateral benefit of enabling its participants to enjoy more harmonious relations with Indigenous people in all parts of their lives (Riley 2015, p.72), but its primary focus is on improving service delivery by non-Indigenous people to Indigenous people rather than decolonising and transforming race-relations in the general population. There are also some approaches to cultural competence which are critiqued for being responsive to racist and colonised assumptions about who is defined as the 'Other', who has the skills and ability to serve as the bridge between cultures and what the purpose of that bridge is. Baltra-Ulloa suggests that in some cases the goal of cultural competency training is not aimed at equipping White Australians for genuine connection or mutual learning and enrichment but rather to serve as a bridge for the 'Other' to be brought into the dominant culture (Baltra-Ulloa 2013, p.93). These approaches, however, exist alongside others that seek to develop the decolonising potential of cultural competence training alongside its primary purpose of enabling non-Indigenous service providers to better serve Indigenous service users (e.g. Riley et al 2013, 2015).

Applying Sen's capability approach to the materially advantaged
By applying Sen's capability approach to the relatively privileged White Australian population, I aim to help address the lacuna in the literature around White capacity and just and equitable outcomes for Indigenous people. This application of Sen's approach subverts taken-for-granted assumptions about which population groups require development. At the same time, it is important to note that my use of Sen is primarily as a device to frame the thesis and guide analysis rather than as a rigorous and in-depth application of Sen's theory. There is, however, nothing to preclude Sen's theory being taken more comprehensively in this new direction. Indeed, Sen does contemplate the use of his framework with privileged populations in relation to enabling their capability for acts that he categorises as 'altruistic' (and therefore at a personal cost) rather than 'personally beneficial'. He terms this idea 'agency freedom'. But he places this outside the capabilities paradigm partly because he does not consider the state to be responsible for ensuring this capability (Sen 1993).

I consider this distinction to be a false dichotomy, or at the very least, one which does not apply in the context of Indigenous/White race-relations. It denies and over-simplifies the interdependence between White Australian and Indigenous wellbeing. Pease touches on this with his expanded concept of self-interest, from one which contributes to immediate and direct self-gain to a broader improvement in quality of life. He invites us to consider, for example, the quality of life impacts for privileged populations of reduced rates of poverty-related crime (Pease 2010). A similar point is made in Wilkinson and Pickett's empirical

work that demonstrates the significant multi-dimensional benefits for all members of society of greater levels of social equality (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009).

Secondly, Indigenous wellbeing most certainly falls within the state's jurisdiction of responsibility in Sen's paradigm. Therefore, in so far as White capability deficits impact Indigenous wellbeing, they are also the responsibility of the state. Finally, and perhaps more controversially, I suggest Sen acknowledges, but places insufficient weight on, the degree to which the satisfaction of the human spirit, and therefore human wellbeing, is dependent on perceiving oneself as acting in line with principles of justice and contributing to society. The scholarship on the intense relationality of human beings and their desire to care for the other (see section 3.4.1) points to this as a component of a life people value and have reason to value. Sen's theory concerns ensuring people have the ability to live flourishing lives (Deneulin and Stewart 2002, p.62) and he himself says, 'One of the most important tasks of an evaluative system is to do justice to our deeply held human values. The challenge of human development cannot be fully grasped without consciously facing this issue and paying deliberate attention to the enhancement of those freedoms and capabilities that matter most in the lives that we can lead' (Sen 2003, p.55). There is no reason, therefore, to restrict the application of Sen's framework to materially impoverished and underprivileged populations.

3.5.4 'Choice' and capability

One limitation of Sen's framework is that only 'achieved functionings' are observable and therefore externally measurable. It is considerably more difficult to ascertain the full range of potential functionings present in an individual's capability set if they are not used (Sen 2003, p.49). Accordingly, Sen's framework does not help to identify when an 'achieved outcome' is the result of a lack of capability and when it is an exercise of agency and free choice. This is important because CRT suggests White people tend to exercise their agency in favour of whatever best serves their interests as a racialised group. Whether consciously or subconsciously, they choose whatever maintains their position in the race hierarchy and the race privilege that position delivers them. Accordingly, an increase in capability to engage constructively with Indigenous people may have little impact on levels of constructive engagement. Putting this capability in place does not ensure the value placed by White Australians on constructive race-relations with Indigenous people will never be trumped by other priorities. The best one can therefore say is that it ensures that those White Australians who wish to engage in constructive race-relations have the capability to do so.

When choice is not a choice

In a related limitation, Robeyns problematises Sen's representation of choice as revealed preference on the basis that choice is not always entirely free. She critiques Sen for assigning the individual too much agency. If a potential functioning is not supported by societal structures and norms, then it is, at best, a constrained choice. Robeyns points out that personal 'preference' is heavily influenced by social context. The exercise of a particular capability may not be socially prohibited but may be overlooked as a valid option in the norms of a particular social context. In this sense some capabilities, though present, may be less accessible in reality than others (Robeyns 2005). This means that social conversion factors are also a consideration at the point of choice (see Figure 3.1). Sen considers conversion factors in terms of the possession of a capability, not in terms of meaningful access to that capability. I use Robeyns's critique in Chapter 9 to explore more deeply the role of White (in)capability in what CRT represents as White choices or revealed preferences.

Sen's framework as an individualistic response to a structural problem

In highlighting the individualistic character of Sen's approach (e.g. Deneulin and Stewart 2002), Robeyn's critique brings to the fore a potential incompatibility with CRT and the decolonisation agenda in which understanding of structural and social location are central. Robeyns, however, offers a partial resolution for this concern by distinguishing between ethical individualism and methodological and ontological individualism. In simple terms this is the difference between understanding individuals as units of moral concern and the claim that 'all social phenomena are to be explained wholly and exclusively in terms of individuals and their properties' (Bhargava 1992, cited in Robeyns 2003, 44). Robeyns points out that a commitment to ethical individualism is 'not incompatible with an ontology that recognises the connections between people, their social relations, and their social embedment' (Robeyns 2003, 44). She further points out that Sen's framework accommodates social relations and societal structures through the categories of social and environmental conversion factors. Sen's approach simply recognizes the value of each person as an end whilst concurrently recognizing and accommodating the reality of his or her social location. Accordingly, Sen's approach has the individual as its unit of analysis but also provides a platform for proposals of state intervention and structural change. Despite this, the individualism of Sen's framework, remains a limitation on its efficacy as a decolonising device.

3.5.5 Extending the public discourse imaginary

That the White Australian community might be in any way impoverished relative to our First Nations peoples is an idea that exists largely beyond the imaginary of our public discourse. By reframing Sen's capability approach I aim to disrupt this limited imaginary and the colonised assumptions that underpin the dominant public discourse of Indigenous deficit. Sen's ideas, when applied to relatively advantaged groups, can potentially provide new understandings of whose capacities need to be developed. By exploring Indigenous perspectives on race relations and on White people and White culture through the lens of Sen's theory, they may help to reveal where White capacity building efforts can be most effectively targeted for building constructive relations with Indigenous people.

3.6   Key terms and concepts

Critical race theory is associated with some key theories, concepts and processes that are also relied on in this study, such as 'Whiteness' and 'decolonisation'. Other key concepts utilised in this study include 'reconciliation', which appears in the research questions, and White ignorance, which arises from the analysis of the data. These are defined below.

3.6.1 Whiteness and the race binary

Whiteness is a central concept in CRT and in this research. Whiteness is not so much a direct reference to white-skinned people as it is to a social construct and process (DiAngelo 2011, p.56; Pease 2010, p.120). Frankenberg, an early pioneer of Whiteness scholarship, defines it as consisting of three dimensions:

> Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege.
> Second, it is a 'standpoint,' a place from which White people look at
> ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'Whiteness' refers to a set of
> cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg
> 1993, p.1).

Frankenberg's later definitions are more nuanced and complex (e.g. Frankenberg 2001, p.76) but this early definition is widely accepted as covering its key components and I believe it is sufficient for the purposes of this study. Whiteness is now the subject of a large body of scholarship. The beginnings of the discipline of Whiteness Studies can be traced to the 1980s but this does not encompass the scholars of colour whose investigations and articulations of Whiteness and White supremacy precede this (e.g. Du Bois (1935) 2007 and Baldwin 1984). Contemporary leading Whiteness scholars, such as Roediger, emphatically

distinguish Whiteness Studies from Critical Whiteness Studies (Roediger 2002, p.57). Critical Whiteness Studies can be understood as a response to a perceived failure in Whiteness Studies to maintain a sufficient focus on the constructed and structural nature of Whiteness and White privilege, as opposed to the development of an anti-racist White identity (Haggis 2004, p.51). Critical Whiteness Studies has significant overlap with CRT due to Whiteness being a key target of CRT's agenda for social change (Hylton 2009, p.25). Accordingly, an outline here of Whiteness as a concept and of its value to this research, would be somewhat repetitious of the discussions of CRT above. I turn instead to some of its problematic aspects and the implications of these for this research.

The concept of Whiteness faces the problem of essentialism (Walter, Taylor, and Habibis 2011; Haggis 2004). Reductive categories, as Said demonstrates, are the tools of colonialism (Said 1978; Gandhi 2006). Their continued use runs counter to the revelatory and transformative critiques of 'the essentialism at the heart of modern social theory' that feminism, post-colonialism and post-structuralism have delivered (Haggis 2004, 52). In its defence, Whiteness as a concept is clearly framed as a social construction. Baldwin, another of the pioneers of Whiteness scholarship, writes of Whiteness as a 'moral choice' since 'there are no white people' (Baldwin 1984, 3). The concept of Whiteness, as articulated by scholars such as Frankenberg and Baldwin, accommodates the fluidity of White identity highlighted in the work of scholars such as Brodkin (1998) and Hage (2012). Many CRT and Whiteness theorists explicitly do not restrict its application to white-skinned people (eg Mills 2008, p.234). Despite this acknowledged fluidity in White identity, Whiteness does, however, tend to structuralism because, while it may include to some degree[18] people who are not recognised as white skinned, all those accepted as 'white' are framed as potential beneficiaries of the privileges of Whiteness (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Harris 1993; Roediger 1999; McIntosh 1989). This is so even though an individual's White privilege may be offset by their under-privilege in other intersecting identity areas such as gender, able-bodiedness, class and sexual orientation. This idea of intersecting identities and associated privilege and under-privilege is termed 'intersectionalism'. Intersectionalism is the fifth tenet in Delgado's five tenets of CRT (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). The use of Whiteness as a central concept to this research carries an inherent risk of stereotyping and essentialising White people, but I suggest this is offset to some degree by its emphasis on its socially constructed nature and recognition of intersectionalism.

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[18] See Fanon's account of the limits black skin places on an individual's ability to fully appropriate the Whiteness of the colonising group (Fanon 1968)

The use by this research of Whiteness as a concept, and of race as an analytic category, is open to challenge on the grounds that it lends legitimacy to the illegitimate and harmful social construct of race (Hattery, McGettigan, and Smith 2014) and in doing so perpetuates one of the most powerful expressions of a colonial mindset: the scientifically debunked illusion of the race binary (Gandhi 2006). In contemporary Australia the idea of a discrete race binary of Indigenous/White is both 'ridiculous and impossible' (Land 2015, p.84). The bottom line is, however, that Whiteness must be unmasked and its centrality made visible (Pease 2010, Moreton Robinson 2004a), otherwise the situation of Indigenous people in this country will continue to be framed in terms of Indigenous deficit, whilst the contribution of mainstream (White) Australian people and culture, and their persistent privilege, remains obscured and hidden from critical analysis. As critics of the practice of 'colour blindness' demonstrate, a refusal to acknowledge socially constructed race categories when both they, and the social structures built around them, have not comprehensively been deconstructed, simply masks and enables the very real racialised power relationships they produce (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Concepts such as Whiteness, and analytic categories such as Indigenous and White, remain useful for keeping in view a socially constructed division, its power relationships and its consequences, without admitting an underlying biological reality (Land 2015, p.93). I suggest that, for now, the utility of naming Whiteness outweighs the risks of essentialism and reproduction of the race binary. Accordingly, I capitalise White to highlight the structural implications beyond skin colour.

3.6.2 Decolonisation and deep change

CRT highlights the many ways in which race-relations between White Australians and Indigenous people continue to be characterised by the patterns, processes and power relations of colonisation. As I noted above, decolonisation theorists explain that colonisation should be understood as an ongoing structure that permeates all aspects of life rather than a historical event now past (Mignolo 2011; Wolfe 2007, cited in Tuck and Yang 2012, p.5). On this view, decolonisation can be broadly understood as the active thinking and doing that is the process of confronting and delinking from that pervasive structure of oppression and injustice (Mignolo 2011, pp. xxvii and 16). Smith articulates this process as 'conscientisation, resistance and transformative action' (Smith 2003, cited in Mercier 2020, p.11). If the matrix of colonisation permeates and shapes all aspects of Australian society, including how most Australians think and act, then the process of decolonisation also has a place in all aspects of society (Chalmers 2017, p.108). This study aims to contribute to the decolonisation of the public discourse that surrounds Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage and the approaches to rectifying the disadvantage that spring from it by focusing

on White capacity building. Decolonisation is a complex undertaking that is revolutionary in both its substance and its scale. Accordingly, decolonisation is the subject of a large, growing and sometimes contradictory body of scholarship.

Several theorists describe decolonisation in more relatable terms as the creation of space for Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being (see, for example, Kovach 2009, cited in Chalmers 2017, p.109; Mercier 2020, p.10). By this, they do not mean space offered on the coloniser's terms. It is not space in the sense of a (retractable) concession that is carved out from within the oppressive matrix of colonisation. Decolonisation theorists are not talking about recognition, they are talking about revolution (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012, p.v). Fanon describes decolonisation as no less than a reordering of the world (Fanon 1963, p.36). For some scholars the pathway to this is through the conscious and persistent uncovering and dismantling of the colonial matrix in all its forms (Mercier 2020, p.11; Mignolo 2011, p.17). For others it is achieved through the revitalisation of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being to command their rightful and fully embodied place, thereby displacing coloniser ways of knowing, doing and being as sovereign and the natural and dominant centre (Evans et al. 2020, p.263; Mercier 2020, p.19). Either way, decolonisation can be understood as a resetting of the power relations that oppress and make conditional Indigenous sovereignty and ways of knowing, doing and being. In this sense, decolonisation cannot be grafted onto the structure of colonisation (Tuck and Yang 2012, p.3). It requires the confronting and overturning of that structure.

Revolutionary change does not take place unnoticed. This is why Fanon states that 'decolonisation never takes place unnoticed' (Fanon 1963, p.36). It is an inherently unsettling and disruptive process. Tuck and Yang point out that if an act of 'decolonisation' is not disruptive and unsettling, it is likely to be something lesser masquerading as decolonisation to ease White consciences and shore up settler futurities. They assert that such acts, in their failure to deliver the outcome of a meaningful shift in the distribution of land, power or privilege, are nothing more than a 'settler move to innocence'. True decolonisation must necessarily confront and disrupt the complacency, entitlement and 'innocence' of the colonisers (Tuck and Yang 2012). If colonisation is a matrix, White Australians engaging in decolonising thought and action can be understood as 'choosing the red pill'[19].

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[19]'Choosing the red pill' is a reference to the 1999 film *The Matrix*. In that film, the 'red pill' and the 'blue pill' represent the individual's choice between revealing the confronting and life-changing truth about the reality they inhabit (red pill) and remaining in blissful ignorance (blue pill).

The process of decolonisation and the privileging of Indigenous perspectives

This thesis seeks to confront and disrupt that complacency through centring Indigenous perspectives. There is a general consensus in the scholarship that a critical feature of the decolonisation process is the privileging of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being (see, for example, Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Martin and Mirraboopa 2003; Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012; Moreton-Robinson 2004a). Sium asserts that 'decolonisation does not exist without a framework that centres and privileges Indigenous life, communities and epistemology' (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012, p.ii). This is not least because it is an act of resistance that is inherently disruptive of the normalised and invisible colonial order. The centring of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being necessarily displaces the colonisers from their central and privileged position. Further, if decolonial thinking consists of the 'relentless unveiling of how the colonial matrix works in order to be liberated from it' (Mignolo 2011, p.17), then this is something that Indigenous people are uniquely well placed to do by virtue of their position in it (Land 2015, p.88; Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.85). It also supports the revitalisation of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being that some scholars identify as central to the process (Evans et al. 2020, p.263; Mercier 2020, p.19). As previously noted, relatively little is known about Indigenous perspectives on White Australian people, culture and their race-relations with Indigenous people (Dunn et al. 2010; Mellor 2003).

Despite the consensus around its importance, the privileging of Indigenous voices in this way is not unproblematic. This kind of approach can be critiqued for reinscribing central features of the very structure it seeks to undo. Fanon and others point out that the framing of Indigenous and coloniser ways as oppositional serves to perpetuate and reify the racialised and colonially constructed coloniser/colonised binary (Fanon 1963, p.35; Tuck and Yang 2012; Chalmers 2017, pp. 104–105). In addition, the turning upside down of colonisation by the simple substitution of the worldview of one group with that of another, can be accused of merely replicating the colonial pattern of engagement by domination (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012, p.iii). Martin and others emphasise the relational nature of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003; Wilson 2003, 2001). Oppositional binaries are a western and colonial creation (Chalmers 2017, p.104; Fanon 1963, p.38). Such actions ultimately do not reconfigure and decolonise the relationship at a fundamental level. This point is famously and succinctly made in feminist theory in a statement widely attributed to Germaine Greer, 'The opposite of patriarchy is not matriarchy, it is fraternity'.

The theorists who point out these pitfalls still identify the privileging of Indigenous perspectives as a legitimate and critical part of the process. Writing on the decolonisation of

knowledge production, Nakata (Nakata et al. 2012; Nakata 2002) and Martin (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003) incorporate the privileging of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being into a more relational approach to decolonisation that acknowledges interconnectedness and interdependence. Nakata, for example, suggests that although 'simplistic binary critique is a dangerous end point, it is a useful starting point' (Nakata et al. 2012, p.132). This thesis adopts the same position. It is part of the 'messy, dynamic and contradictory' process of decolonising Australian society (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012, p.ii).

Relational decolonisation

This research is premised on an optimism that most White people are not inherently and irredeemably opposed to race equality and decolonisation, even though the evidence is that many currently tend to actions and beliefs that work against these. It assumes the capacity within the White population to learn and be transformed. Further, it assumes that this learning and transformation does not inherently work against White interests but can potentially benefit the whole of society, including White people. Some scholars, for example, point to the urgency of decolonisation in light of the ecological harms colonial practices and mindsets are wreaking on the planet (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012, p.ix; Nakata 2012). In this sense, the research lends itself to the relational concept of decolonisation promoted by scholars such as Nakata (2012), Martin and Mirraboopa (2003), Baltra-Ulloa (2013, 2018) and Chalmers (2017).

Decolonisation necessarily involves opposition to colonisation, but this does not mean that Indigenous and coloniser ways of knowing, doing and being are necessarily oppositional. Nakata and Martin write about the decolonisation of the academy as a process of integrating systems and drawing from their respective strengths (Nakata et al. 2012; Nakata 2002; Martin and Mirraboopa 2003). Nakata highlights the common ground. He points out that neither Indigenous nor coloniser methodologies are static. Both are permanently evolving and, at the point of interface, evolving each other (Nakata et al. 2012, p.131). Both Chalmers and Nakata suggest that methodologies are not inherently colonising by virtue of the fact that they were developed within the academy and do not identify as Indigenous. The litmus test is whether they are used to reproduce the colonial order or to challenge it. (Nakata et al. 2012, p.126, Chalmers 2017, p.108). Chalmers points out that on this test feminist and anti-racist methodologies, among others, also have a contribution to make to the decolonisation process. He goes on to say:

These perspectives show us that decolonisation must be a concerted effort amongst everyone working together to transform not just the academy, but also the economy and business, family and gender, the nation-state, and more... Everyone is enmeshed in the colonial fabric and we must all work to unravel it (Chalmers 2017, pp. 108–112).

This thesis adopts a relational concept of decolonisation, defining it as radical collaborative thinking and doing that challenges the colonial order. It attempts to uncover, dismantle and displace colonial ways of knowing, being and doing. It is an attempt firstly because ultimately decolonisation is an on-going process, and secondly because while I attempt to create unconditional space for Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being the epistemological and ontological roots of my work remain the product of my position as a White researcher working within a western academic institution. So while this thesis may make a contribution to the building of a new paradigm, it is in no way a completed decolonised project.

Said (1978) identifies control of knowledge production as a key dimension of colonisation and therefore a key site for decolonisation. The colonially constructed Academy currently decides what is and is not knowledge in this society (Chalmers 2017, p.101). In relation to this important aspect of the decolonisation project this research can make only a thin claim. It utilises the privilege and the power of the Academy to challenge the colonial order in greater society (Nakata (2012); Chalmers (2017)), but is vulnerable to the critique of reproducing, or at least failing to resist, the colonial order within the Academy. I am a White researcher embedded in the Academy, theorising Indigenous experiences in a research process that is partly intended to prove to the Academy that she knows and can conform to its rules of credible knowledge production. It is low in Mignolo's 'epistemological disobedience' (Mignolo 2009, cited in McDowall and Ramos 2017, p.57). It is best described as attempting to apply a decolonising lens to the research rather than claiming a decolonising approach or methodology.

3.6.3 Reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation is the subject of a large, and highly contested body of literature (McIntosh 2000, p.5, Durbach 2008, p.16; Little and Maddison 2017, pp. 145–146). The Uluru Statement from the Heart articulates it as *Makarrata.* This profound concept encompasses many things but is explained as meaning, in its essence, 'the coming together after a struggle' (Uluru Statement 2017). If the scholarly analysis that debates the detail and tends to deal in dichotomies is put to one side, the concept of reconciliation can

be understood as resting on the simple belief 'that things could have been otherwise, and that it is still possible to transform the relations and structures that divide society' (Little and Maddison 2017, p.149), together with the oppression this division delivers. It might be said, therefore, that this research is about building White capacity for reconciliation. As a first step to considering where this research sits in relation to the project of reconciliation, it is important to understand where the project of reconciliation sits in relation to decolonisation.

The reconciliation movement has been critiqued as a deeply colonised space. Noble though its intentions appear, the movement was initiated in Australia as an act of expediency by the nation's political elites. It was the consolation prize designed to redirect the Indigenous rights agenda after the federal government reneged on its promise of a treaty in the 1980s (Clarke, Johns and Brunton 1999, cited in Gunstone 2009, p.43; Short 2003, p.292). Mainstream Australian aspirations for 'reconciliation' can be framed as the ultimate settler move to innocence. Strakosch and others interpret these aspirations as the desire by White Australians to resolve their own uncomfortable and morally dubious status as colonisers. It reflects a desire to legitimate the settler-colonial state and its citizens in order to move on from a colonial past to a post-colonial future. In failing to die out, Indigenous people, together with their *a priori* claims to sovereignty, land and alternative ways of being, pose an ongoing problem for the desire for colonial completion. In this sense the settler desire to reconcile can be directly equated with the desire to 'disappear' or combine the Indigenous population and its political structures into a legitimated settler state. In contrast, the colonial fantasy of reconciliation does not contemplate the disappearance of the settler state (Strakosch 2016, p.16; Tuck and Yang 2012, p.9; Maddison 2019, p.188). In this version of 'reconciliation', Indigenous people have 'the right to be incorporated into the Australian nation but not a right to refuse' (Short 2005, p.274). It is reconciliation as assimilation.

This does not mean all reconciliation processes are inevitably and inherently colonising. It does mean that decolonial concepts of reconciliation cannot be constrained by the White Australian imaginary or current ways of knowing, doing and being. Reconciliation is by definition a joint project. Strakosch explains that reconciliation, by its very nature, cannot be enacted according to a predetermined colonial blueprint. It is an unknown that must be imagined and enacted together through deep dialogical exchange. As such, White Australia needs to enter into conversations about reconciliation without the need to be able to predetermine and control their conclusions. She says that to be part of the process of the mutual imagination, 'we as settlers must first give up the fundamental desire to attach these futures to the project of legitimising our current privileges once and for all'. It is to begin a

sincere conversation without a clear idea of its direction and which may have no end (Strakosch 2016, pp.17 and 31).

This account of reconciliation is embedded in the understanding that it is, at the very least, a process of transformation both of each other and of how White Australians and Indigenous people relate to each other. It is about achieving a transformed dialogue as opposed to achieving the closure, certainty and homogeneity that ends the need for that dialogue (Little and Maddison 2017, p.151). It is a concept of reconciliation that is challenging in what it demands of White Australians. It is necessarily disruptive of their innocence and of their power. The point is, however, that if White Australia wants an easy pathway to reconciliation that they can control and that will demand little of them, then it is not reconciliation that it wants, it is colonial completion (Tuck and Yang 2012, p.4). Reconciliation and decolonisation are necessarily deeply intertwined. It may be that reconciliation is an unending process of dialogical exchange in the same way that decolonisation is an unending process. If the process of decolonisation is to launch into the 'tangible unknown' then so too is the process of reconciliation.

The reconciliation literature draws a distinction between what Crocker terms 'thick' and 'thin' reconciliation (Crocker 2000, p.14). Thin, or 'minimalist', reconciliation, is mere peaceful co-existence and the cessation of hostilities. It can be understood as a political paradigm that is associated with the transformation of socio-political institutions and processes to ensure peaceful co-existence, as opposed to the transformation of interpersonal relationships (Pozen, Neugebauer, and Ntaganira 2014, p.147; Crocker 2000, p.14; Little and Maddison 2017). Thick, or 'maximalist', reconciliation is focused on the interpersonal and the creation of a meaningful relationship between two previously conflicted groups (Marson 2018, p.301). It envisages harmony and the overcoming of social divisions (Little and Maddison 2017, p.147). There is much debate about the virtues and pitfalls of each. Borer frames this debate as a question of ideology. Aspirations for thick reconciliation are based on a belief that we can all get along, while thin reconciliation assumes we will not (Borer 2004, p.31). In Australia this debate is about which is likely to best serve and protect Indigenous interests (eg Little and Maddison 2017; Short 2005). Most of the concerns expressed in these debates relate to a vision of reconciliation in which the settler state and its citizens remain unchanged from how they are now. A primary concern is that thick reconciliation will inevitably end up being little more than assimilation under a more palatable name (Short 2005). I suggest these debates are not critiquing reconciliation but some lesser process that is a settler move to innocence. If reconciliation is yet to be imagined together through a deep and ongoing process of dialogical exchange and mutual

transformation, then these debates over what are largely White constructed binaries of thick and thin reconciliation, and framed by assumptions of an immutable White population, are somewhat premature in the Australian context.

The thick versus thin debate in the literature also tends to assume reconciliation is an 'us' and 'them' negotiation of racially aligned competing and conflicting interests. Reconciliation researchers spend a lot more time 'defining the battle lines' than they do on how intertwined our lives already are (McIntosh 2000, p.6; Nakata and Maddison 2019, p.409). We are 'always already' in a relationship with each other (Strakosch 2016, p.25). Having said this, I acknowledge that Indigenous people are an intensely vulnerable party to this interdependent relationship. In this sense, some of the concerns expressed by commentators in the thick versus thin debate have validity in relation to considerations of how to enable an effective dialogical exchange in the context of a vast power discrepancy. Of particular note is the concern around the inherent vulnerability of Indigenous people in such a dialogue when they make up a scattered 3% minority in a majority rule democracy in which White Australians make up 76% (Short 2005). This is why Strakosch places such emphasis on the transformation of the settler population and in how it relates to Indigenous people. Short posits that this vulnerability is best mitigated by political solutions and structures that maintain and protect Indigenous separateness (Short 2005; Little and Maddison 2017). I suggest it is equally protected by social solutions that strengthen interpersonal and community relationships and foster affective solidarity. This is because, as Shriver points out,

> One does not argue long with people whom one deems as of no real
> importance. Democracy is at its best when people of clashing points of
> view argue far into the night, because they know that next day they are
> going to count and encounter each other as residents of the same
> neighbourhood (Shriver 1995, cited in Villa-Vicencio 1999, p.420).

This emphasis on interpersonal reconciliation is not in any way to deny the importance of structural transformation and political redress as critical dimensions of reconciliation (Nakata & Maddison 2019 p104; Davis 2018, p18). The creation of a theoretical dichotomy between the two is unhelpful when they are better understood as interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Many scholars in the thick of these debates concede this interdependence (eg McIntosh 2000 p6, Little & Maddison 2017 p149). There is potential for political/structural transformation to facilitate the delivery of justice and social conditions conducive to the transformation of interpersonal relations and, similarly, for the transformation of interpersonal relations to help foster the public mandate for

political/structural transformation (Strakosch 2016, 25). The Uluru Statement from the Heart itself acknowledges the direct link between constitutional reform and the will of the people. Thus its explicit address to the Australian people rather than the government in its call for structural reform (Uluru Statement 2017).

The reconciliation literature includes commentary of both scholars and activists and is complex, grappling with reconciliation as a process, a collection of pre-requisites and as a destination. Within the confines of this thesis, I cannot and do not engage with all of this literature. I have focused here on the scholarly contributions to the discourse. In that literature, the lack of a comprehensive, widely accepted definition of reconciliation is repeatedly acknowledged (Little & Maddison 2017 p145 – 146), though attempts have been made (eg Hamber & Kelly 2005; Australian Council for Reconciliation 2000). I was initially reluctant to use the term at all in light of its multiple meanings and use as a catch-all for so many ideas (McIntosh 2014,71). I do not attempt here to provide a comprehensive definition of reconciliation. The status of reconciliation as an intangible unknown means that it is futile and premature to attempt to define the destination of reconciliation too precisely. The purpose of this discussion has been to highlight the relationship between reconciliation and the transformation of how the average White Australian relates to Indigenous people, and therefore the relationship between this research and reconciliation.

I acknowledge that elements of this discussion appear circular in their logic: interpersonal relations must be strengthened in order to foster the conditions for deep dialogical exchange in order to imagine together what a less divided society looks like. Reconciliation, however, being intertwined with decolonisation, is not a tidy, linear process. For the purposes of this research, reconciliation is understood as inseparable from the process of decolonisation. It is therefore a tangible unknown that is imagined, enacted and evolved collaboratively through a process of deep dialogical exchange, with a view to transforming the oppressive structures and relations that divide Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. This definition of reconciliation informs the final research question, which asks: What are the implications for reconciliation?

3.6.4 White ignorance

The concept of White ignorance is central to the findings of this research. Agnotology, or the 'epistemology of ignorance' (Sullivan and Tuana 2007), is the study of culturally induced ignorance (Proctor 2008). Proctor identifies three types of ignorance. First, there is ignorance arising from a lack of access or exposure to information; second, there is

ignorance passively constructed through selective attention, whereby some knowledge is deemed irrelevant and unworthy of attention or investigation; and, third, there is ignorance that is actively constructed through strategies of misinformation and disinformation (Proctor 2008, pp.2–6). I label the first of these categories 'innocent' ignorance and the third 'wilful' ignorance, because it is deliberate. Selective ignorance falls on the spectrum in-between, leaning more towards innocent or wilful ignorance in different circumstances.

In the race relations literature the term 'White ignorance' is generally used to refer to White blindness to White privilege and to the legacy of White supremacy (eg Sullivan and Tuana 2007). Mills defines it more broadly as the presence of both false beliefs and the absence of true beliefs within the White majority about minority people of colour (Mills 2008, p.232). I utilise this definition because it better encompasses all of the areas of ignorance the research concerns. Mills also acknowledges that, akin to the concept of Whiteness, White ignorance is not confined to white-skinned people (Mills 2007, p.22).

The analytical distinctions between wilful and innocent ignorance are important in the analysis of White ignorance. This is because, while 'innocent' ignorance can be understood as a rectifiable cause *of* racism, 'wilful' ignorance can be understood as caused *by* racism. CRT focuses primarily on wilful ignorance in its analysis of White ignorance, ascribing White ignorance a deliberate dimension (see, for example, Sullivan and Tuana 2007; Mason 2011; Frye 1983). Mills (1997, 2007, 2008) is no exception, referring to it as, at the very least, a 'motivated cognitive bias' (Mills 2013, p40). Though Mills' own work frames White ignorance as wilful, the language of his definition of White ignorance technically accommodates both wilful and innocent ignorance. It is therefore compatible with the use by this thesis of the term 'White ignorance' to include all three types of ignorance identified by Proctor (2008), whether wilful or innocent.

3.6.5 Terminology

Indigenous[20]: This term is utilised throughout this thesis to refer to people who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent in Australia. There is a vast amount of commentary representing differing views on preferred terminology to describe these groups.

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[20] In using the terms 'White' and 'Indigenous', I acknowledge the problematic nature of their uncritical use as a reflection of the race binary. However, as per section 3.6.1 I regard them as useful for keeping in view socially constructed divisions and their consequences, without admitting an underlying biological reality (Land 2015, p.93).

'Indigenous' is widely accepted by Australia's First Peoples as a descriptor of Australia's First Peoples, though I acknowledge objections to it as a term imposed by governments. In utilising this term I also acknowledge its failure to convey the significant diversity in culture and language between mainland Indigenous peoples, and between mainland Indigenous peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The respondents are not referred to as Larrakia people in this research even thought the research is undertaken on Larrakia land. This is because many groups from other tribes and nations live in Darwin and this is reflected in the respondent sample.

White Australian: This term refers to members of Australia's majority population who are of predominantly Anglo-Celtic and/or European descent. Using the term 'White' helps to counter the invisibility of race within the culturally and numerically dominant population that is implicit in terms such as 'non-Indigenous' or 'mainstream' (Moreton-Robinson 2004a). In line with Frankenberg's definition of 'Whiteness', its operationalised meaning extends beyond mere skin colour to include its broader structural and cultural connotations (Frankenberg 1993, p.6).

Constructive race-relations: This term refers to race-relations that are characterised by justice and equity and which contribute to the reduction of racialised social and economic divisions.

Enablers: This term is used in its plain English sense and is defined in relation to constructive race-relations. It is operationalised to mean anything that makes constructive race-relations possible or contributes to the achievement of constructive relations.

Barriers: This term is used in its plain English sense and is defined in relation to constructive race-relations. It is operationalised to mean anything that blocks, hinders or prevents constructive race-relations.

Capability: This term is utilised in this study in the context of Sen's capability approach. Sen (1992) uses the term to refer to what an individual is able to be or do in their current circumstances. It is not what they could potentially be or do under different or better circumstances and it is not the narrower concept of what they demonstrably choose to be and do. It is simply what they are actually capable of being or doing.

Capacity building: This term refers to those measures that advance or broaden an individual's capabilities. It is operationalised in this thesis as the equivalent of Sen's concept of 'conversion factors'. In Sen's (1992) framework conversion factors are those elements that must be in place for an individual to be able to convert access to a commodity into a desired capability.

Racism: This thesis adopts a critical definition of this term as the:

> Unfair and avoidable disparities in power, resources, capacities, or
> opportunities centered on ethnic, racial, religious or cultural differences.
> Racism can manifest through cognitive beliefs (e.g., stereotypes),
> feelings (e.g., prejudice) or practices and behaviors that are
> discriminatory. Although they are not mutually exclusive, racism can
> occur at three levels: internalized, interpersonal, or systemic racism
> (Paradies 2018, p.1).

This definition encompasses both the popular meaning of the term as a reference to overt or intentionally racial discriminatory beliefs, feelings and behaviours, as well as the more critical perspective of racism, which includes structural and unintentional promotions of race inequities. In this thesis, racism is used in the broad sense conveyed by Paradies' definition to refer to anything that contributes to race inequities. I use the term 'overt racism' to refer specifically to intentional and conscious racist beliefs, feelings or behaviours.

3.7 Conclusion

Since the start of colonisation, White Australians have defined themselves as the capacity builders of Indigenous people. The idea that they themselves may be in need of capacity building and social advancement is not only absent from the dominant public discourse around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage, but is also largely overlooked in scholarship. I have shown how CRT explains the over-emphasis on Indigenous choices and behaviours and the under-emphasis on White choices and behaviours in the ongoing situation of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. This imbalance is deeply problematic because, as Pease points out, White people are in the strongest position to rectify both their own personal racism and structural racism. CRT theory also highlights the particular value of Indigenous perspectives on White culture and how White people engage with them. The critical importance of these perspectives is further emphasised in the decolonisation literature. Yet Indigenous perspectives on these things are accorded almost no space in White-dominated public discourses and have received inadequate attention in the qualitative scholarly literature. There is a point of intersection between CRT and Sen's capability approach in the sense that CRT allows for the possibility that some White people unintentionally reproduce race inequality despite sincerely held anti-racist views. I use this to propose that White failure to engage in constructive race-relations with Indigenous people can be partly explained by a lack of capability.

This emphasis on White capability neither excuses nor justifies ongoing White complicity in the production of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage, but on the contrary, removes the excuses. The Reconciliation Barometer reports that, of the Australians who say they would like to do more for reconciliation, more than half state that they do not know what to do (Nelson 2018, p.89). This research turns the lens away from Indigenous people and focuses it squarely on what White people can do if they do not wish to be complicit in this injustice. It is not the aim of this research to demonise White people, nor to engage in a retaliatory application of the demoralising and destructive language of deficit. It seeks to allocate responsibility where it belongs and raise the bar. Ideally, it empowers White people to step into that responsibility. At worst it calls their bluff. In the next chapter I outline the methodology I have used in this study to explore the research questions.

Chapter 4:   Methodology

4.1   Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the methodology and methods adopted by this research. There are several ethical considerations particular to research on Indigenous populations that arise from historical and cultural factors. I use these considerations to frame and contextualise my epistemological position, my standpoint, the theory informing my methodology and my choice of research methods. I begin by identifying and justifying my epistemological position of social constructivism. I then reflect on the implications of my standpoint for the production of knowledge by this research. I explain how a critical race and decolonising lens inform both the research questions and the methods I use to investigate those questions. I explain the rationale for the datasets I rely on and their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the research questions. I then describe the stages of the analysis of those datasets and the strengths and weaknesses of that process. Finally, I explain how I have presented the findings and address any remaining ethical considerations.

4.2   Epistemology

The greater context of any social research in Australia is its history of colonisation, White supremacy and the oppression of Indigenous people. Colonisation extends beyond the mere physical occupation and control of a landmass and population, to structurally embedded assumptions about 'who qualifies as a person and what society should look like' (Chalmers 2017, p.106). The chronology of the colonisation of Australia has been both mirrored in the evolving approaches to research on Indigenous people and enacted by that research (Martin 2003, cited inWilson 2003, pp.162–168). Koerner writes, 'For Indigenous people, White research about them is just another aspect of imperialism and colonialism' (Koerner 2010, p.112). Multiple Indigenous scholars have called out exploitative research, racist ideologies and practices and ethnocentric assumptions in the research community (see, for example, Moreton-Robinson 2004a; Moreton-Robinson 2006; Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Rigney 2008; Riley et al 2013, 2015). The epistemological significance of this is that Western epistemologies, which have been largely developed from the perspective of the Cartesian white male, can be understood as being both colonised and colonising.

Moreton-Robinson writes that 'Whiteness is constitutive of the epistemology of the West' (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.75). She explains that Whiteness is universalised, normalised and invisible in the production of knowledge. Its assumed superiority serves as an epistemological *a priori* or 'taken-for-granted knowledge'. 'The dominant regime of knowledge is', she observes, 'culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial' and this fact challenges 'any claim to possess impartial knowledge of the Indigenous other' (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.88). It is limited by what White western researchers do not know that they do not know. Connell frames similar observations in terms of a 'centre' and a 'periphery' in the production of sociological knowledge. She explains how the process of colonisation structured a division in the intellectual labour of sociological knowledge production whereby the south (the colonies) supplied the raw data and the north (the imperial centre) theorised it. This is 'still deeply embedded in modern knowledge formation' (Connell 2018, p.400). On this view, what is commonly accepted as universal and credible sociological knowledge or theory is framed by, represents and assessed against a specific cultural viewpoint - the White viewpoint (Moreton-Robinson 2004a). This intellectual hegemony:

> …has a broad institutional underpinning, including universities but extending far beyond them into professions, governments, corporations and communities of practice, creating in these institutions a common-sense in which other logics of knowledge seem exotic, objectionable or downright crazy (Connell 2014, p.218).

The colonised nature of White western epistemology not only limits how knowledge is produced, but who is considered to 'know' and what is selected for investigation. The superior status assigned to 'White western-ness' in the production of knowledge and representation masks both the subjectivity of the White western researcher and the subjectivity of what is accepted as knowledge.

A movement to decolonise the epistemological underpinnings of sociology is underway (Connell 2018) but social constructivism at least acknowledges and embraces these subjectivities. Social constructivism refers, among other things, to the understanding that meanings applied to the world are subjective. They are interactively and socially constructed. The meaning applied by an individual to their social reality is shaped and influenced by their social context. At the same time, the meanings applied by an individual shape and influence their social context (Crotty 1998, p.52). This epistemological position is particularly pertinent in the study of race-relations given that race is a social construct

(Smedley and Smedley 2005; Graves 2015). The social significance or meanings applied to what are essentially arbitrary physical features, create a social reality that delivers very real advantages or disadvantages to every member of Australian society. Although epistemological categories are ever-evolving, including through the interface of Indigenous and Western epistemologies (Nakata 2002), and none are a perfect fit, social constructivism best describes the epistemological position of my research.

An epistemological position of social constructivism is a crucial backdrop for White researchers in this field for the reasons outlined by Moreton-Robinson (2004a) and Connell (2018) above. The subjectivity of the researcher cannot be separated from the research process (Darlaston-Jones 2007). As Moreton-Robinson explains, 'Knowledge about the other is always relative to oneself' (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.75). This precludes any possibility of researcher objectivity and omniscience associated with positivist epistemologies and demands a conscious, reflexive and, ideally, relational research process. A social constructivist epistemological position means I understand I am a co-constructor with the respondents of the interpretation of their reality presented here (Darlaston-Jones 2007, p.25). My own subjective standpoint interacts with the subjective standpoints of the respondents to create the findings of this research. I am the arbiter of how the findings are analysed, interpreted and presented. This leads me to the inescapable fact of my own Whiteness and its impact on the conduct of this research. I have already outlined my standpoint in the introductory chapter of this thesis. In the next section I consider its implications for the research.

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Research questions and methodological approach

Connell (2018) points out that the biases of (White) Western epistemologies are institutionally manifested and sustained well beyond the formal knowledge production of the Academy. They play out in the social and scholarly discourse around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage in Australia. This discourse is visibly dominated by White voices and, less visibly, by a culturally subjective 'common sense' and the *a priori* of White superiority. The corollary of this is that Indigenous voices and knowledges are peripheral in this discourse in every sense and are treated as highly subjective (Moreton-Robinson 2004a).

My research questions seek to challenge the colonised assumptions in this discourse. They privilege Indigenous voices and expertise. They set aside assumptions of White society as more advanced and apply a development framework to the White population to investigate if White capacity must be built in order to rectify race-relations and the associated problem of racialised socio-economic inequality in Australia. This disrupts the self-assigned role of the White Australian population as the 'knowers' and the builders of Indigenous capacity.

4.3.2 Problematising Whiteness

Frankenberg coined the term 'White cognisance' to refer to White people who have a degree of awareness of their structural privilege and therefore of their responsibility to act to rectify race injustice (Frankenberg 1993, p.15). While my White cognisance has been a key impetus for undertaking this research, my Whiteness is concurrently problematic for it. Firstly, there is the practical problem of the limit my racialised standpoint arguably places on what I can know and understand about Indigenous people, their lived experiences and their perspectives, and therefore my ability to accurately interpret and represent their reality (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, Said 1978). There is an irony in a White researcher attempting to make visible the very things she is arguing can be invisible to White people – invisible in part due to an internalised and normalised sense of superiority. It might be suggested I am egotistically indulging notions of 'White exceptionalism' whereby I do not perceive myself (and do not wish to be perceived) as the 'average White person' (Mayo 2004, p.313).

Then there are the questions my racialised standpoint poses to the integrity of research that aims to be decolonising. My dataset may have a decolonising dimension in that it decentres the White voice, but it is a White voice that then tells the story of that data after applying its White interpretation and analysis to it, using (White) western epistemologies. Despite the researcher's good intentions, the analysis of the data by a researcher who is socially located as White replicates the problematic colonial structure of epistemology highlighted by Connell (2018). The research questions put me, as a White researcher, in the heavily criticised colonial position of speaking for and about Indigenous people (Fredericks 2007, cited in Riley 2013, p.258). Further, Aveling asserts that White researchers simply should not write about what they cannot know (Aveling 2013, cited in Chalmers 2017, p.104). Finally, Curry-Stevens points out an inherent conflict in my expert positioning as someone who speaks with knowledge and authority, undertaking the journey of best practice research, when best practice in this space entails a researcher attitude of profound humility, uncertainty and assumptions of ignorance (Curry-Stevens 2010; Mayo 2004). The concept of 'expert' status is, in any case, somewhat of an anachronism from hierarchical patriarchal

epistemologies. It is all the more problematic in a field where White researchers have a lack of personal lived experience and have historically and damagingly lacked a humble posture of learning. Critical theorists from any dominant group are inevitably excavating the very ground on which their authority as 'expert' rests (Curry-Stevens 2010, p.63).

I support these concerns whilst also believing this research can, on balance, be justified as valid and worthwhile, despite my lack of lived experience of the perspective about which I write. Firstly, hopefully this research does not fall within what Riley describes as 'one-way flow' in its benefits (Riley et al 2013, p.257), or what Martin terms 'Terra Nullius research'. By this, Martin means the vast body of research undertaken in response to White interests without the 'permission, consultation or involvement of Indigenous people'. While I am benefitting from the research in multiple ways, not least through the potential award of a PhD, there are a number of ways in which I believe it might avoid falling into the category of 'one-way' research in which Indigenous people are mere 'objects of curiosity' who are 'seen but not asked, heard or respected' (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003, p.203). This research relies on data from a project initiated by an Indigenous-run organisation[21]. I became involved in that research at their request and throughout it many respondents expressed their hope that I would do what I could to share their voices and views as widely as possible. My use of the project data as secondary data was explicitly endorsed by that organisation and was intended to enable the research to continue when the original project funding ran out. I note the object of study is not Indigenous people in as much as it is White people. The focus is not on the oppression of Indigenous people but on the domination of White people. The respondents are not located as objects in the research but as experts in the field. This research is, at least in part, an attempt to use the platform to which my Whiteness gives me particular and privileged access (and which, in turn, further privileges and amplifies my voice) to try to advance Indigenous research agendas and amplify Indigenous voices. Having said all of this, I acknowledge that the only certain benefit of this research has been to myself through the benefits of my enrolment in the PhD program that forms the basis of this research. This is a dimension of my White privilege.

George Sefa Dei presents the case for White researchers to participate in scholarship in areas they cannot know in the way that people of colour *know*. He writes:

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[21] The Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation is the peak body for the Traditional Custodians of the Greater Darwin Area. It initiated the project which provided the data this research analyses (see Section 4.5.2).

> I think the question of whether whites should talk about racism is a 'no brainer' … there is a place at the anti-racism table for white scholars. For the dominant, the entry point is the investigation of whiteness and white identity (Sefa Dei 2007, cited in Curry-Stevens 2010, p.63).

Curry-Stevens clarifies that White scholars are entitled to enter this arena if their 'White cognisance' is activist oriented and is conscientiously prevented from becoming abstract 'bourgeois privilege' (Curry-Stevens 2010, p.62). Some black activist writers go further, suggesting that White people have a moral obligation to turn up to the anti-racism table and actively participate (McKenzie 2014, p.39). In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon posits that a decisive turn in the development of colonised intellectuals is when they stop addressing the oppressor in their work and start addressing their own people (Fanon 1963). An equally decisive turn in the development of coloniser intellectuals is when they switch their critical gaze from the oppressed and start to apply it to their own people – the dominant hegemonic group of which they are a part and that is implicated in that oppression.

In her summary and critique of Harding on standpoint theory, Pohlhaus uses the concept of intersectionality to respond to some of the practical limitations of the dominant group standpoint (Pohlhaus 2002). Standpoint theorists identify objectivity, in the sense of knowledge that comes from a value-neutral position, as a fiction. All knowledge is subjective and socially situated. Social position makes possible some knowledge and sets limits on other knowledge. A stronger objectivity is, however, possible, when the subjective position and interests behind knowledge are acknowledged and made explicit and a critical stance on the social order is developed. Pohlhaus notes that Harding distinguishes between standpoint and social position or perspective. An individual's social position raises certain questions but it is the action of choosing to engage with those questions that develops their particular critical standpoint. A person from a different social position can also choose to engage with those questions and thus develop a critical standpoint despite their social position. Accordingly, men can forge, and theorise from, a feminist standpoint and White people can forge, and theorise from, an anti-racist standpoint. What is important is not so much from where one views the world as the activities in which one engages (Pohlhaus 2002; Mayo 2004, p.315). It is not about knowing as the other, but knowing with the other. It is not about beginning at or arriving at a particular view on the world, but about the kind of relations I establish with others in order to know together with them. This might include, for example, putting in place the conditions that enable me to properly hear what they have to say. Pohlhaus suggests that it is not helpful to perceive of standpoints as exclusive and oppositional to each other, nor even in opposition to the social order that oppresses some

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and privileges others. Instead, she suggests that understanding where we stand in relation to each other is important while also focusing on how 'diverse communities may move together in knowing relations with the world' (Pohlhaus 2002, p.292).

In *Undoing Privilege*, Pease (2010) also writes about the concept of intersectionality as a productive approach to addressing social injustice. He points out that everyone has multiple intersecting identities pertaining to, for example, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability and class. For most people, some aspects of their identity deliver privilege and some deliver disadvantage. The disadvantage associated with my lived experience as a woman has helped me, over the course of my life, to develop a critical feminist standpoint. Pease suggests that this insight can be used analogously to better understand the perspectives and situation of under-privileged groups in identity areas in which I am privileged. My experience of under-privilege as a woman can help me, as a White person, to relate to and understand more deeply critical race perspectives and the under-privilege of non-Whites. Race and gender are, after all, different faces of the struggle for social justice. My lifelong development of a feminist standpoint has repeatedly served to assist in the development of my more recent understanding of my race privilege.

I have put the case that my standpoint does not preclude my engagement with these research questions but it does have implications for how I engage with them. I detail the practical implications for my methods in the next section. In doing so I acknowledge that my choice of methods can only mitigate and not completely rectify the limitations my social position places on this research – not least because, as previously noted, all perspectives necessarily deliver particular possibilities and limitations to the production of knowledge (Pohlhaus 2002). I acknowledge that Whiteness is insidious and persistent in reinscribing its own dominance and that I remain susceptible to that tendency despite my consciousness of critical race and decolonising perspectives. I recognise that the scholarly seat I occupy at the table has not been entirely attained through a process of meritocracy. The work presented here is not a claim of expertise. Research from any social position can only ever be a contribution to an ongoing dialogue and not the final word. In that sense, I am very open to dialogue and critique in relation to the findings presented here, particularly with and by Indigenous scholars.

It is a weakness of this research that its process reflects the community engagement principles of Indigenous methodologies only up to a point. The research that produced the data on which this study relies was initiated by an Indigenous organisation and designed and implemented in a strong collaborative relationship with a university. Its methods reflected

Indigenous ethical priorities as well as those required by the formal university ethics process. The pursuit of this subsequent study was supported by that Indigenous organisation. Riley's Aboriginal Community Engagement Model (Riley et al 2013, p.267) delivers helpful insight into the Whiteness of the methodology I ultimately utilise in the analysis of that data as secondary data. The more relational approach of Indigenous methodologies (Riley et al 2013, 2015; Martin and Mirraboopa 2003; Wilson 2001, 2003) would have strengthened the findings of this research, offset the limitations imposed upon them by my White standpoint and ensured they are accepted by and responsive to the views and agendas of the community the research seeks to serve. Specifically, as analysis of secondary data, my research design did not integrate a process for community review or veto of its findings. This step was unable to be incorporated subsequently for the reasons outlined in section 4.8. The findings should be viewed in light of this limitation.

This research is offered humbly and hopefully as a contribution to the evolving discourse space around Indigenous-White race-relations. Humbly, in recognition of my inherent limitations as a White researcher interpreting and analysing Indigenous people's experiences and constrained by my own lived experience. Hopefully, in that I hope it is a useful contribution that contains sufficient insight to advance the conversation and fulfil my responsibilities to the Indigenous respondents in the data.

4.4 Methods

4.4.1 Qualitative research

The epistemological framework of social constructivism lends itself to a qualitative research process (Darlaston-Jones 2007). Social constructivism recognises that individuals see and experience the world in different ways. It recognises that the meanings individuals construct from, and apply to phenomena, are diverse and subjective. Qualitative researchers study meaning (Ezzy 2002, p.81). Qualitative data provide the opportunity to access what Geertz terms 'thick description' (Geertz 1973). Thick description is the respondent's subjective explanation of their own views and behaviours, their context and their meaning, as opposed to the researcher's limited and, as social constructivism asserts, equally subjective outside interpretation of those views and behaviours. Denzin suggests that thick description creates a space for the researcher to imagine their way into the life experiences of another (Denzin 2001). Though qualitative data is highly subjective, this information is valuable and, in the case of this research it is this subjectivity that makes it valuable to the study.

Firstly, social constructivism holds that there is no objective position or value-neutral observer, there is only subjective information from various standpoints. The use of a qualitative dataset involving thick description enables the researcher to more deeply understand the respondents' perspectives and meaning-making and therefore to more accurately interpret their views or behaviours. Although, we can only ever understand 'the Other' in relation to ourselves (Moreton-Robinson 2004a), qualitative research data can assist researchers to displace the assumptions arising from their own experience of the world and reduce the imposition of those assumptions on the interpretation of the data.

Secondly, this study is exploring the dynamics of race-relations and how they can be improved. Relationships are, by definition, subjective experiences. In order to understand a relationship, and human behaviour within that relationship, it is important to go beyond observations of the behaviours and understand the subjective reasons behind them. The research seeks to place White Australian behaviour within the larger context of the relationship and considers White Australian behaviour and attitudes as they are subjectively interpreted and experienced by Indigenous people. Relative to qualitative interview data, quantitative survey data, though useful, is limited in the depth of insight it can provide into the dynamics of race-relations. Further, in contrast to quantitative research processes, qualitative data collection processes create space for spontaneous interactions to occur between the researcher and respondent that are responsive to the circumstances and information disclosed. This means that qualitative datasets can offer a deeper exploration of the subject (Locke, Silverman, and Spirduso 2010, p.227).

Finally, this research adopts a critical race approach and applies decolonising ideas. It aims to contribute to the decolonisation of the discourse around Indigenous/White race-relations and the relative advantage/disadvantage of their social positions. A qualitative dataset supports this in two respects. Firstly, Sium describes the process of decolonisation as movement towards a 'tangible unknown' (Sium, Desai, and Ritskes 2012). In this respect, qualitative research allows for responses that are meaningful and culturally salient to the participant, unanticipated by the researcher and rich and exploratory in nature (Mack et al. 2005, p.4). Any attempt by a White researcher to pre-empt what the privileging of Indigenous voices will reveal, and instead force a choice from a range of fixed answers, as required in quantitative research processes, is, in some ways, antithetical to a decolonisation process and could obstruct rather than facilitate knowledge production. Even well informed and well-intentioned White researchers cannot claim the ability to predict what Indigenous perspectives will reveal (Cowlishaw 2004, pp.68-69). Secondly, as noted earlier, critical race and decolonisation theorists both emphasise the particular value of the subjective

Indigenous standpoint in research of this kind. This research is deliberately seeking a viewpoint on White Australian people and culture that is subjectively understood and embedded in an Indigenous perspective. This is partly for the particular insights these perspectives bring to studies of White people and culture, and partly to disrupt the hegemony and normativity of Whiteness by decentring and replacing it as the dominant viewpoint. Accordingly, rather than being viewed as a compromising factor that must be offset, the subjectivity of a thickly descriptive qualitative dataset directly supports the research aims.

4.4.2 The TILII project interview datasets

The TILII project

This study relies on two qualitative datasets sourced from a research project entitled 'Telling it like it is: Indigenous perspectives on race and race-relations' (the TILII project). The TILII project was undertaken in 2014–2016 through a research partnership between the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and the University of Tasmania. The project was funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage grant. The study aimed to 'reverse the gaze' and 'reposition the normativity of settler Australian perspectives so that the dominant culture comes to understand the relative nature of its cultural attachments' (Habibis et al. 2016a, p.58). It asked 'a wide diversity of Indigenous people to tell their views on race and race-relations' with the aim of providing 'an evidence base for attitudinal change, to develop new strategies for racial harmony, and to improve the way services are provided to Indigenous people' (Habibis et al. 2016b, p.1). These aims overlap with my research questions and so the dataset produced by the TILII study is of high relevance to my research. I was Head Researcher at Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation for the duration of the TILII project, and the partner investigator on the project. In this capacity I was involved in its conceptualisation, data collection and the structural coding of the interviews.

The TILII project adopted a mixed methods approach to the research. This involved survey, interviews and Facebook analysis. The interview component consisted of 180 semi-structured interviews, held over a 12-month period in 2014/15 with 43 participants who met the study criteria of identifying as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander, being over 18 and residing in Darwin at the time of the study. Purposive sampling was used to ensure diversity based on a sampling frame matched to the 2011 Census profile of Greater Darwin's Indigenous population. Variables included age, gender, housing tenure, traditional owner/other, income source and Indigenous only or mixed descent. A table of the key respondent demographics is provided in Table 4.3. Recruitment was achieved through

approaching Indigenous organisations and services in Darwin, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation's own networks, the researchers' contacts and through snowballing. Artists, carers, activists, public servants, homemakers, the homeless and the unemployed were amongst the participants in the project. Some were fresh to Darwin from remote community life, others were urban raised and had lived in Darwin their whole lives together with White Australian family members. The respondents participated in a minimum of one to a maximum of eight interviews, with an average of four interviews each. The research design aimed for approximately six interviews per participant but this was not achieved in all cases. Reasons for this included some attrition due to loss of interest by participants, inability to locate some respondents six times due to their homeless status or changed phone numbers, extended visits or relocation back to remote home community and, in one case, death. Efforts were made to replace respondents who fell away early in the process to ensure representation of particular demographic groups, such as the homeless.

The interviews were semi-structured and employed a conversational, 'yarning' style (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010). This facilitated exploration of the topic from the respondents' perspectives. The interviews usually consisted of discussion of a topic prompted by open-ended questions to start the conversation. The main topic areas covered included:

- How they view the relationship between themselves and White Australians
- Their perceptions of White Australian politics, values, priorities and lifestyles
- Their views on arrangements for governance in Australia, including the legal and political systems of the state
- What can be done to improve race-relations between the Indigenous population and White Australians

Respondents were encouraged to speak freely, tell stories and to steer the focus of the discussion to the matters they felt were important. The repeated nature of the interviews enabled a stronger relational dimension to the research that was respectful of the information being shared. It built trust and intimacy with the researchers that allowed for deeper and more frank exchanges that strengthened the quality of the information shared with them (Roulston 2010). It provided opportunity for respondents to revisit topics and clarify responses. It also accommodated the cultural preferences of some respondents to have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss themes with other family and community members before speaking to them in the interviews.

The TILII interview data is comprised of two datasets that are analysed as secondary data for the purposes of this research project:

1. The complete set of 180 transcribed interviews and their audio files amounting to approximately 4000 pages of interview transcripts ('TILII interview dataset').

2. The Nvivo file of the structural coding of those interviews undertaken by the TILII interview research team. This coding process sorted the content of the free ranging interviews into nodes that broadly aligned with the interview schedule questions and topics ('TILII structural nodes dataset'). Table 4.1 below presents the set of nodes that comprise the TILII structural nodes dataset.

Table 4.1: Set of nodes comprising the TILII Nvivo structural nodes dataset

Node no.	Structural coding category	Structural coding category description
1	Belonging	References to different Indigenous groups in Darwin; different White groups in Darwin; where they belong, who they accept, who they reject.
2	Recognition	References to how Indigenous people construct whiteness and Indigeneity; how White people construct Indigeneity.
3	Values, beliefs, behaviours	References to Indigenous values, beliefs and behaviours and any views on these; White values beliefs and behaviours and any views on these; comparisons of Indigenous and White values.
4	White privilege	References to who is advantaged; what White privileges are; how White privileges are achieved; explanations of the position of Indigenous people; impact of advantage on White behaviour and entitlement.
5	Differences between Indigenous people	References to socio-economics differences between Indigenous people; explanations of socio-economic differences between Indigenous people.
6	Understanding, attitudes and behaviours between Indigenous and White people	References to Indigenous understandings, attitudes and beliefs towards White people; White understandings, attitudes and beliefs towards Indigenous people.
7	Improving Indigenous/White relations, barriers and importance	References to views on Indigenous/White relations; barriers; importance; ways to improve.
8	Indigenous relations	References to how different groups in the Indigenous population perceive each other, relate to each other.
9	Mainstream politics	References to White political system; understanding; acceptance; perceptions of fairness and relevance; Indigenous influence and representation in politics.
10	White governance and	References to Indigenous organisations and White governance

	Indigenous organisations	requirements
11	Views on Indigenous and White law	References to the White legal system; understanding; respect for it; perceptions of fairness and relevance; comparisons of Aboriginl and White laws and legal systems.
12	Work and employment	References to work and employment

Data extraction

Nodes 6 and 7 were selected for analysis since they were directly relevant to my research questions. Accordingly, I extracted these two nodes from the TILII Structural Nodes dataset to form a data subset entitled: Race-relationship Data Subset. Table 4.2 below has been provided to clarify the distinctions between the three datasets.

Table 4.2: List of datasets referred to in this thesis

Dataset name	Dataset description
TILII interview dataset	Complete set of 180 transcribed interviews and audio files with 43 respondents amounting to approximately 4000 pages of data.
TILII structural nodes dataset	The structural coding of the TILII Interview Dataset into 12 categories that roughly aligned with the topics in the TILII project's interview schedule.
Race-relationship data subset	Codes 6 and 7 of the TILII structural nodes dataset amounting to 793 pages of data from 38 respondents.

This reduced the size of the material for analysis to 793[22] pages of interview transcript excerpts and 38 respondents. The five respondents that do not feature in the race-relationship data subset were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria of speaking about race-relations. This excluded group primarily consists of respondents that fell away from the research after the first interview. They do not represent a meaningful sub-group for analysis and it can be seen in Table 4.3 below that no variable is overly represented in this group.

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[22] The structural coding process operated on a default of inclusion to ensure all relevant data was captured. Accordingly, there is significant overlap and repetition between and within structural coding nodes 6 and 7 of which the race-relationship data subset is comprised. Once this repetition is taken into account, I estimate that the material for analysis is more accurately assessed to be less than 400 pages.

Table 4.3: Comparison of Respondent Demographics between the TILII dataset and the race relationship data subset

Characteristic	TILII interview dataset		Race-relationship data subset	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Total number of respondents	43	100%	38	100
Gender				
Male	22	51%	19	50
Female	21	49%	19	50
Age				
18–25	13	30%	12	32%
26–45	15	35%	12	32%
46+	15	35%	14	37%
Housing				
Homeowner	6	14%	6	16%
Private rental	8	19%	7	18%
Public housing	12	28%	11	30%
Town camp	9	21%	8	21%
Homeless	8	19%	6	16%
Employment status				
Employed	20	47%	19	50%
Unemployed	13	30%	10	26%
Pension	7	16%	6	16%
Student	2	5%	2	5%
Home duties	1	2%	1	3%

The race-relationship data subset was the primary focus of my analysis. However, I used the TILII interview dataset to support and validate my analysis of the race-relationship data subset. In the first stage of thematic coding, it provided context to the data excerpts, helped to clarify meanings and, where excerpts indicated a longer or earlier conversation on the topic, provided a check that the excerpt captured the respondent's views in full. Secondly, on completion of the thematic coding, I used the TILII interview data set to validate the node data, as explained later in this chapter.

Limitations of the datasets

The two TILII datasets provide qualitative, in-depth information about Indigenous perspectives on White people, culture and race-relations and represent a diverse cross-section of voices and experiences in the Indigenous population. Accordingly, they are an

excellent secondary dataset for the purposes of this research. The datasets do present some limitations for my research questions. One minor limitation relates to my third research sub-question:

What are the implications for reconciliation?

The respondents in the TILII project were not asked directly about their views on reconciliation per se and rarely spoke of it explicitly. They were, however, invited to speak about the state of race-relations, how they can be improved and what is needed to overcome racialised social divisions in Darwin. Accordingly, the datasets, and the findings derived from them, have direct implications for efforts to advance reconciliation despite the lack of explicit questions and discussions on reconciliation.

A more significant limitation of these datasets for the research is their singular focus on the Indigenous population of Darwin. The Indigenous population in any part of Australia should not be taken to represent the views and experiences of the diverse Indigenous populations in other parts of Australia because of the significant cultural diversity between the many different Indigenous nations on this landmass. There are also differences in historical context. For example, the first group of 139 White colonists arrived in what is now Darwin in 1869, nearly a full century after the arrival of colonists in what is now Sydney, making exposure to White culture relatively recent. Unlike other capital cities, traditional Indigenous culture remains a strong influence and authority in the lives of many, with Indigenous languages commonly spoken at home. The demographic makeup of Darwin is also a unique factor in race-relations dynamics. Indigenous people make up just 3.3 per cent of the population of Australia, but in the Northern Territory they make up 30.3 per cent and Darwin has the largest proportion of Indigenous people of any capital city at 8.7 per cent of the population (ABS 2018). Adding to this is its status as the major service centre for Indigenous remote community residents across three states (Habibis 2011). These factors limit some of the generalisations that can be made in the findings.

Mitigating this is the ubiquity of Indigenous experiences of White colonisation. Paradies states that colonisation everywhere has been characterised by:

> …war, displacement, forced labour, removal of children, relocation, ecological destruction, massacres, genocide, slavery, (un)intentional spread of deadly diseases, banning of Indigenous languages, regulation of marriage, assimilation and eradication of social, cultural and spiritual practices… (Paradies 2016, p.83).

I would add to this list: assumptions of White supremacy, the introduction of addictive substances and subjection to infantalising legislative regimes. Then there is the commonality of status of 'First Peoples' in relation to White Australians, described by Povinelli as the 'priority of the prior' (Povinelli 2011, cited in Paradies 2016, p.84). In addition, hegemonic White Australian culture and values, the subject of their observations, are more readily generalised across the nation and the key elements of them as described by the respondents are clearly not unique to White Australians residing in Darwin. Beyond these commonalities, study of 'local talk' is helpful in understanding how the public makes sense of larger issues (McCallum 2003, p.116; Cowlishaw 2004, p.4) and, while it may not be strictly generalisable, I cite national and international literature throughout Chapters 5 and 6 to show that many of the respondents' observations are consistent with those of Indigenous people in other places.

A further limitation of the data is that, despite many respondents explicitly acknowledging diversity within the White population, there is very little nuance in their references to White people. Some, for example, clarify specific critical observations with general statements to the effect of 'but some White people are good'. Only a few respondents distinguish between different demographics in the White population in their comments. A limitation of the TILII project was that it made no attempt to distinguish between different groups of White people, for example tourists, White employees of Indigenous organisations or older White Australians. This at least partly explains why there is little nuance about different White Australian groups in the dataset.

The focus of this research on White Australians is also a limitation of the dataset on which the research relies. 20 per cent of the Australian population is non-White and non-Indigenous (Soutphommasane et al. 2018) and their relationship with Indigenous people is not investigated in the dataset on which this research relies. Prioritising the relationship with the White population is justified to some degree by virtue of the position of White Australians as the dominant and hegemonic cultural group in Australia. They have both a symbolic and numerical majority stake in the social, economic, political and legal power in Australia and set the outer limits of what is and is not culturally acceptable (Povinelli 2002, p.12; Hage 2012, p.18). Mills points out that 'White' ignorance 'will often be shared by non-whites to a greater or lesser extent because of the power relations and patterns of ideological hegemony involved' (Mills 2007, 22). Importantly, White Australians have a particular and long-running power to impact race relations and the wellbeing of Indigenous people.

4.5 Thematic analysis

4.5.1 Use of Nvivo QSR

The thematic analysis was undertaken using Nvivo software. Nvivo software has a number of recognised advantages for qualitative data analysis (Dollah and Abduh 2017). These include accommodation of large quantities of data; efficient management of that data; and functions for table-making, text searching, word frequency, memos, annotations and strength of code by frequency of reference. All of these features were useful to this research. Some qualitative data analysis software programs, such as Leximancer, automate aspects of the data analysis using statistics-based algorithms. Nvivo requires the theme identification to be undertaken manually by the researcher. It has been criticised on this basis as making the analysis prone to the subjectivity of the researcher. Manual data analysis, however, has also been shown to be conducive to more meaningful engagement with the data by the researcher (Sotiriadou, Brouwers, and Le 2014).

4.5.2 Mitigating researcher bias

Social constructivism explains that the subjectivity of the researcher cannot be separated from the research process. This has particular significance as a consideration where the researcher is socially located as White and is undertaking research involving Indigenous people. Simple awareness as a researcher of my social location and its implications is necessary but not sufficient (Curry-Stevens 2010, p.67; Tuck and Yang 2012, p.19). I utilised two main strategies to try to minimise my bias in the thematic analysis process: the use of analytic memos, and a two-step thematic analysis process consisting of open coding before engaging in more selective intuitive axial coding.

Analytic memos

I used the Nvivo memo tool to keep analytic memos throughout the data analysis process. Memos can be understood as 'sites of conversation with ourselves about our data' (Clarke 2005, cited in Saldana 2016, p.44). Reflections in such memos serve not only to document coding decisions and dilemmas, but also provide a space for conscious reflection on the standpoint of the researcher in relation to the data. Krefting suggests that this kind of reflective process is a strategy for enhancing researcher trustworthiness (Krefting 1991, p.217). Moreton-Robinson observes that Indigenous knowledges are often dismissed as implausible (Moreton-Robinson 2004a, p.85). I found that engaging in a reflective process helped to reduce my White bias acting as gatekeeper in the data analysis process. Indeed there were times when I caught myself wanting to sidestep, minimise or over-explain

challenging findings that did not fit with my internalised and racialised worldview of what is reasonable. Grappling with this led to deeper reflection, significant advances in my understanding of the respondents' standpoint and a 'stronger objectivity' (Harding 1991, cited in Pohlhaus 2002, p.285).

Open coding

I was already familiar with large parts of the TILII dataset when I commenced the thematic data analysis due to my participation in both the interviews and the structural coding for the TILII project. This gave me significant context for the thematic analysis of the race-relationship data subset. Despite this prior immersion in the data, I did not attempt to pre-empt the thematic codes. I used an open coding process for the first stage of the thematic analysis. Ezzy explains that in an open coding process:

> …general issues of interest can be determined prior to coding [but] the specific nature of the categories and themes to be explored are not predetermined which allows for unanticipated issues and problems to arise from the data (Ezzy 2002, p.88).

In adopting an open coding process I aimed to engage maximally with what the respondents were saying, rather than with my own preconceptions or preferred findings.

4.5.3 Thematic analysis of the data

The thematic analysis I undertook of the data involved multiple iterations. It can be described in terms of five broad stages. These are briefly outlined in the table below and are described in full in this section.

Table 4.4: Stages of thematic analysis

Stage of analysis	Steps taken
Stage 1	• Commenced process of immersion/familiarisation with the data in race-relationship data subset • Identified all references relevant to my research question (with reference to TILII interview dataset for context/meaning clarification) • Undertook open coding to two a priori categories drawn from research questions • Reduced data to a more manageable size
Stage 2	• Themes and sub-themes emerged and inductive thematic codes were developed through a critical race lens • Multiple iterations undertaken to reduce and refine thematic categories and minimise

	overlap • Redefined initial a priori categories in response to the themes in the data • Assigned themes to redefined a priori categories
Stage 3	• Central themes/ 'story of the data' emerged in an axial process enabling identification and articulation of some missing capabilities for the purposes of Sen's Capability Approach • Applied Sen's Capability Approach to the data leading to further refinement of the thematic categories

Stage 4	• Final reduction of themes undertaken to cater to thesis space limitations through:
	    • Rigorous application of Sen's Capability Approach to identify most relevant themes
	    • Assessment of the numerical strength of the remaining themes to identify strongest themes

Stage 5	• Tested major themes through text searches of complete TILII Interview Dataset

Stage 1

Stage 1 of my thematic analysis of the Race-relationship Data Subset was a process of open coding focused primarily on research question 1:

> What behaviours do Indigenous people identify in the White Australian
> population as barriers and enablers to constructive race-relations?

It was undertaken with the aims of:

•   Commencing the process of immersion in/familiarisation with, the material

•   Identifying all the references relevant to my research question

•   Reducing the data to a more manageable size.

The race-relationship data subset was large at 793 pages. The TILII structural nodes dataset, from which it was extracted, had been coded inclusively and contained a lot of context material and repetition between nodes. The exclusion of irrelevant context material and repetitious references through the open coding process resulted in an immediate reduction in the quantity of material I was working with. To operationalise the research question, I interrogated the data using two *a priori* categories drawn from the guiding research question:

1. White attitudes and behaviours that are enablers of constructive race-relations with Indigenous people; and

2. White attitudes and behaviours that are barriers to constructive race-relations with Indigenous people.

The Nvivo software made it easy for me to cross-reference excerpts in the race-relationship data subset with the TILII interview dataset. This enabled me to clarify the respondents' intended meaning in the context of the full interview transcript and their other interviews and to check for further references in the conversation. I coded any descriptions of positive experiences with White attitudes and behaviours to the first 'enablers' category, and descriptions of negative experiences to the second 'barriers' category. I also included respondent answers to questions of what measures are likely to improve race-relations. I coded these suggestions drawing on Bacchi's 'What's the problem represented to be?' policy analysis tool. Bacchi posits that the policy solutions proposed by policy makers tell us more accurately what policy makers perceive the underlying problem to be than what the policy makers may overtly state the problem to be (Bacchi 2012). The application of the underlying principles of this concept to the thematic coding of the data meant that where, for example, respondents suggest that education measures would improve race-relations, it was taken to mean ignorance is perceived to be a barrier to constructive race-relations. Accordingly, suggestions that race-relations can be improved through education were initially coded under 'Barriers => White ignorance'. The open coding process resulted in a large and overlapping collection of 58 nodes that varied widely in size and significance and which were loosely organised into broad thematic categories.

Stage 2

Stage 2 of the thematic analysis continued an inductive process of identifying themes in the data to help organise and reduce these 58 nodes. This was not a process of excluding data but of organising and understanding it. Inductive thematic coding helps to ensure the themes are guided by the research participants. The application of a critical race lens highlighted and articulated relationships between nodes and emerging patterns in the data, many of which strongly aligned with key themes in critical race and Whiteness theory. Themes emerged, for example, around the impact on race-relations of the structural advantages of Whiteness, White cultural normativity and perceptions of White assumptions of relative White superiority. I recorded my coding decisions, their justifications and other reflections that arose during the process in reflective memos in the Nvivo memo function. Once I had achieved close to a final list of themes, I recoded data to ensure it was captured in the appropriate themes and sub-themes, some of which had been rearranged and redefined.

The refinement of the themes occurred over multiple iterations of the thematic analysis in Nvivo. It is the nature of open coding that there is a period of experimentation until codes are found that fit with the data (Ezzy 2002, p.89). Some key coding decisions influenced their final form. Firstly, despite assertions that 'some White people are good', the

descriptions of White attitudes and behaviours that appear in the data are overwhelmingly negative. The dominance of negative themes in the final iteration of the thematic coding (see Table 4.5 below) is a reflection of this. It was also contributed to by some of my coding decisions. My initial approach was to code any behaviours the respondents identify as problematic to the 'relationship barriers' node, and any behaviours they describe in positive encounters to the 'relationship enablers' node. This approach proved ill-suited to the dataset. This was partly because of the overwhelmingly critical nature of the respondent views expressed in the dataset, which limited the data relevant to the 'enablers' node. In addition, explicit references to enabling behaviours were largely expressed negatively and in terms of their absence. It also quickly became apparent that even the descriptions of positive experiences with White people usually told me more about the prevalence of obstructive behaviours. Many positive stories were explicitly told as 'exception to the rule' stories. I shifted to coding these stories under 'barriers'. More generally, it became apparent that several of the enablers and barriers were simply two sides of the same coin. For example, knowledge of Indigenous cultures is an enabler whilst ignorance of Indigenous cultures is a barrier. Accordingly, I merged the coding of these nodes. This meant that many of the enabler nodes were merged into their significantly more dominant counterpart in the barrier nodes. This was on the basis that they indicated the desirability of certain attitudes and behaviours that were predominantly described as lacking. It is noteworthy that a handful of respondents report they have no problems with White people. Elsewhere, however, these same respondents recount White behaviours that are problematic either for themselves or for other Indigenous people. The respondents do acknowledge and describe White people with attitudes and behaviours they perceive as 'good'. These references were coded and analysed, but for all of the reasons above, positive references to White people are not reflected in the final set of thematic codes.

Kendall warns against becoming 'wedded too early' to what looks obvious as central categories or themes of the research (Kendall 1999, cited in Ezzy p.92). I found this was the case even with my two most basic *a priori* categories. Accordingly, in response to what I was finding in the data I reframed the distinction between the 'enablers' node and the 'barriers' node as follows:

1. Attitudes and behaviours that would enable constructive race-relations if they were more prevalent in the White population; and
2. Attitudes and behaviours that obstruct constructive race-relations because they are overly prevalent in the White population.

I then reassigned the themes I had identified to these redefined categories.

Stage 3

The thematic analysis up to this point was focused on my first research sub-question:

> What do Indigenous people identify as the barriers and enablers within
> the White Australian population and culture to achieving constructive
> race-relations with Indigenous people?

In the third stage of analysis, I stepped back and engaged in a more intuitive axial approach to the thematic analysis to identify the central story of the data. A sense of persistent, multi-faceted and compounding unfair engagement by White Australians, rooted in patterns of misrecognition, emerged as a central theme that cut across many of the thematic categories identified. According to Sen's capability approach, a mismatch between an individual's aspirations (such as constructive race-relations with Indigenous people) and what they actually manage to do or be, is indicative of a lack of capability (Sen 1992). On this basis, I identified the ability to engage fairly with Indigenous people as a missing capability in the White Australian race-relations capability set, underlaid by an inability to perceive Indigenous people accurately. With this in place, I used Sen's framework to help further refine and structure my thematic analysis. Sen's capability approach is widely accepted in the development field as a useful framework to 'identify inadequacies, diagnose their specific causes, and recommend how they might be ameliorated' (Davis and Wells 2016, p.368). My second research question is focused on capacity-building opportunities, or on 'the causes of the inadequacies', and asks in the language of Sen's approach:

> What conversion factors need to be in place for White Australians to
> have the capability for constructive race-relations?

To support the interrogation of this question, I sorted the thematic categories into their best locations in Robeyns's schematic representation of Sen's capability approach (Robeyns 2005, p.98). A modified version of this is provided in Figure 3.1. I populated the schema with the known factors from both my research premises and the central findings from my thematic analysis (as informed by the themes from the data and described in more detail in Chapter 6). This assisted me to further refine my thematic analysis and reduce overlap between sub-themes. White ignorance, for example, was a sub-theme that cut across many categories of problematic attitudes and behaviours. The interrogation of the data for conversion factors clarified that it should be treated as a stand-alone thematic category for this purpose. I also reviewed the themes through the lens of the critical literature on the dimension of choice in Sen's framework. Robeyns's (2005) critique highlights the importance of considering how conversion factors may also impact an individual's freedom

to choose to use a capability in their capability set. If these conversion factors at the point of 'choice' in the schema can be identified, they too can be addressed. I reviewed the themes and sub-themes from the data through this lens. This led me to elevate the critical commentary in the data on the cultural value of individualism from a recurring sub-theme to a stand-alone theme.

Stage 4

The penultimate stage of my thematic analysis was focused once more on data reduction. At this stage of the analysis, it was clear to me where each theme was located in Sen's framework and how it contributed to interrogation of the research questions. My desire to tell the story of the data in the respondents' own words as much as possible, as well as to convey important nuance in the themes, meant that I could not report all of the identified themes within the space limitations of a standard thesis. Further, it was not necessary to report all of the themes to meet the aims of this study. It is not the aim of this thesis to comprehensively identify all of the capacity-building opportunities within the White population. Its aim is to investigate what the views of Indigenous people on White people and culture reveal about whether capacity building within the White population is helpful or necessary to achieve reconciliation, and therefore justice and equity for Indigenous people. I needed to select which themes I should report in full to meet the needs of Sen's framework and to best convey the respondents' experiences. To do this, I considered the numerical strength of each theme in combination with an assessment of how essential its contribution was to Sen's framework.

A review of the distribution of the themes through Sen's framework revealed a disproportionately dense concentration of them as background to the 'missing capability' of fair engagement. It was not necessary to report of all of these themes to support this analytical conclusion. Next, I reviewed the strength of each of the themes. The strength of themes in qualitative data can be assessed in a variety of ways. This includes:

- frequency of their recurrence in the data
- the emotional emphasis placed on them
- the proportion of respondents who speak to them
- the prominence given to the topic in the discussion.

All of these factors assisted with my understanding of the data and refinement of the thematic codes in stages 1 and 2 of the thematic analysis of the data. In Stage 4 of the analysis, however, for the purposes of inclusion in the thesis, I relied solely on the

proportion of respondents who spoke to each theme. In this way I ensured that the themes reported represented the views of the majority of the respondents. Further, the semi-structured nature of the interviews lends a particular significance to the number of respondents who choose to raise any given theme in their responses. Failure by a respondent to raise a theme does not indicate opposition to that theme. Respondent silence can be partly accounted for by the fact that not all respondents completed six interviews as planned, some interviews were short, and the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant not all respondents addressed all topics in the same way. For the same reasons, the repeated fore-fronting of a particular theme by the majority of the respondents in their spontaneous and wide-ranging answers, is a compelling indicator of that theme's significance. I adopted a cut-off of 23 of n(38), or a minimum of 60 per cent of respondents, as the definition of a strong theme for the purposes of this thesis. My account of the data claims to present the views shared by the majority of respondents and a 60 per cent majority represents a strong rather than marginal case for this claim. Any themes with support below this threshold were excluded from further analysis. It can be seen from the figures in Table 4.5 that this reduced the number of themes for investigation by one-third. The themes that met the threshold are shaded grey.

The final cull from six to five themes was simply a judgement call to further reduce the number of themes to a more manageable size. I chose to exclude the theme of 'White people have an unfair power advantage' because the existence of this power advantage, and its sub-optimal use, was already a premise of the research. Further, many of its sub-themes significantly overlapped with other themes reported in full in the thesis. I determined that exclusion of discussion of the data unique to this thematic code was unlikely to distort the overall findings and conclusion of the research. Table 4.5 below displays the final iteration of themes. Further minor sub-theme analysis was undertaken during write-up in order to present the data in a clear and logical way. This later analysis was not undertaken in Nvivo and does not appear in this table.

Table 4.5: Final iteration of the thematic coding (N=38)

Parent node	Child node/Theme	Proportion of respondents that speak to this theme	Grandchild node/Sub-theme
Attitudes, attributes and behaviours	Doing the labour of connecting	34 of N 89%	Making efforts to learn about Lore, languages and cultures (understanding and valuing difference)

that would enable constructive race-relations if they were more prevalent in the White population	across difference and social segregation		Making efforts to adapt, adopt and accommodate to difference (reducing divisions from difference)
			Making efforts to be inclusive and friendly (connecting despite difference)
	Doing the labour of resolving problems	23 of N 61%	Engaging in dialogical exchange

Attitudes, attributes and behaviours that obstruct constructive race-relations because they are overly prevalent in the White population	White people are ignorant	35 of N 92%	Of Australian history
			Of the contemporary situation of Indigenous people
			Of Indigenous lore, languages and cultures
			Of the extent of their own ignorance
	White people are hard to relate to/too different	15 of N 39%	White people take life too seriously
			White people have a different sense of humour
			White people are too concerned about appearances/hide their feelings
			White people are just too different
	White people cannot be trusted	22 of N 58%	Because of historical behaviour
			Because they are inauthentic and insincere
			Because they have hidden agendas
			Because they look after number one/think they are entitled to everything
			Because they are hypocritical/have double standards
	White people treat Indigenous people unfairly	38 of N 100%	White people are overtly racist, discriminatory and disrespectful towards Indigenous people
			White people stereotype Indigenous people
			White people judge Indigenous people
			White people assume they are superior to

			Indigenous people
	White people have an unfair power advantage	30 of N 79%	White people accept or exploit the power differential
			White people do not consult properly
			White people want to dominate and control everything
	White people are individualistic	30 of N 79%	White people look after number one
	White people are hard to understand	18 of N 47%	White people assume everyone speaks 'high' English
			White people do not speak Indigenous languages

Note: Themes spoken to by more than 60 per cent of respondents are highlighted by grey shading.

Stage 5

Finally, I revisited the TILII interview dataset to validate the selected themes for inclusion. I used key words relating to these themes to do a text search of the full set of original transcripts. The aim was to capture any further relevant data that may have been missed in the structural coding process or coded in nodes other than the structural nodes I had selected for the race-relationship data subset. This ensured I had all relevant references for my in-depth reporting and analysis of these themes. This process did identify a handful of new references but did not change my understanding of the most prominent themes contained in the data.

4.5.4 Limitations of the data analysis

This research does not take advantage of the opportunity for demographic sub-group analysis that is enabled by the sampling in the TILII datasets. My analysis does report some demographic variations and differentiations but it does not undertake a systematic sub-group analysis. There are several reasons for this. A baseline factor in this decision was the limited resources of an individual researcher. Importantly, although sub-group analysis may have been ideal, it is unlikely to have affected the overall basic findings of the thesis. The research aims are achieved without this level of analysis. A consideration is the ubiquity of many aspects of the Indigenous experience of colonisation referred to earlier which limits the depth of insight added by normal demographic variables. It is relevant that the TILII study tested the generalisability of its qualitative interview data in a large-scale survey.

Analysis of the demographic differences in the survey responses on White Australian people and culture found a remarkable lack of sub-group differentiation (Habibis, Taylor, and Ragaini 2020).

The semi-structured nature of the interviews was another factor in my decision not to undertake a sub-group analysis. Semi-structured interviews can limit the significance that can be assigned to a respondent's failure to speak to a given theme. Further, in a sample of this size some demographic sub-groups are very small and the value of sub-group analysis becomes questionable. This is especially so once variations in participant ability to analyse and articulate experiences, length of interview and number of interviews participated in are all taken into account. All five of the reported themes in this dissertation are supported by a strong majority of respondents – one theme by 100 per cent of the sample.

Finally, the focus of this research is on the attitudes and behaviours of the White population. Sub-group analysis amongst the Indigenous respondents is not irrelevant but does redirect the lens back onto the features of the Indigenous population. The real limitation of this analysis is a lack of sub-group analysis of the White population in the identification of the capacity-building opportunities within it. This, however, was a limitation of the data and can be addressed in future research.

4.6   Data presentation

The data is presented in a format designed to forefront the voices of the respondents in line with critical race and decolonising principles. I have deliberately presented a high volume of direct quotations from the respondents in the opening findings chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), with minimal analysis or commentary beyond highlighting comparable findings in other parts of Australia. These chapters provide the data relevant to my response to the first research sub-question. I have repeated this format at the start of Chapter 8, which addresses the second research sub-question. My purpose in presenting the data in this way is to ensure the respondents can speak for themselves as much as possible before introducing my analysis of their perspectives. I acknowledge that the process of selecting the quotes for inclusion is an aspect of the analysis.

The quotes presented are the direct words of the respondents but are edited in places to improve readability. I have been careful not to change the meaning of the respondents' statements. For the most part it has simply involved the removal of repetition, crutch words ('um', 'you know' etc.) and linguistic stumbles related to English as a second language. I

have also removed meaningless interjections and encouragements by the interviewers in the transcripts, such as 'yeah' and 'wow'. Occasionally where there has been an external distraction, or a diversion in the narrative by the respondent in the free-wheeling conversational interviews, I have edited that out and connected two statements in the transcript that I understand to be a continuation of the same thought. For example, in one interview a respondent was distracted by birds outside her window and then returned to her unfinished thought on race-relations.

Finally, when referring to White people throughout this thesis I use the pronoun 'they' instead of the inclusive 'we'. McDowall suggests that the academic convention of using language that implies the objectivity or separateness of the researcher from the researched is a feature of the White colonised academy's reified version of academic writing. She cites Haraway, who writes contemptuously of token acknowledgements of decolonising principles that are 'buried in the methodology section' but not enacted throughout the body of the work (Haraway 1992, cited in McDowall and Ramos 2017, p.56). However, my referral to White people as 'they' is neither a case of asserting an objective standpoint, nor one of Mayo's White exceptionalism (Mayo 2004). I do not exclude myself from the critique I make of this group of which I am a member. I use the pronoun 'they' purely for the sake of clarity. I draw on multiple quotes from the respondents that are nearly all in the first person and it becomes confusing to have two 'first persons' in one writing space.

4.7 Ethics

Ethical research with Indigenous participants is guided by the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) 2018 guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Research with Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities ('Guidelines'). These Guidelines apply to this research as, although it uses secondary data, that data involves Indigenous respondents. The Guidelines aim to ensure research that is 'safe, respectful, responsible, high quality, of benefit to Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people and communities and of benefit to research' (NHMRC 2018, p.2). In support of this, the Guidelines articulate the key ethical principles of spirit and integrity, cultural continuity, equity, reciprocity, respect and responsibility. The University of Tasmania Social Science Human Research and Ethics Committee assessed this research project as meeting these standards and granted ethics approval (Ethics Reference Number HOO16601) for it to analyse the TILII interview dataset. The TILII interview dataset is analysed as secondary data and so ethical issues relating to data collection are not discussed here. The TILII project was granted ethics approval to undertake that data collection (Ethics Reference Number

HOO13799) and details of the ways in which that project met the Guidelines in place at the time can be accessed in publications associated with that research (eg Habibis et al. 2016a).

Throughout this chapter I have addressed in some depth many of the key ethics questions emphasised by the Guidelines. I have demonstrated the research's sensitivity to the problematic history of research involving Indigenous people; that the research is responsive to an Indigenous research agenda; that it respects Indigenous conceptual viewpoints and aims to deliver benefits to Indigenous people. It also aims to deliver benefits to the wider community through advancing knowledge of how White Australians can better contribute to the process of reconciliation and develop their own capacity for more constructive race-relations with Indigenous people.

I have spent considerable time in this chapter highlighting and discussing the ethical issues raised by the fact of my Whiteness as a researcher analysing data from interviews with Indigenous people. Ideally, in research of this kind, the researcher would present her work to the respondents and seek their views on her findings, but this is difficult for several reasons. In addition to my own relocation away from Darwin for health reasons, I have no existing relationship with the half of the respondents who were male. I had a deep and strong relationship with many of the female respondents but the majority would now be difficult to meet with in person due to their own relocation away from Darwin, changed contact details or homeless status, and the families of at least two of them have contacted me to tell me they have passed away. The respondents did not, in any case, consent to continue their participation in the TILII project so long after its completion. Accordingly, I have had to rely on the benefit of my long-term immersion in the social context of the research. Section 4.6.2 outlines the steps that I took to minimise the impact of my own bias and ignorance in the analysis of the data and to validate my findings.

Other ethical considerations included the safety of the respondents. I have taken steps to protect their anonymity by using pseudonyms and descriptors that do not permit identification of the individuals involved. I have been careful in writing up the research to exclude any direct excerpts from the interviews that enable identification of respondents or people that they know.

4.8   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology and methods I have employed to answer the research questions posed by this thesis. I have shown how, through the adoption of an

epistemological position of social constructivism, together with the application of a theoretical framework informed by a bricolage of theories, including critical race, recognition and decolonisation theory, I have investigated the research questions with ethical and intellectual rigour. I have paid particular attention to the ethical responsibilities of non-Indigenous researchers whose datasets involve Indigenous respondents. This has been to demonstrate my respect for the fact that the experience of this population of scholarly research includes a long history of exploitation and misrepresentation. The next chapter is the first of five findings and discussion chapters. It presents part of the data relating to my first research question.

Chapter 5: Respondent views on obstacles to constructive race-relations

5.1 Introduction

The next two chapters report the data that relates to the first research sub-question:

> What behaviours do Indigenous people identify in the White Australian
> population as obstacles to and enablers of constructive race-relations?

Despite an initial reluctance by many respondents to stereotype or, as some put it, to talk about people who they do not 'know', all of the respondents in the race-relationship data subset were able to articulate multiple attitudes and behaviours that they associate with White Australian people and culture, and which they perceive to impact on race-relations. The respondents have diverse contexts and purposes for their interactions with White people and culture and diverse levels of exposure to and experiences with White people. Despite this, there are some clear recurring themes in their descriptions of White Australians and the ways in which many White Australians relate to them.

I have divided these themes into two broad categories that I present over two chapters. In this chapter I report the attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous people that are described by the respondents as sufficiently prevalent in the White Australian population to be active obstacles to constructive race-relations. These are behaviours the respondents suggest need to be *less* prevalent in the White Australian population for race-relations to improve. In the next chapter (Chapter 6), I report those attitudes and behaviours that the respondents indicate would be active enablers of constructive race-relations if they were *more* prevalent in the White Australian population. The themes in both chapters revolve around the impact on race-relations of patterns of misrecognition and the burden of disregard.

In this chapter I report five interconnected and compounding attitudes and behaviours that the respondents report as obstructive to constructive race-relations. These are stereotyping; judgement; assumptions of superiority; overt racism, discrimination and disrespect; and self-serving behaviours. I use the words of the respondents as much as possible to describe each behaviour, how Indigenous people experience it and what its consequences are for race-relations. Throughout the chapter, I note where the respondents' concerns reflect national

studies and research from other parts of Australia. This is to emphasise that, although the respondents' observations are 'local talk', such talk can help us to understand the bigger picture and draw out propositions about the nation (McCallum, 2003; Cowlishaw 2004, p.4). Several respondents distinguish between harmful behaviours and harmful intent. This is important context to the respondents' criticisms of White people and culture. The chapter opens by reporting this distinction.

5.2 Joan: 'I think there's a lot of goodwill there…': Perceptions of good intentions

This chapter reports the White attitudes and behaviours that respondents consider to be actively detrimental to race-relations. While plenty of their stories involve experiences of open hostility from White Australians, there are also many stories about deeply problematic behaviours in the absence of any hostility at all. Some respondents, like Sean and Joan, explicitly describe an underlying goodwill. Sean is an early-career public servant who grew up in a remote community and speaks his mother's language fluently. He is an educated, articulate and passionate advocate for Indigenous rights, and has plenty to say, without apology, about the problematic behaviours he sees in the White population. In doing so, however, he regularly makes the distinction between offensive behaviour and intent to offend with comments such as:

> Q5.1   *Their intentions are good but it's the wrong way of going about it.*

> Q5.2   *I think the care is there. It's just expressed a bit funny sometimes.*

Joan is a senior manager who is close to retirement. Like Sean, she is not shy to point out problematic White behaviours, but makes a similar distinction between intent and behaviour:

> Q5.3   *I think there's a lot of goodwill there, however, with that goodwill, understanding or knowledge doesn't necessarily go with it.*

A larger number of respondents do not articulate a perception of an active goodwill but express a readiness to accord White people the benefit of the doubt. Geena is a young single mother in a manual role. She is open about the levels of racism she regularly witnesses but interprets most racist behaviours and attitudes as ignorance rather than racial antipathy:

> Q5.4   *A lot of people are ignorant, not racist ... Like, there's a lot of people out there that literally have no contact with Aboriginals and they*

just hear what they hear … and because that's what they believe, they
start talking the way they do without really having the knowledge to
back up what they're saying type thing. And that's when they're classed
as a racist. Whereas yeah, I believe a lot of it's ignorance, not so much
racist … Like a racist person, there's just no room to change in my eyes
and they've got nothing but hate for the specific race.

In his analysis of White discourses on race matters in American society, Bonilla-Silva finds that racially oppressive attitudes and behaviours are not necessarily coupled with attitudes of racial hostility in White people (Bonilla-Silva 2006, pp.7-8). The remainder of this chapter will similarly show that, regardless of how positively some respondents may perceive the intentions of White people, all respondents report that White people regularly manifest unacceptable attitudes and behaviours towards them which they say must be addressed for race-relations to improve. Paul, a community leader and advocate in his late 40s, puts it plainly:

Q5.5 I like White people, but they've got to start pulling their finger out
of their ass.

5.3 Misrecognition and unfair treatment as barriers to constructive race-relations

The remainder of this chapter will report the attitudes and behaviours respondents describe as active barriers to constructive race-relations. The behaviours described here were raised by respondents mostly in response to questions about race-relations and how they can be improved. As noted above, a majority of respondents describe interactions with White Australians that are marked by negative stereotyping; assumptions of superiority; judgement; interpersonal racism, discrimination, disrespect; and self-interest. I report the data on each of these in turn.

5.3.1 Anne: 'They think all blackfellas are like that': White people stereotype

The practice of negatively stereotyping Indigenous people is heavily criticised in the data. Many respondents spontaneously articulate the stereotypes of dysfunction applied to themselves and to friends and family. Stewart is a young, urban-raised man in his first job. His expression of a wearied familiarity with such stereotypes is typical of the respondents:

> *Q5.6   I think some people, like, White people, look at, like, Indigenous*
> *as all the same. As all the same – drunken, on the street, doing nothing,*
> *fucking useless – or whatever they would say.*

Paul is an older man and community leader living in a highly stigmatised, segregated Indigenous suburb. He gives a more comprehensive summary while also highlighting the sense of injustice such stereotypes provoke:

> *Q5.7 I reckon I'll get to the main part: White people – they carry that*
> *bad attitude towards blackfellas … This is what they're calling us mob:*
> *we are bludgers, we sit on our butt and we get royalty money, and we're*
> *dirty buggers, we haven't changed, we're getting free money, free*
> *housing… Them western society family need to stop saying that to their*
> *kids… You see nowadays little kids they pick on little Aboriginal kids at*
> *the school, a few times our kids have been picked on … And meantime*
> *we're out there looking for work! Like I'm still looking for work. [My*
> *job's] not good enough – that's only part-time – I want full work.*

Claire, who has been in paid work her whole life, echoes this sense of injustice:

> *Q5.8 You know why I don't trust them? Because they think they get it.*
> *They stereotype us, like we are all drunken people, you know? 'We don't*
> *work', you know? 'We don't pay taxes' – it's only them. But you know,*
> *they forget that Aboriginal people worked for a long time and never got*
> *wages like White people – you know what I am talking about? Stolen*
> *wages? So, you know, sometimes when you look at it, the economy of*
> *Australia has been built on the black's back.*

Studies on the non-Indigenous population throughout Australia confirm high levels of stereotypical attitudes towards Indigenous people (Pedersen et al 2006; Balvin and Kachima 2007; Beyond Blue 2014). Moreton-Robinson describes stereotyping as endemic to White engagement with Indigenous people since colonisation (Moreton-Robinson 2004a).

Nearly all respondents raise White stereotyping of Indigenous people as not only common and unfair, but as problematic for race-relations. Carl, a full-time single dad of an adopted toddler, says:

> *Q5.9 You know, like some people don't get along with Aboriginal people*
> *because they think that we all bad – like alcoholic, drug addict, and all*

> *that. Yeah. Like, they like to stereotype us. [Later he says] They only see the bad things, not the good things.*

Shannon, a university student in her late teens, describes the impact of this on her willingness to interact with White people:

> *Q5.10 It's intimidating because they look at you: 'Oh you're just another Indigenous girl, you just want money for your alcohol or just your smokes…'*

Beyond expressing a sense of injustice about the widespread acceptance of these unfair stereotypes, some respondents tell of the hurt, outrage and resentment caused by their application. Mary was working as a teacher's aide and living in a private rental with her long-term partner when this incident occurred in a public park:

> *Q5.11 Yeah, well, I'll give you another example. … One day I come and have visit some family that was sitting here at Fannie Bay, you know the monument down the bottom there … And we were sitting and talking and we seen this bloke he was coming … There was a couple of us girls there and we had a pram. [My sister's] daughter was there. She was only a little one. The next minute we all turned and we looked at the man – he was pointing that camera to us – and we said … 'Hey no photos, no photos', and he just walked off. Next day we was in the newspaper [in an article about homeless Indigenous people] … It was really, really bad feeling when I saw me in the paper. Like, 'What the fuck? … He just called us a long grass[23] monkey!'*

Daniel is 20 and has come to the city from a remote community to attend university. He understands why so many White people operate on stereotypes, but is also angry about the rejection he has experienced because of this. He talks about the way stereotyping has disrupted natural friendships with White peers:

> *Q5.12 The only thing [the media] report is the bad stuff that happens and just exaggerate on it … It got to the point where, like, I had friends who were White and, like, their friends wouldn't let me come over into their house … I felt disgusted really. I guess that's when I'd sort of realised how bad it was. I felt angry about it. You know, really man, I'm*

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[23] 'Long grasser' is a common term in Darwin for homeless people, derived from them historically camping out in the long grass where they cannot be easily seen.

> *just disgusted of how like they would stereotype – that like, because I'm*
> *Aboriginal, 'obviously' my parents would be alcoholics, and stuff like*
> *that.*

Several respondents express Daniel's and Mary's complaints about the negative stereotyping of Indigenous people by the mainstream media. Their perceptions align with studies on media stereotyping of Indigenous people (Proudfoot and Habibis 2015) and the influence of this on the general population (Elder 2007; Nelson 2018, p43; Maddison and Statsny 2016).

In Daniel's story, stereotypes prevented him from moving in White spaces. Several respondents talk about the way stereotypes also prevent White people from moving in Indigenous spaces. Annette lives in a fenced-off, designated Indigenous suburb in the heart of Darwin called Bagot. She talks about how negative stereotyping stops White people from spending time there and mixing with the Indigenous residents:

> *Q5.13 I know somebody, they'd been driving past Bagot for the last two,*
> *three years. All her friends used to say, 'Don't go to Bagot, it's very*
> *dangerous. It's violent. There's full of drunks and it's not safe to walk in*
> *that community'. But one day she had to come in Bagot. She drop in*
> *feeling scared, and then she sort of met me and my other friend and by*
> *us she felt safer to come into Bagot and to walk in Bagot. Now she's not*
> *afraid. It's other people that are making people, the White Australians*
> *especially, feeling scared of coming into Bagot … We do want to come*
> *together as one people, not being shut out by White Australians.*

This section demonstrates that negative stereotyping of Indigenous people is perceived to be widespread. It is experienced as deeply unfair and as the root cause of other injustices. As the other sections of this chapter will show, it is implicated in many of the problematic behaviours that currently serve as barriers to constructive race-relations. In addition, respondents directly link it to racial segregation, reporting that it discourages people from entering spaces where intergroup interaction is likely to occur and inhibits natural interaction when they are in shared spaces.

5.3.2 Annette: 'They think they're better than us': White assumptions of superiority

The previous section described respondent perceptions of widespread negative stereotyping of Indigenous people. Closely linked to this are respondent reports of White assumptions of

superiority in relation to Indigenous people and cultures. The vast majority of respondents raise such attitudes in some way, many of them plainly and directly:

> *Q5.14 Claire: A lot of them see us as second-class citizens.*

> *Q5.15 Annette: They think they are better than us.*

> *Q5.16 Mark: It's the constant treatment from a mindset of superiority…*

> *Q5.17 Geena: Like, they just always look down at you.*

> *Q5.18 William: They really look down on us. So we just can't talk to them.*

Even the least critical and outspoken of the respondents ascribe assumptions of superiority to nearly all White Australians. Some explain that such assumptions are not limited to conservative elements of the White population, they just manifest differently for different groups. Sean has worked with a cross section of people in his public service roles. He says:

> *Q5.19 Andrew Bolt[24] – classic. You can just pick him a mile away. But then on the flipside is, I guess, the left-wing racist who has the good intentions, has a lot of understanding of Indigenous issues but then comes across in a condescending or patronising or paternalistic way … 'We're going to fix you. I'm going to be a White saviour and go and fix Aboriginal people'.*

Geena is in her 20s and works for an Indigenous organisation. It is her perception that regardless of how positively some may approach Indigenous people and culture, all White people are invariably looking down on her:

> *Q5.20 Much as they are talking nice to you, participate in activities and wanting to listen to everything like – they just still look down on everyone and you just feel that they are looking down.*

These attitudes of superiority, though not always perceived to be conscious or intentional on the part of White people, are keenly felt. Neil is a young man who is a few years into his first job. He works for an Indigenous organisation but his service regularly collaborates with White workers from other organisations. He talks about weathering a constant assumption by the White people he deals with that 'they know best':

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[24] Andrew Bolt is a conservative right-wing commentator in Australia.

> *Q5.21 I think it's because 'they know everything' and 'they know what's*
> *right', you know? It's like they have more knowledge on how to do*
> *things and we're just like 'native'. And they think like we don't know.*

James offers a particularly stark example of how normalised this sense of superiority is even in the context of genuine goodwill. He describes how oblivious White people can be to the underlying attitudes their actions betray:

> *Q5.22 I had this woman – White one – [say to me], 'Well I had*
> *Aboriginal friends. I used to feed them over the fence' … You fed them*
> *over the fence and they were your friends? Could you not have brought*
> *them to your table?*

The Reconciliation Barometer consistently reports that the vast majority of non-Indigenous Australians consciously and overtly reject the belief system of White superiority to Indigenous people (Nelson 2018). Such attitudes are, however, implicit in the results of other national surveys. This includes Beyond Blue's finding that around one-third of Australians think Indigenous people 'should behave more like other Australians' (Beyond Blue 2014). A large-scale survey in Queensland and New South Wales found one in eight respondents retain openly White supremacist views. This statistic is strongly age related, suggesting a generational dimension to conscious White supremacy (Dunn et al. 2004).

Attitudes of superiority are experienced as unjust for several reasons. Firstly, most respondents do not perceive themselves or their cultural differences as inferior. Joan is a senior public servant and the first generation in her family to have received a western education. She says:

> *Q5.23 No. I don't think that mainstream Australia fully has considered*
> *that they're actually living amongst equals*

Secondly, many perceive elements of White knowledge and cultural norms to be inferior to those of Indigenous people. Claire works in a management position in government and is nearing retirement. She says:

> *Q5.24 It's just that, you know, 'superior race'. They think they're the*
> *superior race. That's what I said – they wanna look at themselves …*
> *They'd be ashamed of themselves and their behaviour.*

Dot is an elderly woman who lives in a segregated Indigenous suburb and supplements her pension with hunting. She is more specific:

> *Q5.25 What they're thinking in their mind – 'I'm better than them', you*
> *know? But we could be better than them too. You take a person that's*
> *'better than us' out bush, who's going to survive? Him or us?*

She also expresses disbelief at the childishness she observes in the leadership and processes of Australia's highest governing institutions.

> *Q5.26 Yolngu[25] way, we sit the proper way and talk about the issue. I*
> *mean, we've got ways of settling our problems … but these politicians,*
> *that's all they're doing, killing each other with words … They go red in*
> *the face, I mean, throw papers everywhere. They're killing themselves in*
> *there. They're not doing anything for the community, this Northern*
> *Territory, nothing. They're in there for themselves.*

Paul says:

> *Q5.27 And they want us to share their law. Their law sucks. I can't tell*
> *you.*

Respondents make a range of negative observations about White Australian culture and even biology. These comments are rarely spontaneous criticisms. Instead, they are most often connected to observations that White Australians assume their own lifestyles, systems and knowledge are superior or common sense. The impression is that a sense of injustice is triggering these critical responses by Indigenous people to White cultural differences.

Perceptions of assumed superiority spark feelings of frustration, irritation and resentment. Beyond this, Dot suggests such attitudes block a posture of learning and mutual exchange of complementary knowledge, that can enhance collaboration and cooperation and improve things for everyone. She continues on from her observations at Q25 above to say:

> *Q5.28 Dot: You take a person that's 'better than us' out bush, who's*
> *going to survive, him or us? Yolngu or Balanda[26]? That's why I'm*
> *saying we should come together as one.*
>
> *Int: Because of what you know, and because of what they know?*
>
> *Dot: That's right, put them together and that's it.… If you learn our*
> *ways, we'll teach you and you can become as one, work as one, make*

---

[25] 'Yolngu' is the term for Indigenous person in Yolngu language. The speaker is a Yolgnu woman.

[26] 'Balanda' is the term for White person in Yolngu language. It is used widely by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Darwin.

> *this place a better place for us to live, you know? Not this snobby look,*
> *'Oh that black fella'.*

More commonly respondents report that it causes them to withdraw from interactions with White Australians. Clara is a young mother of two. She is professionally ambitious and works full-time. She says she has no tolerance for such attitudes:

> *Q5.29 Well, yeah, that's my stereotype of a White person that I don't*
> *like, and that's the main ones that I bump into all the time, because they*
> *think that they're so much better than you, just because you're*
> *Aboriginal … I won't judge a book by its cover – I'll go and I'll meet,*
> *and it's like, 'Well you was exactly what I was thinking you were gonna*
> *be, but I gave it a go, so I'm going. Bye!' … no, I'm just not going to talk*
> *to that person again. You know it – people that are stuck up.*

Others link this attitude with feelings of shame and discomfort. They report that it can make them reluctant to speak up in, or even enter, White-dominated social and professional spaces. Claire reports that her grandchildren will not come into her government workplace with her because of feelings of shame. Geena says she would be reluctant to work for a non-Indigenous organisation because of people looking down on her. Tom says his co-workers will not speak up in the workplace or ask questions of non-Indigenous supervisors and co-workers for fear of looking stupid. Don, an elder and cultural liaison officer, teases the White interviewer about White attitudes, saying:

> *Q5.30 You are more pretty than us, don't you agree?*

Lara, middle aged and homeless, puts it more seriously:

> *Q5.31 I think the major thing for us Indigenous people – you get shamed*
> *– don't know how to approach a White man, White person … Some*
> *because they're embarrassed of their skin colour or the way they speak*
> *or the way they dress.*

In summary, nearly all respondents give the impression that they believe that nearly all White people think, consciously or subconsciously, that Indigenous people are inferior to them. Many clearly profoundly reject this view of themselves and experience it as deeply unfair. They report that they do not accept that they are not equal to White Australians and consider many aspects of White culture, knowledge and physiological features to be obviously inferior to those of Indigenous people. This perceived attitude in White Australians contributes to social divisions in that Indigenous people withdraw from

interactions and White spaces to avoid it. It is also perceived to inhibit equal dialogical exchange supportive of social cooperation, cohesion and advancement.

5.3.3 Mike: 'They should get to know people better instead of fucking judging them': Judgement and lack of compassion

A common immediate response to the question of how race-relations can be improved is descriptions of the negative impact of feeling constantly judged. All, bar one or two of the respondents, report living under the constant critical gaze of White Australians. Mark, an older, urban-raised man, says:

> *Q5.32 No, I try not to judge people, because I get judged all the time.*

Mike is one of the younger research participants, and a reticent interviewee, but even he speaks fiercely about the need to address this behaviour to improve race-relations:

> *Q5.33 Well, they should get to know people better instead of fucking judging them.*

Elsewhere he is asked what he would change about White people, and says:

> *Q5.34 Mike: Yeah. Change their perspective.*
>
> *Int: Perspective on what?*
>
> *Mike: On people and how they view them, how they think about them.*
>
> *Int: What do you think their perspective is now? …*
>
> *Mike: Mostly judgemental, really.*

Respondents describe three aspects to the judgement they experience. The first is related to the widespread stereotyping reported in section 5.3.1 of this chapter. Several respondents report feeling judged simply because they are identifiable as Indigenous. They report that blanket stereotypes are applied to them in public spaces and that as a result they experience high levels of negative attitudes and judgement:

> *Q5.35 Int: Why don't people feel relaxed in pubs?*
>
> *Claire: Because White people stare at you. They are judging you.*

When Shannon is asked what would be different about her life if she had been born White, she says:

> *Q5.36 You wouldn't get put down. You wouldn't get judged for what you*
> *do. People wouldn't look at you funny when you try and get a job or*
> *when you tell them that you're Indigenous. You'd just, 'Oh, yeah, I'm*
> *just an Aussie'. You know, you don't have to be worried about if people*
> *are going to look down upon you because you're Indigenous ... That's a*
> *scary question. I don't like that question.*

A second aspect of the judgement relates to a perceived lack of acceptance of difference or positive regard for it. This is raised by many respondents and is particularly noteworthy for the strong emphasis they place on its role in obstructing constructive race-relations. When asked about the biggest single obstacle to Indigenous people and White Australians becoming one community, Joan says:

> *Q5.37 The first thing I think there has to be an acceptance of difference.*
> *We both come from different places. I think that's first and foremost. An*
> *acceptance of the difference, difference of societies, of culture – and*
> *appreciation comes into that as well.*

Katie grew up in a remote community and works as an interpreter bridging cultural and linguistic differences in her work every day. She is very calm and mildly spoken throughout the interviews but, like Mike, she suddenly speaks with passion and force about the sense of injustice that arises when she feels judged for her culture and lifestyle by White people:

> *Q5.38 Int: And if there's one thing you could tell White people, what*
> *would it be?*
>
> *Katie: Mind your own business.*
>
> *Int: And why would you tell them that?*
>
> *Katie: Because they have no rights to judge people, we have no rights to*
> *judge them. If they don't like the way how we live and who we are, then*
> *that's your problem. We don't care, don't come to us and judge us and*
> *tell it to our face…*

Neil offers a specific example of the negative and judgemental approaches to difference that other respondents describe more generally when he recounts a conversation with a White co-worker:

> *Q5.39 He's like, 'Yeah, I knew this blackfella. He worked with us, same*
> *income, and he still had nothing the whole time I was working with him'.*
> *And I said, 'Because he could've gave it all to his family'. I'm, like, 'If it*

was you, you wouldn't give it to your family or relatives. Do you ever

think like that?' And it was in the car talking on the way home from

work, and then it kind of got to me, you know. I was, like, you know,

have an open mind about other people and Aboriginal people and how

we are and what things we do, like we do them for a reason, you know?

Here, the White worker is critical of his former Indigenous co-worker for not accumulating the same wealth as his White co-workers on the same wage, implying he judges the co-worker as irresponsible and incompetent. In contrast, the Indigenous worker sees the behaviour as rational and responsible but culturally different.

A third dimension of the judgement to which respondents report being subjected concerns White Australian responses to Indigenous people in difficult life circumstances. They report that, rather than attracting compassion, Indigenous people in severe hardship are often judged and blamed for their situation. While some suggest this 'hard heartedness' is just a feature of individualistic White culture that is applied equally to all (see section 5.3.6), others feel that Indigenous hardship is subject to particularly harsh judgement. Claire is in well-paid, stable employment but describes the White Australian response to other family and community members who are not. She says that even though many people live in hardship, Indigenous people are more often held responsible for their situations of hardship:

> *Q5.40 We got no need to judge them, they're just people doing it hard*
> *that's all. And that's what Australians don't realise. There's lots of*
> *people doing it tough but it's always the blackfellas – 'They don't wanna*
> *work', 'They wanna beg', 'They wanna drink'.*

Analyses of Australia's print media appear to bear out these observations, noting a 'disturbing lack of compassion' in discourses around Indigenous suffering (Proudfoot and Habibis 2015). Claire's observations align with Shaw's analysis of non-Indigenous attitudes to residents of The Block, an Indigenous residential area in Redfern, Sydney. Shaw found many White people living nearby defined the area by its social problems and conflated those social problems with the residents' Indigeneity (Shaw 2000).

Respondents give numerous examples of being unfairly judged, both for their situations of hardship, and for their reasonable responses to extreme hardship. These include the lack of employment opportunities on community being understood as laziness and an unwillingness to work (Claire), escape from the multiple hardships of life in remote communities being perceived as a lifestyle choice of urban homelessness (Alice), and self-medication of severe

trauma being judged as an irresponsible abuse of substances (Diane and Geena). Some of these forms of judgement are considered particularly unjust because White people are perceived to have created the circumstances for which Indigenous people are being so harshly judged. Diane, who used to be homeless, says:

> *Q5.41 I don't know how they expect people not to be drunk. Put it that*
> *way. I mean after what they did. After they came and did what they did.*
> *This is the symptoms now. This is the result – the end result – to the*
> *colonisation. To ripping the carpet out from under people, turning their*
> *world upside down and then expect them to land on their feet and walk*
> *well and straight and stable. Good luck.*

Geena gives the example of Indigenous people being judged as irresponsible for continuing to eat dugong despite it being an endangered species[27]:

> *Q5.42 There was a big outcry 'cause dugongs were on the menu and*
> *that's like, well, if the dugong was gonna go extinct, it would have gone*
> *extinct millions of years ago when we were hunting. The only reason*
> *things have gone extinct now, in my opinion, is because the White man*
> *has just taken everything.*

Many respondents are unequivocal about the negative impact on race-relations of what they perceive to be a pervasive mindset of judgement towards them. Diane is an older Larrakia woman and grew up in Darwin:

> *Q5.43 We could be really good friends and mates, black and white. We*
> *could make this work – really good. But not with that attitude… Why*
> *can't you just let us be who we are? …We're different. We're allowed to*
> *be different… Who was that guy that said 'Blackfellas are good as long*
> *as they behave like us'? … The president of the Collingwood Football*
> *Club!*

Geena makes a similar point

> *Q5.44 Well I believe most Aboriginals, they're willing to accept anyone*
> *as long as they can feel you're willing to accept them.*

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[27] http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2014/12/08/4144372.htm (accessed 30 July 2021)

Some report that judgemental attitudes reduce trust and the willingness of Indigenous people to engage with White Australians. Neil says his default is to not engage with White Australians for fear of encountering judgement:

> *Q5.45 But it's just that barrier where you just can't, you know, where you're just blocking people. Like before, you know, you give them a chance, you don't give them a chance. 'Will I let them in?' and all that. Because you're afraid of what they will say and like they could hurt you – just being judged.*

Claire, who has had an established, successful career in government, expresses a similar wariness of non-essential interactions with non-Indigenous people for the same reason:

> *Q5.46 Aboriginal people I am comfortable with, but I can talk to non-Aboriginal people as long as they don't judge us, you know what I mean?*

A pervasive attitude of judgement towards Indigenous people is perceived to be a significant obstacle to constructive race-relations. Respondents report being unfairly judged by negative stereotypes for neutral or even positive cultural differences and for their social and economic disadvantage. This judgement reduces the emotional safety of engaging with White people. It diminishes trust and willingness to engage.

5.3.4 Ben: 'It's just racism is always there, you know?': Interpersonal racism, discrimination and disrespect

Overtly racist, discriminatory and disrespectful treatment by White Australians is reported as a fact of life. All respondents, without exception, raise racism, disrespect or discrimination as present in and problematic to race-relations. Many do so multiple times. This finding is particularly significant in light of research that indicates people are more likely to under-report rather than over-report experiences of racism (Kaiser & Major 2006).

Ben is a young man raised in a rural area outside of Darwin and now living in a segregated Indigenous suburb on its outskirts. He is generally positive in his descriptions of White Australians and race-relations but when it comes to racism, he says:

> *Q5.47 It's just racism is always there, you know. You can never really try and get rid of it completely – you know – be rid of racism. It's always going to be there… I'm sort of like a happy-go-lucky type of guy, you*

> *know? If anything is directed at me like that, well I'll just shrug it off*
> *and not take it personally. But some others, you know – like other*
> *countrymen – will take it much more to the heart, kind of thing.*

At the same time, nearly all respondents are also careful to qualify this particular assertion. Some say that it is less common than it used to be, many clarify that it is only some White people that treat Indigenous people this way, a few point out that many ethnic groups in multicultural Darwin are subjected to racism, and a significant number are quick to say that Indigenous people are 'racist' too. These qualifying statements can be understood in the context of the personal risk involved in members of subordinate groups calling out racism in dominant groups. Australian researchers have demonstrated the 'substantial penalties and personal costs associated with the acknowledgement of racism' (Dunn and Nelson 2011). The on field experience of Australian footballer Adam Goodes in 2013 is a high profile example of this[28]. However, even if these caveats are taken at face value, the fact remains that overtly racist, discriminatory and disrespectful treatment from White people is described as an expected and universal experience. This delivers a level of constant risk in engaging with White people and negatively impacts race-relations.

Many respondents make general references to racism, discrimination and disrespect pervading the relationship. These comments by Holly, a well-heeled professional in the corporate sector, and Elaine, who is long-term homeless, are typical of the general observations found in the data:

> *Q5.48 Holly: Yeah, I just feel there is still a big undertone of racism,*
> *whether it's spoken or not.*

> *Q5.49 Elaine: Yeah. A lot of people are racist. We know it ourselves.*

Many respondents also describe specific personal experiences. James, a highly paid and long-term government worker, says:

> *Q5.50 As educated as I am, as well as presented as I am, I still run into*
> *discrimination out there. It's sad. If I had a dollar for every time*
> *someone called me a blackfella, I would be a millionaire twice over. Oh*
> *yeah, what's one? Getting into a taxi – 'Have you got the money before*

---

[28] Adam Goodes is an Aboriginal man and former professional football player who called out an act of racism in the stands during a match in 2013. A consequence of his anti-racism advocacy was his subjection to sustained booing during matches. This ultimately led to his withdrawal from the game and premature retirement in 2015.

> *you go?' I find that really offensive. 'No, I haven't. I will just get the*
> *next taxi'.*

The reports of specific experiences of race-based mistreatment range from being beaten up and abused, to discrimination in employment and housing, to social insult and poor service in shops. Mark says:

> *Q5.51 I see how they act to my fellow countrymen, you know what I*
> *mean? Which pisses me off ... If someone is asking for a short one or a*
> *cigarette butt ... and getting it flicked at you rather than handed, what*
> *does that say? ... There's no understanding, respect, dignity. There's*
> *nothing, you know?*

The high rates of interpersonal racism, discrimination and disrespect experienced by Indigenous people in Australia are well established (Nelson 2018; Beyond Blue 2014; Priest et al 2014; Temple et al. 2019; Cunningham and Paradies 2013; Ferdinand et al. 2012; Dunn et al. 2005; Paradies 2018).

Several respondents talk about developing an acute ability to read body language, vocal tone and facial expressions. This enables them to quickly assess if they are safe to interact with an unfamiliar White person or if that person should be avoided.

> *Q5.52 Clara: Some people I can actually see it and I won't even go up to*
> *them.*

> *Q5.53 Annette: Yeah. Signs in their attitude and the way they speak and*
> *the way they treat you, that's all, and it makes me think, 'No I don't want*
> *to talk to this person, I'll go and talk with the other person'... I could tell*
> *by the facial things...*

Mark is talking about the importance of having these skills when he says:

> *Q5.54 We have to know that business.*

These attitudes and behaviours by White Australians negatively impact race-relations in several ways. Firstly, many respondents report withdrawing from interactions for their own emotional and physical safety. Geena says she will not stay in a nightclub when no other Indigenous groups are present for fear no one will have her back if 'something happens':

> *Q5.55 I have gone to Darwin city a few times and literally not one*
> *Indigenous person in the club and I felt so uncomfortable as much as I*

feel alright around non-Indigenous people. But at the moment I was in
that position – 'Can we go? I want to go. I don't want to stay here'. ...
Yeah, when someone is picking on an Indigenous person ... if there were
other Indigenous people I would feel more comfortable. Because if
conflict was to go down – not saying there would have or the White mob
would start anything but you never know...

Annette reports that she consciously avoids leaving the segregated Indigenous suburb in which she lives in order to limit negative interactions with White people:

Q5.56 Annette: I don't feel like going anywhere… This is my safe zone…
What I'm thinking when I'm going out… I just want to go to that place
and come straight back without any hassles.
Int: Do you think there probably will be some hassles when you go out,
is that what you expect?
Annette: Yeah… It's how people are raised, you know, how you raise
your child to be against Indigenous mob you know.

Many respondents report that the homeless population is particularly poorly treated. William, who is homeless, avoids unnecessary interactions with White people altogether:

Q5.57 Int: Right, okay, and you wouldn't spend any time with [White
Australians] at all?
William: No way. We don't, when we see them looking at us with hate
because we – to them we are just trash.

Secondly, some respondents report withdrawing from some interactions for fear of their own angry reactions to unfair racialised treatment. Tim says he's scared he 'might lose control and go off'. Annette, a slight, older woman says:

Q5.58 Yeah and if they're being rude to other customers, I'll probably
go to the next register you know, I don't want to talk to him or say
anything you know, I'll just go to another cash register. Because you
know, sometimes I'll just go off my head.

Several homeless respondents speak of their anger in the face of race-based disrespect. They distinguish the self-control they exhibit when sober from their more ready expression of anger under the disinhibiting influence of alcohol. Mary finishes a story of disrespectful treatment by a member of the public with:

>*Q5.59 Feel bad and sad about it but I can't do anything because –*
>*maybe if I was drunk it would've been a different story [laughs].*

Thirdly, several respondents state that such attitudes and behaviours by White Australians directly spark retaliatory rejection by Indigenous people.

>*Q5.60 Paul: You know, when you go out there and you see an*
>*Aboriginal person, respect them! They're the first Australian. And we'll*
>*start respecting the White people.*

>*Q5.61 Tim: If you're gonna give me the time of day I'm gonna give you*
>*the same back. If you're gonna snob me off, you're not worth my time.*

>*Q5.62 Sandra: I've seen some White mob, they do, some, they do respect*
>*Aboriginal people, and you get some Aboriginal people do respect White*
>*people. Only the ones that don't respect you, you will not be respected*
>*from Aboriginal people.*

Patterns of retaliatory rejection have been documented in other parts of Australia. Cowlishaw, for example, writes about race dynamics in the country town of Bourke. She describes performative behaviours by Indigenous people in public spaces that are consciously designed to court the disapproval of White onlookers. This 'anti-social' behaviour is represented as an act of resistance and provocation sparked by perceptions of racist attitudes (Cowlishaw 2004, p.5).

All of the respondents report that experiences of overt racism, disrespect and discrimination are part of daily life with White Australians. Although many say that things have improved and clarify that not all White people mistreat them in this way, unfair treatment in this form is still described as prevalent. It is sufficiently common that several report developing the ability to identify racist attitudes early in interactions as a means of self-protection. Respondents report that such attitudes cause them to withdraw for emotional and physical safety and to engage in retaliatory rejection of White Australians.

5.3.5 Cassie: 'What are you *really* here for?': Self-interested behaviour

The majority of respondents report observing a tendency in White Australians to be self-serving and to prioritise self-interest over doing what the respondents consider to be strictly right or fair. Respondents observe that this tendency, rather than being shameful, appears to be culturally condoned and normalised in many parts of White Australian society. Unlike

the other behaviours reported in this chapter, the unfair treatment Indigenous people associate with this is not overtly related to how White Australians perceive or misperceive them. It is reported as a cultural value that results in unfair engagement that does not specifically target Indigenous people. It does, however, have particular consequences for Indigenous people in the context of the power differential and cultural incompatibility with Indigenous cultural values and behaviour.

Most respondents at some point in the interviews describe White Australians as embracing, without shame, selfish, self-centred or self-serving behaviours. Both Paul and Katie serve in different ways as cultural interpreters and intermediaries for their communities. Paul is an older community leader in a segregated urban Indigenous community and Katie is a young woman who grew up in a remote community and works as a professional interpreter:

> *Q5.63 Int: What do they value the most?*
> *Katie: I don't know really. Themselves.*
> *Int: Themselves?*
> *Katie: Yep, pretty much.*

> *Q5.64 Int: What are White people about?*
> *Paul: Self-centred.*
> *Int: Yeah, tell us more.*
> *Paul: Self-centred. They think about themselves, that's it.*
> *Int: How you feel about that? Do you like or –*
> *Paul: You ask any of the Aboriginal mob – they don't like it. Even me,*
> *I'm one person out of a million people in Australia that don't like it.*
> *Int: And why is that?*
> *Paul: Why is that? I just told you – that's not our law.*

Diane says:

> *Q5.65 This culture's very nasty. It comes from England… That's in my*
> *mind nearly every day that this is the society we're in – nasty, selfish,*
> *greedy, brutal. The people treat – everyone treats everyone – like even*
> *the fashion – 'Look at my hair. Look at my boots' –- like this focus on*
> *themselves.*

Sean sums it up as:

> *Q5.66 White culture loves individualism, individualistic thinking.*

This prioritising of self is understood as a taught cultural value rather than an inherent and natural behaviour. It is not that Indigenous people have inherently selfless tendencies and White people have inherently selfish tendencies, it is that their cultures teach them different priorities. Mark says:

> *Q5.67 Yeah, because through [the western] education system you are rewarded for being the highest achiever and all that. And that creates psychopathic, megalomaniac, narcissistic – you name it – it's all about the individual. Alright, well, you can be an individual within our group and that's fine, but you have that understanding of responsibility for one another. Whereas in the Western context, the individual is – 'I look out for myself, I get what I want, I'll be right mate'. Do you know what I mean, sort of thing? Whereas they've lost the plot, they've lost their connection again.*

As Paul observes, this is not how he was taught to behave culturally. He tells us that Indigenous law does not condone the act of prioritising one's own interests. The self-oriented nature of White Australian hegemonic culture observed by the respondents stands in stark contrast to the traditional collective ontologies of many Indigenous people. Some of the more analytical respondents explain that this self-oriented behaviour contradicts their understanding of human society as inherently interconnected and interdependent. Sean says:

> *Q5.68 I generated a discussion around self-determination and a lot of the people were saying, 'Well, you know, it's about me as an individual and individual freedom' and so on. For the white people, it was all about individualism and individualness. Whereas, for me, I always have viewed it as an 'individual' is a non-existent sort of concept – an 'individual' doesn't exist in a vacuum.*

Daniel explains the ontological difference in this way:

> *Q5.69 I think with White people they value more, I guess, the success of the individual success, compared to where it's with an Aboriginal, they worry about the success of like every member in the group or whatever. So [Aboriginal way] it's like that individual is the collective.*

Mark puts it more simply:

> *Q5.70 Look I mean like, I look at the big picture and I just say, well we,*
> *we're living in a fish bowl in the sense that all of us got to live on this*
> *planet…*

Importantly, this self-orientation is observed to manifest in the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest and a reduced concern for others. Joan is describing the average urban attitude to Indigenous people when she says:

> *Q5.71 I work, I pay my way, why should I care about them? Why do I*
> *even have to think about them?*

Claire reiterates this reduced concern for others and expresses bewilderment at it as a normalised and accepted behaviour:

> *Q5.72 We share our money, we share our food, we share if other family*
> *members are struggling, we share. Like, if there's a funeral or if there's*
> *a party everyone chucks in… They [White people] don't share. They*
> *leave their money in the bank and that's it. I don't know what they think.*
> *Maybe they think that's the normal thing to do.*

James, a government worker, and Shannon, a student, describe the competitive behaviours they observe in White workplaces:

> *Q5.73 James: White man won't let their guard like we do, in terms of we*
> *like to share our knowledge, white man don't, so we can't be like White*
> *man, because they are not going to share with you. You know it's like me*
> *working in my department – if you want to get into a managing level it*
> *would be really hard because managers are not gonna move for you,*
> *they'll pick your intelligence to stay in that job, but they won't share*
> *their intelligence with you, so yeah you can't.*

> *Q5.74 Shannon: They could be empowering people, taking their*
> *experience and bringing people up, empowerment. But I don't see much*
> *of that. I don't see them empowering others.*

The respondents' observations indicate that the problem is not simply that this behaviour is culturally different. It is that this behaviour is unfair. It is not that respondents are critical of White people for having and pursuing personal aspirations. Several explain that the problematic behaviour is that White Australians do not seem to feel obliged to take care of the interests of others when those interests conflict with their own personal gain. Ben puts it like this:

Q5.75 Ben: I mean, don't get me wrong, it's okay that they focus on themselves and want to achieve something in their lives and have their goals set, but when you kind of do it in a way where everyone's less important than you, it kind of – you know what I mean? ... Yeah. Yin and yang, have a bit of a balance.

Respondents associate a number of unfair behaviours with this attitude that negatively impact on their trust of White Australians. I have broadly categorised these intersecting behaviours into two groups. The first is engagement in overtly unfair behaviours to 'get ahead' and the second is the compromising impact of mixed motives on the delivery of things that are theoretically for the benefit of Indigenous people.

In relation to the first category, several respondents report that White Australians commonly act as if it is acceptable to exploit advantage and to engage in a degree of dishonesty, manipulation and rule bending if it helps them to get ahead. The primary limiting factor on White Australian behaviour is not perceived to be the benefit of the rule for the group or what would be most fair to others; it is what an individual thinks they can get away with. Sean is among those to speak to this at length. He says:

Q5.76 I think the strength in the Indigenous system is as I was saying before, it's not a removed institution, it's part of your personal values as well you know, you're ingrained with a sense of citizenry I guess, into society and your agency within that society. Whereas in western systems, it's all about the individual and if you can get away with you know, avoiding a few laws here and there, you're rewarded for it.

He and other respondents offer several specific examples of this. He also describes the shock of his initiation into White culture as a child. He was raised remotely and remembers vividly his first experience of the largely White school to which he was sent in the city.

Q5.77 When I came out of [remote] community I went to school, in a White school, for primary education and I was also boarding. The first experience I had was when you had to do PE. So that was basically just getting outside and running around the oval. So we did that and obviously I was the fastest runner out of my class and then I was running out the front and then this White kid pulled on my shirt and was trying to pull me back so I wouldn't be first. I was like, 'Oh okay, that's White people'.

Others speak to the practice by White Australians of taking individual credit for ideas. This is perceived as wrong when almost any individual achievement has a dimension of collaboration with or support from others.

> *Q5.78 Daniel: If, say, an Aboriginal person makes it high up, like you know corporately – they'll always acknowledge their family. You know, 'I wouldn't be here without my family' and this and that – their support. Whereas, not to stereotype or anything but like, I guess for the White person it would be like, main things are his. You know, 'I did this, it was all me.' Rather than acknowledging sort of a collective group or something that brought them to where they are. I guess, mainly about themselves.*

> *Q5.79 Joan: I have discussions with people about things and then people take the idea away and then in another meeting they will say, 'Well I would like this' or 'I've thought this' and I think, 'Hang on a minute, I spoke to you about that and I think that that's my idea!' However, I'm not the sort of person, and Aboriginal people aren't the type of people to say, 'That's my idea I thought about that.' Often that happens, often, where credit and acknowledgement – due acknowledgement – isn't given.*

She speaks to this at length observing that, on one level, the White Australians she deals with just think so differently about collective contributions that they genuinely believe they are entitled to claim ideas and work as entirely their own, but she also says it is about power.

> *Q5.80 I think it comes right back to 'Well, we wanna do it, we're gonna do it. That's a good idea but I wanna own it and make it my idea and I don't care that an Aboriginal person spoke about it at length with me and I'm not going to acknowledge that'.*

Joan is saying that this offensive cultural practice plays out particularly unfairly with Indigenous people because of the Indigenous cultural abhorrence for self-promotion. Other respondents also report that this can leave White entitlement and unfair gain unchecked. James' experience is that some White people know and actively exploit this reluctance in Indigenous people. Joan further implies that this difficulty in enforcing fair play is compounded by the presence of a racialised structural power differential. This power differential features in many of the workplace and service delivery relationships described by respondents.

This structural power differential also contributes to the second, perhaps more insidious, consequence of White people's reportedly self-interested ways. Some respondents refer to the adverse consequences for Indigenous people of White people's mixed agendas when White people so often have power over resources and services that affect Indigenous lives. They report that many times White people who claim to be there to 'help' are in equal measure there to help themselves. They perceive this to be regularly achieved at the expense of the full potential benefit to Indigenous people, whether through a lack of whole-hearted effort or through consciously corrupt and self-serving actions. Mark and Sandra both refer to people who take management and service delivery roles in Indigenous communities:

> *Q5.81 Int: Tell me a bit more about these people. I mean, what are these*
> *people doing wrong that's not creating a good relationship?*
> *Mark: What's their intent? What's their purpose when they come and*
> *get these jobs? Is it because they genuinely care about Aboriginal*
> *people or is it because of the CV where they can climb the ladder? You*
> *know, looks good on the resume… She got the regional manager job*
> *because of that. Yet she had no idea.*

> *Q5.82 Sandra: There are some people, some White people that come*
> *into the community just for the name of money – for the sake of money.*
> *And they come, they get what they want, they leave and they leave us*
> *with – 'What are we going to do? How are we going to fix that debt?'*
> *And that's what they leave us with.*

Geena speaks about the efforts of the Government and White Australian people she engages with generally. She believes they are more concerned about their own reputation and appearing to care, than genuinely wanting to help.

> *Q5.83Geena: Well, I believe they are only trying to help us out because*
> *it's part of what they have to do, they don't want to do it.*

> *Q5.84 Paul: I'll give you another example – they stole all our bloody*
> *kids back in the olden days. Put them in all those compounds*
> *everywhere. And now what 40 or 50 years later what are these mob*
> *saying? Sorry. And then it only took six to eight months later to stick up*

the Intervention[29] thing. See that's a lie. That is a complete lie. They are
all red necks and they say they are not red necks.

The perceived self-serving nature of White people is reported by respondents to contribute significantly to their ongoing distrust of White Australians. Some, like Claire and Cassie, report that, when dealing with White Australians, they have learned to adjust their own cultural tendencies that might be supportive of constructive race-relations, such as trust, inclusion and candour. They report that their willingness to cooperate with White Australians is significantly diminished:

> *Q5.85 Claire: Well, I don't trust them, you know. Like, what are their*
> *motives? What are they going to do? We tell them what we want them to*
> *know about us, like we tell them a little bit of information – but not*
> *everything – because we are superstitious about what they are going to*
> *do about that information.*

> *Q5.86 Int: Are White Australians easy to make friends with, do you*
> *think?*
> *Cassie: No. They've got trust issue, we've got trust issue [laughs].*
> *We've all got trust issue. You've got to build up trust first before you go*
> *and do the things that you're – so when I do see people come into the*
> *community and they're like, 'Oh hi, I'm going to do this'. I'm like, 'What*
> *are you really here for? What is the real reason? You can't just come*
> *here just because you want to help. What are you getting out of this?'.*
> *Before, I never used to do it, I was just like, 'Yeah come' and now I'm*
> *like, 'Oh stop' – you need to find out what they want first.*

Mark, who elsewhere readily acknowledges his own White heritage as an important part of who he is, completely rejects this aspect of White culture. He concludes that it makes White people utterly unable to be trusted to do the right thing:

> *Q5.87 They're cunning, they're sly, they're shifty. It's the same as their*
> *law. It's the same as the way they colonise. So as far as I'm concerned,*
> *you've got to treat them like a murderous thief in that sense, because*
> *they'll kill you, they'll cut you.*

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[29] 'The Intervention' is a commonly used term in the Northern Territory for the Northern Territory Emergency Response. See footnote 10.

The observations reported here suggest these respondents perceive White Australians as regularly prioritising self-interest over fairness towards others. They perceive the consequence to be that White Australians engage in unfair behaviours to get ahead and often have mixed motives in helping Indigenous people. This is particularly problematic for Indigenous people because of the relative structural power advantage many White Australians enjoy and the contrasting cultural values of Indigenous people, which can permit this behaviour to go unchecked. These unfair behaviours are an obstacle to constructive race-relations because they create a sense of distrust of White Australians and reduce the willingness of the respondents to include and work together with them.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the main behaviours respondents associate with White Australian people and culture that they perceive to be obstructive to constructive race-relations. Respondents are careful not to stereotype, but their stories indicate that these attitudes and behaviours are sufficiently widespread to impact the way they relate to White Australians as a group. Fundamentally, these behaviours are experienced as deeply unfair and spark a strong sense of injustice around the way White Australians relate to them. This pattern of unfair treatment serves as a significant overarching obstacle to constructive race-relations even for those who believe most White Australians generally mean well. Collectively, these behaviours foster a deep distrust of White Australians, withdrawal from non-essential interactions for emotional and physical safety, and retaliatory rejection of White Australian people and culture. This chapter has reported the White Australian attitudes and behaviours that are perceived by the majority of respondents to be active obstacles to constructive race-relations. The next chapter presents the negative consequences of a passive approach to race-relations by White Australians. It describes the behaviours respondents say would enable constructive race-relations if they were more prevalent.

Chapter 6: Respondent views on enablers of constructive race-relations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I report the data that relates to attitudes and behaviours that respondents report would better enable constructive race-relations if they were more prevalent in the White population. The data presented in this chapter primarily relates to respondent perceptions that White Australians are not doing their fair share of the emotional and intellectual labour of constructive race-relations. This unfair division of labour can be understood as an aspect of the burden of disregard. I have divided the data in this chapter into two thematic sections. The first relates to a perception that White Australians do not make themselves available for the kind of equal dialogical exchange respondents perceive to be fundamental to just and equitable race-relations. The second relates to perceptions that Indigenous people are expected to do nearly all of the cultural learning, cultural adaptation and reaching out, to bridge the cultural divide.

6.2 Diane: 'Why can't we just talk things over?': Engagement in equal dialogical exchange

This section reports respondent reflections on the importance of equal dialogical exchange to race-relations and the ways in which White Australians engage, or do not engage, in its emotional and intellectual labour. In response to the question of what can be done to improve race-relations, several respondents suggest the creation of spaces dedicated to conscious dialogical exchange between Indigenous and White Australian people. A significant number of respondents explicitly identify it as critical to constructive race-relations.

Don is an older man in his 70s who grew up on a remote community mission. He talks about the importance of this kind of exchange. He says that Indigenous people believe things could have been very different if White people had been willing to engage like this from the beginning:

Q6.1 So certainly I believe that White men came to the shore and… we could have sat down and talk about it before anything bad thing happens to Aboriginal people and so all my friends, they know that –- they know that.

Dot is of the same generation as Don. She repeatedly states that strong communication on an equal footing is key to finding a way forward, enhancing mutual understanding and resolving differences:

Q6.2 They need to understand about where Aboriginal people are coming from. Aboriginal people need to understand where this Balanda are coming from. Them two have to sit down and talk. What the issue is got against Yolngu people. What Yolngu people got issue against Balanda, you know? Them two, let them talk it out… I'd like to go to a conference, talk about Yolngu concerns and Balanda concerns… You know, I'd like to tell them that we become one group or family, so we can understand each other, talk about the issue, so we can fix him at both ends instead of all this fighting about rights, you know? What is right and what is wrong; we come together and be as one and talk this issue out. Maybe we could solve him both ways.

Elsewhere she says:

Q6.3 You can't go anyway shortcut or whatever. You and me going to sit down, talk properly so we can work out this issue.

This emphasis on dialogical exchange is shared by a wide variety of respondents. Diane, middle aged and urban raised, emphasises the mutual exchange aspect of such a space:

Q6.4 I don't know, but how about a forum? A nice forum, not a lecture – a gathering or a discussion.

Geena, urban raised and in her 20s, references the conversations associated with this research as an example and emphasises that such spaces must be ongoing in nature:

Q6.5 They need to get people out there to – not a big group, just one or two like we're doing and just have talks to people, ask them what they want, ask them how they think, exactly what you're doing with me… Like, elders, they've got a lot of ideas and I believe exactly what we're doing would be the best step, first step I say to just get out there, and not just a one-off thing, but how we're going on – on a weekly or so basis –

> *just to prove to them that you are interested in what they've got to say,*
> *prove to them that you do want to make a change and prove to them that*
> *you are part of this change. Whereas if they feel they're not part of it,*
> *well, they're just going to think, 'Well, we've got no control, what's the*
> *point?'*

Many respondents report, however, that White Australian responses to their attempts to engage are often far from encouraging. Respondents report that individual efforts can be futile, upsetting and sometimes even unsafe. When Tim is asked why he does not say to White Australians what he is really thinking and feeling, he describes witnessing anger and abuse directed at others who speak openly to White people about their perspectives as Indigenous people:

> *Q6.6 Int: What's stopping you from saying what you really feel to White*
> *people?*
> *Tim: … I just grew up around you know, watching stuff, what these*
> *people say what they want, and they say, 'Go back to your country!' Or*
> *some shit or like, 'Fuck off you black cunt' … probably, the fear of it*
> *happening to me.*

Joan is a smartly dressed, articulate, older woman in a senior management role. Unlike Tim, she does not fear being abused for speaking her mind on Indigenous matters in her workplace. Her experience is, however, that White colleagues engage in dismissive and blocking behaviours when she does. She describes the response to her attempts to bring an Indigenous perspective to discussions around Indigenous related projects:

> *Q6.7 Colleagues have the audacity to even say, 'Well I have*
> *qualifications in this area, dear'. [I replied] 'I'm Aboriginal. I live it. I*
> *didn't read about being Aboriginal in a textbook. I didn't read about the*
> *nuances of Aboriginal society and about their culture in a textbook. I*
> *live it and I live with that worldview as well'.*

She re-enacts her colleague's response by rolling her eyes.

Reports of negative responses to attempts to share perspectives on Australian history in particular are a common and recurring theme in the data. Respondents report that White Australians often belittle the significance of what is being discussed, disbelieve and dispute Indigenous people's historical knowledge, or simply refuse to engage, impeding the journey towards healing that is an essential step in the process of reconciliation. Diane describes the

discouragement she encounters when she broaches some of the darker aspects of our national history:

> *Q6.8 It's the most horrible feeling when you're trying to get people to discuss something and they just fold their arms. It's just so horrible. It's so wrong. Why can't we just talk things over?*

Shannon, a young university student, explains her experience has taught her that such discussions are pointless:

> *Q6.9 Int: Now, you mentioned a little bit back there, something about history and you said that someone you know asked you a little bit about history.*
> *Shannon: Well, the conversation starts and then it ends in an argument… So, there's not really much communication. Like I can't communicate with them unless there's an argument, and even then I give up because there's no point in arguing. I just told them to read the books – 'Don't ask me, you're just going to argue with me'.*

For Shannon, the fruit of this exchange, or lack thereof, is her withdrawal from the conversation. For others, it can be re-traumatising. Diane uses the analogy of childhood sexual abuse and how the unwillingness of the child's family to let her talk about it can be worse than the abuse itself:

> *Q6.10 Blackfellas have been trying to say, 'Let's talk, let's meet, let's negotiate, let's' - you know? And they're [White people] the ones that keep, you know, 'cause they don't wanna… So, to me this is how I feel exactly what's going on in Australia – they don't want to talk about it. It's a cover up. It's like an abused child wants to speak out, wants to talk, wants people to know it was hurt, but no one will let it out … They run as soon as I want to bring anything up. Yeah, so that's what hurts more than the actual physical thing what happened to me is the covering up and then the betrayal … so that's what I am saying – to me, Australia's harbouring that thing there. They just don't want to talk about it. They don't want to fix it. They'd rather say it wasn't, it didn't [happen].*

Key to a healthy exchange is the act of listening to each other. Multiple respondents emphasise the importance of this while noting a lack of it on the part of many White people. Paul, always one to speak plainly, sums it up like this:

> *Q6.11 We listened from the beginning ever since they took over this
> country. We're sick and tired of listening to them. They've got to start
> listening to us.*

Sean identifies listening as the key element in a rare experience of a genuine dialogical
exchange with some White 'bikies' in a bar. He contrasts this with the poor listening he
encounters even amongst White people working to advance Indigenous human rights:

> *Q6.12 They're asking me where I'm from and everything and, I mean,
> they say some racist shit, but I call them on it and they're really
> fascinated. They're really listening – and these are like the most yobbo
> sounding, yobbo looking blokes I've ever seen in my life – but they
> actually sat down and listened and were really fascinated by it. Whereas
> I've had people in suits who – at the fucking UN – who are trying to tell
> me how things are in Australia for Aboriginal people. Listening is huge,
> man.*

For Geena, the equal dialogical exchange that is currently missing from race-relations would
benefit it in two ways. She says that it will enable different cultures to find a way to work
together, but also, that it would build trust:

> *Q6.13 Well, just like, when they are discussing things about Indigenous
> mob in general… I believe if we were literally involved for every little
> aspect I believe we'd feel wanted, we'd feel like they are listening to us
> and we'd feel like our opinion would matter… hearing what they've got
> to say and then asking them what you have got to say and then trying to
> work together around our culture and white mob society the best way we
> can do that because there is a way… We just got to have time for each
> other, have the right questions for each other and just have the right
> attitude and respect for each other.*

Some formal spaces for exchange do exist in the form of service provider or government
consultations. Some respondents feel that the White representatives[30] of these bodies
participate in consultations disingenuously. Joan describes such consultations as box-ticking
exercises whose organisers have no real intention or desire to engage with and understand
Indigenous perspectives:

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[30] Respondents regularly conflate the government and other service providers with White people in
general. These instrumental relationships are the primary source of interaction for many of the
respondents with White Australians.

> *Q6.14 Joan: Time and time again. We only have to look around here with the development of Darwin. How much talking and discussion goes on with – in the planning and the development of Darwin – actually occurs – sit down discussions, consultation with the Aboriginal people from here? … You know, it's not just one talk, one advertisement in the paper, one or two advertisements in the papers about meetings, it's about being able to get right in – right in – and have other levels of discussion.*

Dot's experience is that White people come to talk rather than listen and do not act sincerely on what they do hear:

> *Q6.15 Dot: Well, when they go out to communities, they should sit down and talk properly what their needs are. Don't come in, talk talk, and just go and don't get any information back. Not listening to our needs. What our needs are. You know, second time around, come back – you probably won't see Indigenous mob sit around… Sometimes [we] can read their faces, read their minds. Like, he's not the one – he's not that person to work on Indigenous issues. Because, when he taken back that message, [he'll] talk another way in the office. Because we don't know what they say in the office. [Maybe] they say, 'That's not a good idea'. 'We don't want that'. 'That's not a good idea'… I don't think he show it to his boss… We know when there's nothing been done on communities.*

Dot's experience of these formal opportunities for dialogue is echoed in analyses of government consultations with Indigenous communities. Bauman observes that such consultations are often marked by one-way communication and describes them as a process that is done 'to' Indigenous people rather than 'with' them (Bauman 2007). Despite the importance Dot personally places on spaces for exchange, she explains here that the way White Australians engage in them results in withdrawal from these spaces by herself and other Indigenous people. Her story indicates that she has learned from experience that the spaces are futile and their organisers untrustworthy.

A large number of respondents emphasise the importance of sincere and equal dialogical exchange for constructive race-relations. Many also report that White Australians tend to avoid or block this kind of genuine exchange. This includes White Australians who have organised the space for exchange and who appear to believe they are sincerely engaging in dialogue with Indigenous people. The impact of this on race-relations is not just the loss of

the potential solutions and understandings such exchanges might deliver, but also patterns of withdrawal and low trust by Indigenous people.

6.3 Don: 'They don't do their best to understand': Bridging the cultural and social divide

The previous section demonstrated that many respondents state they would like to 'talk things out' with White Australians but that their experience has been that White people are generally unwilling to invest in genuine and constructive dialogue. This section continues the theme of the burden of disregard and its impact on understanding and connection. Here, I present respondent perceptions that White people do relatively little of the work of the cultural learning, cultural adaptation, and outreach and connection that is needed for constructive race-relations.

6.3.1 The labour of cultural learning

In Chapter 8, I will describe and discuss the importance respondents place on White knowledge of Indigenous cultural values and behaviours to achieve mutual understanding and constructive race-relations. This section reports the impact on race-relations, not of the lack of knowledge per se, but of the lack of effort they are perceived to put into acquiring this knowledge. Many respondents report a very low effort by the general White population to actively build their knowledge of Indigenous cultures and social rules. When Daniel is asked what White people can do to improve the relationship, he says:

> *Q6.16 Yeah, make the effort to learn as well and make the effort to go up and ask instead of always being approached and told first, you know? Because I've never seen a White person come up and ask like a Blackfella to do that, unless they were working in the community as a worker for an Aboriginal organisation. That's the only time, but I've never seen it on a sort of social level.*

This lack of interest is experienced as offensive and is understood to be indicative of a lack of regard for Indigenous people generally. Claire is one of several respondents to contrast the lack of interest displayed in the cultures of the First Peoples of this country by White Australians with that which she observes in overseas visitors. Similarly, she is also not the only one to perceive a disheartening contrast in the White interest in foreign places and cultures over visiting and understanding their own country:

> *Q6.17 It's just a bit sad, like, I think of things and like I look around and, you know, everyone goes to Bali, everyone goes overseas. I mean, they should go and visit Australia and visit Aboriginal people. They go on those – there's lots of tour guide experiences and this and that, but no one seems to be interested. You get more foreigners overseas wanting to know about Aboriginal people than White Australians wanting to know about Aboriginal people, which is a shame.*

Don is an experienced cultural liaison officer. He agrees with this contrast and expresses his offence at the arrogance it implies:

> *Q6.18 People coming from overseas they interest [in] learning Aboriginal system okay because all the multicultural people okay – so they learn, we learn. What about the White people? What they? Ignorance! Stubborn!*

The message received by respondents is one of a marked lack of care for them. Neil is a young man in his first job, Paul is an experienced community leader:

> *Q6.19 Neil: I don't know. I don't know, sometimes people just don't want to know. They don't care. They don't care for a reason because he wasn't brought up into, you know, you're not Aboriginal, you don't care, you don't understand, it's like whatever.*

> *Q6.20 Paul: Pigs. Ignorant pigs. All they ever think about, they're self-centred bastards, they don't care about us, you know.*

Beyond the feelings of insult is a widely expressed sense of unfairness. This relates to perceptions of the relative efforts of Indigenous and White people to educate themselves about their cultural differences to enable social harmony. Respondents report that Indigenous people are commonly expected to know and understand White culture, but that White people have no such corresponding expectation of themselves in relation to Indigenous cultures – the cultures of this land. Typical comments include:

> *Q6.21 Don: Well to make people happy I have to try to understand, I try my best to understand, they don't. White people don't try their best to understand.*

> *Q6.22 Dot: We're trying to learn Balanda way, Balanda got to learn our way too.*

> *Q6.23 Sandra: They intend to force us to try and recognise their law.*
> *And we try very hard to harmony and peace and we want to introduce*
> *and teach them or their countrymen our way – our way it's never done.*
> *But [we] only teach them to people that are very keen and interest and*
> *that have the compassion.*
> *Int: Do you see much of that in mainstream Darwin?*
> *Sandra: No.*

Even where White people express interest in Indigenous cultures, respondents report that some expect Indigenous people to do the intellectual and emotional labour of the White Australian's learning process. Multiple respondents express the same willingness as Sandra to educate White people who show genuine interest in their culture. The objection is to a perceived sense of entitlement by some White people to Indigenous time and energy for this purpose. Indigenous people who do not enthusiastically give that time and energy feel held responsible for White ignorance. Sean puts it like this:

> *Q6.24 It's like, 'I'm ignorant because you refuse to pull me up on it', or,*
> *'I wouldn't be so ignorant if you just taught me about your culture', you*
> *know? There's so much information out there that a lot of what a person*
> *can do is just go and educate themselves before they engage.*

He explains this point further later in the interview. Here he speaks to the judgement and the emotional labour dimension of the education process he feels he is expected to carry. He points out the unreasonableness of these expectations:

> *Q6.25 Another element of that is – if I don't explain it then I'm not being*
> *a nice black person. You know? And if I just was nicer about the way I*
> *explain things. Because of the fatigue, I just say, 'Well fuck off, I'm not*
> *gonna. Go and read a book'. You know? [laughs] Um – 'If you black*
> *people were just nice about this'. But you know these ideas are not new*
> *ideas really, the whole idea of 'self-determination' – all those things –*
> *they're not new ideas. They've been explored countless times and it*
> *doesn't take much to sort of Google these concepts, you know what I*
> *mean?*

Claire draws again on the contrast she sees in attitudes to overseas travel and cultures to make a similar point. Here, she refers to common negative assumptions about Indigenous people:

> *Q6.26 So that's the thing I tend not to, I suppose 'fix' with non-Aboriginal people, is because you get that 'How come?' or 'Why?'. So you get tired of the same questions all the time. So I think they need to do a bit of research you know… I would do that. It's like if you are going to go travel to Greece, wouldn't you want to find out what the local language is and where to go eat and what accommodation is available? Same like travelling overseas. You do some personal research.*

She goes on to speak to the impact of these repetitive questions that are often rooted in offensive stereotypes. She says:

> *Q6.27 They just make me weak.*

A handful of respondents state that they disengage from interactions with ill-informed White people in order to protect themselves from frustration and fatigue. Sean puts it plainly:

> *Q6.28 So going back to what you asked before, there's sometimes a point where I just refuse to engage because of the level of the ignorance, right?*

In contrast, the smallest of efforts can be experienced as delivering relief, enlivening and a powerful basis for goodwill, connection and friendship. Dot talks about her response to White people who make the effort to learn just one or two words in her language:

> *Q6.29 Dot: Yes 'bobo[31]', it's Yolngu language, and when I hear that, when Balanda say that, I feel good inside, I feel good.*

Claire expresses repeatedly that she does not trust White people. When she is asked if there is any that she does trust, she replies:

> *Q6.30 Oh, there is some White people I trust because they embrace the Aboriginal culture. They want to learn and get to know us and they want to treat us equal to them.*

In this section I have presented the experience of many respondents that there is a deep imbalance in the division of labour around understanding cultural difference. This imbalance is unhelpful to race-relations. It is experienced as a lack of care and also as unfair. The significant positive impacts on race-relations of even very modest attempts by White people to learn about Indigenous languages and cultures are informative in the contrast they provide.

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[31] 'Bobo' means 'goodbye' in Yolgnu language.

6.3.2 The labour of cultural adaptation

Section 6.3.1 above reports perceptions of an unfair division of labour in relation to learning and understanding each other's cultural differences. This section reports respondent perceptions of an unfair division of labour in relation to the active accommodation of those cultural differences. Respondents describe operating in an environment of White normativity and hegemony. They report that in this environment cultural difference is neither embraced nor met halfway. The intense normativity of Whiteness is implicit in statements and stories from nearly all the respondents. Sean, a young professional, articulates this directly when describing a Twitter exchange:

> *Q6.31 And one person wrote, 'Why do we have to have all these other cultures? Why can't we all just be under the banner of Australian culture?' And I said, 'No thanks' ... You know, when people say 'Australian', and by people I mean White people, they don't usually envisage Indigenous people, let alone other ethnicities, within that context… Australian culture is proud of its ignorance, it's proud of its exclusion, it's proud of revising its history. So when people say, 'Why can't we all be Australian?' that's like putting on rose-tinted glasses and saying, well, these other cultures don't exist and if they do they need to be assimilated into this one… You can identify with more than just one culture. Most people do. Australian culture seems to have this idea that it's White or nothing.*

Paul is a long-term community leader and advocate. He appears to reference colonial attitudes of *terra nullius* when he talks about White hegemony and dismissive attitudes to the accommodation of Indigenous cultures in their own country:

> *Q6.32 I run cultural awareness … some of them mob don't accept it. And when they do that – there's some people in Australia still holding on from the past, you know? They think this is all White man country, and we're nobody.*

Cowlishaw writes that, 'Although *terra nullius* may have been abandoned in law, it still pervades popular conviction' (Cowlishaw 2004, p.7). The experience of many respondents is that there is an ever-present expectation that things will be done 'the White way' and in accordance with 'White priorities', with little room for negotiation, compromise or accommodation of 'Indigenous' ways and priorities. This dynamic has been documented in

the critical race and decolonisation literature reported in Chapter 3. National survey research shows that around a third of non-Indigenous Australians openly believe that Indigenous people 'should behave more like other Australians' (Beyond Blue 2014).

Some respondents talk explicitly about the power differential and how it enables White people to abrogate their share of the labour of cultural adaptation and compromise:

> *Q6.33 Paul: [White people] need to read more them cultural things you know and learn how to work in with us, you know. Stop being stubborn all their life, you know… I reckon if we work together and get a better understanding, instead of all the dominance all of the time. Dominance, dominance all the time, that's the problem – you know – 'We're in charge', 'We're the law', 'They're underclass', 'They're nothing'.*

> *Q6.34 Neil: You've got to enforce your law, and why can't we enforce ours, you know? Like, we say, 'You can't build here'. But then you go and build there. Like, whose laws are more important, you know? It should just go both ways, you know? But it doesn't. It's just very sad, it's a very sad thing. It makes me upset… White people say something has to be done and they do it because of the money and the system and the way they have things going on, they control everyone, you know? … You can't really stop anyone from doing anything, you know, because they're in charge, they say what has to happen and what people do, they control your lives.*

A few respondents express frustration at the failure by White Australia to embrace Indigenous cultures when Indigenous embrace of White western culture is assumed:

> *Q6.35 Diane: We celebrate whatever the White man brought here. We celebrate, of course we do. We want it, we like it. We like cars, and houses and fans and dresses. Why can't you like what we can give and offer yeah? … Why can't you embrace the Dreamtime and embrace us as a nation?*

Cassie suggests that Australia's governing institutions (which she equates with White people) are yet to recover from Australia's history of colonisation and so retain a colonial mindset. This, she implies, is betrayed by the fact that it does not even occur to government that there are benefits in incorporating Indigenous cultural knowledge into their decision making:

Q6.36 So, they have good advisors for western way, they got no good advisors for country [Indigenous] way. Like how to live on land. And they're not giving them that opportunity to do it, to find balance both ways. And that government, they saying 'sorry' to us mob to 'heal'. They are the one that need the healing, not us mob.

Others express frustration at the failure to even simply accommodate Indigenous cultures. Neil describes his sense of outrage at security personnel breaking up an important and emotional grieving ceremony in order to protect the grass in a public space. The ceremony was a gathering of 100 people for his brother who had died in tragic circumstances:

Q6.37 I felt disgusted, truly. I was thinking, like, how could they not know, you know, what we were doing and what it meant to us, you know? How could they not know? And why would they even come up and say something like that and tell us we can't do this, we can't do that? ... It's bad, they just try and enforce the law, you know, the White man law. But in forgetting that we also do have a law, you know? ... How would you feel if you got stopped from doing something of importance to you – like that important – to send your loved one off like that. A ceremony?

Diane talks about her family's futile multigenerational advocacy for education processes responsive to Indigenous cultural knowledge and behaviours:

Q6.38 My mother was in thousands and thousands of meetings in her lifetime trying to make changes... My grandfather was in so many! And [White people] keep saying, 'Oh, it's too hard, it's just too hard, it's too hard!'. Two hundred years of saying it's too hard to change, to modify, to alter, to include, to merge. For fuck's sake, you know?

Several respondents say, in various ways, that to preserve social harmony they are forced to be the ones to 'change', 'modify', 'alter' and 'merge':

Q6.39 Neil: I dunno, it's just if we're gunna, you know, like, I say we don't choose to live that way but if we're gunna get along then I reckon that, you know, we have to. Like we actually do it.

Q6.40 Daniel: Yeah, they've had to, yep. That was in order to, you know, to keep sort of co-existing with western ways of doing things, so

yeah, I guess they have adopted it, but I suppose you know, really there's no other choice.

Q6.41 William: White people govern us. So you've got to listen to their law to get along, otherwise we stuck to our law here, shit, there'd be chaos.

Q6.42 Geena: I would really like to do the things that meant most to me, but it's not always how it works out. You've gotta go by guidelines, you've got to do this and that, and, like what's important to us, isn't important to Australia, so it just gets pushed to one side.

Q6.43 James: You'd be surprised how many white families I took over to meet my parents and when they met my parents and saw how they lived they were my friends like that gone. I was just dropped. It was like, 'We don't mind hanging around with natives but not that kind of native. That's too native'.

Many respondents describe the labour of cultural adaptation that they must do in different parts of their lives in order to participate socially, economically and politically. The alternative is to withdraw from these spheres of engagement. This is an option that a significant number report taking. Annette is one of several respondents to speak about the overwhelming nature of the cultural adaptation required of her to work in White-run workplaces:

Q6.44 Sometimes it's very hard for us mob, countrymen, or even for me, to go out and to try and find a job because of White Australians that don't believe in our culture… There's no communication. It's okay if we work for Larrakia Nation, that's alright because it's run by Indigenous corporation mob. But if you try and go out and work with White Australians, it will be very different, how you dress and how you're going to speak to them. They changes us from that person to being that person. It's very hard. Yeah.

Dot and Diane both report withdrawing from employment as teachers' assistants when White co-workers (teachers) refused to take guidance on how they could adapt to better support their Indigenous students:

Q6.45 Dot: And she didn't like the way, like I was – how you say? – … interfering with her work. But I was there to help the Yolngu children.

So it got to me where I didn't want to work anymore, because she didn't want to listen to me.

Others, like Anne, talk about avoiding White-organised professional and social functions. Anne says this is partly because she has nothing to say in social conversation that revolves around White cultural values of individual achievement and materialism. She also feels self-conscious as the only black person in the room, owing to the White western norm of issuing individual rather than open invitations inclusive of multiple family members.

Neil suggests the only way to be included in policy discourse impacting Indigenous people is if Indigenous people enter the Australian political system and align with White viewpoints as much as possible before presenting Indigenous viewpoints:

Q6.46 Because that's the only way they'd listen. I think, because the amount of times we protest and all of that, like, hardly ever listen. But if you was into politics, then I think that if you're on their side as well, see things from their views…

The uneven effort to adapt to cultural difference is understood as inherently unfair and unhelpful to race-relations. Dot compares the mutual cultural give and take she sees when White people live in remote Indigenous communities. She suggests that that effort needs to be replicated in the city.

Q6.47 Dot: Well, I mean, it's White man, that Balanda, him should be changing culture. Changing all in issues and everything. Like trying to get together, you know? I mean, I know lot of Balanda mob work on communities. They respect the culture. That what Indigenous mob, Yolngu mob, they respect that culture for them too, that work on the community. Well, that should happen in parliament and the people that live in Darwin or wherever.

Joan says:

Q6.48 It always defaults to the expectation that that Aboriginal person must lose, give up that value, that expectation to attend that funeral. That's what it defaults to; the Aboriginal person must lose that value. [But] you can't just lose that value.

In addition to a sense of unfairness about the White Australian approach to cultural difference, a handful of respondents identify a further dimension of insult and injustice

when it comes to Indigenous people specifically. They point out that such attitudes are all the more offensive in that they fail to recognise their status as the First Nations peoples of Australia and as the people that belong here. The offense expressed by Diane and Paul below at Indigenous people being reduced to 'just another ethnic group' in multicultural Australia is widespread and has long been documented in scholarship (e.g. Dunn 2010):

> *Q6.49 Diane: We're not Chinese or Japanese, or Africans coming in and asking for help here, refugee migration, ethnic understanding and whatever they set up all these things for multicultural, to help people with English and to help them function and operate and exist, you know, all that stuff. They treat us like we're one of them! In fact, I was under the funding that I had once was came out of ethnic funding. They paid for me out of ethnic funding to do staff cross-cultural stuff, you know? I'm saying you people are still, you won't budge, you won't change, you won't have a mental shift that we were the first fucking people here, the first Australians, the first people, the first culture, the first way of life, the first religion, and you still today will not accept that...*

> *Q6.50 Paul: Us mob, we got one law in Australia and that law stays in Australia, it doesn't go anywhere and we practise it in Australia. They shouldn't come here with their western laws and tell us you got to do this now. This country is ours and you've got to share it … So when you say, 'How do you feel living in western society?', I feel a little bit no good, you know? I went to school, I learnt a little bit about western society that probably makes it all right with me, you know, the 'educated Indigenous' – I still practise my law, I still say it's wrong.*

Respondents report that they are forced to live in a society governed by White normativity. Within this environment it is normal for White people to expect Indigenous people to adapt to their cultural norms with only a minimal sense of reciprocal responsibility. Respondents feel they carry nearly the entire burden of this labour. This causes some to withdraw from participation and interaction in White dominated spaces. The imbalance in the workload of cultural adaptation is perceived as particularly unfair in light of Indigenous people's status as the First Peoples of Australia and that this is their only home. Immigrant minorities have *chosen* to become citizens of the settler nation but Indigenous people have never willingly ceded their lands or political autonomy. This point is repeatedly made in the reconciliation literature (e.g. Short 2005).

6.3.3 The labour of connecting across difference and segregation

The findings analysed so far suggest the respondents perceive that White engagement in the labour of constructive race-relations should include being prepared to dialogue about how to improve the relationship, learn about Indigenous cultures, and adopt and adapt to relevant aspects of those cultures. This section reports a fourth type of labour identified by respondents as critical to constructive race-relations. This is described as the conscious effort required by both Indigenous people and White Australians to achieve positive connections across divisions of cultural difference and entrenched social segregation that currently inhibit natural interaction and connection.

Some respondents compare race-relations in Darwin favourably with other places but, even so, the majority still describe Darwin as racially segregated. Leah is young, unemployed and a regular visitor from a remote community, Anne and Diane are older women, employed, and were born and raised in Darwin, Daniel, a young man, grew up in a remote community but lives in town to attend university. They all say the same thing:

> *Q6.51 Leah: They don't know how to get to know each other – there's only White people and black people keeping away from each other, you know?*

> *Q6.52 Int: What are people saying to each other about White people, then?*
> *Anne: To tell you the truth, I don't think they are saying much because we just don't have that, we don't socialise with White people. We don't have anything to do with White people.*

> *Q6.53 Diane: Start getting people to mix, mingle, to get together because they don't – we don't. We don't see black fellas and White people together unless it's a football thing. All the socials are set, everyone's, you know, the White blokes are in their pubs and black fellas are, yeah, they don't have any pub and it's all segregated.*

> *Q6.54 Daniel: I do see a lot of people, you know, like a lot of Aboriginal people talking to White people who have been friends with them, but then again, I see a lot who just zoned separate… Yeah. I see a lot more segregation than I do of unities sort of thing.*

Not everyone agrees with these stark descriptions of race-relations in Darwin. Young urban-raised men in particular tend to report people are 'getting along' and that their friendship circles are mixed. However, they acknowledge this is not the case for all Indigenous people, and that they themselves avoid segments of the White population they perceive as likely to be racist.

Some respondents observe that overcoming these social divisions will take conscious effort:

> *Q6.55 Annette: People, like Indigenous mob, they want to be on their own instead of mixing with the White Australians. They find it hard to communicate and there's a barrier there that we do need to break that barrier down to make it a better place for Indigenous and non-Indigenous mob. That is what that barrier blocking for our people to come to know each other, our culture and their culture.*

> *Q6.56 Daniel: You have to be open-minded as well and that's what I try to do. I always try to open my mind and try to understand other people's perspectives and that's how – I guess, both sides of our Aboriginal people and White people to sort of open up each other's minds and understand each other a bit better. That way we should be able to live here and shall co-exist.*

> *Q6.57 Anne: Anything can be fixed, but to fix this situation between black and White it takes a lot of long, hard work. You always have to have a good team behind you to win and achieve things and it's just too hard. And I don't think there's enough interest out there from both communities, black and White communities, to go the full hog and make the actual real effort to close the gap.*

Here, the respondents suggest that not only is conscious effort needed to improve race-relations, but that neither Indigenous people nor White Australians are willing to put that effort in. Others report that, akin to other aspects of the race-relations labour, Indigenous people are putting in a greater share of the effort. Homeless respondents in particular report that they often make friendly overtures to White Australians only to be ignored. Elaine is a neatly presented, long-term homeless woman and she says:

> *Q6.58 Because we see them and we always trying to say hello. They don't say hello. We say 'G'day'. They don't say 'G'day'. They just walk past… If they wanna be them kind of people, we don't like racist people.*

> *We don't. We good. We're loving, kind-hearted people. We polite*
> *people… I don't say anything. I just go and sit down.*

Claire suggests Indigenous people are the ones organising the activities in support of reconciliation:

> *Q6.59 Well I think the Aboriginal people have been trying to reconcile*
> *for a long time. But I see the Aboriginal people making activities for*
> *reconciliation, why don't non-Aboriginal people – White people – make*
> *activities for us to meet with them? … Why do we have to put our*
> *flagship at our hand all the time? Why can't they do something to*
> *reconcile with us?*

There is a tangible sense of unfairness communicated through these particular observations. The importance, however, of White Australians shifting from a passive to an active approach to race-relations, extends beyond simply doing their fair share. For some respondents, active efforts by White Australians to connect have a particular contribution to make to constructive race-relations, irrespective of the relative efforts of Indigenous people. Indeed, research has shown that segregation patterns are most highly impacted by the preferences of the dominant race group (Priest et al. 2014). The importance of a proactive White approach is attributed by one respondent to the power imbalance and White hegemony. She suggests things will not shift unless, and until, White Australians take an active role in repairing race-relations because that is the nature of power and social change:

> *Q6.60 Clara: Yeah, I just think that it's both sides not wanting to talk to*
> *each other at all because I think like people don't care. That's what I*
> *feel, that White people don't care, and then black people just don't care*
> *that they don't care, so they just don't care. And, the only way to make*
> *that change is to have a [White] person that's literally, from my point of*
> *view, saying, 'Look, I do care, and you know I want to change it'.*
> *Because, as stuffed as it is, if a black person came through and said,*
> *'I'm sick of the way my people are getting treated, I want to do*
> *something about it', you know, it might not even get done – even though*
> *you try as hard as you can to want to get that done and succeed in this*
> *because that's what you're passionate about. To me, it's not until a*
> *White person joins your argument that people start looking at you. So,*
> *yeah, I guess we just need that powerful person to actually care.*

More commonly, the respondents tie the importance of active effort by White Australians to reach out and connect to the rectification of a trust deficit that White people are perceived to have created. The presence of a significant trust deficit is widely recognised and is measured in the Reconciliation Barometer (Nelson 2018, p.30). Respondents suggest this lack of trust has two implications for race-relations. Firstly, some respondents report that negative personal and intergenerational experiences of judgement, rejection and disrespect, mean Indigenous people are unwilling to be the ones to initiate interaction. In Chapter 5 (eg Q5.10, Q5.18, Q5.29), I demonstrated that these experiences of rejection cause respondents to withdraw and avoid interaction. Claire and Frank indicate that one of the obstacles to mixing is the unpredictable nature of White reactions to Indigenous approaches. Claire says:

> Q6.61 *Aboriginal people are kind. They open their hearts and their doors to everybody… but I think the Aboriginal people in Darwin – there's a lot of not trusting of White Australians – because they take things the wrong way.*

Frank is an older man who has held senior administrative positions in his remote home community. He was sleeping rough while visiting town for an extended holiday. He says:

> Q6.62 *Well, see if I walk in – I mean a stranger, like I never met this bloke, touch his shoulder and say, give me smoke, whatever. I don't know whether he would swear at me back, or – you know? Well, I never met him before like, you know.*

In the context of the high levels of race-based verbal abuse experienced by Indigenous people across Australia (Nelson 2018, p.18), the respondents' reluctance to initiate interaction can be appreciated as entirely rational. Accordingly, some respondents suggest White people need to be the ones to initiate interactions. Geena is employed, housed and English is her first language, but even with the White people with whom she is most familiar, she waits for them to initiate contact for fear of being unwelcome. She describes the White people in her life with whom she feels most comfortable:

> Q6.63 *They don't send out any vibes that they don't want to be around us, or anything like that. Like it's always usually them making the first move to hang out with us and I think that's probably why I feel comfortable with them because, like, me – if I feel like I am bugging someone or whatnot – I would just wait until they come to me. But yeah … it's always them making the first move trying to hang out, and that's what I like about them.*

The second implication of the trust deficit is that of a need for perseverance by White Australians when connection does not come easily or when Indigenous people are initially untrusting and unresponsive. This is implied by some and openly stated by others. It appears to be linked to a need for White people to 'prove' their sincerity. Geena says things are improving, but that persistent effort is needed and 'long and steady wins the race'. At Q6.5 above she talks about the importance of engaging repeatedly when seeking dialogue to prove a sincerity of interest. She goes on to say:

> *Q6.64 Prove to them that you are interested in what they've got to say, prove to them that you do want to make a change and prove to them that you are part of this change… It would be a lot of hard work to get people as interested and willing to do it would be another thing too. But, yeah, I think that would be a really good first step.*

Claire expresses cynicism about White motivations behind expressions of goodwill. She is talking about White people at the NAIDOC Week march:

> *Q6.65 Are they going because they are passionate and support the cause or are they going because it's fashionable? That's what I put a question mark on, you know?*

She says she will not open up to White people until she can see evidence from their perseverance that they are genuine and are interested in a connection that is not all on their terms or about their own gratification. She refers to this as evidence as 'battle scars':

> *Q6.66 A lot of the times you [White people] have to prove yourself and work hard and make mistakes and learn by them and lessons learnt and move on. The thing about it is being honest and sometimes you have to work damn hard but you don't get the results – the sort of results you want. That's what I mean by battle scars.*

She also says that one aspect of this perseverance includes breaking the feedback loop of negative interactions by weathering without retaliation the occasional racialised slur from drunk, homeless, and likely traumatised[32], Indigenous people without retaliation:

> *Q6.67 Be a bit thick skinned. If they call you a fucken White cunt, so what? Just keep walking.*

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[32] Holmes's 2008 study of trauma levels in the homeless population of Darwin found extremely high levels of exposure to multiple traumatic lifetime events and that 1 in every 5 homeless people in Darwin were PTSD symptomatic (Holmes and McRae-Williams 2009).

Sean explains that this is the price of a long history that needs to be overcome:

> *Q6.68 It's such a big ask. There's so much anger and bitterness there –*
> *and hatred, I'd go as far as to say – and I think that it's at that level.*
> *When White people are ready to engage, some Indigenous people just*
> *aren't ready yet and it really can hurt someone who's trying to reach out*
> *with their small amount of understanding, saying, 'Please, Indigenous*
> *person, I'm trying to understand here' and an Indigenous person just*
> *goes, 'No, fuck off'.*

I have shown that there is a perceived need for active and determined outreach by White Australians. Instead, several respondents report that opportunities for casual friendly interactions in public spaces are often blocked rather than embraced or fostered by White people. The respondents' observations align with studies that show that the White population is more likely to self-segregate than minority groups (Priest et al. 2014). Diane is one of many to speak about the disrespectful responses to Indigenous people she observes on the street (see also Q5.51, Q5.56-57):

> *Q6.69 Diane: I've seen it and heard the Whitefellas, when the*
> *Blackfellas say, 'Hey brother, you got a smoke?' and they say, 'Fuck*
> *off'. I've heard the Whitefellas say, 'Fuck off and don't call me brother'.*
> *Int: And what do you think about that?*
> *Diane: They're very nasty and rude. There's no need to be nasty and*
> *rude. You just say, 'I don't have any smokes' or 'No, I can't give you'.*
> *But I've heard them. I've been walking behind them and they say, 'Fuck*
> *off, you black cunt'. They say really bad things to them. There's no need*
> *for that. They always add this nasty sting on it too and they say, 'You're*
> *not my fucking brother'.*

Don and Claire talk about the pattern of interactions they see in pubs. In Australian society, pubs are commonly a space for natural social connection between strangers:

> *Q6.70 Don: Yeah. And if they go to the pub, you know, welcome*
> *Aboriginal person, you know. Look after him there. And don't give cheek*
> *or be racist creating more problem.*

> *Q6.71 Claire: They have this thing, 'Oh God, stay away from them, they*
> *will be asking you for money for grog'... It's like, 'Don't talk to me, you*
> *might ask me for a beer'. Well, sorry, we got money, you know. Don't*
> *assume that we're all gonna ask you for free grog.*

Similarly, some respondents speak about White responses to the opportunities to connect with Indigenous people in their neighbourhoods. Joan says she sees people with Indigenous neighbours putting up higher fences or blackout material on wire fences. She interprets this as an explicit message that interaction is unwelcome.

> *Q6.72 I think from that reaction is – 'Don't want to have anything to do with them', 'I want to block them out', 'Want to fence them off', 'Don't come into my space', 'Don't look into my space!'. It's unwelcoming… And I haven't only seen it within close proximity to my house. I've seen it in other places in the suburbs where Aboriginal people live next door.*

The emphasis placed by respondents on the importance of casual interactions in public spaces is supported by research on the role of these interactions in building inclusion and a sense of community (Priest et al. 2014).

Many respondents say White people need to stop blocking opportunities for interaction. Some suggest White people need also to actively create them. Priest's work indicates that under the right conditions increased intergroup contact can improve race-relations (Priest et al. 2014). In this vein, a few respondents suggest White people should change some of their patterns of behaviour and consciously step outside of their comfort zones to increase opportunities for connection. For some, it is as simple as going up and talking to someone with whom they would not normally think they have things in common. Stewart, a young urban-raised Indigenous man, is responding to the question of what White Australians can do to improve race-relations:

> *Q6.73 Change their behaviour. Probably just take a chance at talking to someone that's Indigenous and making friends… Where I live, there's a big old park there and there was a couple of Indigenous people that would be sleeping there at night time and everything. And then I remember one time I went over and I was kicking a footy by myself and he came up to me and … he just said, 'Do you want to kick the footy with me?'. And I was like, 'Yeah, alright', and started kicking the footy with this random Indigenous bloke. He proper taught me how to kick left-footed and everything… Yeah. Just have a chat, I guess.*

> *Q6.74 Claire: Sit down with 'em. Sit down with 'em. And it doesn't mean having a beer with 'em. Just go sit down there and say, 'Hello, my name's such and such. Tell me what's so great about being Aboriginal'. Well, we'll tell you what's great. You know we're very proud race.*

Sharing that information between each other and leaving that baggage behind. Go there as people talking to people. Don't look at colour, don't look at clothes, don't look at smell, don't look at appearance. Just sit down and say, 'Hello, my name is John, what's your name?'.

A couple of respondents point to White lifestyles and suggest White people may need to make a conscious decision to abandon the routine behaviours that keep them separate from Indigenous worlds. Anne sees White lifestyles as a barrier to connection. She says:

Q6.75 People, they go to work and, you know, work in the air-conditioned office and get in the air-conditioned car and then go home to their air-conditioned house and that's it! Not seeing anything around them, to say the least, that's all.

Annette's story of her White friend and Bagot Community[33] also suggests that White people may have to venture outside of their comfort zones and make conscious effort to place themselves in situations where interaction can occur. She says many White people in Darwin have a habit of avoiding designated Indigenous suburbs (Q5.13). Another member of Bagot community tells a similar story about the positive results of a White friend making a decision to spend time in Indigenous-dominated spaces:

Q6.76 Carl: Like, at first she was nervous, really nervous… Now, whenever she walk around here, she's very relaxed, she knows the Bagot people… Before she was really afraid [laughs]. Yeah. But now everyone all know her here, and she knows everyone here in Bagot, she always come and have a yarn…

Many respondents indicate that social segregation and cultural differences inhibit opportunities for natural and constructive interactions with White Australians. Some suggest that it will require conscious effort by everyone to overcome these barriers to reconciliation. Others report, however, that White Australians are not meeting them halfway. Some assert White Australians need to do more than just meet Indigenous people halfway. They need to be proactive in connecting, persevere in their efforts to do so, and adjust their behaviour and preferences to create and embrace opportunities for positive interactions. Justifications for this include a perception of disproportionate White social power and therefore increased responsibility. More commonly, respondents raise the need for White people to work to

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[33] Bagot Community, sometimes referred to as Bagot Road Aboriginal Reserve, is an Aboriginal community located close to Darwin's CBD. It was established in 1938 as the Bagot Aboriginal Reserve and is now administered by a community council.

rectify a trust deficit White people are perceived to have created. In a context of a legacy of distrust, respondents believe it is fair and necessary for White Australians to make a disproportionate and determined effort to earn their trust.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reported some of the attitudes and behaviours that respondents indicate would enable reconciliation if they were more prevalent in the White population. Collectively, the respondents' observations suggest that passive goodwill from White Australians is not sufficient to enable sustained, constructive race-relations. They point to the need for White Australians to engage in greater numbers and to a greater degree in the intellectual and emotional labour of race-relations. This challenges the value of White Australian 'goodwill' in the absence of efforts to engage in behaviours that demand something of White Australians and that actively facilitate constructive race-relations. Goodwill is not the same as equal and sincere dialogical exchange. It is not the same as pro-active engagement in cultural learning, cultural adaptation and conscientious efforts to reach across the cultural and social divide. Indeed, in the absence of such efforts the effect of feelings of goodwill on race-relations may sometimes be hard to distinguish from that of callous disregard.

The inadequacy of passive goodwill aligns with heavily criticised concepts of White benevolence or beneficence in the Whiteness literature (see for example Bond et al 2021; Howard-Wagner 2009; Riggs 2004; Hage 2002). Displays of White benevolence in the form of mere goodwill towards and inclusiveness of the Indigenous 'other', can be understood as performative acts that enable the White population to view itself as ethical, anti-racist and benign in its engagement with Indigenous people when in fact such acts mask and perpetuate White domination, normativity and control (Howard-Wagner 2009, p56; Riggs 2004, p.6). In the absence of White transformation, or active openness to transformation, such acts are nothing more than a reassertion of the White population's entitlement to determine the rules of inclusion and engagement and reinforce Indigenous marginality. It is, as Bond so concisely puts it 'absolution rather than accountability' (Bond 2021, p.91). Passive goodwill means that 'non-Indigenous people can't really be blamed for [their] violence against Indigenous people as [their] intentions were/are good' (Riggs 2004, p.6).

The respondent experiences demonstrate that the unfair distribution of the race-relations labour burden is part of the burden of disregard that they shoulder. They indicate that the sense of injustice sparked by this unfair division of labour is not conducive to building trust and advancing reconciliation. In contrast, even small efforts to engage in the behaviours described here are reported to trigger significant feelings of wellbeing and trust. In the next chapter I will explore more deeply some of the consequences of the obstacles and enablers identified in the previous two chapters for Indigenous people and for race-relations.

Chapter 7: Fair engagement as a missing capability

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, I reported a range of attitudes and behaviours the respondents experience as sufficiently prevalent in the White Australian population to obstruct constructive race-relations. In Chapter 6, I reported a range of attitudes and behaviours the majority of respondents believe would better enable constructive race-relations if they were *more* prevalent in the White population. The common thread in these stories is a sense of injustice. It is the respondents' experience that, regardless of intention, many White Australians tend to engage unfairly with Indigenous people. They report White Australians perceive them unfairly, treat them unfairly and do not shoulder their fair share of the race-relations labour.

In this chapter, I consider the evidence that this unfair engagement is not exceptional. I show that the attitudes and behaviours described are broadly reflective of the state of Indigenous/non-Indigenous race-relations in Australia today. They can also be understood as a continuation of the colonial paradigm. I draw on recognition theory to demonstrate the depth and significance of the social injustice and division to which these attitudes and behaviours contribute. Recognition theory helps explain why the unfair attitudes and behaviours the respondents describe are not petty matters but have profound consequences for Indigenous people and for race-relations. I collate the respondents' observations to show that these consequences include distrust, a sense of exclusion, withdrawal from interactions with White Australians and a retaliatory rejection of White Australians. Their cumulative impact is an observable pattern of race segregation in Darwin. I conclude that constructive race-relations, and therefore White Australia's aspirations for better outcomes for Indigenous people, cannot be achieved unless they can learn to engage more fairly with Indigenous people.

7.2 'Local talk' and the national picture

Although the respondents' observations are 'local talk', such talk can deliver a deeper understanding of the bigger picture and draw out propositions about the nation (McCallum

2003, p.116; Cowlishaw 2004, p.4). Throughout chapters 5 and 6, I linked the experiences of the respondents to the broader empirical literature on Indigenous/non-Indigenous race-relations. I showed that White behaviours of stereotyping, assumptions of superiority, judgement, racism, discrimination and disrespect have been widely documented throughout Australia. Similarly, I showed that the literature on race relations confirms the importance of White Australians making efforts to connect across difference in even fleeting encounters; the benefits of enabling increased opportunity for intergroup interactions; and that there is a widespread assumption in the White population that Indigenous people should be the ones to do the work of cultural adaptation (e.g. Gray and Sanders 2015, p.3; Priest et al 2014; Temple et al 2019). The respondents' observations both confirm, and are confirmed by, national surveys and other location-specific studies. These studies indicate that the attitudes and behaviours of which the respondents speak are a common and problematic feature of race-relations for Indigenous people throughout Australia.

The consistency of respondent experiences with broader scholarship suggests that the unfair behaviours they report should not be dismissed as individual hypersensitivity, nor as out of character for the White Australian population as a whole. They are neither aberrational from an otherwise functional intercultural relationship, nor are they unique to Darwin. Rather, the indications are, that the picture painted by the respondents accurately depicts the day-to-day reality of race-relations for many Indigenous people. Although they would appear to be largely known and accepted facts in scholarship, the patterns and behaviours raised by the respondents rarely feature in public discourses on what are commonly termed 'Indigenous issues'.

7.3 Business as usual: Contemporary race-relations as a continuation of colonial dynamics

In many respects the attitudes and behaviours the respondents describe represent a continuation of the paradigm of colonial race-relations. The attitudes and behaviours of the early colonisers are now widely understood by the broader Australian population to have been deeply unjust and profoundly harmful (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.5). In 2008 the Australian government enjoyed widespread support when it formally apologised to the First Nations people of Australia for some of the historical policies that arose from the White supremacist attitudes of former times[34]. The White supremacy of colonial theory has now

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[34] These policies are explicitly referred to in the text of the Apology which can be read here: https://www.aph.gov.au/Visit_Parliament/Whats_On/Exhibitions/Custom_Media/Apology_to_Austra lias_Indigenous_Peoples (accessed 8 August 2021)

been resoundingly scientifically dis-endorsed (McCann Mortimer et al. 2004); overt belief in it is treated in Australian society as socially abhorrent, with the exception of a small and mostly ageing segment of the population (Dunn et al. 2004, p.420; Nelson 2018, p.45); and law prohibits unequal treatment on the basis of race. It is fair to say that much of contemporary Australian society categorically rejects the race hierarchy concept on which the moral foundation of the colonial paradigm relied. The experiences of the respondents, however, suggest that much of White Australia has not abandoned in equal measure many of the unjust attitudes and behaviours associated with that paradigm. Amongst the beliefs endorsed by colonial theory was the idea that Indigenous people are 'underdeveloped' but with education and training can be 'civilised' and 'improved' (Bretherton and Mellor 2006). Respondent experiences suggest this perspective would still appear to have currency.

The respondents overwhelmingly report that they are perceived to be inferior (Q5.14-18, Q5.20, Q5.23–25, Q5.29). Sean speaks about the White Australian desire to 'fix' Indigenous people (Q5.19) while Neil describes workplace assumptions that White Australians know best (Q5.21). Claire (Q5.40) and Diane (Q5.41) point out that Indigenous hardships are regularly blamed on Indigenous choices and cultural values, and that Indigenous people therefore have a responsibility to change. This is as opposed to external factors such as historical injustice or structural racism. All respondents report that at least some White Australians feel entitled to treat them with open disrespect, racism and discrimination (Q5.47–53). Further, the majority of respondents report that their cultural differences are judged (Q5.36–39), that the contribution of their cultural knowledge is ascribed a low value (Q5.25, Q6.17–19, Q6.23, Q6.32-33, Q6.35–36) and that it is taken as common sense that they should learn and adopt the ways of White Australian culture (Q5.27, Q6.21–23, Q6.31, Q6.34, Q6.37-42). The overarching implication of these experiences is congruent with much of the critical race analysis of contemporary Australian discourses on Indigenous related matters. Namely, that White Australians still see themselves as the critical assessors, civilisers and capacity builders of a deficient Indigenous population that needs to 'catch up' (e.g. Altman 2014; Howard-Wagner 2012).

In Chapter 3, I used critical race and decolonisation theory to explain how these attitudes and behaviours have maintained their legitimacy in an era where their conscious foundations have been so resoundingly eroded. I highlighted Said's analysis of the dynamics of domination by colonisers in the colonial era and the means by which it was justified and maintained. Said explains that the self-perception of colonising populations as a civilising force is established and maintained by a practice of essentialising and Othering the colonised group. The version of the colonised population that is projected onto that

population more closely reflects the coloniser's self-perception as superior, than it does the reality of the colonised group. Difference is equated with inferiority and interpreted negatively. The colonised group is wholly defined by its difference. This validates and reinforces perceptions of superiority, therefore justifying dominance and control (Said 1978).

Respondent observations indicate that several of these same enabling elements persist in contemporary Australian race-relations. The respondents strongly convey the sense of an impenetrable pattern of misrecognition by White Australians of them and their communities. Nearly all the participants in the research refer to the unfair negative stereotypes to which they and their communities are regularly reduced (Q5.6–13). Several tell of a negative and judgemental approach to Indigenous cultural difference (Q5.34, Q5.37–39). Neil shares the story of his White co-worker who, by default, interprets rational but culturally different choices by Indigenous people as irresponsibility and incompetence (Q5.39). The story suggests that Neil's co-worker applied a negative stereotype to a behaviour he did not understand. Difference was assumed to be inferior. This resulted in a contemptuous reaction to a behaviour that could equally have been understood as reflecting values of family responsibility, generosity, service and selflessness. As a result, the co-worker's pre-existing sense of superiority was not only left unchallenged by his experiences, but reinforced.

The respondents' experiences make it clear that, in many respects, unjust attitudes and behaviours from the colonial era continue as 'business as usual'. Critical race theory explains they are so normalised that they pass unnoticed (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Legal equality and shifting attitudes to overt racism are important steps in the process towards more constructive race-relations, but do not in any way amount to its culmination. Respondents report that, regardless of any lack of hostility, or even genuine goodwill that many White Australians may feel towards them (Q5.1-4), they consistently engage with Indigenous people unfairly. White Australians perceive them unfairly, treat them unfairly and do an unfair share of the intellectual and emotional labour of constructive race-relations. The behaviours described are not an aberration from an otherwise functional relationship, they are, in many respects, a continuation of deeply unjust and dysfunctional colonial race-relations.

7.4   The personal and collective wounds of misrecognition

The consequences of these compounding and commonplace acts of unfairness are considerable. Australia's achievement of some meaningful milestones on the path towards race justice does not mean that the nature of the unfairness that remains is minor. Legal equality is just one of the three dimensions of recognition of the individual on which Honneth argues self-realisation and a just society are conditioned (Honneth 2001). In this section, I collate respondent descriptions of the consequences of the unfair attitudes and behaviours reported in chapters 5 and 6 to demonstrate their profound impact on race-relations. Drawing on recognition theory, I show that these are not mere instances of petty unfairness that Indigenous people should just 'get over' (Geena) or 'harden the fuck up' to (Diane), as some respondents report they are told to do. Rather, they are injustices of misrecognition that have the potential to cumulatively carve deep wounds and social division. I have distilled these consequences into four main categories: withdrawal from interactions with White Australians; a reduced trust of White Australians; a sense of exclusion by White Australians; and a retaliatory rejection of White Australians by Indigenous people. The cumulative impact of these consequences is social division in the form of marked race segregation. I deal with each of these in turn.

7.4.2 Clara: 'I won't even go up to them': Withdrawal from interactions

The most commonly articulated consequence of White Australian attitudes and behaviours is withdrawal by Indigenous people from interactions with them and from spaces where such interactions are likely to occur. Avoidance of White Australians is the primary response reported by the study participants across the full spectrum of problematic White attitudes and behaviours described in this study. Respondents indicate that avoidant behaviours are triggered by attitudes of superiority (Q5.18, Q5.29) as well as the ongoing sense of shame that such attitudes can provoke (Q5.31). They are also triggered by constant judgement (Q5.45-46) and acts of racism, discrimination and disrespect (Q5.52-53, Q5.56-58, Q5.61, Q6.62). Respondents also report limiting engagement because of White people's self-serving agendas (Q5.86); disrespectful engagement in dialogical exchange (Q6.9); disingenuous engagement in dialogical exchange (Q6.15); failure to make efforts to become informed about Indigenous cultures (Q6.26–28); unwillingness to adapt to Indigenous cultures (Q6.45); and lack of effort to connect across cultural barriers (Q6.55).

Avoidance is recognised in Australian scholarship as a common response to past negative race-based experiences. Temple et al. (2019) demonstrate that the strategic efforts of Indigenous people to avoid potentially racist encounters are a widespread phenomenon in

Australia. This strategic avoidance is so prevalent that they identify avoidant behaviours as a distorting factor that must be accounted for in assessments of racism levels in the community. This means that, where such assessments rely on the frequency of racist experiences as their measure, consideration must be taken of the fact that many potentially racist experiences are systematically and strategically avoided by Indigenous people.

The bottom line is that the unfair engagement respondents describe triggers a range of stressful and unpleasant emotions. The respondents describe feelings of fear, anger, hurt, frustration, irritation and boredom. Racism, disrespect, judgement and assumptions of superiority are reported as particular sources of emotional (and physical) unsafety (Q5.18, Q5.29, Q5.45–46, Q5.51–53, Q5.55-58, Q6.62). Tim and Annette avoid interactions for fear of their own behaviour if they lose control of their anger response to racially-based unjust treatment (Q5.58). Anne feels stressed and bored at social and professional functions that are solely responsive to White Australian social comfort zones and cultural expectations. She is not the only one to report relinquishing good employment opportunities in all-White organisations for these reasons (Q6.44). Others report feelings of futility and frustration, interwoven with feelings of offense, when encountering disingenuous engagement, ignorance and unfair stereotyping (Q6.8-9, Q6.26–28, Q6.45).

Recognition theory suggests that it is more than mere transient emotional discomfort that the respondents are seeking to avoid in withdrawing from interaction. Honneth (2001) identifies misrecognition as harmful to individual self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect and an affront to a sense of justice. All three types of misrecognition referred to by Honneth can be found in the respondents' experiences. Dot is talking about a failure to recognise, validate and create spaces for the safe expression of the unique needs and aspirations of Indigenous people when she refers to their withdrawal from disingenuous consultations (Q6.15). Diane and Cassie offer only limited and wary engagement because of a perceived lack of regard for Indigenous preferences and priorities (Q5.85-86). Tim does not reveal his true thoughts and feelings to White Australians for fear of receiving abuse rather than recognition and validation (Q6.6). A lack of recognition of their inherent dignity as human beings and rights to equal treatment is repeatedly raised in stories of avoiding attitudes of superiority (Q5.18, Q5.29) and racism (Q5.52-58). It is a lack of esteeming of their uniquely Indigenous identity and a failure to recognise the things Indigenous people have to contribute that Lara is talking about when she describes the nature of the shame she sees in Indigenous friends and family in relation to their Indigeneity (Q5.31), or when Claire (Q5.46) and Neil (Q5.45) talk about feeling judged for their difference, or when Annette says she has to change who she is to get

a job (Q6.44), or when Dot and Diane have their advice as teacher's assistants dismissed (Q6.45).

Honneth (2001) explains that subjection to persistent misrecognition is harmful. It is inherently wounding and stressful. The sense of injustice triggered by repeated experiences of misrecognition is in itself a profound source of strain. It is hardly surprising that many Indigenous people do not want to be exposed to misrecognition and attempt to avoid interactions with a perceived key source of it. Given the plethora of studies that demonstrate the negative consequences of stress for physical and mental health, withdrawal from sites of that stress can be understood as a rational and healthy response (e.g. Larson et al. 2007; Paradies et al 2008; Paradies 2016, 2018; Temple et al 2019).

7.4.2 Claire: 'Well, I don't trust them, you know?': Reduced trust

The reduction of trust is a second, closely related consequence of the unfair ways in which White Australians engage with Indigenous people. The mutual distrust described by Cassie at Q5.86 is widely understood to be an important and problematic feature of Indigenous/non-Indigenous race-relations. So much so that the Reconciliation Barometer measures trust levels between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people biennially as a way of gauging the state of race-relations. It has consistently recorded the levels of trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as low (Nelson 2018, p.30). Respondents say that experiences of racism (Q6.62), persistent judgement (Q5.8, Q5.45), negative misinterpretations of cultural practices (Q6.61), a lack of consultation (Q6.13, Q6.64), disingenuous consultation (Q6.15), lack of effort to understand cultural differences (Q6.30), and a perceived cultural tendency to self-serving agendas and the prioritising of personal gain (Q5.76–77, Q5.79, Q5.81–87) all contribute to low levels of trust.

The respondents' experiences indicate that patterns of unfair engagement negatively impact trust levels in three main ways. Firstly, many respondents do not feel they can always trust White Australians to do what is right and fair in relation to them (Q5.76-77, Q5.79–87). This is especially so if it conflicts with individual self-interest, the prioritising of which is perceived by the respondents to be culturally condoned by White Australians (Q5.65, Q5.67, Q5.75–76). Secondly, some do not feel on stable ground around White Australians because they do not trust that they genuinely care or are engaging with them sincerely (Q6.13–15, Q6.19–20, Q6.64, Q5.83-84). Thirdly, respondents report that they do not trust that they will

be understood and received positively, or given the benefit of the doubt when they are not understood (Q6.61- 62, Q6.69, Q5.39).

Here, again, patterns of misrecognition are strongly present in the White Australian attitudes and behaviours associated with low levels of trust. Claire is describing misrecognition of the value of Indigenous people's cultural and economic contributions to Australia when she talks about the misinterpretation of their kindness and the fact that poorly or unpaid Indigenous labour was instrumental in setting up Australia's economy (Q5.8, 6.61). Neil also speaks to this when he talks about his co-worker judging rather than esteeming admirable aspects of Indigenous cultures (Q5.39). Mark (Q5.51), Elaine (Q6.58), Diane (Q6.69) and Frank (Q6.62) are describing misrecognition of their inherent dignity, equal status and worthiness of respect as human beings when they talk about the dismissive and aggressive responses to their friendly greetings that have made them so wary of approaching White Australians they do not know. In contrast, Claire references her increased trust of the rare White Australians who make an effort to learn about her culture. She experiences this as recognition of her and her culture as their equal (Q6.30). It is a failure to recognise the validity of Indigenous people's needs and aspirations when White Australians do not engage in meaningful and sincere consultation with Indigenous people (Q6.13-15) or diminish and disregard Indigenous people's expressed interests in pursuit of other priorities (Q5.75, Q5.85–86). The 2008 Apology to the Stolen Generations was an important act of symbolic recognition of historical injustices by the Australian Government – injustice that was bound up in all three forms of misrecognition – but Paul (Q5.84) ultimately experienced it as insincere because, in his view, flagrant unfair engagement and dismissal of Indigenous needs and aspirations continue. His views find significant support in broader commentary on the Apology that notes the sense of betrayal and lost opportunity that accompanied its failure to mark a meaningful shift in engagement with Indigenous people (Maddison 2012, p703; Nelson 2018, p.95).

Here, again, respondents describe patterns of interaction in which all three forms of misrecognition that Honneth (2001) implicates in profound harm to self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect, are present. The levels of trust essential to constructive race-relations are unlikely to be achieved in a social climate riddled with wounding behaviours, regardless of intention. In fact, for some, it is the lack of intention behind those wounding behaviours, and the obliviousness of White Australians, that can make them hard to trust (Q5.8).

7.4.3 Annette: 'Being shut out by White Australians': A sense of exclusion

A further harmful consequence of unfair engagement by White Australians is a sense of exclusion. Annette says Indigenous people can feel 'shut out by White Australians' (Q5.13). Sean and Paul suggest that Indigeneity does not fall within many White Australians' amorphous concept of who is properly 'Australian' (Q6.31–32). The widespread nature of this general sense of non-belonging is confirmed by a survey of nearly 500 Indigenous people in Darwin in which 42 per cent of respondents said most White people act like they do not want Indigenous people in Darwin (Habibis et al. 2016, p.14). For some respondents, this feeling of exclusion is associated with experiences of active and overt acts of exclusion expressing racism (Q5.56), superiority (Q5.22, Q5.28), judgement (Q5.35, Q6.43) and stereotyping (Q5.12–13, Q6.72). It is felt in their cold reception in pubs (Q5.35, Q6.70-71), the raising of fences (Q6.72), the bypassing of 'Indigenous' suburbs (Q5.13), the aggressive snubs in shared public spaces (Q5.51, Q6.69, Q5.61, Q6.58) and the arms-length 'friendships' that do not cross the intimate threshold of the front door (Q5.22, Q5.12).

For many, however, the message of unwelcome is not necessarily perceived as intentional. It is a message that is delivered subtly by a lack of active inclusion. The sense of exclusion arises in part from the requirement that, in order to be included, Indigenous people must conform to White Australian ways of being and doing (Q5.37–39, Q5.43, Q6.33–34, Q6.37, Q6.39–40, Q6.42–44, Q6.46, Q6.48). It is also in the lack of regard for the value and relevance of Indigenous perspectives and contributions (Q5.28, Q6.7–8, Q6.10–11, Q6.13–15, Q6.21–23, Q6.29–30, Q6.35–36, Q6.45-46, Q6.64). This passive exclusion is not simply irritating or offensive, or an obstacle to be overcome by Indigenous people with a bit of determination. It represents a misrecognition of the value of Indigenous people's knowledge and perspectives, the importance of their needs and aspirations and, in cases of overt and deliberate exclusion, a failure to recognise their equal rights as fellow human beings. It is a profound rejection and devaluing of Indigenous people that recognition theory explains damages their motivation to be included and to adopt the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Honneth 2001).

7.4.4 Tim: 'If you're gonna snob me off, you're not worth my time': Retaliatory rejection

Recognition theory sheds light on the ways in which everyday attitudes and behaviours of White Australians can be experienced as violent. Honneth's (2001) work explains the

profound consequences of persistent experiences of misrecognition for race-relations and for the wellbeing of Indigenous people. In this chapter, I have drawn on recognition theory for the increased clarity and appreciation it brings to the sense of injustice respondents report and the cumulative consequences of those injustices. A weakness of recognition theory lies in its apparent denial of the agency of Indigenous people – as a subordinate group – to reject White Australia's self-assigned role as the objective arbiter of the value of Indigenous rights, needs and contributions. The structural power discrepancy is real but the power to impact self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect is more subjective. The potency of recognition can be acknowledged without diminishing the autonomy and agency of individuals or groups such that they are constructed as helpless victims of White Australian attitudes and whose sense of self is slave to White perceptions (McBride 2013, p.5). The respondents display considerable agency in this regard. It is clear that many reject the legitimacy of White Australians to dispense recognition whilst also arranging their lives strategically to avoid the emotional strain of misrecognition.

One dimension of the agency they display is found in their near-universal rejection of White Australian perceptions of Indigenous people. Respondents convey this in their ability to articulate and object to the misrecognition they experience (e.g. Q5.23). It is, however, this discrepancy between the recognition perceived to be due and the recognition actually received that Honneth argues is the source of the distress misrecognition can cause (Honneth 2001). The respondents' agency and resistance to White Australia's authority to dispense recognition, however, has a further dimension. This is found in the expression of a kind of retaliatory rejection of White Australian people and culture. This retaliatory rejection is expressed in two main ways.

In its most overt form, it can be found in the conscious and direct reciprocal refusal by some to accept (Q5.44), respect (Q5.60-62) or include (Q5.85, Q5.57) those White Australians who are perceived to not be accepting, respectful or inclusive of them. Here, the subordinate group is overtly rejecting the need for approval and acceptance by the dominant group. They are also overtly rejecting White Australian people who might otherwise be accepted were it not for their unfair behaviour towards Indigenous people. Cowlishaw's study of White/Indigenous relations in rural New South Wales describes similar dynamics in another part of Australia. She writes that the well-known problematic race dynamics in the country town of Bourke are mutually constituted. Indigenous people are not passive victims of racism but have an active retaliatory response, albeit at times involving humour. Indigenous community members exercise their agency by rejecting 'conventional construals of desirability'. Cowlishaw observes the development of strategies of asserting a more primary

sense of self by the 'racialised citizen who cannot attain a positive social self' in the eyes of White citizens. These strategies include the overt rejection of the need for White approval displayed at times in the active courting of White disapproval (Cowlishaw 2004, pp.4 and 20).

In a second, less direct form of retaliatory rejection, the respondents express their agency by discrediting the moral authority of White Australians to dispense or withhold recognition at all. This aspect of the retaliatory rejection appears in the data as criticisms levelled by respondents at perceived shortcomings in White people and White Australian culture. The context and tenor of many of these criticisms suggests that they are not simple observations but a reaction to the misrecognition of Indigenous people and cultures by White Australians (Q5.24–27, Q5.42). Dot says White people who think they are better than her should see how they survive a week in the bush (Q5.25). She also questions their physiological hardiness in this climate. Paul challenges the assumption Indigenous people should trade their legal system for a deeply flawed White western legal system (Q5.27). Geena rejects judgements of Indigenous 'irresponsible' hunting of endangered species in light of far more harmful White Australian environmental practices (Q5.42). The implied purpose of these kinds of comments is to display the hypocrisy and absurdity of White Australian notions of superiority and thus entitlement to give or withhold approval of Indigenous people and their choices. Katie states explicitly that White people have 'no right to judge' (Q5.38), while Claire suggests they would feel ashamed if they instead took a look at themselves (Q5.24). This dynamic of retaliatory rejection appears to be the fruit of unfair engagement by White Australians. The result is a judgemental approach by Indigenous people to difference that might otherwise be greeted with a greater tolerance, compassion or generosity of spirit.

If the colonisers' sense of superiority and entitlement is maintained through the misrecognition of the colonised population, a second factor is a corresponding misrecognition of their own selves (Said 1978). It is both a cause and an effect of a failure to direct the same critical gaze on themselves that they apply to Indigenous people. Several respondents flag the lack of fair-minded self-reflexivity as irritating, hypocritical and offensive in the context of a widespread, entitled and critical scrutiny and rejection of Indigenous cultures and abilities. Recognition theory, with its focus on the ways in which subordinate groups are misrecognised, tends not to engage with the way in which this is bound up in the misrecognition of the dominant group of its own self. In this sense, it is limited as a theoretical device for advancing decolonisation and reconciliation (see Chapter 9).

The responses of the respondents to the persistent misrecognition they experience are not without agency. All reject at least some aspect of the perceived misperceptions of themselves; some refuse to assign value to White esteem, reassigning the power to reject to themselves; and several reject the moral authority of White Australians to sit in judgement on them and their cultures. The respondents' accounts suggest room for a more nuanced approach in recognition theory. Agency and strength can sit side by side with experiences of emotional wounding arising from persistent and multidimensional misrecognition. Importantly, whether respondents respond to unfair attitudes and behaviours with or without displays of agency, whether they resist or receive the distorted images of themselves misrecognition delivers, the end result is social division.

7.4.5 Daniel: 'I see a lot more segregation than I do of unities': Race segregation

The cumulative impact of withdrawal from interactions, distrust, a sense of exclusion and retaliatory rejection, is a noticeable, racialised social division in Darwin. Put another way, the cumulative impact of the unfair attitudes and behaviours prevalent in the White Australian population is the antithesis of constructive race-relations or reconciliation. Respondents make direct and unequivocal statements about the levels of race segregation they observe in Darwin between Indigenous people and White Australians (Q6.51-54). At one point, Diane expresses admiration for South Africa's apartheid system for at least being honest. The normalisation of this segregation is also implicit in the respondents' stories, such as James's story of the woman who fed her Indigenous 'friends' over the fence (Q5.22). These observations reflect social distance studies that make it clear that this is a pattern common to race-relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people throughout Australia (Habibis et al. 2016; Nelson 2018; Walter 2012). As previously observed, this lack of mixing cannot be dismissed as a fact of geographical remoteness. In Australia, 80 per cent of Indigenous people live in urban areas (Walter 2012, p.16). In Darwin, nearly one in ten people identify as Indigenous (ABS 2016). There is natural opportunity to mix should people wish to do so. These findings explain why Indigenous people may not.

7.5   Capability as a dimension of fair engagement

In this chapter I have shown that respondent experiences of relations with White people are marked by a pattern of unfair engagement by White Australians, which has sizeable negative consequences. The conclusion that constructive race-relations require White

Australians to engage fairly with Indigenous people is beyond unsurprising. More challenging is the conclusion that many do not, and that they are perceived to behave in ways deeply harmful to race-relations and Indigenous people. Dunn observes that 83 per cent of Australians identify racism as a problem in Australia, while concurrently reporting that they do not see themselves as party to it (Dunn et al. 2004, p.423). This research identifies a similar contradiction. The majority of Australians recognise the unacceptable situation of Indigenous people in Australia and support investment in its transformation (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.5), yet respondents report that many persistently engage with Indigenous people unfairly.

CRT would suggest that it is their banal commonality that masks for White people the unfairness of the behaviours and attitudes that respondents identify as so harmful. It is the very quality of 'business as usual' that permits problematic behaviours and attitudes to pass as unremarkable except in their most extreme forms (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, p.8). It is this that makes it possible for a White woman to proudly, and without the least trace of irony, tell James about her Indigenous 'friends' that she 'feeds over the fence' (Q5.22). The hegemonic normalisation of social imbalance over several generations can make it harder to perceive social injustices, be they related to gender, sexual orientation, ability, age, race or ethnicity. This is particularly so for those groups who are rewarded rather than disadvantaged by those injustices and who therefore have little reason to question them (Pease 2010).

In Chapter 3, I used CRT to comprehensively explain the masking effects of White hegemony and normativity. CRT tells us that one of the fruits of the race hierarchy has been White enculturation (Green and Sonn 2005, p.480) and the establishment of Whiteness as the universal human norm. I showed that White Australians have inculcated Whiteness as the measure of humanity (Montag 1997, Moreton-Robinson 2004a). This may explain respondent descriptions of the lack of interest displayed by White Australians in understanding cultural differences (see section 6.3.1) and in adapting to and accommodating those cultural differences (see section 6.3.2). They report that White Australians appear to assume they have little to learn from Indigenous people (Q5.25-27, Q6.35-36) and treat as common sense that Indigenous people should simply conform with White Australian culture. Their perceptions align with CRT's assertion that White Australians, while overtly claiming Indigenous people are their equals, fail to perceive themselves as a cultural group with its own strengths and weaknesses (Q5.24) or consider they may have a reciprocal obligation to understand and adapt to Indigenous cultures (Q6.21-23).

CRT and post-colonial theory highlight that all Australians are immersed in the colonial matrix of power. This hinders the ability of White Australians to see either Indigenous people or themselves clearly. Sen's (1992) concept of capabilities provides a space to consider whether White Australians might have a genuinely diminished capability to perceive what is fair and therefore to engage fairly. I suggest this diminished capability is a factor in enabling goodwill and aspirations for constructive race-relations to sit side-by-side with multiple acts of unfairness. On this basis, I speculate that at least some White Australians may not realise they are perceiving Indigenous people unfairly, treating them unfairly and doing an unfair share of the race-relations labour.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate the profound harms, both to Indigenous people and to Indigenous/White relations, of the White attitudes and behaviours reported in chapters 5 and 6. Recognition theory provides a compelling explanation of the potential for these behaviours to be intensely debilitating to subordinate groups. It explains the deep sense of injustice they trigger, together with their negative effects on self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence. Importantly, recognition theory explains how and why even seemingly innocuous attitudes and behaviours can be so instrumental in racialised social divisions. I have also shown that these unfair attitudes and behaviours are normalised. This is both in the sense of being commonplace and in the sense of their continuation of the attitudes and behaviours associated with colonisation. Drawing on CRT, I have shown that it can be hard for White Australians to see that they engage unfairly. This is despite the pervasive harms such unfair engagement causes. I conclude that White Australians may need to develop their capability to perceive when they are engaging unfairly with Indigenous people if they are to achieve their aspiration of constructive race-relations with Australia's First Peoples.

This finding can be applied to help advance the population of Sen's framework as illustrated in the table below. The framework is already partially populated from the literature. In Chapter 2, I established that White people value and have reason to value constructive race-relations with Indigenous people. Accordingly, the desired 'achieved functioning' is that of constructive race-relations. This means that the capability for constructive race-relations must be present in White Australia's race-relations capability set as a 'potential functioning'. There is evidence that the capability for *non-constructive* race-relations is widely present in the White population. There is less evidence of the capability for constructive race-relations. I also established from the literature that White Australians have

the commodity of disproportionate legal, political, economic and social power. This power is a commodity with which they can impact – for better or for worse – Indigenous people's lives and the quality of the race-relationship. It is a resource that has the potential to be converted into the capability for constructive race-relations. The collective experiences of the respondents presented in the previous two chapters, and the analysis of those experiences in this chapter, has helped to refine the sub-capabilities that make up the capability for constructive race-relations. The ability to engage fairly, partially constituted by the ability to perceive what constitutes fair engagement, is one of those component capabilities.

Figure 7.1: Adapted version of Robeyns' schematic representation of Sen's framework, populated with findings from chapters 5–7
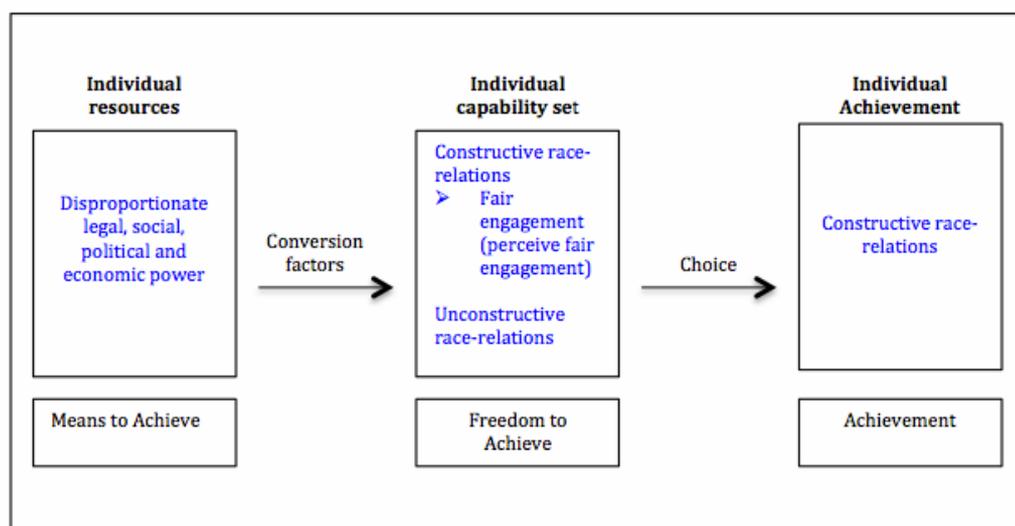
Still remaining to be addressed is the first link in the schematic representation of the capability approach. This relates to the step in the analytical process entitled 'conversion factors'. In Sen's approach, the relationship between an individual's 'commodities' (White Australian power) and 'potential functionings' (fair engagement with Indigenous people) is subject to the presence or absence of relevant conversion factors. Individual and socio-environmental conversion factors govern if, and how, a commodity can be converted into a potential functioning. According to Sen's approach, these conversion factors must be identified and their absence rectified in order for White Australians to be able to effectively convert their disproportionate power into fair engagement with Indigenous people. The question therefore arises, 'What individual or socio-environmental conversion factors are not in place that so many White Australians appear unable to convert their commodity of

power into the potential functioning of fair engagement with Indigenous people, and therefore constructive race-relations?' I examine this in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: The missing conversion factors: White ignorance

8.1 Introduction

The next two chapters report and analyse the data relating to the second research question:

> What conversion factors must be in place to enable capability for
> constructive race-relations in the White Australian population?

This chapter identifies the rectification of White ignorance[35] as one of these conversion factors. It finds that widespread ignorance obstructs the ability of White Australians to discern what is fair engagement with Indigenous people and therefore to convert their power advantage into constructive relations with them. White ignorance is a heavily recurring concern in the interviews. Nearly every respondent raises it in some form. I have identified four main categories of White ignorance from their comments. These are ignorance of the history of colonisation; of Indigenous law, cultures and languages; of the complexity of contemporary Indigenous lives; and of the extent of their own ignorance. Many respondents directly link these forms of ignorance to the patterns of misrecognition they associate with the unfair engagement they experience. An implication of their observations is that White Australians do not effectively perceive what is fair engagement with Indigenous people, partly because ignorance inhibits them from fairly and accurately perceiving Indigenous people and cultures. I then consider the literature that weighs against the identification of White ignorance as a capacity-building opportunity in the White population. Specifically, I consider the CRT literature that suggests White ignorance is 'wilful' rather than 'innocent' and empirical studies of the effectiveness of anti-racism education. I conclude that addressing White ignorance is a necessary but not sufficient aspect of capacity building the White Australian population towards constructive race-relations with Indigenous people.

8.2 Don: 'What they? Ignorant! Stubborn!': Observations of White ignorance

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[35] A definition of White ignorance is provided in section 3.6.4.

Joan observes at Q5.3 that the unfair attitudes and behaviours Indigenous people experience are not so much the product of ill-will as they are of a lack of knowledge. While her perceptions of goodwill find some support amongst the respondents, her perceptions of widespread ignorance enjoy near-universal support. Perceptions of White ignorance arise in two main ways in the interviews. The majority of respondents refer to it reasonably directly in general observations and in speculating about what causes White Australians to so consistently misrecognise them and to behave in the ways that they do. Nearly all of the 38 respondents refer to, or describe as problematic, at least one of the four dimensions of White ignorance listed above (n=36). White ignorance also arises indirectly, but consistently, through the responses to interview questions about strategies to improve race-relations. Of the respondents that engage with these questions (n=34), the most common recommendation is education in some form (n=31)[36]. If the solution is perceived to be education of White Australians, then the problem must, at least in part, be perceived to be White ignorance (Bacchi 2012). In the sections that follow, I present the data supporting each of the four categories of ignorance.

8.2.1 Ignorance of Australia's race-relations history

Respondents express a broad consensus that few White Australians have full knowledge of, or are exposed to, a balanced and 'uncensored' version of Australian history. Typical comments include:

> Q8.1 Shannon: Yeh, like we all know Australian history, you know, it's all in books, and there's like only bits and pieces of what happened to Aboriginal people and it's a big shame. It is a shame though. I'm just trying to think because people don't accept it, how would they accept such an evil past? How do you get people to understand? It's all up to them, really, you know. Like they don't teach it in schools. You have to take a specific class if you want to learn it. I'm waiting for this TV show… 'Australia, the Story of Us – I want to see what they've actually put into it… Hopefully they tell the black history.

> Q8.2 Moana: …To let the [White] people know to be aware of really what happened in the early days of that time and what [Indigenous] people have done for this country as well, you know. Like I was saying,

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[36] Many respondents make more than one suggestion. Other heavily recurring suggestions relate to measures for the empowerment of Indigenous people and opportunities for dialogue.

they only see the outside of it, they don't actually see what's inside and
what really happens and what has happened.

Respondents describe three aspects to the ignorance of Australian history displayed by many White Australians. Firstly, many observe that White Australians are not informed about the full extent of the suffering and oppression of Indigenous people as the colonisation process advanced. This is reflected in Shannon and Moana's comments above, and echoed in statements like Mark and Cassie's:

> *Q8.3 Mark: I believe we are the oldest race, yet we're continuing – you*
> *know what I mean? Despite all the policies and you know, shooting,*
> *poisoning, all that business. Um, why isn't that told in our history books,*
> *in our schools? Why isn't that told? See that's, that's censorship.*

> *Q8.4 Cassie: We need to teach that in us mob school correctly and for*
> *history, not just say that Captain Cook come here and Mr Wonderful*
> *and, you know, seen this land... And, it [should be] part of the school*
> *curriculum to say that, 'This is history – we did stuff up and this is what*
> *we're doing now to heal that process.'*

Secondly, several refer to a low awareness of the significant historical contributions Indigenous people have made to contemporary Australia. Moana touches on this above (Q8.2). Claire references stolen wages and the lack of appreciation that the 'Australian economy was built on blacks' back' (Q5.8). Joan gives multiple examples of the information she thinks needs to be included in education programs for White Australians:

> *Q8.5 Joan: ...focus on the achievements or again, achievements of well-*
> *known Larrakia people. It's not just people who are around nowadays,*
> *I'm talking about people who were around years ago. People who went*
> *off to World War One, World War Two. I'm talking about the service*
> *people. I'm focusing on how our Larrakia people also built Darwin as*
> *well, helped develop it and establish it. With the petition[37], you talk*
> *about the petition, acknowledging the struggles of people and the*
> *reasons behind it.*

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[37] This is a reference to what is known as the 1963 Bark Petition in which the Yolngu people of Yirrkala petitioned the Australian Government demanding, with some degree of success, recognition of their rights over sections of their land subject to mining leases.

Finally, a handful of respondents suggest that White Australians can have a distorted perception of historical timeframes. Some refer to a low awareness of just how recent some colonisation has been from an Indigenous perspective of history.

> *Q8.6 Joan: Their worldview is different and we haven't come from a space that's a few hundred years. It's just understanding the concept. There's a substantial amount of years of history there why people behave a certain way.*

Alice, who is homeless, is talking about appreciation of timeframes when she describes the disrespect and contemptuous sense of entitlement of young people in the park where she lives, who appear oblivious to her own deep sense of entitlement.

> *Q8.7 Alice: They had a barbeque. Maybe a birthday, I think, someone's birthday. Yeah. Then when we tell them [to be quieter so we could sleep], and they were laughing over there and they think it was funny… I dunno. I think [their parents] wasn't telling them about we were the first Australians. That we were here, you know, 40,000 years almost – our ancestors.*

Others point out how recent the 'past' is, that they are told to 'get over', from any perspective of history:

> *Q8.8 Diane: You can't keep saying 'Oh, forget the past!' and 'Move on'. How do you? The sixties is not long ago, the sixties! … So, you've got all those people and generations there that are traumatised and you want that to disappear? … That's not thousands of years of separation of pain and suffering and hurt from a dominating culture.*

> *Q8.9 Joan: I don't think that a lot of people, Australians, truly understand with Aboriginal Australians our journey. You know in terms of a non-Indigenous education, really, people have been, seriously been being educated from the fifties and that's sixty years. Sixty years… I don't think that there's a full appreciation or an understanding of that and yet when you look at, well in my own situation – my grandmother didn't have a White person's education, my father didn't have a White person's education – I've had a White person's education and my children have had a White person's education. That's two generations and I think that we're doing really, really, really well, considering.*

Multiple respondents identify ignorance of history as an underlying factor in the misrecognition of Indigenous people, linking this misrecognition to distorted assessments of what is fair engagement. At Q5.41, Diane questions the widespread criticism of Indigenous people for self-medicating with alcohol. She connects ignorance of traumatic historical events with unfair judgement, blame and a loss of compassion for the current circumstances of many Indigenous people. Daniel agrees:

> *Q8.10 Daniel: If they were more educated maybe they'd have more of an understanding to why, you know, we are faced with like, you know all these problems … if it was taught – like the history, you know, Australian colonisation was taught – in schools, I reckon there'd be, you know, a lot more understanding.*

The comments of Joan (Q8.9) and Alice (Q8.7) suggest ignorance can unfairly diminish significant achievements and status, leading to the withholding of appropriate respect and admiration. Others, like Claire (Q5.8), directly link ignorance of history to unfair stereotyping. Diane makes a similar point when she describes the way in which viewing Indigenous behaviours in a historical vacuum can contribute to an unfair stereotyping of the Indigenous work ethic:

> *Q8.11 Diane: Yeah, yeah. So, you say today the Blackfellas never want to work whereas you withheld their wages in the sixties, fifties, forties, thirties when they were maids, when they were servants, when they were stockmen, when they were pearling. Pearlers, they pearled, yet you – the gold rush! They did so much. Their welfare dependency and that – [Whites] created all that and they just keep saying it's the blacks that never want to work…*

Some respondents link ignorance to a pervasive sense of superiority and entitlement, portrayed in Alice's comments above about usage of the park (Q8.7) and implied in Anne's observations here of shoppers at the mall:

> *Q8.12 Anne: A majority of people think their shit don't stink and that they are better than Blackfellas, you know. And that's the attitude I have towards them – who the fuck do you think you are, you know? You don't deserve to be here, in my country, sitting down and enjoying this beautiful land. You know that it, that it was stolen!*

The counterpart of this unfair sense of White entitlement is perceptions of Indigenous undeserving that respondents also attribute to ignorance of history:

Q8.13 Shannon: A young girl came up to me and argued with me about our rights, because we're Indigenous and we 'have all these benefits' … And I explained to her because she didn't understand. I said it straight out to her, I said, 'I'll take all your things away from you and then not give it back to you and I'll see how you feel'. And I said to her, 'Australia's trying to give back what they took, they can't give back our families, they can't give back our land because it's got buildings and government won't give it back, so they're trying to get other ways to help Indigenous people'… She goes, 'Well, how come you guys get all this stuff what we don't?' and I said, 'Well, how come my grandmother got taken and your grandmother didn't?' … It actually really upset me because it's not her fault, she just has less understanding because of the lack of education which she got, because – how I feel – is that Australia's trying to hide their past.

Q8.14 Joan: Yes. Yes, and also people who live in the suburbs. Some people who live in the suburbs, it's too much effort – 'I work. I work, I pay my way, why should I care about them? Why do I even have to think about them?' … They don't have any idea of the true history of this country.

8.2.2 Ignorance of the complexity of contemporary Indigenous lives

Many respondents report that the contemporary reality of their lives is not well understood on multiple fronts. Firstly, several report a low appreciation of the hardships many Indigenous people face due to the legacy of colonisation in terms of poverty, racism and trauma. Claire says that many White Australians do not realise that Indigenous people are 'doing it hard' (Q5.40). Here Mark is talking about the low awareness of the ever-present racism.

Q8.15 Mark: Yeah, because we live it, I see it so obviously. Because we live it, we see it, whereas, if you don't live it, you don't see it.

Alice escapes the troubles she faces in her small remote community by sleeping rough in the city. She was horrified to read her homelessness represented in the newspaper as Indigenous people 'holidaying' in the city. It suggests to her that people have no idea about the lived reality behind her 'choice' of urban homelessness:

Q8.16 Alice: The government should see what the people are going through. Suffering, a lot of pain, a lot of anger and what's happened there. And it's still today. New millennium – nothing's changing, still the same. We're still in the same place. That's why we all come in and we live in the long grass, you know? Like, I know like, people writing stories in the headlines about we coming to town like tourists – like tourists!

This low appreciation is exacerbated by misapprehensions that special privileges and free handouts are readily available to mitigate such hardships:

Q8.17 Claire: I don't know, there's that, you know, that, the stigma and the assumptions you know. There's lots of assumptions, like black people get a lot of money, we get everything free, 'Why do they need this?' and 'Why do they need that?' and I don't know, they just don't know fact from fiction.
Int: And where are they getting their information from?
Claire: Newspapers. Or just themselves making it up.

A second aspect of the contemporary reality of which White Australians are perceived to have a low awareness, is the social and cultural complexity Indigenous people must daily navigate in their own communities and in juggling the diverse, conflicting and competing demands of two cultural worlds.

Q8.18 Ben: I don't think most of them even realise that we do have a law and how strong our law is and how strict it is. A lot of them need to realise and sort of be taught and understood.

Q8.19 Diane: When I used to work at _____ there's a phone manner you have to use when you work in any, yeah, you have to, 'Good morning' – nice English. And I would do that and then the Blackfella [would ring] and he'd say, 'Why are you talking like a White fella?' Oh fuck, because I fucking have to, alright. I have to live in these two worlds. Like, daily I'm juggling who I am, you know, how I talk, how I act, and look and whatever. So, you get it from the White fellas, you know, that you can't talk good English and then these Blackfellas, you know – 'Why are you acting White, talking White?'

The many good and praiseworthy things that are going on within the Indigenous population are identified by some as a further aspect of the contemporary reality that is not well known.

> *Q8.20 Joan: They're coming from a place of ignorance. It is so obvious what's portrayed in the media, the messages that come through in the media. I think that people are picking up and just running with it … Where are the real positive stories about Indigenous people, about achievements? I don't see many or any in the Northern Territory News...[38]*

These misperceptions about Indigenous people's lives are strongly associated with unfair perceptions about Indigenous people, leading to judgement and stereotyping. Claire says at Q5.40 that it leads to intense judgement of people who are simply 'doing it hard'. As reported in section 5.3.3, ignorance of context means that behaviours that might otherwise be understood as rational responses to circumstance result in judgement, disrespect and negative stereotypes: a lack of employment opportunities on community is understood as laziness and an unwillingness to work, self-management of severe trauma is judged as an irresponsible abuse of substances (Q5.41), escape from the multiple hardships of life in remote communities is perceived as a lifestyle choice of urban homelessness (Q8.16). William bewails the daily judgement, lack of compassion and disrespect he must weather from ignorant individuals:

> *Q8.21 William: Just understand that we going through hardship. I mean, they don't understand. I've told them. They ask me, 'Why do youse live homeless?'. I said, 'We didn't choose to be homeless. We had no choice – most of us want to actually have a place.'*

Reliance on misinformation from other White people (Q5.13) or White-dominated news sources (Q5.12, Q8.20) is identified as a key source of unfair perceptions of Indigenous people and the resulting stereotypes, judgement and discrimination.

Ignorance of the contemporary authority of Indigenous law and culture in the lives of many Indigenous people is linked to unreasonable expectations of, both the adoption of White western culture by Indigenous people, and the ready abandonment of their own. Joan implies (Q8.6) that those who do not are often judged for their behaviours.

8.2.3 Ignorance of Indigenous law and cultures

In section 6.3.1 I reported respondent perceptions that many White Australians make inadequate effort to *acquire* knowledge and understanding of Indigenous law and cultures.

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[38] The Northern Territory News is Darwin's primary local newspaper

In this section, I report respondent perceptions that many White Australians *possess* inadequate knowledge of Indigenous law and cultures. They report that most White Australians have little awareness of the cultural factors that inform Indigenous choices and behaviours, of appropriate social etiquette around Indigenous people and of the positive aspects of Indigenous cultures from which all of society could potentially benefit.

Nearly all the respondents bemoan a perceived lack of knowledge of Indigenous law and cultures amongst the White population. Several make generic links between the degree of cultural knowledge White Australians possess and the quality of race-relations.

> *Q8.22 Int: Do you think there is an issue with the relationship between White Australians and Aboriginal Australians in Darwin?*
> *Sean: I think so, yes. I think it's probably less pronounced in Darwin than it is in other places. By that, I mean that I think White people in Darwin generally, at least from experience, have a better understanding of Indigenous cultures. At least with my peer group they've been exposed to Indigenous people through school, through parent's friends and so on. Whereas when I lived in Brisbane, there's White people there that have never met an Aboriginal person.*

> *Q8.23 Int: Do you think it's important to improve the relationship between White and Aboriginal people?*
> *Carl: Yeah, really important. Especially them White people that don't know much about Indigenous culture.*

Darwin is a city of immense population churn amongst the non-Indigenous population. Numerous respondents echo Sean's observation of the positive impact on race-relations of long-term exposure to Indigenous cultures. Many draw unfavourable comparisons of the attitudes and behaviours of new arrivals from 'down south' with those of long-term Darwin residents who 'know us and our ways' (Carl).

Specifically, respondents refer to a perceived lack of knowledge about the cultural rules and expectations to which the choices and behaviours of many Indigenous people are subject and responsive. Neil (Q5.39) touches on this when he criticises his White co-worker's assumptions about an Indigenous co-worker's lack of financial gain on the same salary rather than recognising this as a reflection of fundamental values of Indigenous reciprocity and concern for family. See also Ben's comment above (Q8.18) about the low awareness of the strength, depth and currency of Indigenous law in many people's lives today.

Closely linked to this are multiple references to the importance of knowledge of appropriate Indigenous social etiquette. Several respondents observe this is regularly absent in interactions.

> Q8.24 Anne: And I found that really offensive, the way she spoke to me… A bit ignorant on Aboriginal Australia and the ways of our – just knowing our ins and outs … But I think that what's really disappointing here in Darwin – that not all White Australians are culturally aware.

> Q8.25 Paul: You know, someone needs to do a book and White people need to read it. People that haven't dealt with Indigenous people in their life – they've seen them in the streets and haven't gone up to them – they're too much red-neck stuff and all that. Them red-necks need to read more them cultural things you know and learn how to work in with us, you know? Stop being stubborn all their life, you know?

Finally, some describe a low awareness of admirable features of Indigenous cultural values and processes. This is implicit in Claire's references to the ways in which Indigenous kindness is misinterpreted (Q6.61) and Dot's bewilderment at our adversarial governance processes (Q5.26).

Low awareness of cultural rules and values governing Indigenous behaviour and choices is associated by respondents with negative perceptions of Indigenous people and of why they do the things that they do. A lack of awareness of the more admirable features of Indigenous cultures is also associated with negative perceptions that underestimate Indigenous people and cultures. Respondents report that both of these aspects of ignorance perpetuate unfair stereotypes and justify judgement, disrespect, discrimination and assumptions of superiority, together with expectations that Indigenous people should just conform with 'common sense' or 'superior' White Australian cultural practices and expectations.

Daniel is talking about how more cultural awareness training might serve as a counterbalance to imbalanced news coverage that is perceived as sensationalistic and a source of negative perceptions. He speculates that better knowledge might help to address stereotyping, saying:

> Q8.26 Daniel: I think it's, yeah, the lack of understanding – the differences between the two. When, you know, you don't have the understanding of the other people, of course you're going to make these

assumptions. And when you make these assumptions then that's what you're going to think because you didn't go over and talk to them or associate with them, you don't know nothing.

Neil is one of many to talk about the disrespect that arises from poor understandings of Indigenous cultural practices. He talks about ways to increase respect towards Indigenous people:

Q8.27 If you understand the people and the laws and the reasons why they do things the way they do, like, you know, the way we do it and why we do it and why we have that law and we've had it for so long – if you understand that, then you'll understand us and how we are.

He is a young Larrakia man and the city of Darwin is on his ancestral lands. He describes a grieving ceremony for his recently deceased brother in which security personnel moved participants on in order to protect the grass in a public space:

Q8.28 See, it's just grass, you know? And that ceremony is more important than anything. But other people don't understand that. We danced for my brother, you know, said our last goodbyes, and then get in trouble over a piece of fucking grass. That's Larrakia country, am I right? ... I felt disgusted, truly. I was thinking, like, how could they not know, you know, what we were doing and what it meant to us, you know? How could they not know? ... It's bad, they just try and enforce the law, you know, the White man law. But in forgetting that we also do have a law, you know?

Elsewhere he talks about ignorance as a factor in the disrespect shown towards sacred sites:

Q8.29 Like I said before, you can't really go out and, you know, go to ceremony over this place because of something's been built. Like even trees, for example, trees are sacred as well – like, they're getting knocked down and they shouldn't be. But yeah, sometimes people just don't understand that, but if they, like, I think if they were made aware of it ... I know there's people out there trying to do good and trying to, you know, stop that from happening, making people aware and some good things are turning out.

Several respondents, such as Anne earlier at Q8.24 and Daniel below, perceive ignorance of culture as playing a significant role in interactions that are inadvertently offensive and disrespectful:

> *Q8.30 Daniel: You know, without that [knowledge] then people are just going to be walking around clueless saying things that might offend people without even realising.*

It is also associated with consciously disrespectful and racist attitudes towards Indigenous people. William is homeless and lives on the street, Holly is an executive:

> *Q8.31 William: This is graffiti. Then it's got, 'These Abo's call it culture – they make a wind fart into a log and they call that culture' … Yeah, and I'm just sitting there reading all this, and I'm like, 'Fuck, who writes all this shit?' … I'm just dumbfounded because they obviously don't know our culture, but we know a lot about their history, about the Queen. I've read a lot about British monarchy.*

> *Q8.32 Holly: I just feel there is still a big undertone of racism, whether it's spoken or not, but I think Australia needs to come to a place where we just accept everybody for their difference… But I just feel like within Australia we're not at that point. If you watched that First Contact documentary, it really highlights what the average Australian probably– their limited exposure to what Aboriginal culture is and what their views are about Aboriginal culture*

In addition to being a regular source of offence (Q8.30), ignorance of appropriate social etiquette is viewed by some as contributing to the White Australian reluctance to try to connect across difference and social segregation described in section 6.3.3. Leah says people do not know how to get to know each other (Q6.51), Annette says people do not know how to communicate (Q6.55) and Shannon explains that lack of cultural knowledge inhibits mingling which, in turn, inhibits opportunities for White Australians to become familiar with Indigenous cultures and law and thus to be able to engage with them with compassion and respect:

> *Q8.33 I think one of the barriers for mixing is the cultural awareness about each other…Things would be a lot more open. You'll have an understanding of, well, empathy, walking in someone else's shoes. You'll know what they've been through, they can teach you different things. There's just – knowledge is power, you know?*

Several respondents link experiences of persistent judgement to the misrecognition of behaviours that are measured, rational and responsible but that appear impulsive, irrational and irresponsible in the context of cultural ignorance. Neil's story of his white co-worker at Q5.59 is an illustration of this. Katie talks about meetings where her culturally taught behaviour of reflection before response is interpreted as laziness, disengagement or as having nothing to offer. Several draw direct generalised links between cultural ignorance and judgement:

> *Q8.34 Claire: Mmm, they're like judging. Judging us – and if you got to know us a little bit more you wouldn't be judging*

> *Q8.35 Int: Do you think that's why they judge them?*
> *Daniel: Yeah. It's obviously why – it's a misunderstanding of each other's cultures and way of life.*

For Dot, cultural knowledge is fundamental to the recognition of and engagement with Indigenous people as equals:

> *Q8.36: If you learn our ways, we'll teach you and we can become as one, work as one, make this place a better place for us to live, you know, not this snobby look, 'Oh, that black fella…'*

A lack of cultural knowledge appears to be associated by some with their perception that many White Australians do not do their fair share of the cultural learning and adaptation. Respondents imply in several places that a more comprehensive knowledge of their cultures might help White Australians to refrain from viewing Indigenous people as empty vessels available to be filled with western knowledge and values. Ben refers above to the way the strength and role of Indigenous law is underestimated (Q8.18), Joan states below that one of the fundamental things White Australians need to understand in order to engage fairly is that Indigenous cultures continue to be practised, while Sandra emphasises the role of cultural knowledge in shifting expectations of a one-sided Indigenous cultural adaptation:

> *Q8.37 Joan: …Understanding that, even though this country has been occupied by another people, there is still a peoples, a group of people who still continue with their cultural obligations. It's still happening.*

> *Q8.38 Sandra: Once you go into the world, into our world then you will feel like they live like this, this is just the way they are, they have always been like this and they will always be like this. Yeah, and no matter*

> *whatever comes across to try and affect our living standard lifestyle for*
> *Aboriginal people, it never will be broken.*

A feature of liberal discourses of Indigenous improvement the subject of how much and how quickly Indigenous people can be expected to learn and adapt to White western culture (Kowal 2015, p.94). Diane and Don invert this. Instead, they express frustration and bewilderment at the low accumulation over the generations within the White population of knowledge of Indigenous cultures, the misrecognition of which, they suggest, causes both social division and manifold problems for Indigenous people:

> *Q8.39 Diane: When are they going to respect or understand or learn*
> *that the Indigenous people have a different culture, language? It's 200*
> *something years – a couple of centuries now – and they still haven't*
> *learnt.*

> *Q8.40 Don: We should solve White problem already [but] we still*
> *waiting [for them] to recognise that we are first people of the nation,*
> *okay? We are still waiting, okay? Nothing! How many years now from*
> *1788 to 2015? How many years tell me that? But there's a big, big gap*
> *and our white friend need to fill that gap in understanding,*
> *understanding knowledge of Aboriginal people.*

8.2.4 Ignorance of their own ignorance

Some respondents report that compounding all of this is White ignorance of the degree of their own ignorance. They suggest that White Australians do not know or understand that they are ignorant. Claire says she does not trust them because 'they think they get it' (Q5.8). Others observe that this can render the misrecognition to which they are subject frustratingly impenetrable. Sean says:

> *Q8.41: You can't productively educate someone if they're back here.*
> *Generally, because, if they're at that level of ignorance, then they can't*
> *even hear themselves, right?*

Several respondents reference the difficulty of dealing with people who think they are not racist or ill-informed and therefore don't ask, won't listen or 'can't be told'. Joan (Q6.7), Daniel and Don describe how this ignorance can inhibit fair assessments of the potential benefit of engaging in dialogical exchange and of the importance of doing more to educate themselves culturally:

Q8.42 Daniel: Yeah, because they think they understand our values [but] they don't understand anything at all. Like, you know, they make all these assumptions without even consulting or discussing or communicating with us anything, you know, of our values or our interests or what we know. There's never been that sort of proper understanding.

Q8.43 Don: 'They know best'. The White people, they said it in Canberra, 'Look, we White people make up policy for Aboriginal people'. You know. And we don't know what's going in there. They think they can see right through – God giving eyes and brain. No, you can't!

Here Don is suggesting that the failure of White Australian policy-makers to recognise the limits of their knowledge is akin to ascribing themselves a god-like omniscience.

8.3   Ignorance as a valid conversion factor

It can be concluded that it is the perception of the vast majority of respondents that a critical mass of White Australians lacks important knowledge in the areas of Australian history, Indigenous law, languages and cultures, the complexity of the contemporary situation of Indigenous people in society, and of the degree of their ignorance in each of these areas. Further, it is the perception of most of the respondents that this ignorance can be linked in a causal relationship to the misrecognition associated with the unfair engagement they experience. Their observations indicate that an inability to perceive Indigenous people fairly can distort White Australian perceptions of fair and appropriate engagement with them. This suggests that the prevalence of White ignorance represents a significant capacity-building opportunity, or conversion factor, towards achieving constructive race-relations, and thus equity and wellbeing for Indigenous people. This represents a significant inversion of the public discourse around Indigenous disadvantage and reconciliation, which currently emphasises ignorance and lack of education within the Indigenous population (e.g. Australian Government 2020). In the remainder of this chapter, I interrogate whether this finding is sustained in the context of a deeper analysis of respondent observations and the literature. I consider both empirical studies of the effectiveness of anti-racism education measures and the theoretical insights of CRT and agnotology.

8.3.1 Critical race agnotology and the causes of White ignorance

It is one thing to argue White ignorance is prevalent and a key factor in White capability for constructive race-relations. It is another to claim it is a capacity-building opportunity that has the potential to improve race-relations. This is because the latter assumes White Australians are willing to listen and willing to learn (Alcoff 1998, p.11). Whether White ignorance is wilful or innocent is arguably a threshold question in determining its status as a conversion factor. Agnotology explains that not all ignorance represents an innocent 'natural absence or void where knowledge has not yet spread' (Proctor 2008, p.2). CRT rejects suggestions that White ignorance is innocent and arises from a simple lack of access or exposure to the relevant knowledge or information. It emphasises, instead, selective and constructed causes of ignorance that are more deliberate in their nature (see, for example, Mills 2008; Mason 2011). It is to wilful White ignorance that Stanner alludes in his famous reference to 'the great Australian silence' (Stanner 1968). An examination of the data through this lens reveals that many of the respondents' observations appear to align with the CRT position in their description of selective and constructed ignorance.

Selective ignorance

As Sean (Q6.24, Q6.25) and Shannon (Q6.9) point out, much of the relevant information they think White Australians need to know is actually readily available in books and online for anyone who wants to find it. Similarly, Claire observes that, although some exposure to Indigenous communities and their cultures is made possible by tour experiences, many Australians choose instead to tour overseas and explore cultures from elsewhere (Q6.17). It is selective ignorance that Don (Q6.18, Q6.21), Paul (Q8.25) and Claire (Q6.26) are describing in other references to the failure by White Australians to actively pursue opportunities for learning and exposure to Indigenous cultures. Neil (Q6.19) and Paul (Q6.20) state explicitly that White people do not know because they do not care enough to find out. Cassie talks about the Australian government neglecting to draw on Indigenous expertise to govern this land because, unlike business expertise, millennia of accrued knowledge of this land is not considered to be useful information (Q6.36). Neil reports that an important ceremony was misunderstood and disrupted by security personnel because only knowledge of White laws is viewed as relevant to the job (Q8.28). It is clear that multiple respondents identify White ignorance with selective attention by White Australians and the 'burden of disregard'.

Constructed ignorance

Assertions of constructed ignorance can be found in the respondents' many direct accusations of individual and institutional denial and cover-ups (Q8.1, Q8.3, Q8.11, Q8.13), the sharing of misinformation (Q.8.17) and of media misrepresentations of Indigenous people (Q5.12, Q8.17, Q8.20). Mills' work maps the multiple ways in which the lens of White supremacy can mediate White perceptions to construct and systematically sustain White ignorance. Many of the specific processes of constructed ignorance he identifies are supported by the observations of the respondents. Mills asserts that White people are 'aprioristically intent on denying what is before them', perceiving things only in ways that align with pre-existing concepts (Mills 2008, p.239) and White preferences (Howard-Wagner 2019). This perception is present in Geena (Q5.42) and James' (Q5.22) accounts of cognitive dissonance, and in the observations of Neil (Q5.39) and Claire (Q5.40, 6.61). Diane states it explicitly:

> *Q8.44 Diane: It's not a mistake. It's not an accident that that they're not listening. I don't believe that – 'We just don't understand you' – I don't believe that. My mother went to, there was a contingent that went down to parliament in Canberra ... They gave John Howard a heart. They said 'You need a heart'. This is what the Aboriginal people did. My mother was there. And they said ... 'and you need ears. Your ears don't work'. So, to me, they've been pretending all along. Because you hear them all the time: 'What do you blackfellas want?'. We've been telling you for long enough, you just don't want to hear it.*

Mills also suggests that White denial relies to some degree on the White 'management of memory and collective amnesia' (Maddison 2012; Mills 2008, p.239). This aligns with Claire (Q5.8), Cassie (Q8.4), Dianne (Q8.11) and Joan's (Q8.5) accounts of what aspects of Australian history are not taught or told. Mark labels the dominant version of Australian history a form of censorship (Q8.3). Holly proposes public monuments to remind a population that appears to be oblivious of key aspects of its past. Her comments can be further contextualised in the subsequent earmarking of $50 million of government funding for a new Captain Cook memorial at Botany Bay. Meanwhile the over-300 documented massacres of Indigenous people associated with the process of colonisation that followed Captain Cook's arrival remain largely uncommemorated[39]. Shannon (Q8.1) concurs with

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[39] https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/sydney-to-get-new-captain-cook-memorial-as-part-of-50m-revamp-20180428-p4zc64.html. See also
https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php

Maddison's analysis that White people simply cannot face the challenge that acknowledging this country's history poses to their proud national identity (Maddison 2012). So does Diane. She is referring to the tens of millions of dollars the Federal Government has spent on legal fees to contest Stolen Generation test cases for compensation when she says:

> Q8.45 Somebody said to me they don't want to spend taxpayer's money on the Stolen Generation… I said, it's not about money. They are not blocking us because of money … I actually think there's something behind that. They're not worried about the money, but they'll say, 'It's the money we care about'. But I don't believe that. I believe it's their pride and stubbornness and ego.

Mills also suggests that distorted perceptions rely on 'hostility to black testimony' (Mills 2008, p.246). This is reflected in respondent stories of White resistance to genuine dialogical exchange (section 6.2). This hostility is found most graphically in William's (Q8.21), Diane's (Q6.8, Q6.10, Q8.8), Shannon's (Q6.9) and Joan's (Q6.7) accounts of attempts to inform unreceptive White audiences.

Wilful vs innocent White ignorance

The respondents' descriptions of the selective and constructed dimensions of White Australian ignorance support the interpretation by critical race theorists that White ignorance has a deliberate dimension. It is wilful, not innocent. Indeed, Diane and Don question how it is possible that after more than 200 years of sharing this country with Indigenous people White people can still be so ignorant about them (Q8.39-40). CRT frames the ongoing ignorance as the outcome of cultural and political struggle (Shiebinger 2004, p.237) or, put more plainly, power and its maintenance (Sullivan and Tuana 2007, p.2). On this view, it is 'a kind of epistemically culpable and morally noxious misrecognition that facilitates the maintenance of the status quo' (Mason 2011, p.302). In using this frame, they invert the interpretation that racism is the consequence of ignorance to assert that White ignorance is the consequence of racism. Its construction is rooted in a history of White supremacy, which it also perpetuates (Mills 2008, p.233).

If White ignorance is a deliberate and chosen state of being, then the validity of White ignorance as a conversion factor is called into question. On this view, tackling White ignorance directly becomes a somewhat futile exercise. It becomes unassailable in light of the power imbalance if White Australians really do not want to know. The relevant conversion factor becomes instead White attachment to power and domination. If this is the case, then efforts to directly address White ignorance are reduced to a foolish distraction that

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masks the real issue – perhaps even a disingenuous 'settler move to innocence' (Tuck and Yang 2012). Certainly White education in the absence of other measures for structural reform and redress of historical injustices has been criticised as an inadequate and misdirected focus of reconciliation efforts (Nakata and Maddison 2019, p.411).

Innocent White ignorance

However, many respondents also tell us that they perceive significant aspects of White ignorance to be innocent and rectifiable. Shannon indicates that the White Australian population has been deprived of important information when she describes an individual's offensive ignorance as blameless due to their poor education (Q8.13). The respondents overwhelmingly communicate that increased exposure of White Australians to relevant information would be helpful (Q8.2, Q8.4–5, Q8.7, Q8.9–11, Q8.18, Q8.22, Q8.25–27, Q8.29, Q8.32–33). The need for such exposure is one of the most prevalent responses they give to the question of how to improve race-relations. Respondent suggestions of ways to elevate knowledge in the White population towards improved race-relations are many and diverse. They include the school system, industry cross-cultural programs, self-education, the availability of educational monuments and materials in publicly accessible spaces, accreditation to work with Indigenous people and, finally, through greater exposure to and direct instruction from Indigenous people. The near-universal support expressed for efforts to better inform and educate White Australians is drawn from their lived experience. It is clear, both from their emphasis on educational measures and from the common distinction they make between interactions with those who have had the chance to learn and those that have not (Q8.22-23, 8.25), that, despite their awareness of selective and constructed ignorance, many of the respondents do not dismiss innocent ignorance as a component of the ignorance they observe. Efforts to address it are presented as far from futile.

8.4   The false dichotomy of 'wilful' versus 'innocent' White ignorance

The idea of wilful ignorance contributes crucial insights into why White ignorance persists. I suggest, however, that it also has the potential to foster a false and unhelpful dichotomy. It is important that the insights delivered by theorists such as Mills (2007) are not reduced to a simplistic reframing of White ignorance from a cause to an effect, and from an issue of innocent incapacity to one of wilful culpability. There is a tendency in the White ignorance literature to focus on the constructed and selective, or what I term the 'wilful' dimensions of White ignorance (see for example Sullivan 2007; Frye 1983; Mason 2011). Mills refers to White ignorance as a cognitive tendency in which racial domination plays a central

causative role. It is the product of social practices entrenched in White supremacy (Mills 2007). His analysis, though highlighting the active nature of White ignorance, allows for it to have dimensions of racism *and* incapacity. The notion of wilful ignorance as an explanation for the persistent and widespread presence of false beliefs and absence of true beliefs in the White population about Indigenous people casts efforts to address White ignorance as a futile distraction from the real issue of attachment to power. The wholesale acceptance that White ignorance is wilful, however, has equal potential to distract. It clouds the potential simple and real value of efforts to advance White knowledge and understanding. It is therefore important to avoid the temptation to oversimplify and describe the phenomenon of White ignorance in terms of one or the other. My analysis finds that, not only is such dichotomous thinking unhelpful, it is rare in the respondents' heavy emphasis on White ignorance and the need for its rectification. The impression is that respondents accept that the two can simultaneously be part of the picture.

Multiple respondents acknowledge that White ignorance has structural components. They recognise that there are some important things many White people appear to either prefer not to know or do not consider worth knowing. They report that these selective and constructed aspects of White ignorance are unjust (Q8.3, Q8.11), a source of deep frustration (Q8.4, Q8.8), at times deeply offensive (Q8.13, Q8.16, Q8.28) and even traumatising (Q6.10). Many of these same respondents, however, also communicate a widespread expression of faith that at least some Australians in many ways, or many Australians in some ways, simply do not know and that increased exposure to relevant information has the potential to minimise the harm this causes. Overall, the respondents describe a more complex picture of White ignorance that recognises the coexistence and interplay of innocent and wilful ignorance both within the White population as a whole and within White individuals. As I explain in more detail below, innocent and wilful ignorance are not competing versions of the same story, but can be understood as interdependent co-contributors.

8.4.1 White Australians are not homogenous

Respondents describe a variety of responses by White Australians to information and efforts to educate. These range from a humble posture of learning (the exception) (Q6.23, Q6.30), to indifference (Q8.14), to obtuseness (Q6.6-10). They describe people who want to know and make the effort (Q6.23, Q6.30), people who have been given poor information (Q8.3-4), people who are too removed in their daily lives to even know what they are missing (Q6.75), and people whose fledgling efforts to know have been crushed (Q6.68). Blanket

assumptions that they do not know because they do not want to know are not reflected in empirical research. A 1996 national study found that, while White ignorance is widespread, distinctions can be made between 'those who do not know' and those who 'do not *want* to know'. Indeed, when presented with certain facts, respondents in that study expressed frustration at the lack of, or misinformation, to which they had previously been exposed (Johnson 1996). Reynolds makes similar observations of White frustration in *Why Weren't We Told?* (Reynolds 1999, p.2). Though collectively benefitting from White privilege, White people are not homogenous in their responses to it (Mills 2008, p.235; Pease 2010). Pease highlights various social movements throughout history where members of privileged groups have not chosen to deny the experiences of subordinate groups they are exposed to, but have rallied in support of their rights (Pease 2010).

8.4.2 The interplay between innocent and selective ignorance

There is also room to understand selective ignorance in a more nuanced way than as simple, immutable disregard. Neil expresses conviction that White people just need to hear Indigenous people's stories about themselves; their land and their cultures, and then they might start to care (Q8.27). Johnson's study reports that, while a significant portion of the non-Indigenous population may not actively seek out information, 'they can be expected to respond to appropriate stimuli and information' (Johnson 1996, p.5). Pease takes this further, arguing that selective ignorance is not simply vulnerable to correction through exposure to information, but that there is a tipping point of awareness at which it becomes morally untenable to turn away (Pease 2010). In other words, exposure to information can create the conditions conducive to an active desire to know, counteracting patterns of selective ignorance.

8.4.3 The culpable and the innocent in constructed ignorance

Exposure to information may also have a role in countering constructed ignorance. It is important to note who it is that respondents accuse of constructing ignorance. While they do not let individual White Australians entirely off the hook, it is common for respondents to point to the role of social institutions in constructing White ignorance. Several report that government (Q8.13), the education system (Q8.1, Q8.3–5, Q8.10, Q8.13) and the media (Q5.11–12, Q8.16–17, Q8.20) actively construct the ignorance they observe in the general population. Mark describes curriculum content design as censorship (Q8.3), Shannon says she does not blame individuals for ignorant statements because they have not been appropriately educated (Q8.1), while Joan and Daniel condemn an irresponsible media for

fostering ignorant attitudes (Q8.20, Q5.12). The active institutional construction in Australia of 'collective White ignorance' (Mills 2013) has been well documented, from the point of invasion (Pascoe 2014) to recent government policy (e.g. Howard-Wagner 2012) and in the many iterations of school history curriculums in between (Moore 2021). Manifestations of ignorance by the general population, as recipients of this dis- and misinformation, can be understood as innocent on their part. This view of White ignorance aligns with Althusser's concept of people as 'bearers of structures', whereby those structures are inscribed on the individual's subjectivities (Althusser & Balibar 1968, cited in Fuchs 2019). A distinction can be drawn between individual culpability for ignorance that is the result of structural factors and ignorance that is the result of 'wishful thinking, denial, self-interested selectiveness as regards the evidence' (Fricker 2013, p.50). This leaves the door open to the possibility that consequences of constructed ignorance can be mitigated to some degree through exposure to accurate information.

8.5   Does increased knowledge mean decreased misrecognition?

In the previous section I demonstrated that the presence of wilful ignorance in the White population does not mean that it does not have innocent dimensions that can be rectified. The wilful dimensions of White ignorance do not eliminate it as a viable conversion factor. There is, however, a second consideration in the process. This relates to whether increased knowledge actually changes White attitudes and behaviours. The respondents express great faith, many from experience, that increased knowledge can positively impact recognition, enhancing the ability of White Australians to perceive what is fair engagement. This is conveyed in their many and varied suggestions of education measures as a means of improving race-relations. It is also conveyed in the repeated distinction they draw between the attitudes and behaviours of White people who have had meaningful exposure to Indigenous people and cultures, and White people who have not (Q8.22-23, 8.25).

In the early days of the formal reconciliation movement the education of Australians was a proud centrepiece (Maddison and Stastny 2016). It remains core business for Reconciliation Australia[40]. This focus is now greeted by some scholars with a degree of scepticism. On the one hand there is a perception that it has been over-emphasised as a reconciliation strategy at the expense of measures for structural reform and restitution (Nakata and Maddison 2019,

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[40] The Reconciliation Australia Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022 identifies education of the community as one of its three core strategic directions: https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ra-strategic-plan_web.pdf [accessed 8 August 2021]

p.411). On the other there is a question mark over its efficacy in shifting the burden of disregard and patterns of misrecognition at all. Maddison and Stastny give a particularly dispirited account of this when they conclude that 'the ambition to use education to foster non-Indigenous engagement [with reconciliation] has largely failed' (Maddison and Stastny 2016, p.235). If education efforts have little meaningful impact on White attitudes and behaviours, then the rectification of White ignorance is not a valid conversion factor.

There is, however, evidence that increased knowledge does positively impact White attitudes and behaviours. Higher general education levels are associated with less racist attitudes (Walter 2012; Dunn et al 2004; Paradies 2016, p.112). The US literature draws causative links between critical historical knowledge and anti-racist understandings of the present (Bonam 2019). Evaluations of programs for attitudinal and behavioural change in dominant race groups report mixed results. Both the Australian and international literature indicate a pattern of significant short-term impact on attitudes and behaviours, which then dissipates over time. This is despite good retention of learned facts (Bezrukova et al. 2016; Hill and Augoustinos 2001). In one Australian study, long-term impacts were observed only in relation to the overt racism of high prejudice groups (Hill and Augoustinos 2001). This and other studies indicate, however, that exposure to information has sustained positive impacts on patterns of misrecognition under the right conditions (Durey 2010; Hill and Augoustinos 2001). Where, for example, the programs are delivered in multiple sessions and over longer periods they have proven to have more lasting effects (Bezrukova et al. 2016). It is not surprising that gains made in a single training are not always sustained when participants return to a broader environment in which they are repeatedly exposed to negative messaging about Indigenous people. Although the empirical evidence does not endorse a simplistic notion that exposure to information is the silver bullet to misrecognition, it does confirm that efforts to reduce White ignorance can be an effective measure to help combat it.

Efforts to rectify White ignorance are perhaps best understood as a necessary but not sufficient factor in enabling White capability for fair engagement. Paradies (2016) emphasises the importance of increasing understanding of White privilege alongside exposure to information. Manton and Williams (2021, p.228) highlight that the delivery of facts must be accompanied by exercises in critical self-reflection, mentoring and opportunities for application of learning and feedback – which, they note, are rarely adequately provided in programs to shift attitudes. Nakata and Maddison (2019) are critical of how the focus on education has served as an excuse to avoid structural reform and restitution, but do not suggest it is devoid of any value at all. The misuse of education

measures as a settler move to innocence needs to be separated from assessments of its fundamental value as a strategy to build White capability for constructive race-relations. Efforts to reduce White ignorance may not alone be sufficient to transform White attitudes and behaviours, but this does not preclude them as a critical dimension of strategies towards this end.

There are many explanations for why education efforts might appear to be 'failing' against the measures of engagement with reconciliation applied by Maddison and Stastny (2016). This includes the possibility that education efforts are currently inadequate. The media and the education system are the primary sources of education about Aboriginal people for most Australians (Maddison and Stastny 2016; Nelson 2018, p.12). Despite some excellent developments in both of these areas[41], they continue to be problematic sources of information. The inclusion of Indigenous history and cultures in school curriculums is relatively recent, limited in scope and faces implementation challenges due to the White ignorance of many of the educators responsible for delivering it (AITSL 2020). The mainstream media, though improving, persistently portrays Indigenous people in biased and stereotyped ways (Proudfoot and Habibis 2015). In 2021, the Australian Senate supported a motion to remove CRT from the national curriculum after concerns about it were reported in mainstream media[42]. Reconciliation Australia, whose mandate includes public education towards reconciliation, is poorly funded and reliant on the benevolent responses of settler institutions and corporations to its opt-in programs (Davis 2016, cited in Nakata and Maddison 2019, p.411). The attitudes and behaviours that need to shift permeate the whole of society. They are rooted in over 200 years of deficit discourses and White hegemony. It will take more than exposure to one or two alternative narratives to turn them around. Further, even when the education Australians are receiving is accurate, its content can be narrow. The range of knowledge emphasised by the respondents as important to changing hearts and minds extends far beyond simple awareness, for example, that atrocities occurred in early colonisation.

The fact that efforts to date to reduce White ignorance have not transformed Indigenous/White relations does not eliminate it as a critical component of the

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[41] See, for example, the Australian Curriculum Review 2021, which proposes an increased emphasis on Indigenous histories and cultures in schools (Australian Curriculum 2021). In the tertiary sector, 31 of Australia's 40 tertiary institutions have committed to developing the cultural capability of their students and 14 regularly report on their progress in demonstrating improved general awareness of Indigenous cultures (Manton and Williams 2021, 227).

[42] https://theconversation.com/the-senate-has-voted-to-reject-critical-race-theory-from-the-national-curriculum-what-is-it-and-why-does-it-matter-163102 [accessed 9 August 2021]

transformation of those relations. Such a conclusion contradicts the lived experience of the majority of the respondents in this research. I suggest it is premature to call it a failed measure in light of the flawed and inadequate education much of the general population has received. Reducing White ignorance is something that Australia is still learning about. An alternative explanation might be that Australia's efforts to address White ignorance have contributed to a 'tipping point' (Gladwell 2000) of awareness in the Australian population that has not yet been reached. Pease (2010) asserts that there is a level of awareness at which many individuals are unable to turn away from the moral imperative to know and to act in relation to social injustice. McIntosh (2014) similarly writes of a tipping point in the reconciliation process whereby it will attain its own momentum. I suggest that the problem is not that education measures have been over-emphasised. It is that they have been insufficient. Furthermore, a sound knowledge base in the White population is more likely to garner public support for sidelined structural change and restitution measures than the current bedrock of White ignorance.

I do not suggest that increased and better quality education measures constitute a complete solution. White fragility and backlash against alternative narratives are also part of this picture and need to be navigated, as demonstrated by the recent Senate motion against the inclusion of CRT in the national curriculum. These are significant considerations in how education can most effectively be undertaken, but should not be allowed to paint education efforts as futile and to paralyse action to reduce White ignorance.

8.6   The importance of White education on Indigenous terms

The respondents repeatedly and universally describe a stark degree of misrecognition. Critical race theorists explain that in the colonisation process it is not the colonised population's reality that informs the colonisers' perceptions of them. Rather, the colonised population is portrayed and perceived in a way that shores up the colonisers' preferred perception of themselves (as superior) and justifies their domination of the colonised population (Said 1978). Australia has a history of portraying Indigenous people in whatever way best serves the interests of White Australians at the time (Moreton Robinson 2004a). Critical race agnotologists further explain that the provision of partial or selective information can be used to give the impression of knowledge, while in fact constructing ignorance that conveniently sustains perceptions of racial or cultural superiority (Sullivan 2007). Tuck and Yang (2012) warn of how readily strategies towards decolonisation can morph into settler moves to innocence – the appearance of taking action when in fact the

fundamental transformations required of White people by decolonisation are sidestepped. Measures to address White ignorance that engage selectively and on White Australian terms with the dimensions of knowledge identified by the respondents are unlikely to effectively transform patterns of misrecognition. They run the risk of affirming, rather than disrupting, the perceptions of superiority on which the power imbalance relies.

Respondents highlight that knowledge of history encompasses not only their mistreatment (Q8.1-3), but also its recent nature (Q8.8-9) and the immense positive contributions Indigenous people have made both to Australia as a whole (Q5.8, Q8.5, Q8.11) and towards their own welfare (Q8.5). They report that knowledge of their contemporary situation includes not only their relative hardship (Q5.40, Q8.21), but also their sizeable achievements against the odds (Q8.9) and the complexity of navigating two cultural worlds (Q6.44, Q8.18-19). In relation to knowledge of culture, they explain that this encompasses more than just social etiquette (Q6.55, Q8.24, Q8.30), but also an appreciation of the logic and common sense informing their choices and behaviour (Q5.39, 8.26-27) and the relative strengths and wisdom that can be found in Indigenous life worlds (Q5.25-27, Q5.76, Q6.35).

Efforts to advance knowledge in order to develop White Australian capacity to perceive Indigenous people fairly must be informed by and responsive to what knowledge Indigenous people say is relevant and why (Riley et al 2013, 2015). Strategies to disseminate information that are not informed by these factors may technically amount to an advance in knowledge, but run the risk of simply reinforcing and perpetuating the deficit discourse. Historical knowledge that focuses solely on the injustices of history risks painting Indigenous people as helpless victims worthy of White pity and assistance, but perhaps not respect. Cultural knowledge that focuses solely on the logistics of effective engagement risks painting Indigenous cultural difference as a special need that should be tolerated or accommodated, but not necessarily embraced, learned from and incorporated. Knowledge of the contemporary lives of Indigenous people that focuses solely on their circumstances of hardship risks painting them as hopeless, dysfunctional and in need of special assistance, rather than appreciated as resilient and determined survivors navigating a complex, challenging, and often unrewarding, social, political and cultural terrain, as they wait for White Australia to mature and learn to be fair.

Any serious effort to address this conversion factor must be on Indigenous terms or it runs the risk of being reduced to a settler move to innocence. Although White fragility and attachment to privilege are realities that must be navigated in efforts to alleviate White ignorance, such efforts cannot be limited to what ill-informed White Australians think they

need to know or are comfortable knowing. If White people are to engage constructively with Indigenous people, they must be informed by what Indigenous people say White people need to know.

8.7 Conclusion

Based on my analysis of the respondents' experiences, the rectification of White ignorance is a conversion factor in White capability for fair engagement with Indigenous people. This tells us two things. Firstly, that a reduction in White ignorance is understood by Indigenous people to be a prerequisite to constructive race-relations and therefore to their wellbeing. On this basis, it is worthy of further investigation as a strategic capacity-building measure within the White Australian population towards addressing Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. Secondly, that when a development framework is applied to the White Australian population, and their own biased perspective is not relied upon to inform that process, critical capacity-building needs in the White population can readily be identified. This finding is responsive to one of the central aims of this thesis – the investigation of whether capacity-building measures targeting the Indigenous population only are too narrowly focused to achieve an improvement in the situation of Indigenous people, or if there is a need to broaden Australia's efforts to encompass capacity-building measures in the White population.

The finding does not suggest that addressing White ignorance is the silver bullet solution to achieving constructive race-relations. It must work in conjunction with other measures. This research neither aims nor claims to provide a comprehensive list of capacity-building opportunities in the White population towards this end. Rather, it points to the value of further research to reveal if there are more. The findings can be understood as suggesting that addressing White ignorance may be a necessary but not sufficient factor in enabling this capability. Importantly, the chapter itself highlights limits on what measures to address White ignorance can deliver. The concept of wilful White ignorance is one of those limits. The denial it entails is an exercise of the considerable agency at the disposal of White Australians. White Australians have significant power to both refuse to see Indigenous people fairly and to refuse to engage fairly. This agency is represented in Sen's (1992) framework by the dimension of 'choice'.

The capability framework aims to enhance personal agency and freedom of choice to live the life an individual has reason to value. Capabilities are enabled to give individuals freedom of choice, not as a guarantee of a particular outcome. In Sen's framework, the

development of a desirable capability ('potential functioning') does not necessarily mean that it will be exercised ('achieved functioning'). The framework accommodates the fact that, while constructive race-relations may be desirable to an individual, in any given situation other factors may be accorded higher priority by that individual. Faced with the same set of capabilities, different people will make different choices following their ideas of the 'good life' (Robeyns 2005, p.101). Similarly, this research is concerned with ensuring White Australians who value constructive race-relations with Indigenous people have the capability to engage in constructive race-relations if they so choose. Part of this research is predicated on the assumption that fair engagement with Indigenous people may not actually be an option for many White Australians because they lack the capability. If that capability is ensured by comprehensively addressing White ignorance and any other relevant conversion factors, this does not ensure that the value placed on constructive race-relations will not be trumped by other priorities. This is important because it is a tenet of CRT that White people will tend to prioritise maintaining their own race advantage over enacting race justice (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2006).

In Chapter 3, I highlighted Robeyns's critique of the way Sen frames choice as simple revealed preference. She suggests this is an overly simplified approach that takes insufficient account of the social constraints on human agency. She points out that our ideas of a good life are profoundly influenced by our backgrounds and context. If a preferred choice is not supported by social structures and social norms, it is at best, she asserts, a constrained choice (Robeyns 2003, p.48). This raises the question as to whether or not people genuinely have access to all of the capabilities in their capability set. Robeyns's critique raises the possibility that what CRT frames as White choices may in fact also have a capability dimension. Robeyns suggests that social conversion factors should also be considered at the point of choice. In the next chapter I consider the respondents' observations through the lens of Robeyns's concept of 'choice'.

Chapter 9: The missing conversion factors: White individualism

9.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to address the second research sub-question:

> What conversion factors must be in place to enable capability for
> constructive race-relations in the White Australian population?

It considers this question in light of Robeyns's (2003, 2005) critique of Sen's (1992) concept of 'choice' and agency in the capability approach. As discussed in Chapter 3, she suggests that the point of 'choice' in Sen's framework gives rise to its own conversion factors affecting the substantive availability of a given capability that is theoretically in place. In the previous chapter I showed that the respondents' observations raise the possibility that there are missing conversion factors that need to be addressed for fair engagement to be present as a capability in the race-relations capability set of White Australians. This chapter considers whether the respondents' observations point to any further conversion factors that would ideally be in place to maximise White Australian freedom to choose to exercise that capability for fair engagement. In it, I find that the respondents' observations do highlight capacity-building opportunities within the White Australian population that influence this choice. Specifically, this chapter considers respondent reports that suggest that the emphasis on individualism they observe in the prevailing White Australian culture negatively impacts White decision-making around fair engagement. The implication is that the displacement of individualism as a dominant cultural value and central organising principle in Australian society is a further conversion factor in White Australian capability to engage fairly. It represents a further capacity-building opportunity within the White Australian population toward the achievement of constructive race-relations. I then consider whether the displacement of individualism as a core cultural value is a viable conversion factor or if it is disproportionately disruptive relative to the problem it is intended to solve.

9.2 Sean: 'White people love individualism': Individualistic, competitive and self-interested

Sen's treatment of 'choice' as unencumbered personal preference is critiqued by Robeyns as overly simplistic. She suggests that invisible social pressures can subconsciously restrict what Sen calls 'free' choice. Her position finds support in the respondents' criticisms of certain priorities they perceive in the dominant White Australian culture and of the impact of those priorities on the motivation of White Australian people to engage fairly with Indigenous people. One such criticism articulated by the majority of respondents is that mainstream Australian culture appears to condone, and even encourage, self-serving behaviour (see section 5.3.5). Paul says White Australians are single-mindedly focused on themselves (Q5.64). Kate says White Australians value themselves more than anything (Q5.63). Many respondents describe White Australian cultural values, in contrast to their own, as individualistic (Q5.66 - 69, Q5.76, Q5.78), self-interested (Q5.63-65, Q5.67, Q5.71-76, Q5.80, Q5.86) and competitive (Q5.67, Q5.73, Q5.77, Q5.81).

The respondents are essentially articulating the cultural value of individualism that is widely recognised as a key feature of western liberal capitalist societies (Beck 1992, Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020). The Hofstede model of national culture is a widely accepted measure of the relative attributes that distinguish national cultures (Jones 2007). One of the six dimensions of culture that it measures is individualism versus collectivism. A society's position on this dimension relates to whether its members' self-image is defined in terms of 'I' rather than 'we'. According to the Hofstede measure, Australia ranks at 90 for individualism, while countries such as Vietnam and Saudi Arabia rank at 20 and 25 respectively. This means that Australia is a relatively highly individualistic society.

In this thesis I use the term 'individualism' to mean the belief that the general interests of society are subordinate to the freedom and self-realisation of the individual; independence and self-reliance are commendable; and that competition and self-interest are rational and natural behaviours that are valued as productive. Cultural values can be understood as 'principles or qualities that a group of people will tend to see as good or right or worthwhile' (Peterson 2004). Implicit in the responses of many respondents is a rejection of the value of individualism as neither 'good' nor 'right' nor 'worthwhile'. Their responses suggest that individualistic approaches are not 'right' in light of the respondents' understanding of our inherent interdependence as human beings. They are not 'good' or 'worthwhile' because they are perceived by most of the respondents to make people behave selfishly to the detriment of others.

Specifically, the observations of some respondents make it clear they do not share the individualistic, atomist concepts of society promoted by influential classical and neo-liberal theorists[43] to justify both the rationality and inevitability of individualistic behaviours – ideas that now pervade dominant discourses in Australia. A few respondents explain explicitly that the concept of the 'individual' as separate from others is a construct that does not, in their view, reflect reality (Q5.68). Some refer to human interdependence as an obvious fact (Q5.67, Q5.70, Q5.78). Mark says we have 'lost the plot' and our sense of 'connection' (Q5.67). He says we need to look at the big picture and understand we are all sharing the one 'fishbowl' (Q5.70). Sean says that there is no such thing as an individual because no individual 'exists in a vacuum' (Q5.68). Others make a similar point when they express bewilderment at the White Australian practice they observe of taking personal credit for achievements when so much in life is a collaborative effort (Q5.78-79). Several indicate that individualism is a value that is neither taught nor accepted in Indigenous communities (Q5.64-65, Q5.67, Q5.75-76). Paul states that it is against Indigenous law (Q5.64). In stark contrast to this, Mark and Sean observe that the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is a taught cultural value in Australian society, embedded in the very heart of White Australian social and formal education systems (Q5.67, Q5.76).

Beyond the simple difference in ontology, individualistic behaviours are also not perceived to be 'right', 'good' or 'worthwhile' because they are experienced as inherently and deeply problematic. Multiple respondents link the dominance of these values in White Australian society with a willingness to place fair engagement second to that which secures personal gain. They associate this emphasis on self with a decreased sense of responsibility and concern for the wellbeing of others. Several articulate this explicitly (Q5.65, Q5.67, Q5.69, Q5.71, Q5.75-76). Mark says it makes White Australians narcissistic and untrustworthy (Q5.67, Q5.87). Sean says it diminishes their sense of citizenry and fair play (Q5.76-77). Joan sums up the prevailing attitude as, 'I work, I pay my way. Why should I care about them?' (Q8.14). The sense of entitlement to put oneself first is also expressed through the multiple examples the respondents give of White Australians choosing to prioritise their own advantage over what the respondents perceive to be right and fair to others: they are observed to hoard excess resources for future personal use in the face of immediate need in others (Q5.72); self-promote and take the credit for collaborative efforts (Q5.78-79); exploit advantage rather than use it to support others (Q5.73-74); trade adherence to group rules, honesty and sincerity in the pursuit of personal gain (Q5.76-77, Q5.82, Q5.85-87) and look

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[43] See, for example, Smith, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Rousseau and Rawls (Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020)

after number one with lesser regard to, or at the direct expense of, the wellbeing of others (Q5.67, Q5.71, Q5.75, Q5.80, Q5.82, Q5.87). The respondents report that this value plays out even in contexts where White Australians have the stated altruistic aim of 'helping' Indigenous people. The result is suboptimal outcomes. This is because their actions to 'help' are so often compromised by concurrent self-serving motives such as career progression and financial gain (Q5.81, Q5.83-84).

The respondents are strident in expressing their frustration with this cultural value and the problems it causes. This is not least because it has particular consequences for Indigenous people who are so often, and in so many ways, in the subordinate power position. Some respondents speak categorically about the self-serving nature of many White Australians (Q5.63-64). Others speak in more nuanced terms about the value of individualism as contributing to an imbalance in White behaviour (Q5.67, Q5.75). These latter respondents do not assert that White Australian culture or individuals are wholly and ruthlessly self-serving and devoid of altruistic motives. Nor do they suggest that manifestations of individualism in the form of individual expression and aspiration are inherently bad. Rather, they appear to be saying that hegemonic Australian culture, with its emphasis on individualism, has gotten the balance wrong between looking out for self and looking out for others. It is this imbalance, according to some of the respondents, which permits many White Australians to casually put personal gain ahead of what the respondents perceive to be strictly fair engagement with others. Regardless of how strongly stated, the implications of the respondents' perspectives for Sen's framework are the same. Namely, that the cultural valorisation of individualism in Australian society means that there may be many instances where White Australians will consider it reasonable and common sense to choose not to engage fairly with Indigenous people, regardless of the capability to do so.

9.3   Individualism and commitment to fair engagement

9.3.1 Individualism and responsibility for others

The respondents' perceptions align closely with the critical literature on individualism. Lukes's (1971) documentation of this scholarship across the 19th and 20th centuries demonstrates recurring assertions from as far back as De Tocqueville that a reduced sense of social responsibility and concern for doing the right thing by others are exactly the consequences of the increasing influence of individualistic values. Lukes's documentation of the scholarship on individualism ends at 1971 but from here the critical scholars of the

radically individualistic neo-liberal philosophy pick up the commentary (e.g. Harvey 2005, 2008; Weigratz 2010; Cahill et al. 2018; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001; Giroux 2016). Their assessments of the impact of neo-liberal individualism on society profoundly mirror the respondents' views. Giroux, for example, asserts that it has reduced 'self-reflection and mutual empowerment' to 'self-promotion', 'self-interest' and a 'ruthless social Darwinism' (Giroux 2016, p.xv).

Lynch and Kalaitzake's (2020) analysis of the impact of the neo-liberal valorisation of individualism on social solidarity has a particular resonance with the respondents' observations. Their use of the concepts of affective and calculative solidarity closely articulates the dynamics the respondents describe and helps to pin down the point so many of the respondents seem to make in diverse ways. Lynch and Kalaitzake use the term 'affective solidarity' to refer to expressions of collective caring and the protection and support of vulnerable others. They explain that a cultural emphasis on individualism shifts the balance away from affective solidarity to a more calculative solidarity. They assert that the self-responsibility and self-interest promoted by the value of individualism denies the deep interdependency and relationality of the human condition. This relationality is supportive of an affective, morally led solidarity, while individualism supports a weaker form of solidarity that they describe as narrow, self-interested and calculative (Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020). It is this that Geena (Q5.83) describes when she says the desire to help of many White Australians is driven by a self-centred desire to appear to care about Indigenous people rather than a genuine care for Indigenous people. Mark (Q5.81), Sandra (Q5.82), Claire (Q5.85) and Cassie (Q5.86) are all referring to calculative solidarity when they say they have learned to assume a self-serving motive behind White Australian offers to help or work together.

The concept of 'calculative solidarity' has parallels in the field of critical race theory with Bell's (1980) concept of 'interest convergence' in which Bell asserts that White people only advance non-White interests where they converge with their own. Accordingly, the cultural value of individualism offers an explanation for this behaviour that is described with such fatalism in the critical race literature. Calculative solidarity can also be understood as a form of misrecognition in the sense that it does not respect each individual as an end in and of themselves. The displacement of affective solidarity by a more calculative solidarity undermines the inherent dignity of the other as a fellow and equal human being. Recognition of this inherent dignity is associated with respect, and ultimately a more just society (Honneth 2001).

9.3.2 Individualism and ethical behaviour

Importantly, Lynch and Kalaitzake (2020) correlate more ethical behaviour with affective solidarity and less ethical behaviour with calculative solidarity. This goes to the heart of the respondents' observations that the valorisation of individualism in the prevailing White Australian culture reduces their commitment to doing the right thing by others. Similarly Karlberg's deep analysis of the legal, economic and political tripartite of systems governing our society finds that the compounding effect of their structural emphasis on the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is not conducive to 'self moral regulation' (Karlberg 2004, p.53; see also Giroux 2016). The strong promotion in recent decades by the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO of neo-liberal individualism throughout the world (Harvey 2005, p.3), has created the opportunity for empirical studies on the specific impact of the adoption of individualistic values in traditionally collectivist societies. These studies have found marked increases in institutional and individual tolerance of behaviours widely recognised as unfair and unethical (e.g. Weigratz 2010). Fairness is, of course, a subjective and culturally contingent notion. I address this later in this chapter. What appears to be less subjective though, is that individualism can be associated, both theoretically and empirically, in a causative relationship with a lowered commitment to do whatever is perceived to be the right thing.

9.3.3 Individualism and social justice

The respondents' impatience with individualism adds to a growing chorus of voices in the critical neo-liberal literature that identifies the valorisation of individualism and fostering of neo-liberalism's homo economicus as key factors in a number of social ills. As noted in the discussion of neo-liberalism in Chapter 3, there is a sizeable body of theoretical and empirical research that demonstrates the neo-liberal project of 'radical individualism' (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2013, p.596) has had significant adverse social and economic impacts for all except an elite minority. The perception that it inhibits White Australian motivation to engage with Indigenous people fairly from a position of significant power advantage adds to this already lengthy list. It is not my aim to demonise individualism nor to deny the contributions it has made – including to the important development of human rights. Rather, my aim is to step back and shine a light on this cultural value that in many ways is 'unmarked' and 'unseen' and is largely uncritically accepted as normal and common sense in Australian society. This is what the respondents' observations invite us to do. I note that within the critical scholarship are those who highlight that the shift toward individualism should be respected for its contribution to vast progress, whilst also identifying it as a

transitional step from which western society must eventually mature and move on (Blanc 1846, cited in Lukes 1971).

9.3.4 Individualism and freedom of choice

The critical neo-liberal literature suggests that individualism as a central organising principle for society does not necessarily free us in the ways that advocates of neo-liberal individualism believe, and in the way which Sen (1992) argues is emblematic of a developed society. Instead, in some ways, it may ultimately force conformity (Lukes 1971). In western capitalist societies like Australia the key institutions of power (legal, economic and political) have the rewarding of the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest built into their design (Karlberg 2004). Decades of neo-liberal policy has further promoted a social perception that it is rational and acceptable to prioritise self-interest and exploit advantage, and perhaps naïve or even foolish not to (e.g. Harvey 2005). In this sense, the dominance of the value of individualism can diminish affective solidarity as a viable or reasonable option.

In short, what the critical literature on individualism tells us is that the respondents' negative perspectives on the valorisation of individualism in mainstream Australian culture should not be understood as a mere adverse reaction to relative ontological and cultural difference. Nor is it simple resentment at the imposition of those differences upon the respondents by a more powerful group. The problematic nature of the behaviours and consequences the respondents attribute to the valorisation of individualism have an objective reality beyond cultural relativity or cultural preference. The respondents tell us that this reality is playing out in a race-relationship marked by a profound power differential. In doing so, it is obstructing constructive race-relations. The subjective and relatively collectivist cultural position of many of the respondents is relevant, but primarily in so far as it enables them, as outsiders, to perceive more acutely the workings of this core cultural value in Australian society.

This finding would appear to vindicate Robeyns's (2003) critique of Sen's (1992) framing of choice as unencumbered personal preference. The respondents' observations point to the cultural valorisation of individualism as the kind of invisible constraint on free choice to which Robeyns refers. The capability for fair engagement may exist, but unfettered access to it and the motivation to use it are diminished and discouraged. This is because the hegemonic culture promotes, rationalises and, in some ways, even systemically enforces the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest and calculative rather than affective solidarity.

On this basis, the cultural value of individualism, as a core value and central organising principle of Australian society, is a potential target for a conversion factor in ensuring White Australians can freely choose to exercise their capability for constructive race-relations. It is therefore worthy of investigation as a further capacity-building opportunity in the White Australian population.

9.4 Individualism and perceptions of fair engagement

The analysis in the previous section may appear as an overly stark and essentialising representation of Australian society. This analysis of the operation of individualism in society is provided in this way to clearly lay out a cultural dynamic that I suggest is commonly obscured by White normativity. Importantly, the White population is, of course, not homogenous. There are segments of the White population who are highly motivated to engage fairly with others despite the deep influence of individualism in the dominant culture. Indeed, it is likely that most Australians would like to think of themselves as individuals who, on the whole, engage fairly with others. The respondents' observations indicate, however, that there is a second impact of the immersion in the cultural value of individualism that can serve to blind even consciously fair-minded White Australians to unfair engagement.

The respondents' observations indicate that the cultural valorisation of individualism may also operate as an inhibiting factor in the ability to *perceive* what constitutes fair engagement. Joan says that a common White Australian suburban attitude is, 'I work, I pay my way. Why should I care about them?' (Q8.14). This points to a perception in the dominant culture that looking after number one *is* fair engagement. As discussed in Chapter 7, an ability to perceive what constitutes fair engagement is an essential factor in the capability to engage fairly. The suggestion is, that in addition to the possibility that individualism can cause White Australians to *choose* unfair engagement with Indigenous people, it may also, akin to White ignorance, contribute to misrecognition and distort their ability to *perceive* what constitutes fair engagement. In this section, I explain three ways in which the value of individualism contributes to the misrecognition of Indigenous people and potentially negatively impacts White Australian ability to perceive what constitutes fair engagement.

Before I do so, I acknowledge the highly subjective nature of perceptions of fairness. At the other end of the spectrum is the philosophical proposition that justice is an absolute. The

exploration of these kinds of philosophical and existential questions is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice to say, no one would suggest that assessments of fairness are entirely relative. Most would acknowledge that there is an objective dimension to what constitutes fairness, whether or not an individual's subjective perception of it is clouded by factors such as misrecognition. Leventhal's empirical work on perceptions of fairness supports this assertion and indicates that it is possible for individuals to access a more objective assessment of fairness under particular conditions (Leventhal et al. 1980). This section proceeds on the premise that fairness has a degree of objective measurable reality.

Firstly, there is the way that individualism can lead to the misattribution of structurally influenced failure and success as a personal failing or success. The respondents' stories align with the theory of Mills and others in this regard (Moreton-Robinson 2009; Mills 2015; Howard-Wagner 2019). They highlight the operation of individualism as misrecognition in their lives. As Joan points out (Q8.9), her family has had access to 'White' education for just two generations and, accordingly, their educational achievements represent a greater talent and effort than the accolade they attract. On the flipside, Claire (Q5.8) points out the unique contribution Indigenous sacrifices of their land, labour and autonomy have made to the contemporary wealth of 'successful' White Australians. They are talking about the uneven playing field that is masked by individualism's denial of the relevance and difference of black histories and contemporary social location.

Secondly, individualistic systems are not culturally neutral. The respondents' experiences highlight that to even enter the competition demands a high cultural price of many Indigenous people. I have shown that individualistic systems (for better or for worse) come at a price for nearly everyone (Mercier 2020; Harvey 2005, 2008). This particular price of participation and inclusion, however, is not paid in equal measure by most White Australians for whom many aspects of homo economicus are, at least to some degree, relatively normal and common sense. Joan speaks about the cost of her cultural unwillingness to engage in the individualistic self-promotion practices in her workplace (Q5.79). Paul says individualistic behaviour would require him to behave in a way contrary to Indigenous law (Q5.64). Annette says that to get a job she has to change herself from one person into another person (Q6.44). Claire and Cassie describe learning to suppress natural inclinations to include and collaborate when dealing with White Australians and instead to prioritise their own interests, as no one else will (Q5.85-86). It is recognised in the literature that participation in a western capitalist society like Australia, or rather, the avoidance of exclusion from it, demands the great price of compromise or abandonment by members of collectivist cultures of their own cultural attachments and of any existing cultural aversion to

individualistic behaviours (Altman 2014; Howard-Wagner 2012; Habibis et al 2016; Weigratz 2010)[44]. Studies indicate that this is not a price that is readily recognised or taken seriously by many in the dominant group. Gray and Sanders report that the majority of Australians agree, for example, that it would be best for Indigenous people to 'completely assimilate into Australian society' (Gray and Sanders 2015, p.3). The terms of engagement are understood as fair, even though many would likely readily agree with Fraser that participation in social life on an equal footing is integral to fairness (Fraser 2003, cited in McBride 2013, p.110). The imposition of individualism tends against the recognition of, and creation of, spaces for the safe expression of the unique needs and aspirations of Indigenous people – another of Honneth's pillars of recognition essential to a just society (Honneth 2001).

Finally, I turn to Leventhal's work on fairness and its implications for White perceptions of fair engagement in light of everything the respondents have highlighted about how individualism operates in Australian society. Leventhal's empirical research establishes that human beings do have a natural bias towards their own self-interest in assessing what is just. This bias, however, can readily be displaced in the right conditions by concepts of fairness that are more in line with those of an objective observer. These conditions include an emphasis on impartiality, the welfare of others, flagrantly unfair distribution and open discussion of distribution principles (Leventhal et al. 1980). My analysis of the respondents' experiences indicates that a social environment in which the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is a dominant value is unlikely to provide these conditions. Individualism does not emphasise the welfare of others. It masks rather than highlights unfair distribution. It encourages the pursuit of individual self-interest rather than impartiality. It defines the distribution principles and concepts of deserving and undeserving. Based on the standard of fairness being that of the objective observer, there is some validity to assertions that the location of individualism as a core cultural value is an obstructive factor in the ability of those uncritically immersed in it to perceive what constitutes fair engagement with Indigenous people.

My reframing of Sen's (1992) approach indicates that there are two distinct but related ways in which the dominant cultural value of individualism inhibits White Australian capability to engage fairly with Indigenous people. Firstly, it can reduce White Australian motivation to

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[44] Bargh and Otter's analysis of Maori responses to the rise of neoliberalism offer important nuance to this assertion that ascribes Maori more agency within this framework. They note that Maori have at times used neoliberal principles to advance self-determination. They document instances where, for example, Maori have exploited neoliberal rhetoric to gain control of the delivery of services for Maori people (Bargh & Otter 2009, p.160)

choose to exercise their capability to engage fairly with them. Secondly, even for those for whom fair engagement with others is a priority, the cultural value of individualism may contribute to the misrecognition of Indigenous people. This in turn can inhibit White Australian capability to perceive what constitutes fair engagement with them. It reinforces, rather than displaces a natural human tendency to a self-interested bias in assessments of what is fair. On these bases, the displacement of individualism as a core cultural value and as a central organising principle of Australian society can be identified as a possible conversion factor in White Australian capability to engage fairly with Indigenous people. It is a capacity building opportunity within the White Australian population that Indigenous perspectives suggest is necessary to ensure White capability to engage in constructive race-relations.

9.5   Individualism as a valid conversion factor

In the remainder of this chapter, I investigate the viability of the displacement of individualism as a conversion factor. A conversion factor is not meaningful if it is impossible to effect. For example, men carrying pregnancies is not a meaningful conversion factor in advancing the capability for gender equality, much as in theory it might resolve a few things. In western liberal capitalist societies, the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is widely understood to be human nature and rational, common sense, productive behaviour. Accordingly, the dominant discourse paints it as indispensable and somewhat inevitable (Karlberg 2004). In this context, suggestions that individualism must be somehow wound back to achieve constructive race-relations can appear naïve, absurd or disproportionate. In this section, I explore the proposition that individualism is necessary and inevitable and is therefore not a viable target for a conversion factor.

9.5.1 Individualism is human nature

The classical liberal and neo-liberal theories that have shaped Australian cultural values and institutions are based on the assumption that the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is human nature. It can therefore appear to be non-negotiable. There is a body of literature that challenges this assumption (e.g. Lewontin et al. 1984). Geertz asserts that many beliefs about human nature are in fact cultural constructs (Geertz 1973). This question does not need to be resolved here. The viability of this conversion factor does not hinge on whether or not the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest is an inherent human behaviour. None of the respondents deny the fact of impulses to competition and self-interest. The question is not whether these impulses are driven by cultural constructions or

human nature, but of how we choose to respond to them. The respondents criticise a perceived immaturity or lack of self-discipline in Australian culture in relation to self-interest. They object to the apparent unashamed embrace and acceptance of competitive and self-interested behaviour and the unfair outcomes associated with it. Human nature or not, such behaviour is perceived to be unacceptable. In their view, it should be curtailed rather than encouraged. This perspective on individualistic behaviour finds support in the work of Lynch who points out that human beings are both relational and individualistic. She asserts that either quality has the potential to be fostered or undermined by the cultural and politico-economic context (Lynch and Kalaitzake 2020). In their work on biological determinism, Rose et al. write that while 'humanity cannot be cut off from its own biology, neither is it enchained by it' (Rose et al. 2000, p.311).

9.5.2 Individualism is rational, common sense and productive

A second challenge to the viability of this conversion factor is the argument that individualism is rational, common sense and productive. On this view, it appears irrational, unreasonable and regressive to suggest that it is a harmful cultural value that needs to be displaced from its valorised position in society. Perceptions of individualism as common sense may be experienced as objective by those immersed in White western values, but should be understood as having a culturally contingent dimension. It is the nature of cultural values that, for members of that culture, they become normalised and internalised and are ultimately experienced uncritically as common sense. It can be hard for individuals to see the problematic aspects of their own culture's values. This is particularly so for White Australians because of White normativity and hegemony in Australia, and across the globe. The universalisation of Whiteness as the invisible measure of an evolved society means White western cultural values are rarely challenged in a way that forces White people to see those values as cultural constructions, examine them critically, or reflect on their cultural attachment to them (Eddo-Lodge 2018; DiAngelo 2011). For individuals immersed in White western culture, individualism can appear as the best and only way to do things. The domestic and global dominance of systems based on individualistic values means it can be hard to even imagine things being any other way. Yet there is ample evidence from history, as well as the simple fact of collectivist cultures, both within Australia and across the globe, that things have not always been this way and do not have to be going forwards. The current global and domestic dominance that individualism as a philosophy currently enjoys should not be mistaken for conclusive evidence that it is either optimal or inevitable (Karlberg

2004). The viability of the ideas themselves needs to be separated from their acceptability to the dominant group.

In this sense, the challenge might more accurately be framed as White fragility - the resistance of White Australians to critical cultural feedback that challenges their racialised understandings (DiAngelo 2011). The resounding critique and rejection by the respondents of a cultural value so widely accepted as natural and common sense is likely to be a challenging proposition for many White Australians, even for those who are themselves critical of some aspects of it. The challenge it poses to prevalent understandings is sizeable. It inverts the value of individualism from the solution to the problem. In this significant reframing, individualism moves from an advanced and constructive cultural value to a weakness in Australian culture. It shifts from a value that public policy is actively seeking to establish in Indigenous communities as a 'project of improvement' and 'normalisation' (Altman 2014; Howard-Wagner 2012), to an obstacle to Indigenous wellbeing, and to that of many others (Harvey 2005, 2008). The respondents' views confront any remnant internalised colonised assumptions of Whiteness as the pinnacle of evolution. Here, the 'primitive', 'simple minded', 'violent' and 'uncivilised' (Moreton-Robinson 2009) appear less willing than 'modern civilisation' to accept the idea that we, as human beings, are inevitably ruled by animal instincts. White fragility experiences cultural criticism as intuitively 'wrong'. It seeks to redirect such criticism and restore the racialised (im)balance rather than to engage with it and interrogate it (Di Angelo 2011). The temptation for the dominant culture therefore, is to dismiss these critiques as mere cultural relativism, or more specifically, as the relativism of cultures yet to evolve and catch up.

9.6 Individualism is too central to be displaced

I have demonstrated that the valorising of individualism can be understood as a colonised and culturally contingent value. The unmasking of its Whiteness unsettles assumptions that individualistic behaviour is common sense and inevitable. It opens the door to the possibility that individualism can be displaced as a central organising principle in our society. The remaining challenge to the viability of this as a conversion factor rests in the degree of disruption this would necessarily entail. Its implementation has the potential to not only be deeply disruptive to our current institutional arrangements, but also to hegemonic ways of thinking and operating at both an individual and collective systemic level. This raises questions about the proposed remedy being disproportionate to the problem.

9.6.1 Decolonisation is disruptive

Later in this chapter (section 9.7) I seek to demonstrate that this is a valid conversion factor – not in spite of its disruptive nature, but because of it. First, however, I want to highlight that arguments of disproportionate disruption imply that processes of decolonisation must fit in with White Australian systems and cultural comfort zones. This is nothing less than the reimposition of the colonial hierarchy and mindset. I note that arguments of disproportionate disruption rarely arise in relation to policy measures designed to coerce the adoption of individualist values by collectivist Indigenous communities. Assertions that this conversion factor is overly disruptive are further countered by the observations of decolonisation theorists that decolonisation demands revolutionary change and is necessarily and inherently disruptive (Fanon 1963; Sium et al. 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012). If an act of decolonisation is not disruptive and unsettling, if it does not deliver a meaningful shift in power, it is likely to be something lesser masquerading as decolonisation to ease White consciences, namely, a settler move to innocence (Tuck and Yang 2012).

If colonisation is a structure not an event (Tuck and Yang, 2012), then decolonisation cannot be grafted onto that structure. It is the structure itself that must be unsettled. At a minimum, Fanon, and other theorists of decolonisation, explain that this requires the decentring of the dominant White Australian voice and perspective around which this structure is built (Fanon 1963; Moreton-Robinson 2004; Martin and Mirraboopa 2003; Tuhiwai Smith 1999). The fruit of doing so here has been to expose the necessity of displacing individualism as a dominant value in order to achieve the conditions for constructive race-relations. If we are engaging in a process of decolonisation to identify and foster the conditions necessary to enable White Australians to engage fairly with Indigenous people, then, by definition, White Australia does not get to use its disproportionate power to unilaterally cherry-pick only the proposed changes that suit it best.

Fanon explains that decolonisation does not occur by documenting, romanticising and attempting to reinstall the past ways of the colonised, to which there is no real return, but nor is it some kind of compromise with the values of the colonisers. Fanon makes the case for the 'emergence of a 'new national culture' and the 'veritable creation of new men'. This means 'everything' must be called into question (Fanon 1963, pp. 36–37 and 227). Nothing can be placed beyond critical reach. Individualism may be a central organising principle for western capitalist society (Karlberg 2004), or as Bauman asserts, 'the trademark of modern societies' (Bauman 2001a; p.14), but it cannot be off limits just because the consequences could be deeply disruptive.

9.6.2 Disruptive for whom?

The above discussion flags the pertinent question of 'disruptive for whom?'. The respondents' observations highlight an overarching irrationality in the value placed on individualism as an organising principle of society in the name of individual freedom. This is that the competitive pursuit of individual self-interest, must, by necessity, impinge on the interests of other individuals (Beck and Beck 2001). Not everyone is equally free in individualistic systems to pursue their individual self-interest. Power discrepancies mean that the freedom of some must inevitably be disproportionately curtailed by the enactment of this kind of freedom by others. Harvey (2005) points out that neo-liberal individualism has ultimately proven beneficial only for a small elite. This is demonstrated in the list of adverse social and economic impacts of the neo-liberal project of 'radical individualism' provided in Chapter 3. The competitive pursuit of individual self-interest may be common sense in the sense that it is a prevalent and hegemonic value but, as Harvey concludes, it has not so clearly proven to be 'good' sense (Harvey 2005). There is much to suggest that this value is, instead, bringing the planet to its knees (Mercier 2020). This begs the question, for whom is the displacement of individualism from its current valorised position too great a price?

9.7 Recognition theory and the desirability of deep disruption

Finally, in this section I propose that the deeply disruptive nature of this conversion factor should not be perceived as a disproportionate by-product of its implementation. Rather, its deeply disruptive nature should be understood as proportionate to the depth at which racialised divisions operate in the structures of Australian society and in the individual psyches of its citizens. This degree of disruption is therefore appropriate. The racialised divisions in Australian society are not surface – they are deep. Deep change is ultimately necessary to overcome them. Within the frame of recognition theory, I will show how, by virtue of its deeply disruptive nature, this conversion factor serves to address racialised divisions at the true depth at which they occur in Australian society. It does not simply mitigate their surface dynamics. I also show how the nature of this conversion factor represents a potential remedy to the limitations of recognition theory as a pathway to constructive race-relations. I suggest that the disruptive nature of this conversion factor is not an argument against its legitimacy, but in its favour.

9.7.1 The limitations of recognition theory

The findings in this thesis rely heavily on recognition theory to explain why the solution to race-based divisions necessarily involves rectifying White ignorance and displacing the cultural value of individualism. In short, Taylor (1994) and Honneth (2001, 2003) draw a straight line between recognition and the conditions for a just society, and the respondents' observations draw a straight line between the unjust engagement arising from misrecognition and racialised social divisions. The purpose here of pursuing the recognition of Indigenous people is not simply to put in place the conditions for fairer engagement as an end in itself. Rather, the bid to achieve the fairer engagement that recognition enables is because this is necessary to overcome racialised divisions and facilitate the affective solidarity of a greater shared group identity. As I have previously explained, there are some inherent contradictions in relying on recognition as a pathway to reduced race-based social division. Universal recognition is insufficient because it is normative to the culture of the oppressor (Kymlicka 1995, cited in McBride 2013, p.19). Struggles for particular recognition call attention to and reinforce racialised group identities. They affirm and reinforce the colonial construct of the race binary that gives 'blackness' and 'Whiteness' meaning. They affirm rather than disrupt the race hierarchy and White entitlement to give or withhold recognition of Indigenous people against the invisible measure of universalised White values (Fraser 2000; Bauman 2001b; Coulthard 2014). In short, the ultimate solution to race-based social division is unlikely to be found in recognition processes that reinforce race-based divisions.

9.7.2 Deep recognition as a remedy

The nature of the recognition this conversion factor demands represents a potential remedy to this contradiction in recognition theory. Recognition theory is problematic because of its focus on and reinforcement of race-based identity. Not all recognition measures, however, must be identity based. This conversion factor represents a deeper form of recognition that does not rely on the reinforcement of race-based identities and divisions to operate. I term the form of recognition this conversion factor represents 'deep recognition'. This is as distinct from 'surface recognition'. Surface recognition can be understood as recognition that operates within the framework of socially constructed race categories. Surface recognition disrupts the social value assigned to those categories but not the categories themselves. Deep recognition operates at a level below these constructions. It is not only unresponsive to these social constructions, it dismantles the foundation of the race binary on which they are built and maintained.

This concept of surface and deep recognition draws heavily on and develops Fraser's (1995) analytical distinction between 'affirmative' and 'transformative' recognition measures explained in section 3.2. Transformative, or deep recognition, remedies operate by changing (and decolonising) the values by which moral worth is measured, reshaping everyone's identities. They are not reliant on the promotion of existing group differentiations. Rather, they have the potential to destabilise them over time creating room for alternative group alignments and broader solidarities (Fraser 1995, pp.83–86). The implementation of this conversion factor would be an act of deep recognition. It demands a deep change that is not responsive to the prevailing pattern of the arbitrary devaluing of Indigenous ontologies and axiologies and overvaluing of White western ontologies and axiologies. It recognises a weakness in Australian culture and the need to supplant it. In doing so, it does not align itself with Indigenous identity but does potentially result in its elevation. This is because Indigenous moral worth is then no longer judged as deficient against a White western-centric value nor does it need to seek exemption from this judgement on the grounds of difference. Instead, the oppositional binary is abandoned and the measure itself is thrown open to question and its value reassessed for everybody. The individual and collective shift it entails does not engage with group identity, yet has the potential to disrupt the identities of everyone.

9.7.3 Deep recognition versus universal recognition and colour blindness

It is important here to clarify that the concept of deep recognition should not be confused with universal recognition nor discredited concepts of colour blindness. The latter two have been criticised for being normative to the values of the dominant White population. They may consciously attach no overt status to Whiteness or blackness, but they leave in place the unmarked and unnamed status attached to colour-aligned values and behaviours due to White normativity (e.g. Bonilla-Silva 2006; Eddo-Lodge 2018; Kymlicka 1995, cited in McBride 2013, p.19). The individualism of colour-blind approaches, in particular, not only fails to address the deep self-reproducing injustices of structural racism and the colonial legacy, it actively denies them. Deep recognition is also unresponsive to race categories. It can be distinguished in that it works to undo the arbitrary alignment of status with the features – biological or behavioural – of any particular race group. Colour blindness operates above race identity categories, glossing over them and pretending they do not exist. Deep recognition operates below race identity categories, disrupting the foundations on which they are built. Colour-blind approaches are passive. Deep recognition is active. Deep recognition neither demands uniformity nor the denial or diminishing of the rich diversity of

Australian society. Rather it draws on that diversity to strengthen and advance society. It disrupts and reframes the presumed oppositional nature of socially constructed categories of Indigenous and non-Indigenous, together with the hierarchical assignment of race group value which such oppositionality inevitably sets up.

9.7.4 The limitations of surface recognition

This conversion factor also serves as a good illustration of the limitations of surface recognition identified by Fraser (1995). A surface recognition response to the respondents' expressed abhorrence for individualistic behaviours might be to recognise that many Indigenous people do not share the value of individualism and, in recognition of their cultural difference, to cease imposing it on Indigenous populations. This surface recognition does not require any shift in the White Australian population's relationship with this value. It does not disrupt White Australian entitlement to set the limits on what degree of difference is ultimately culturally acceptable in this 'multicultural' country. It simply broadens what degree of difference is accepted within that limit for a particular group. Fraser's analysis explains that this kind of 'special concession' for Indigenous people is counterproductive to overcoming division. This is because it not only entrenches constructed race distinctions and fails to disrupt race hierarchies, but because it is likely to foster resentment and judgement towards Indigenous people. It feeds into the narrative of White superiority and the eternal Indigenous need for 'special concessions'. In addition, the interdependence of society means that other 'special concessions' are likely to be needed to rectify the inequalities created by large parts of the White Australian population continuing to engage in a more calculative solidarity on an uneven playing field with a population that culturally tends more towards affective solidarity.

Here, I have highlighted the limitations of surface recognition but this is not to suggest that surface recognition has no benefit. Many respondents vigorously advocate for acceptance of their cultural differences and to be left to live these differences in peace (Q5.37-38, Q5.43-44, Q6.23, Q6.50, Q6.74, Q8.32). As such, the mere cessation of public policy efforts to impose individualism on remote Indigenous communities would amount to an advance in constructive race-relations. Further, it can be seen that many times it is to a surface concept of recognition that the respondents appeal when they say greater levels of knowledge in the White population would support constructive race-relations. Claire wants people to know that Indigenous people are just as capable as White people. She can pay for her own beer, works and pays tax (Q6.71). She also wants them to know that Indigenous people have been major contributors to the building of the modern Australian economy (Q5.8). Di wants

public Indigenous drunkenness reframed in the context of the particular fruits colonisation has delivered for Indigenous people and to therefore serve as a trigger for White compassion and contrition rather than judgement (Q5.41). Daniel seeks greater accommodation of his situation of concurrent obligations under both Indigenous and White law (Q8.18). Dot seeks respect for Indigenous people's unique ability to survive in the bush (Q5.25). It can be acknowledged that in these latter examples the revaluing of Indigenous identity delivered by reduced White ignorance is reliant on the reinforcement of Indigenous difference based on particular, and arguably restrictive, concepts of Indigeneity. The facts offered by Claire in the initial example disrupt negative stereotypes, but moral worth is still assessed against White values around work and money. This recognition, though upwardly valuing Indigeneity, leaves the race hierarchy intact. It also fails to disrupt the inequitable distribution of the race-relations labour burden of cultural adaptation.

In acknowledging all of this, it must also be acknowledged that surface recognition has important merits that should not be dismissed. It is irrefutable that more recognition by more Australians that Indigenous people are equally capable; have made and make, as a group, particular valuable contributions to the nation; have particular needs and entitlements, which are reasonable in their particular cultural and life circumstances and are not the fruit of personal failings; and that a greater degree of Indigenous cultural difference should be embraced by our multicultural nation, would all garner an increase in the valuing of Indigenous people and a reduction in the persistent unfair engagement they experience. These would all amount to significant advances in race-relations from the open judgement, racism, discrimination, disrespect, assumptions of superiority and stereotyping described by the respondents as ordinary daily experiences. Further, although the rectification of many aspects of White ignorance does not demand deep recognition, it can potentially precipitate it. Pease asserts that there is a level of personal awareness that can be reached in relation to the injustice created by one's own privilege, which is a 'point of no return'. He suggests that, at this point, turning away from responsibility for social change ceases to be an option for the conscientious individual (Pease 2010). For all of these reasons, processes of surface recognition, though imperfect, have a meaningful and important contribution to make to the advancement of constructive race-relations.

Coulthard cites Fanon in referring to the efficacy of struggles for recognition, and the self-recognition such struggles entail, as a transitional but insufficient step in the process of decolonisation (Coulthard 2014). Similarly, the contribution of surface recognition of Indigenous people by White Australians can also be understood as a step on an evolving journey or trajectory towards constructive race-relations. It is part of what Sium et al.

describe as the 'messy, complex and contradictory process of decolonisation' (Sium 2012, p.ii). As with any social change of this size, it will not and cannot be achieved in a single leap. The journey towards just and equitable race-relations needs to be understood as one of shifting goalposts, as advances are made and new horizons appear within reach. In a time of war, the point at which the bombing stops can be celebrated as 'peace'. This does not imply that the ultimate aspiration of peace, as defined a by united, thriving, harmonious society with no threat of an imminent lapse into violence, has been achieved (Lotfali 2006; Curtin and Bird 2021). Increased surface recognition would amount to an important and high impact advance in White Australian capability to engage fairly with Indigenous people. It does not represent the end point of the journey.

The fact remains that, despite its merit, aspects of the pursuit of surface recognition play into the colonially constructed race binary and can work against the overcoming of race-based divisions in society. It valorises race distinctions while presenting as anti-racist. It addresses the harmful symptoms of race-based division, but not the underlying structures and beliefs on which those divisions rest. Surface recognition does not require the deep change in the White Australian population necessary to reach the level at which race is embedded in Australian society, its psyche and its institutions. Surface recognition offers an important advance but ultimately, if the goal is to overcome race-based division, we cannot rely on increased surface recognition within the framework constructed by colonisation. Deeper acts of recognition are necessary to reset the relationship.

9.7.5 Deep recognition and decolonisation

Although I have framed it in terms of recognition theory, deep recognition is, in essence, a process of decolonisation. Fanon's (1963) explanation of what decolonisation requires and why it is necessary to just race-relations implies a process of deep recognition. Both theoretical approaches demonstrate the necessity for whole-of-population radical change. Like Fraser (1995), Fanon and Coulthard point out that if we focus our efforts on rectifying the consequences of colonisation, without transforming the structure of colonisation itself, we run the risk of reinscribing those inequalities in the race-relationship (Fanon 1963; Coulthard 2014). Fanon explains that the colonial structure, together with the oppositional race binary integral to it, must itself be dismantled. This includes the particular assumptions embedded in this structure we have subscribed to about what society should look like (Chalmers 2017).

Fanon asserts that the process of decolonisation integral to just race-relations requires the deepest of changes. It entails the 'disappearance of the colonised man'. By this he does not mean a wholesale return to pre-colonisation society. Though, as Coulthard explains, the revitalisation of key aspects of pre-colonisation ways of knowing, doing and being can serve to offer working alternatives to problematic aspects of the dominant capitalist systems (Coulthard 2014). The potential of such alternatives to make their full contribution in line with Nakata's (2012) vision of decolonisation as mutual enrichment depends on a radical paradigm shift. In order for White Australian people and structures to adopt the humble posture of learning (and unlearning) necessary for this to be possible, a revolutionary change is needed in the current ubiquitous discrepancy in power, the culturally embedded nature of White western ways and the superiority assigned to one system over the other. This is why Fanon makes the case for no less than the emergence of a 'new national culture' and the 'veritable creation of new men' (Fanon 1963, p.36-38). As Sium puts it, decolonisation launches us into the 'tangible unknown' (Sium 2012, p.xii). The deeply disruptive displacement of the colonised value of individualism from its position as a central organising principle of Australian society represents one such foray into this 'tangible unknown'.

9.8   Cultural change and self-reflexivity

The degree of transformation in thought and action that this conversion factor requires is without doubt an immensely destabilising concept for White Australians to grapple with. This is especially so for a race group so unaccustomed to being challenged in this way. In the face of this kind of challenge to our racialised understandings many White people do not engage with the challenge. Instead, it is the pattern of White people to restore a stable sense of self through diminishing or dismissing the challenge, or engaging in a diverting 'settler move to innocence' (DiAngenlo 2011, Tuck & Yang 2012). This is why I conclude with the following point.

In this chapter I have relied heavily on critical neo-liberal literature to show that individualism can be understood as a problematic cultural value. The size of this body of literature tells us that the limitations of the 'radically individualistic' neo-liberal doctrine are well known in the social and political sciences. Giroux observes that these views are becoming more broadly understood and that a growing number of people in western capitalist societies reject the ideology of radical individualism promoted by neo-liberalism

and the price it demands (Giroux 2016). Neo-liberal thought is, in some senses, only a relatively recent policy development and one that can be reversed. It has been built on a longer history of western liberal individualism. This awareness alone, however, does not undo our individualistic social structures and the deeply internalised influence that Harvey tells us the prevailing value of neo-liberal individualism and the fostering of homo economicus has had on how we relate to each other and interpret and live in the world (Harvey 2005). I have shown how everyone, and White Australians in particular as the dominant cultural group, has a degree of blindness to their internalised cultural values. No one living in Australian society with its hegemonic culture of individualism can assume they are untouched by its influence and that the respondents' observations do not apply in some way to them. Dunn's survey study of perceptions of racism in Australia again provides a useful analogy. In that study, 83 per cent of respondents agreed Australia is a racist country but did not agree that they personally were racist and part of the problem (Dunn 2004, p.412). The respondents are not talking at an abstract level about neo-liberal theory and government policy. They are talking about everyday behaviours by everyday people. They describe these behaviours as prevalent in the White Australian population. Tuck warns that the development of critical consciousness is not enough to achieve decolonisation (Tuck and Yang 2012). The change required is not about an intellectual ideological shift or tweak of government policy. It is about the deep reflexivity that Land says all White people need to do to be effective allies (Land 2015) and which critical race and Whiteness theorists say is so hard for White people to do (DiAngelo 2011; Eddo-Lodge 2018). Social justice is not wrought or undermined solely by the acts of a few upon the many; its conditions are created by the many choices of each and every one of us every day.

9.9 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore whether any prevalent and adjustable features of the White Australian population restrict White Australian agency to utilise their capability for constructive race-relations. It asked what, if any, developments in the White Australian population might enhance the freedom of White Australians to choose to engage with Indigenous people more fairly more often. The finding of this chapter is that the displacement of individualism as a dominant cultural value and as a central organising principle of Australian society is a conversion factor in White Australian freedom towards this end. The respondents' observations point to it as a factor that reduces White Australian motivation to engage fairly with Indigenous people. Compounding this is the possibility that it may also cloud their ability to perceive what constitutes fair engagement with Indigenous people. The validity of this conversion factor is likely to be hard for many White Australians

to accept. It challenges the merits of a cultural value widely viewed as natural, rational, common sense and superior. It also challenges the individualistic political, legal and economic systems that cultural value has shaped. Perhaps most confrontingly, it challenges the security delivered by the hegemonic position of White Australians as the cultural arbiters of what is right and good. Disruption of these kinds of invisible colonised assumptions is, however, part of the process of establishing the conditions for a sustainable social cohesion based on justice rather than submission. It is tempting on this basis to dismiss it as too radical a requirement in reality. It is theoretically interesting but practically unrealistic. I suggest that Fanon (1963) and Fraser's (1995) work makes it clear that it is equally unrealistic to believe race-based divisions in Australia can ultimately be resolved, and race-relations characterised by justice and equity achieved, without this kind of deep and disruptive change within the broader Australian population. The findings of this thesis add further weight to their theoretical conclusions. In the next chapter I consider the implications for reconciliation of these findings.

Chapter 10: The mutual benefits of reconciliation

10.1 Introduction

I turn now to the third and final research sub-question posed by this thesis:

> What are the implications for advancing reconciliation in Australia and, therefore, justice and equity for Indigenous people?

For the purposes of this research, reconciliation is understood as inseparable from the process of decolonisation. It is therefore a tangible unknown that is imagined and enacted collaboratively with a view to transforming the oppressive structures and relations that divide Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Reconciliation is not an explicit interview topic in the dataset on which this research relies. The respondents were asked for their views on race relations and White Australian people and culture. This study has investigated those views using principles from Sen's (1992) capability approach. The aim was to explore if there are any capacities that, if built in the White population, may improve the interpersonal relations that currently divide Australian society along race lines and hinder Indigenous wellbeing. Accordingly, although the respondents were not asked directly about 'reconciliation' per se, the findings of this research have implications for efforts to advance the interpersonal relations aspects of it.

Further, although this thesis has focused on interpersonal relations, strengthening grassroots relations has implications for structural/political change, as does structural/political change for relations at the grassroots (McIntosh 2000, Little & Maddison 2017, Strakosch 2016). In a majority rule democracy, structural/political changes are dependent to some degree on a mandate from the Australian public. The efficacy of such changes is also dependent on the support of the Australian public. A treaty, for example, that is understood and endorsed by a critical mass of the population who enjoy strong relations with its Indigenous community members, will be a more potent force for change and reconciliation than one begrudgingly engaged in for political expediency. The interdependence of grassroots race-relations and structural/political change is a dimension of the relevance of this research to reconciliation.

The fact that the respondents were not asked directly about reconciliation means that any implications for it reported here arise from my analysis of the respondents' experiences. They are therefore mediated through a White lens, with all the potential bias and limitations a White standpoint implies. I begin by summarising the findings of the research and then consider their implications for reconciliation. I show that the findings lend empirical weight to Strackosch's (2016) assertion that reconciliation is a process that must be imagined and enacted together. They demonstrate the importance of the deep and ongoing dialogical exchange she identifies as part of that process. This is dependent on Indigenous people having a voice. Secondly, contrary to the dominant discourse of Indigenous deficit, the findings suggest that transformation of the oppressive relations that divide Indigenous people and White Australians is dependent on transformation within the White Australian population and on their active participation in that transformation. Finally, the findings help to highlight that Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being can strengthen Australian society if genuine and unconditional space is relinquished for them. This suggests that reconciliation should not be framed as something White Australia is doing for Indigenous people. Rather, in line with relational concepts of decolonisation, it should be understood as mutually beneficial.

10.2 Research overview

This thesis began by considering the situation of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage in Australia. It highlighted the colonised assumptions that frame the public and political discourses around this apparently intractable issue and the disproportionate focus on Indigenous people this leads to. It asked what solutions would be revealed if these colonised assumptions were set aside. What is exposed by shifting the focus from what needs to change in the Indigenous population to what needs to change in the White population? What is exposed by shifting the focus from White Australian perspectives and experiences as the primary source of information and expertise, to the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous people? The research centred its investigations on White capacity for constructive race relations because of the established links between race-relations and Indigenous wellbeing.

Chapters 5 and 6 drew directly on the respondents' own words to paint a picture of their persistent misrecognition and disregard by even well intentioned White Australians. Fundamentally, the sentiment conveyed was that many White Australians tend not to engage fairly with Indigenous people. The respondents reported that White Australians perceive

them unfairly, treat them unfairly and do not do their fair share of the emotional and intellectual labour of race-relations. In Chapter 7 I used recognition theory to explain that this unfair engagement is harmful and divisive. Harm and division are the opposite of the kinds of outcomes many White Australians say they aspire to for Indigenous people and for the race-relationship. Using principles from Sen's capability approach, I concluded that one possible explanation for this discrepancy is that many White Australians may lack capability to discern what constitutes fair engagement with Indigenous people.

In Chapter 8, I applied Sen's concept of 'conversion factors' to the data. This was to help identify what needs to change in White people and society to maximise their capability to engage fairly. My analysis of the respondents' experiences indicated that White ignorance is a critical factor in the persistent misrecognition of Indigenous people. I found that rectification of White ignorance is a necessary, though not sufficient factor in the ability of White Australians to perceive what constitutes fair engagement with Indigenous people and therefore, to engage fairly with them. My identification of this capacity building opportunity within the White population counters prevailing narratives of Indigenous deficit that locate the source of Indigenous problems within the Indigenous population. It inverts assumptions about whose capacity and ignorance need to be addressed to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.

The significance of this finding, however, is diminished by CRT's argument that, regardless of capability for fair engagement, White people, consciously or subconsciously, are likely to exercise their disproportionate power to prioritise self-interest over race justice (Delgado & Stefancic 2017; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Accordingly, building White capability to engage fairly will not necessarily result in increased fair engagement and better outcomes for Indigenous people. Robeyns' (2005) critique of Sen's theory counters this, highlighting that choice too can be restricted by social conversion factors. Accordingly, in Chapter 9 I investigated whether the data told us anything about conversion factors at the point of choice in Sen's framework. I found that the hegemonic cultural value of individualism may be one such factor. I showed that it reduces White motivation to choose to engage fairly. I also showed that it may be a second inhibiting factor in White ability to perceive what constitutes fair engagement. This suggests there may be a capability dimension to the White beliefs and actions that maintain their race advantage but which CRT frames as a White choice or revealed preference. In the next section I consider some of the implications of these findings for reconciliation and for White Australians, who are the intended audience of this thesis. This chapter forms part of the conclusion to the thesis.

10.3 White Australians as agents of change

At a basic level, my analysis of the respondents' experiences indicates that reconciliation may be advanced by efforts to reduce White ignorance and to displace individualism from its valorised position in Australian culture and as a central organising principle in Australian society. At a more abstract level, there are some general implications for reconciliation that can be derived from these basic findings. Firstly, they dispel any assumptions that the role of White Australians in the reconciliation process is to build the capacity of a struggling Indigenous population to 'catch-up'. White Australian readiness to support change in the Indigenous population is not sufficient. Rather, the transformation of the oppressive relations that divide Indigenous people and White Australians is dependent to a considerable extent on transformation within the White Australian population. White Australians must be prepared to undergo significant growth and change themselves.

Joan (Q5.32) states that, 'White Australians have not fully considered that they're actually living amongst equals'. The vast majority of Australians claim that they do recognise the inherent equality of Indigenous people with themselves (Nelson 2018). There are signs of an emerging consciousness in the White Australian population around the need to advance reconciliation and enact justice for Indigenous people (see sections 2.6.1 and 3.4), but the experience of the respondents is that this has not transformed the divisive and oppressive habits of thought and action that White Australians have inherited. The research calls on White Australians to recognise the inherent interdependence of society and the ways in which their individual and collective attitudes, choices and behaviours impact Indigenous people. It calls on them to take responsibility for this. Fundamentally the research calls for White Australians to transform themselves in order to transform the ways in which they engage with Indigenous people, and therefore the situation of Indigenous people in Australia.

If White Australians are to shoulder this responsibility and overcome the socially divisive and oppressive habits of thought and action described in this research, this will take conscious effort. In Chapter 6 multiple respondents state plainly that transformed relations will require more White Australians to engage more actively and more often in the labour of constructive race relations. Passive goodwill is not enough. It does not create the social conditions necessary for the relations that divide Indigenous people and White Australians to be transformed. It neither rectifies White ignorance nor displaces the individualism of the hegemonic culture. Passive goodwill and the burden of disregard are bedfellows insofar as neither is fuelled by racial hostility but both facilitate the reproduction of race divisions and

of Aboriginal/White socio-economic inequalities. CRT tells us a passive approach to race-relations is neither neutral nor harmless (see Chapter 3) and the respondents' experiences suggest this is true. Accordingly, a second implication of the findings is that reconciliation cannot be delegated to government alone to be delivered to Indigenous people on Australia's behalf. Maddison et al. (2016) write that 'non-Indigenous Australians must be engaged as conscious, reflective beings' in pursuit of the conditions of justice conducive to reconciliation (Maddison, Clark, and De Costa 2016, 293). This research similarly finds that reconciliation is necessarily an active state.

10.4 Policy implications

The findings suggest that transformed race-relations conducive to reconciliation will not be found in the current bedrock of White ignorance. Nor will it be found in the ideology of self-interested individualism that has gained ascendancy in Australian society, and that is systematically imposed on Indigenous communities. These findings present a fundamental challenge to contemporary modes of operating at both the individual and institutional level. While Indigenous policy is not a core focus of this thesis the findings have a number of policy implications that are worth consideration. These include strategies to reduce White ignorance of Indigenous people and culture and some thoughts on how public policy might address the barriers presented by the individualistic values and norms that characterise contemporary Australia.

White ignorance

In terms of social policy, a prime target is the Closing the Gap initiative, which is, in effect, Australia's national Indigenous policy (Strakosch 2014). All 17 of the specific and measurable targets of the Closing the Gap National Agreement[45] relate to changes within the Indigenous population. Amongst its specific 'priority reform areas' are general references to building cultural competence in government agencies to ensure cultural safety for Indigenous people engaging with them. Though important, this focus on cultural competence is restricted to government agencies and is not subject to a target for measurable change. The elimination of racism is referred to, but 'racism' is undefined in the document. Indigenous commentators have criticised the continued focus of this policy initiative on 'Black bodies and behaviours' (Bond 2020). This research points to the utility of including specific and measurable targets for change within the broader Australian population in

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[45] The National Agreement on Closing the Gap can be found here:
https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/national-agreement-closing-the-gap [accessed 11 August 2021]

Closing the Gap's list of national socio-economic targets and outcomes. This could include, for example, a defined and measurable reduction in White ignorance within the Australian population.

Secondly, there is room for political initiatives in relation to research and education around White ignorance. In Chapter 8 I noted the limited budget of Reconciliation Australia but also the evidence of increasing efforts in the education sector to rectify aspects of White ignorance. These developments are encouraging but fragile and insufficient. Importantly, they are *ad hoc* and not underpinned by public policy commitment. If the rectification of White ignorance is critically important to reconciliation and Indigenous wellbeing, then more can and should be done. The findings indicate the need for government-funded comprehensive research into the prevalence and nature of White ignorance across various demographics in Australia and how this can most effectively be rectified. Questions for investigation should extend to strategies for navigating White fragility and backlash.

The millions of dollars currently assigned to the construction of memorials celebrating the invasion of Australia by Britain (see Chapter 8) might be effectively redirected to the development of an appropriately funded, sustained, systematic, whole of community education strategy that is responsive to the findings of the research proposed above. Social attitudes to smoking in Australia were turned around almost within a generation due, in part, to determined, well-researched and well-funded community education strategies (Chapman and Freeman 2008).

Finally, in terms of individual initiatives, the implication of these findings is that White Australians must do what they can to rectify their own White ignorance and that of the people around them. It is neither fair nor viable for Indigenous people to do so much of the work of building connection and understanding. As several respondents point out in chapters 6 and 8, individuals and communities can more actively pursue their own education by choosing to engage with the multitude of resources available. Individual White Australians can also use their White privilege to advocate for initiatives towards the rectification of White ignorance such as the policy developments identified above, or within other institutions with which they are engaged.

White individualism
The displacement of individualism has less straightforward implications for public policy and the choices of White Australian people than addressing White ignorance. Although this research indicates that analysis of the role of White ignorance in Australia's poor

White/Indigenous race relations receives inadequate attention in the literature, this is partly because the problems it causes are largely taken as given. The Australian public may underestimate its importance, but it is generally accepted as a factor in the misrecognition of Indigenous people (e.g. Johnson 1996). The calculative solidarity promoted by the value of individualism also contributes to misrecognition and inhibits White ability to choose to engage in constructive race relations (see Chapter 9). The association of individualism with obstacles to reconciliation is less recognised and considerably more challenging to contemporary understandings of race-relations than that of White ignorance.

CRT notes the racialised consequences of individualism (e.g. Moreton-Robinson 2009; Mills 2015; Howard-Wagner 2019) but the problematic nature of the valorisation of individualism does not generally feature in the public and scholarly discourses around race relations and reconciliation. The exception is some of the decolonisation literature that directly equates individualistic capitalist and neoliberal values with colonisation (e.g. Kiddle 2020; Mignolo 2011). Hartendorp (2018) writes, for example, that 'capitalism in Aotearoa today is predicated on the suppression of Indigenous knowledge and ways of doing things' (Hartendorp 2018, cited in Kiddle 2020, p.36). Bargh and Otter (2009) document Maori enterprises that are operating outside of the neoliberal paradigm. While these do not directly challenge the operation of White values outside of these enterprises, they point out that such enterprises do offer alternatives. The focus of this research by Maori scholars is understandably on the need to reinvigorate and protect Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being, but White people need to take responsibility for considering how their own values impact on Indigenous people, and individualism is a critical area for consideration.

The deep reach and prevalence of individualism, both as a cultural value and organising principle for Australian society, mean individual initiatives to resist it face the obstacle of even recognising opportunities to do so. I pointed out in Chapter 9 that this requires the practice of a deep reflexivity by all who live in, and are therefore influenced by, the dominant cultural values of Australian society. The cultural competence literature provides insights on how such reflexivity can be triggered and supported. A helpful political initiative would be greater investment in this kind of research.

I also observed that the increasing recognition of the destructive effects of the radical individualism of neoliberal philosophy sits alongside the likelihood of strong resistance to its reassessment. The findings suggest that White Australians who want to engage in constructive relations with Indigenous people must make conscious and conscientious choices not to have their engagement with others shaped by this hegemonic value. This is

difficult in social conditions and structures unsupportive of more collectively oriented choices. It is this refusal to conform with social norms and expectations, however, that can make such acts of resistance particularly powerful relationship building and decolonising acts.

For some White Australians who have limited engagement with Indigenous people, these conscious choices can be to participate in public discourse about Indigenous policy. The overtly racist policy measures associated with the Northern Territory Emergency Response were notable for the lack of public outcry they elicited from a non-Indigenous public that was largely unaffected by them (Altman and Hinkson 2007). This kind of support has both a symbolic and a practical consequence for Indigenous people. A more vocal and engaged public in support of Indigenous agendas buoys Indigenous people[46] and can influence policy towards more progressive agendas. The increasing base of support around the campaign to change the date of Australia Day is an example of this.

Other opportunities to resist individualistic attitudes and behaviours may entail a degree of conscious sacrifice that is direct, personal and immediate. One example is the 'pay the rent' initiative[47], whereby individuals and businesses can choose to pay an annual rent on the land they occupy to their local Indigenous community, despite such rental payments being legally unenforceable. This financial sacrifice amounts to a personal act of reparations and wealth redistribution. It has symbolic value in that it is an act of respect that recognises the injustices of the past that have lead to the wealth and land distributions of the present and it changes the discourse around entitlement. It has practical value in that the money raised directly supports Indigenous agendas and self-determination.

White Australians who are interacting with Indigenous people more directly and more regularly are likely to encounter specific and personal opportunities to conscientiously resist their individualistic cultural influences and prioritise justice over personal gain. Land tells the story of a White dentist who achieved deep trust and acceptance by the Indigenous community in Melbourne by virtue of being known to have given up a lucrative private dental practice to work for an Indigenous community dental clinic (Land 2015, p.40). For

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[46] After 250,000 Australians turned out to March for Reconciliation in 2000, an event that was expected to attract a few hundred people, Chair of the Council for Reconciliation Evelyn Scott is reported to have said on the day, "I'll die happy tomorrow". https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/walk-for-reconciliation [accessed 21 July 2021]

[47] See for example https://paytherent.net.au/ in the Northern Territory of Australia [accessed 1 August 2021]

researchers in the Indigenous space it might mean sacrificing the desired project timeline, or even abandonment of treasured projects, to ensure that Indigenous stakeholders endorse and are being served by the process (Riley et al. 2013, 2015). In activist spaces it may mean stepping back and accepting relatively thankless behind the scenes work to support Indigenous counterparts in higher profile roles and to amplify their voices, rather than seeking personal praise and glory (Land 2015).

These examples are illustrative examples only. There are many other areas for consideration, including within the important area of employment (e.g. Di Giorgio 2019). Taken to its logical conclusion, however, this conversion factor implies a wholesale reimagining of our society and its institutions that is beyond the scope of this thesis and any individual action or single policy suggestion. It entails deep structural and cultural change. The findings of this thesis, supported by the growing body of critical neo-liberal literature (see Chapter 3), take us to the very first step of this degree of social change – admission that the valorisation of individualism is a problem. The next step is to identify a way forward. This brings us to dialogical exchange as a critical part of the reconciliation process.

10.5 Reconciliation and dialogical exchange

In section 3.6.3 I explained that if reconciliation is not shaped by processes of decolonisation, then it will likely be shaped by processes of assimilation. Poka Laenui writes that decolonisation has five stages: rediscovery and revitalisation; mourning; *dreaming*; commitment; and action (Laenui (2000) cited in Mercier 2020, p.17). Dreaming is a precursor to decolonising action because decolonisation 'requires the courage and imagination to envision and construct a new future' (Sium et al. 2012, p11). It is 'moving to a different and tangible place, somewhere out there where no one has ever really been' (Cruz 2012, cited in Sium et al. 2012, p.iv). So too is reconciliation. There is no pre-existing harmonious race relationship for Australia to return to. Colonisation was the point of conflict and pre-colonisation there was no relationship (Short 2005). Dreaming is, therefore, a critical component of reconciliation. The research lends empirical support to Strakosch's (2016) assertion that the dreaming of reconciliation must be undertaken together in a process of ongoing, equal and deep dialogical exchange.

In section 6.2 of this thesis, I reported the emphasis several respondents place on sincere dialogical exchange as part of the process of removing social divisions. The thesis itself demonstrates what is brought to the fore by the centring and amplifying of Indigenous

voices and perspectives that are so commonly silenced in the dominant discourse. Indigenous perspectives do not simply 'disrupt the complacency of White power', they throw up things that, as Cowlishaw says, even well-informed and well-intentioned White scholars cannot always predict (Cowlishaw 2004, pp.68-69). This research has shown that the conscious privileging of Indigenous perspectives immensely enriches the discourse around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage and reconciliation in ways that are unlikely to have otherwise arisen. It inverts understandings of whose knowledge is inadequate and therefore whose knowledge must be systematically and rigorously elevated. It completely turns on its head a core hegemonic White Australian cultural value from a perceived solution to a major problem. It promotes a seismic shift in hegemonic White Australian cultural values in order to create a more just society and overcome Australia's racialised divisions. All of these things fall largely outside of the White Australian imaginary as represented by dominant discourses around reconciliation and the closely related issue of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage.

Strakosch (2016) states that the White Australian dream of reconciliation is effectively one of colonial completion. It is a dream of Australian society as it is now but with a legitimated White state and White guilt resolved. Although it envisions a change in the conditions of Indigenous people, it contemplates neither transformation of the White population nor the restructuring and reordering of Australian society. The centring of Indigenous voices by this research exposes this vision of a reconciled Australia as lacking in imagination and ambition. It is also lacking in justice. It is assimilation under a different name that yet again fails to recognise, in its most profound sense, the inherent equality and value of Indigenous people and cultures. My analysis of the respondents' perspectives aligns with calls by decolonisation theorists for the 'envisioning and construction of a new future' (Sium et al 2012, p.11) and for 'everything' to be 'called into question' to enable the 'creation of new men', a 'new culture' and the reordering of the world (Fanon 1963, pp.36-38). The research findings contemplate a vision of reconciliation that is characterised by a radically transformed Australian society. They lend weight to concepts of reconciliation as a joint and evolving project of shifting horizons and uncertain end (Strakosch 2016, Little and Maddison 2017).

This research represents only a tiny step towards a more balanced discourse about what transformed relations require, yet it is indicative of the potency of such reimagined dialogues. This is not to suggest that Indigenous people have or should have all the answers. Rather the assumption is that equal, deep dialogical exchange may create a productive space

where there is enhanced potential for more constructive mutual understandings, relationships and strategies to arise.

10.5.1　Dialogical exchange in the context of deep inequality

I do not pretend that the proposal of deep, ongoing and productive dialogical exchange proffers an easy way forward. Such dialogues are intensely vulnerable to the immense power differential and entrenched patterns of White domination in Australian society. In addition, processes of this kind must contend with the challenges of White fragility, apathy and natural resistance to change of any kind, let alone the enormity of the social change proposed by this research. The respondents' experiences validate why many Indigenous people may be wary of participating in such dialogues, or engage from a position of 'defensive crouch' (Mercier 2020, p.27).

None of this, however, should place dialogical exchange in the too hard basket. It points instead, to the importance of fostering spaces at all levels of society in which Indigenous people and White Australians can safely and meaningfully speak to each other as equals, and in which Indigenous people can be heard on their own terms and their perspectives valued. It calls for the conscious and conscientious privileging of Indigenous voices, including those with inconvenient views, in the public and political discourse spaces from which they are so often excluded. Productive dialogical exchange can be learned about through rigorous and persistent effort. The cultural competence literature undoubtedly has much to offer in this respect. There are several Indigenous scholars writing about cultural safety in the health and education spaces whose work can be drawn on (e.g. Ramsden 2005; Rigney 2011; Riley et al. 2013, 2015). To not attempt this on the grounds that the gross inequalities between Indigenous people and White Australians preclude the possibility of equal and safe dialogue, is to be complicit in the perpetuation of those very inequalities. If Australia is serious about reconciliation and good outcomes for Indigenous people, then, at the very least, it has to make the attempt.

10.6 Reconciliation is not about 'us' and 'them' it is about 'all of us'

This thesis defines reconciliation as necessarily deeply intertwined with processes of decolonisation. In this section I propose that the findings align with the more relational concepts of decolonisation espoused by theorists such as Nakata (2012), Chalmers (2017), Baltra-Ulloa (2018) and Martin and Mirraboopa (2003). I am aware that this is a stretch that aligns with a personal bias and that I open myself to the criticism of analytical overreach. I share these ideas simply for consideration.

CRT frames the interests of White Australians and Indigenous people as racially aligned and competing, but some Indigenous scholars suggest that this should not be assumed to be the case (e.g. Mercier 2020, p.27). Nakata (2002) points out that when one knowledge system is assigned superiority over another the potential for them to be mutually enriching is stifled. The findings in this research arise from the elevation of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being from their normalised devalued position. I argue that what they reveal leans towards relational concepts of decolonisation in two ways.

Firstly, the findings highlight the profound and unavoidable interdependence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. White Australians and Indigenous people share this landmass and their choices impact each other. There is no arrangement for co-existence possible by which they cease to impact each other's lives. Accordingly, I suggest that the way forward is one that recognises and works with, rather than against, this interdependence.

Secondly, my analysis shows that the respondents' objections to the individualism of hegemonic Australian culture should not be understood as a difference to be coercively eradicated or begrudgingly accommodated with special concessions. Rather, as per the critical neo-liberal literature (see Chapter 3), their critique is an opportunity to better understand and transform a problematic aspect of Australian society for the benefit of all. The value of Indigenous perspectives extends beyond resolving what are commonly termed 'Indigenous issues'. When Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being are given space then their potential power and contribution can be known.

The point I am attempting to draw out from the findings in this section is articulated by Behrendt when she says, 'The dichotomy of us and them was untrue and it was unhelpful. We are not in competition and we are not necessarily a threat to each other; our fates - and Indigenous and non-Indigenous people - are tied' (Behrendt 2007, 53). The findings can be understood as highlighting that reconciliation is not something that White Australia does 'for' Indigenous people. Nor is it something that the Australian government does on behalf

of White people with an Indigenous 'Other'. Rather, the same processes that will enable Australia to transform the oppressive relations that divide Indigenous people and White Australians, are likely to be mutually enriching and to strengthen Australian society as a whole. On this basis, reconciliation should not be understood as about 'us' and 'them'. It is about and by and for 'all of us'.

10.7 'Dreaming' as a critical component of reconciliation

In its concern to find a path through both the theoretical impasse represented by CRT and the reality of Australia's problematic race relations, this research is open to criticisms of idealism. Although addressing aspects of White ignorance falls within the realms of immediate possibility, other aspects of the findings, such as the displacement of individualism as a central organizing principle of society, the call for equal dialogical exchange, deep recognition and relational decolonization, are open to criticism on the basis that they are insufficiently rooted in reality. They are theoretically interesting but practically remote.

There are several responses I could offer to critiques of these findings as impractical. Firstly, I could say that the findings suggest it is equally unrealistic to expect to achieve reconciliation in the form of constructive race relations conducive to justice and equity for Indigenous people without deep change in the broader population. The research is simply stating the facts around the depth at which such change needs to occur. Secondly, I could highlight that what is proposed is no more than the degree of cultural change and adjustment Australian society regularly expects and coercively demands of Indigenous people. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, there is an inherent value in articulating these ideas. Dramatic social shifts do occur and have occurred. The shifts in social attitudes to human slavery and, more recently, to aspects of gender roles and hetero-normativity, serve as salient examples of societal change that, at one point, would have been inconceivable. Each of these major changes began with the belief that things could be different.

Dreaming is a critical component of decolonisation and, indeed, of any social change (Laenui (2000) cited in Mercier 2020, p.17). Multiple scholars rightly assert that consciousness in the absence of action is not decolonisation (Tuck and Yang 2012, Curry-Stevens 2010, Mercier 2020) but it is a legitimate and necessary precursor to it (Mercier 2020). Martin Luther King's dream, as ambitious as it was at the time, was never intended to remain in the realm of ideas. A vision of change must necessarily be articulated before it

can be brought into reality. The mere articulation of the ideas thrown up, or at least reinforced by this research, can serve to advance the understanding of the dominant population. It scatters the seeds of these ideas on the constantly shifting ground of social attitudes, that sooner or later may land on fertile soil. To stretch the analogy a little further, articulation of these ambitious ideas tells us how White Australians might strive to prepare the soil to increase its readiness for these ideas to germinate into real change in a critical mass of the population, given that so much of that population claims to want to see growth in this space.

One of the foundations for the critique of idealism arises from the silencing of Indigenous voices. The respondents can highlight the unfair engagement to which they are persistently subjected, and make a sound case for its rectification in order for reconciliation to be possible, but the very foundation of these patterns in society has been Aboriginal powerlessness to obtain a sustained hearing and to enforce fair engagement. Accordingly, revolutionary social change directed by their experiences seems unlikely. In this regard, the invitation extended to all Australians by Indigenous people in the Uluru Statement from the Heart (Uluru 2017) represents an immediate and potent opportunity for White Australia.

10.8 The Uluru Statement from the Heart

This thesis is the work of a White researcher. Its findings, though intended to amplify Indigenous voices, are mediated through the lens of my racialised life experiences and standpoint as a White woman. Australia, however, has recently been given the gift of a united Indigenous perspective on some things Australia can do to advance reconciliation. The Uluru Statement is the fruit of an extensive Australia-wide consultation process that was undertaken by Indigenous people and achieved a national consensus. In it, Australia's Indigenous people speak with one voice and outline a clear set of proposals that, from their perspectives, will enable a stronger and more just Australia going forward. The Uluru Statement proposes changes to the Australian Constitution that would establish a Voice to Parliament to advise the government on matters affecting Indigenous people and a Makarrata Commission to oversee processes for Treaty and Truth Telling. All of these measures, if implemented, will serve to further amplify Indigenous voices and enable them to speak directly to the nation.

Indigenous people have told Australians and the Australian government what they want, and what they have said reflects the voices of the Indigenous people reported here - as analysed

by this researcher through the lens of critical race and recognition theories. The respondents' experiences point to a critical need to rectify White ignorance. Two of the three measures proposed by the Uluru Statement directly relate to mitigating White ignorance and its consequences. The proposed Truth Telling Commission targets the collective amnesia about Australia's history of colonisation that Mills (2007) identifies as a universal feature of White ignorance and which is reported by so many of the respondents. The proposed Voice to Parliament has the potential to check White ignorance in government and some of the destructive consequences of that ignorance. It has significant potential for their perspectives to be more present in both policy and public discourses.

The respondents emphasise the importance of dialogical exchange. The Voice to Parliament amounts to the embedding of a secure form of dialogical exchange at the highest levels of power - one that cannot be disbanded for expressing views that are hard for White Australians to hear. This opens the door to public policy developments along the lines of some of the more challenging findings presented here. Findings that currently lie beyond the White Australian imaginary and that may appear out of reach under Australia's current structures of governance. The Truth Telling Commission is also a national dialogue space addressing a topic whose importance is repeatedly emphasised by the respondents. The Treaty process is a form of dialogical exchange with immense potential to be turned into real action. It is the opportunity to, as Dot puts it, 'talk things out' and 'solve them both ways' (Q6.2).

The findings of this research highlight the opportunity the Uluru Statement from the Heart represents for this generation of Australians. The research helps to explain and lend further weight for why the Uluru Statement's proposals warrant the wholehearted support of the Australian public. The Australian Reconciliation Barometer reports that most Australians want to do more for reconciliation, but more than half of these same Australians say they do not know *what* to do (Nelson 2018). This research shows that the Uluru Statement represents an immediate and profound opportunity for Australians like these to act collectively in support of reconciliation, justice and equality for Indigenous people. Beyond voting 'yes', Australians can help to drive the agenda by acting collectively to hold the government to account in relation to each of the proposals in order to obtain their maximum benefit for the nation.

10.9 Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates that White capacity may be a limiting factor in achieving constructive relations between Indigenous people and White Australians. Poor race-relations are associated with poor socio-economic and health outcomes for subordinate race groups. This lack of capacity in the White population therefore has consequences for Indigenous people. The research shows that systematic capacity building within the White Australian population for fair engagement with Indigenous people warrants greater public policy attention as a critical component of advancing reconciliation and ensuring justice and equity for Indigenous people. The findings point to the need for White Australia to do more of the heavy lifting in the relationship. White Australia must turn its critical gaze onto itself and undertake a frank accounting of its ignorance and cultural weaknesses, and their consequences for Indigenous people.

In this chapter, I have addressed the implications for reconciliation of this research. In doing so I have presented the core findings of this thesis. In the next chapter I present the theoretical implications of the research, its limitations and its implications for further research to conclude the thesis.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

11.1 Introduction

The previous chapter concluded the analysis chapters and drew together the key points and implications of the research for both governments and the broader White community. This final chapter examines the theoretical implications of this research, and its limitations. The thesis concludes with a consideration of areas for further investigation.

11.2 Theoretical implications

I have relied on a number of bodies of theory in pursuing the empirical findings of this thesis. CRT informs my primary theoretical framework. My analysis has also drawn on theories and concepts in the fields of decolonisation, recognition theory, agnotology studies and Sen's capability approach. Although the thesis is primarily focused on advancing social change rather than social theory, the analysis has implications for some of these theories and frameworks.

11.2.1   Sen's capability approach

The research is loosely framed by a radical application of Sen's (1992) capability approach. Sen's approach is widely used in socio-economic development (Fukuda-Parr 2003). It was selected for this research because it does not define what constitutes a developed society in narrow economic terms (Sen 1992, 1999). Economic measures of development reflect White western values. Sen's definition helps to avoid these traditional and deeply colonised measures of development from obscuring the development needs of materially wealthy populations. Reapplying these ideas to White populations enables investigation of the broader ways in which White Australian society may be relatively backward or in need of advancement. This approach has two implications for Sen's theory.

Although Sen's framework is liberated from traditional restrictive definitions and assumptions around the concept of development, a review of the literature indicates that it has rarely been applied to investigate the development needs of a materially wealthy population. It has been applied *within* materially wealthy societies but primarily in relation

to analysis of the development needs of materially impoverished segments of those societies (Robeyns 2005, 94). This thesis uses Sen's approach primarily as a tool to challenge colonised aspects of the discourse around Indigenous disadvantage and perceived underdevelopment. It does not engage deeply with its theoretical strengths and weaknesses. Even so, the application of it to a privileged group that is not defined by a situation of material disadvantage is unusual and extends it. My analysis points to the potential for this application of Sen's ideas to support decolonising agendas, albeit within the constraints of its own western-centric features, such as its inherent individualism (see section 3.5). This approach opens the door to its use more broadly for balancing racialised global discourses around development. It facilitates a more honest accounting of the relevant causal pathways of problems, which is particularly pertinent in light of the global threats that humanity is facing, such as climate change. These are threats that can no longer be treated at the impoverished sites of their symptoms, but must be diagnosed and treated at the sites of their causes.

The second contribution this research makes to this theoretical field is empirical validation of Robeyns's theoretical critique of Sen's framing of 'choice'. She argues that Sen's representation of 'choice' as personal preference is an oversimplification. She points out that personal preference can be silently and subconsciously directed by social and cultural factors. Accordingly, free choice is not always as free as it may appear (Robeyns 2005). In Chapter 9, I identified that the prevalence of the cultural valorisation of individualism in White Australian society is a constraint on White freedom to choose to exercise their capability to engage fairly with Indigenous people. This finding provides empirical validation of Robeyns' assertion that conversion factors that must also be identified and addressed at the point of 'choice' in Sen's framework.

11.2.2   Recognition theory

The thesis draws on recognition theory to support its premise that race-relations are a critical factor in Indigenous wellbeing and socio-economic outcomes (see Chapter 3). In Chapter 7, I used the concept of misrecognition to explain the dynamics behind the persistent sense of injustice the respondents report experiencing in their interactions with White Australians. I showed how misrecognition is a key contributing factor to patterns of racialised social segregation in Darwin. In Chapter 9, I explained this does not mean increased recognition will necessarily resolve racialised social divisions because a limitation of recognition theory is that the emphasis it places on group identity can also be divisive. It can reify group identities in ways unhelpful to either justice or improved social cohesion (Fraser 1995;

Bauman 2001). Fraser's (1995) work offers a response to this. She seeks to distinguish the forms of recognition that contribute to social equality from those that do not. In doing so, she draws a distinction between affirmative and transformative recognition measures. Her concept of transformative recognition raises the possibility that recognition processes can elevate a misrecognised group's value, and increase their access to social equality, without emphasising an exclusive identity. This thesis takes Fraser's theoretical ideas and explores them in the specific empirical context of Indigenous/White Australian race relations. It develops and reframes them as surface and deep recognition, partly to remove the oppositional connotations of Fraser's terminology. My concept of deep recognition is an extension, clarification and enrichment of Fraser's concept of transformative recognition. The analytical work of this thesis strengthens the utility of Fraser's original concept as a remedy to some of the limitations of recognition theory in relation to reconciliation and decolonisation.

Fraser acknowledges that her concept of transformative recognition faces the challenge of being overly idealistic. My model brings Fraser's ambitious model closer to reality because it accepts and incorporates the complexity of the respondents' real-world expressed aspirations to surface recognition. Fraser's theoretical model frames affirmative and transformative recognition measures as oppositional and mutually exclusive. In her model they undermine each other. She refers to the messiness of the contradictory reality of human identity and relationships as an obstacle to the appeal and effective adoption of her model in the real world. My model does not resist this messiness. It acknowledges the limitations of surface recognition but does not frame it as inherently oppositional to deep recognition. I frame surface and deep recognition as parallel and potentially complementary processes on an evolving trajectory towards more constructive race relations. This encompasses the value placed by the respondents on both surface recognition, as measured against White values, and on a deeper shift in society's measures of human value. A schematic representation of the relationship between the contributions of surface and deep recognition to optimal race relations is presented in Figure 11.1 below.

Figure 11.1 shows that while surface recognition can advance society towards more constructive race-relations, it is limited in the extent to which it can do so. This is because it operates within the space of the colonially constructed race binary, which is inherently divisive. Optimal race relations are dependent on deep recognition processes because these operate outside of the constructed race binary. Surface recognition can, however, be supportive of deep recognition in the sense of raising the awareness and understanding that leads to deep recognition.

Figure 11.1: Schematic representation of deep recognition and surface recognition on race-relations
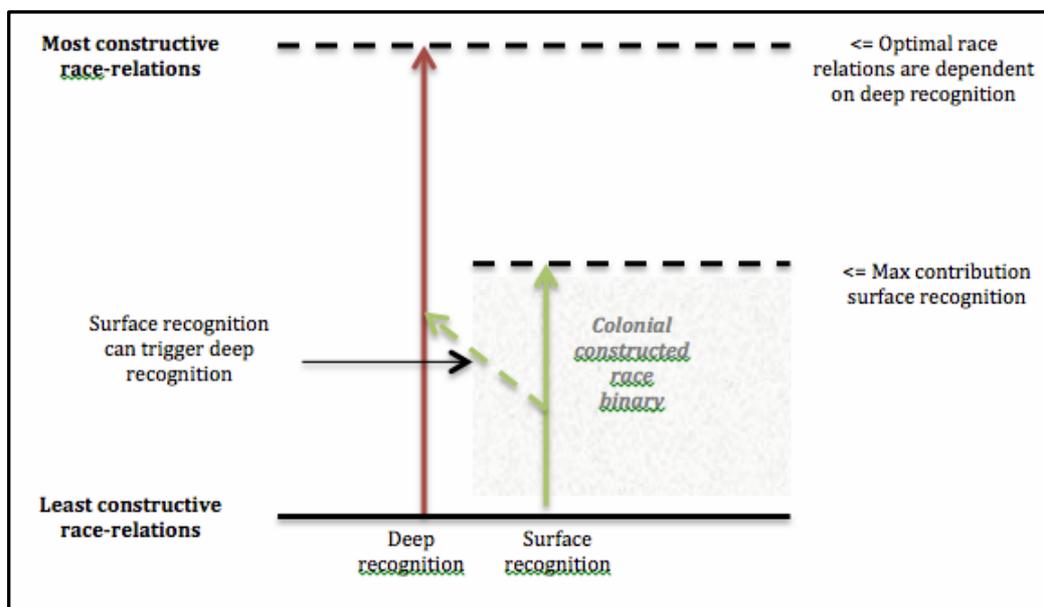
My work also helps to clarify the distinction between deep recognition and potentially comparable concepts such as colour blindness and uncritical applications of universal recognition. Fraser does not directly address this critical distinction. Clarifying the distinction between these concepts is important because, while all three concepts claim to be unresponsive to socially constructed race categories and therefore impartial, both universal recognition and colour-blind approaches to racial equality are deeply partial. These 'neutral' approaches do not account for the structural nature of racial inequality and the universalisation of Whiteness as the norm against which all other racial groups are assessed. Accordingly, in a heavily biased hegemonic White context, they can deliver the re-inscription rather than the eradication of existing inequalities and biases (Kymlicka 1995, cited in McBride 2013, p.16, Bonilla-Silva 2006). Deep recognition can be distinguished from these concepts because it takes account of structural inequalities and White normativity and actively works to undermine them.

Finally, Fraser expresses hesitancy about the application of transformative or deep recognition in colonised contexts where maintenance of strong Indigenous identities has particular significance. Contrary to Fraser's concerns, this research demonstrates the specific utility of deep recognition in colonised contexts. Deep recognition is not a process of homogenisation or assimilation. It is simply a breaking of the current arbitrary ties between Whiteness and the accepted measures of human worth (see section 9.7.2). Deep

recognition can be understood as a form of relational decolonisation. It neither denies diversity nor promotes uniformity. It does, however, work to disrupt and displace the colonial matrix of power. It undermines the reified, hierarchical and oppositional colonially constructed race binary. As such, it offers an alternative to divisive and oppositional concepts of 'us' and 'them' that can arise in some discourses of decolonisation. It highlights instead the potential of deep recognition for the collective advancement and benefit of all.

11.2.3   Critical race theory

Critical race theory has been used in this thesis to explain how even White Australians who are consciously in favour of race justice can be complicit in the maintenance of Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage. I pointed out in Chapter 3 that critical race theory heavily emphasises White culpability but also acknowledges an element of unintentional reproduction of race privilege by at least some White people. It is within this space that I argued for the need to investigate White capability to engage in constructive race relations conducive to justice and equity for Indigenous people.

The productive investigation by this thesis of White capacity building opportunities has worked to expand and help configure this space. It has highlighted that the White choices, attitudes and behaviours that are framed by CRT as revealed preference and incorrigible self-interest, may in fact have a capability dimension. This contribution to critical race theory emphasises solutions and ways forward rather than an articulation of an intractable problem and assignment of blame. In doing so it helps to mitigate the oppositional, divisive and essentialising aspects of critical race theory for which it has been criticised (eg Subotnik 1998), and which can distract from the important insights critical race theory has to offer.

11.3 Limitations of this research

I outlined some key limitations of this research and their implications in Chapter 4[48]. In section 4.6.3, I flagged that the research paints an overwhelmingly negative picture of White Australian attitudes and behaviours. I explained that this is partly due to the dataset in which

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[48] In section 4.6.2, I argued for the need to exercise caution in drawing broader generalisations from location-specific research. I also acknowledged the lack of nuance and sub-group analysis of White Australians and explained that this has arisen from a limitation of the data. In section 4.6.4 I similarly acknowledge and justify the lack of demographic sub-group analysis of the respondents. In section 4.6.3, I flagged that the research paints an overwhelmingly negative picture of White Australian attitudes and behaviours, which was both a limitation of the data and the fruit of particular coding decisions. A significant limitation of the research is the Whiteness of its author. I address this in sections 4.3.3 and 4.6.2 where I consider the likelihood of researcher bias and my efforts to mitigate this.

the observations about White Australians are nearly entirely negative. It is also partly due to my coding decisions, which I also explained in that section. I believe I accurately portray the stress, anger and frustration the respondents experience in their interactions with White Australians. What my analysis fails to capture is that this is not the full story because the respondents also show a generosity of spirit towards White Australians that, given their experience, is both surprising and remarkable[49]. This includes a generalised optimism and willingness on the part of the respondents to work together going forwards – should White Australians be willing to rise to the challenge and do their part. It is dependent on White people's willingness partly because the extreme power imbalance precludes any possibility of the relationship advancing without it. This generosity of spirit and optimism were not foregrounded in my analysis, which focussed on White attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous people. This is partly because these presented more as a reflection of the qualities of some of the respondents than as resulting from their experiences of engagement with White Australians.

There are some other limitations of this research that remain to be acknowledged. The first is that this research relies on data that is one step removed from its core subject manner. It derives its findings on the White population from Indigenous perspectives on it as outsiders, rather than direct investigation of the White population itself. While I have already articulated the value Indigenous perspectives as the subaltern can bring to understanding White people and culture, direct exploration of White individuals and groups is essential. I hope the findings from this research prove valuable in providing key insights into such an investigation.

Secondly, this thesis has reported only the themes in the data raised by 60 per cent or more of the respondents. There may be other significant material in the dataset relevant to the research questions investigated here. There was significant overlap between the themes and at least some of the material from the excluded themes has been reported here, but certainly not all of the relevant material has been covered. There are further dimensions of the respondents' experiences that remain unaccounted for in this study and which would benefit from deeper exploration and analysis in future research.

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[49] This is indicated in some of the direct quotes provided in this thesis, such as Dot (Q5.28, Q6.2) and Annette (Q5.13) stating that they want to see Indigenous and White people 'come together as one' and Paul saying he likes White people even though they 'need to pull their finger out' (Q5.4). Cassie was asked at one point if she would have joined in some protests where some Indigenous protesters in Sydney burned the Australian flag. She replied, "Maybe not like that, burning the flag. If anything, I'd put our flag up, and Australian flag together, because we all one race".

Finally, there is the singular focus in this research on the White Australian population when Australia is a multicultural society. The findings of this research emphasise that reconciliation necessarily involves the entire community. This includes the more than 20 per cent of the Australian population that is non-White and non-Indigenous (Soutphommasane et al. 2018). The lives of this segment of the population also impact, and are impacted by, the Indigenous population. Paradies observes that 'reconciliation sits at the nexus of relationships between White settler-invaders, Indigenous people and non-White immigrants with the last most neglected in Australia to date' (Paradies 2016, p.106). This research is also guilty of this neglect. I justified the focus on White Australia in section 4.5.2. This does not diminish the need, however, for future research to investigate the same questions across the full diversity and complexity of Australia's settler population.

11.4 Implications for further research

This study has set aside the dominant discourse of Indigenous deficit around Indigenous disadvantage/White advantage and shifted the focus to the White population. This shift follows the work of critical race theorists who have observed that Whiteness receives inadequate attention in the intercultural research space (e.g., Kowal 2015, 47). Here, I suggest additional ways to investigate the White population, in the hope and expectation that it may facilitate new understandings and initiatives of benefit to Indigenous people.

The two capacity-building opportunities within the White population identified in this research suggests there may also be other capacity deficits that should be understood and addressed if improved race-relations and race justice are to be achieved. In relation to the capacity-building opportunities this research does identify, one approach would be to establish baseline measures of the prevalence of these capacity deficits across diverse segments of the White population and investigate how they can be addressed for each group.

A critical question left unexplored in this thesis, but which is central to its concerns, is how to maximise the receptiveness of the White population to take on what is being asked of them. How ready are White Australians to reflect on their privilege; to understand the Indigenous experience; and to rectify their capacity deficits? How willing are they to even listen to the very idea that there are aspects of White culture and White people that are underdeveloped and need to change? How open are White Australians to educational measures that challenge their beliefs and cultural self-esteem? How prepared are White

Australians to re-evaluate some of their core cultural values? What would increase the receptivity in the White population and turn it into action? How can the obstacle of White fragility be managed and overcome? The potential for White backlash in segments of the population is a reality that must be accounted for. Donald Trump's Make America Great Again campaign, for example, tapped into such sentiments in the White American population with great effect.

In Chapter 3 I showed that broad-based goodwill has been repeatedly documented within this population, together with aspirations for reconciliation and an improved situation for Indigenous people. I highlighted the many indicators that when concrete proposals supportive of reconciliation are put to the broader population, they can enjoy widespread support. I also noted that other studies reflect a degree of ambivalence towards ideas of Indigenous deservingness. It is not clear to what degree various segments of the White Australian population are willing to do the real and personal work of constructive race-relations once aware of what it involves. Maddison, Clark and de Costa have undertaken some early work into how 'non-Indigenous identities and ideologies both prevent and enable genuine engagement with reconciliation' (Maddison, Clark, and De Costa 2016, 291). More of this kind of research is needed to ascertain where different parts of the population fall on the spectrum of commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous people, and why.

The Australian Reconciliation Barometer provides a multi-dimensional biennial assessment of the state of reconciliation in Australia. McIntosh argues that progress can be measured, not only in terms of outcomes (is the relationship improving?), but also in terms of process (what do we need to do, and how much are of this is needed to achieve positive change in the relationship?) (McIntosh 2014, 78). In Chapter 6 I reported four specific behaviours the respondents say would enable constructive race relations if they were more prevalent in the White Australian population. These are: engagement in dialogical exchange; learning about Indigenous law, languages and cultures; incorporating Indigenous law, languages and cultures; and striving to connect across cultural difference and racialised social segregation. It would be helpful to go more deeply into these ideas and what they mean for White race-relations learning and to investigate the degree to which White Australians already are, and are also willing to, consciously engage in them. It would also be highly relevant to ask White Australians for their perspectives on what behaviours they think they should engage in to improve race relations and the extent to which any of these suggested changes are actually supportive of constructive race relations.

An area that would particularly benefit from further research is that of strategies for increasing opportunities for dialogical exchange between members of the broader Australian population and Indigenous people and communities. The importance of sincere and ongoing dialogical exchange is a core finding of this research. There is room for a wide array of research efforts to identify, for example, existing and potential dialogue spaces; how such spaces can be maximised and supported by individuals, communities and institutions; what motivates people to participate in such spaces; what conditions need to be in place for such processes to be safe and effective; how to promote translation of the dialogue into meaningful action outside of the dialogue spaces, and so on. Cowlishaw speculates, for example, that even highly motivated White people can avoid authentic dialogical exchange with Indigenous people for fear of causing offence, being attacked or delivering fodder to the conservative right (Cowlishaw 2004, p.74). Investigation of these questions will require longitudinal research to monitor, evaluate and inform an evolving learning process. Here again, Maddison, Clark and de Costa's (2016) focus group research is an example of recent research that has begun to map some of the factors in active White engagement with reconciliation. The effectiveness of such dialogues is assumed by this research, but there is also room for investigations of whether increased dialogue and understanding between White Australians and Indigenous people does deliver more constructive relations.

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