How does race play out in schools? A scoping review and thematic analysis of racial issues in Australian schools

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Abstract

Racial bias and racism present widespread challenges in educational settings. Children may experience and/or witness racial bias or racism at school and the impacts are pervasive. Despite this knowledge, there is a paucity of research examining these issues in primary school contexts. A scoping review and thematic analysis examining racial bias and racism within Australian primary school contexts yielded four salient themes (1) a lack of teacher confidence and competency regarding racial issues, (2) white normativity, (3) colour-blindness and (4) silencing. Findings suggest that students need ongoing discussions about race, racism and racial bias. However, teachers need supportive leadership and training to enact such educational conversations. This review also provides an understanding of how school contexts potentially contribute to the development of prejudicial views in children, finishing with implications for policy, practice and research to assist in building more inclusive and equitable classrooms for all students, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

Keywords Racial bias · Racism · Australian primary schools · Anti-racist education · Inclusive education

1 Introduction

Education is considered a key driving force toward opportunity and success. However, there is substantial evidence to indicate that various barriers exist within education that can negatively impact students from minoritised backgrounds (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2010). These barriers exist at individual levels (e.g. microaggressions

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or racial bias from teachers and peers), as well as at systemic levels (e.g. educational policies that disadvantage and exclude students based on their race, or Eurocentric curricula that could exclude non-white student experiences) (de Plevitz 2007; Gershenson and Papageorge 2018; Nance 2016, 2017; Osanloo et al. 2016). Understanding how these issues unfold and how to address them is complex and multifaceted. This article will explore what is currently known in the literature regarding racism and racial bias in Australian primary school settings.

1.1 Defining racial bias and racism

A key barrier within education has been linked to racial bias at an individual level. Attitudes toward a particular race or ethnic group need not be consciously available in order to evoke negative evaluative reactions toward marginalised groups (Baron and Banaji 2006; Sue et al. 2007a, b). There is evidence to indicate that an individual's explicit racial bias is substantially more egalitarian compared to their implicit racial bias (Baron and Banaji 2006). Racial bias and racism are challenging concepts to define and are often incorrectly conflated with other forms of bias such as cultural, religious or linguistic bias (Carr and Haynes 2015; Frisina and Hawthorne 2018; Goodman and Burke 2010; Kutay 2015). For the purposes of this study, racial bias can be understood as unfairly negatively or positively held views, feelings or evaluations about a person/s based on their *race* (Hall et al. 2015). Additionally, race has *no* biological basis and can be better understood as a socially constructed category (Smedley and Smedley 2005).

Racism, however, embodies an additional behavioural and systemic layer (Aboud et al. 2012; Scheurich and Young 1997). It transcends the individual in that it uses institutional power to assist in the establishment and maintenance of a racial hierarchy (Kohli et al. 2017; Solorzano et al. 2002). Racism can be understood as "racial bias plus power" (Operario and Fiske 1998). Race, in this sense, has been used historically to maintain a racial hierarchy by affording some racial groups particular privileges while it actively disadvantages those from other racial groups (Feagin and Elias 2013). So, while race is not based on genetics, human experience is still strongly shaped by the concept of race. Both racial bias and racism can be implicit (e.g. a teacher unconsciously holding higher expectations for white students compared to minoritised students) or explicit (e.g. calling someone a racially derogatory term) (Dovidio et al. 2003).

Racism and racial bias are international and widespread problems (Baron and Banaji 2006; Hall et al. 2015; Pager and Shepherd 2008; Paradies and Cunningham 2009; Sue et al., 2007a,b; Vaught and Castagno 2008). Given the prevalence and pervasive impact, an examination of racism and racial bias is important. Some of these impacts include, reduced empathy from out-group members (Avenanti et al. 2010), poorer health outcomes (Larson et al. 2007; Williams and Mohammed 2009) and increases in anxiety and depression (Huynh and Fuligni 2010; Molina and James 2016; Priest et al. 2011). Additionally, inequality within academic (Skiba et al. 2011), counselling/therapeutic (Feisthamel and Schwartz 2009; Schwartz and Feisthamel 2009) and employment settings (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004) has

been noted. However, previous research surrounding racial bias and racism has largely focused on adult populations outside an Australian context (Hoffman et al. 2016; Qian et al. 2016). Moreover, there is a lack of research examining how racism and racial bias play out in educational settings (Kohli et al. 2017).

1.2 Culture, race and ethnicity: a complicated relationship

In order to understand racial issues in education, an understanding of the interconnectedness between race, ethnicity and culture is necessary (Frisina and Hawthorne 2018; Gay 2013; Kutay 2015; Villegas et al. 2012). When considering these constructs, there is debate in the field around whether they are distinct, interlinked, or some variation in between (Causadias et al. 2018a, b). Culture is something we learn from our environment and it contributes to a collective mindset that differentiates one group of people from another (Hofstede 1980). While ethnicity has been somewhat socially constructed, it also has genetic markers; race however does not, and is instead considered to be a socially constructed category (Smedley and Smedley 2005). For some individuals, culture, race and ethnicity overlap. However, recent research has questioned whether the assumption of these constructs being inherently linked, is a biased assumption that researchers should be mindful of (Causadias et al. 2018a). There has been a tendency in research to assume racially minoritised groups are influenced strongly by cultural factors, whereas white individuals are shaped predominantly by psychological factors (e.g. personality) (Causadias et al. 2018b).

This assumption that culture is more salient for some racial groups is one that this article aims to avoid. The researchers do not want to assume that there is a definite overlap between these concepts. This is to avoid insinuating or assuming that those from a particular race, are also from the same culture, ethnicity, religious or linguistic background. This homogenising assumption does not take into account the nuances of race, especially with the western world's rapidly changing and increasing diversity in demographics (e.g. through migration, interracial relationships, mixed-race children and the international diaspora in general) (Aspinall 2018). Thus, there are likely to be many individuals who do not fit this narrow understanding of race, ethnicity and culture. Additionally, there may be individuals who share a culture, language or religion but are from different racial groups (e.g. a Caucasian-Australian born individual and an Ethiopian-Australian born individual).

Moreover, there is a visibility when it comes to race and ethnicity that is more prominent than it is for culture, religion or language. One can, to an extent, hide or minimise the visibility of their culture, religion or language so that it is not immediately obvious (e.g. by removing religious symbols from clothing). That same individual cannot hide the visibility of their race with the same ease (e.g. skin colour or facial features). In addition, research has shown that the development of bias is not strictly universal and people often express different forms of bias in different ways and to varying degrees (Bucchianeri et al. 2016; Latner et al. 2008; Meeusen and Kern 2016). Moreover, different forms of bias and prejudice may present differently across the lifespan (Baron and Banaji 2006; Gonzalez et al. 2017; Hoover and Fishbein 1999). This may be true for the way in which racial bias and racism manifests,

compared to closely linked biases such as religious or cultural bias. This is particularly important given some research has indicated children, especially younger children, may rely on visual cues to guide their intergroup attitudes and behaviours (e.g. skin colour or visible religious items) (Devine et al. 2008).

This study by no means ignores culture altogether. However, to avoid perpetuating damaging stereotypes, the authors are not assuming that culture and race are inherently interlinked. In saying this, research has indicated that intergroup contextual factors may contribute to how different forms of bias manifest (Meeusen and Kern 2016). As such, the researchers have considered culture in the broader sense, which contributed to the focus on an Australian context only. International research has made important contributions to understanding the extent and development of racism and racial bias within educational settings generally (Rutland et al. 2005; Skiba et al. 2002; Welch and Payne 2010), as well as highlighting possible interventions to reduce prejudice in these settings (Feddes et al. 2009; Stathi et al. 2014). However, more targeted research is necessary to understand and combat these challenges within an Australian context.

Australia shares many cultural similarities with other western nations such as the US, the UK and Canada. However, many differences also exist that may influence the generalisability of international research to an Australian context (Mcleod and Yates 2003). This impedes our understanding of racism and racial bias in Australian schools, subsequently impeding our ability to combat these issues adequately. A greater understanding of this topic in an Australian context will assist research to understand whether there are similarities or differences in how those living in Australia understand racial issues, relative to those in other countries. For example, focusing this review on Australian literature may offer information regarding how Australians are racialised, how they understand the concept of race, as well as how they engage in racially biased attitudes and behaviours, compared to those in other cultures (e.g. Frisina and Hawthorne 2018; Goodman and Burke 2010; Goodman and Rowe 2013; Kutay 2015). It would also allow schools to understand how interventions utilised internationally (Cameron et al. 2006, 2011; Feddes et al. 2009; Gonzalez et al. 2017; Paluck 2011; Paluck et al. 2016; Paluck and Green 2009; Paluck and Shepherd 2012), may be adapted to suit an Australian context.

Finally, this paper also acknowledges the intersectional nature of bias illustrating how multiple identities can overlap, creating unique and accumulative experiences of bias and discrimination (Crenshaw 1989). However, a specific focus on intersectionality is beyond the scope of this paper and has been documented elsewhere (e.g. Alper et al. 2016; Bowleg 2013; Crenshaw 1989; Ecklund 2012; Remedios and Akhtar 2019; Remedios and Snyder 2015).

1.3 Intergroup attitudes in primary school children

In relation to race, a child's primary school years are a pivotal stage in their social-cognitive development (Rutland and Killen 2015). It is a time where children begin to understand the world around them and their place within it. Racial bias and racism evident in adults does not manifest in adulthood. It begins in childhood, slowly

develops across the lifespan, becoming deeply ingrained and resistant to change by adulthood (Rutland and Killen 2015). Prejudice emerges simultaneously as children's social-cognitive ability is developing (Aboud et al. 2012; Raabe and Beelmann 2011). Just as a child's negative views regarding race and ethnicity develop, so do their prosocial attitudes (Rutland and Killen 2015) and their sense of morality (Dahl and Killen 2018; Dahl and Kim 2014; Smetana et al. 2012).

Additionally, children's implicit racial bias and their explicit racial bias become increasingly divergent from adolescence through to adulthood (Baron and Banaji 2006). Despite explicit racial bias seeming to become more egalitarian with age, implicit racial bias appears to remain stable across the lifespan (Baron and Banaji 2006). There are many possible reasons for this, such as social desirability motives increasing as we age. However, more research is needed to understand this phenomenon. What studies such as Baron and Banaji (2006) indicate, is that there are important age and developmental differences that need to be accounted for in prejudice research. Although there is some research relating to prejudice development in primary school aged children internationally (Baron and Banaji 2006; Duriez and Soenens 2009; Killen and Rutland 2011; Pahlke et al. 2012; Rutland et al. 2005, 2010; Xiao et al. 2015), there remains a paucity of information specific to the Australian context.

During these early and crucial formative years, many factors may contribute to the development of racial bias in children. While it has been previously thought that children's strongest racial and ethnic socialisation influencers are within the home and family environment, there has been some contention within the field regarding the strength and complexity of this relationship (Castelli et al. 2009; Hughes et al. 2009; Pahlke et al. 2012; Sinclair et al. 2005). Given that school contexts have the potential to guide student attitudes pertaining to race and inclusion (Hughes et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2003), it seems logical to explore this space as a possible contributing factor to racial bias in children. A link between children's attitudes regarding race and the attitudes of their teachers has been explored (Smith et al. 2003; Vezzali et al. 2012). However, additional research is necessary to understand how children develop racially biased beliefs. This will also assist in developing interventions to address racial bias prior to its solidification in adulthood.

1.4 Racism, education and academic outcomes

Schools have long been considered a microcosm of broader society and therefore, racism and racial bias may also transcend into a classroom setting (Hytten and Warren 2003; Matias et al. 2014). Given children begin primary school during a stage of crucial social-cognitive development, particularly in relation to their ethnic-racial socialisation, it is important to consider how schools may influence this development (Raabe and Beelmann 2011).

Schools are the most common spaces where children experience racism and racial bias (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010). This can occur from many different sources such as systemically, or from peers, teachers and other staff members. In particular, teachers' implicit racial bias has the potential to create inequitable learning environments

that disadvantage racially marginalised students and privilege white students (Kohli et al. 2017). For example, minoritised students are more likely to be suspended or expelled for the same infractions as their white peers (Bryan et al. 2012; Skiba et al. 2011). They are also perceived as less cognitive and academically able (Jacoby-Senghor et al. 2016; Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007; van den Bergh et al. 2010). Due to these perceptions, minoritised students are more likely to be referred to special education programs and less likely to be referred to gifted education programs, compared to their white peers with similar cognitive abilities (Grissom and Redding 2016). Teachers' implicit bias has been shown to influence their expectations of students based on their race, such as having lower cognitive and academic expectations for minoritised students compared to majoritised students (van den Bergh et al. 2010). These implicit biases and differing teacher expectations have been shown to impact students' academic achievement, whereby negative expectations may lead to lower achievement for racially marginalised students (van den Bergh et al. 2010). There is also some evidence that teachers empathy is diminished when a student belongs to a racial out-group (Cikara et al. 2011), although there is some debate surrounding this topic. Given teaching professions in the western world are largely comprised of white females, this may have detrimental impacts in regard to minoritised students' education opportunities.

Teachers and school leaders may not be the only ones to embody racial bias or to engage in acts of racism in schools. The literature indicates that not only do children experience racism (Pachter et al. 2010), they also have the potential to embody both explicit and implicit racial bias (Baron and Banaji 2006; França and Monteiro 2013). They also have the potential to act in racially prejudiced ways (Baron and Banaji 2006; Pachter et al. 2010). For some children, this may result in the development of negative stereotypes that go unchecked, which has the potential to negatively impact minoritised groups through prejudicial beliefs and behaviours (Bigler and Liben 2007). This may sound concerning however, children are also capable of engaging in discussions surrounding racial issues. This indicates an opportunity for early intervention prior to these views becoming ingrained. Some research with adults has shown that intervention effectiveness decreases over time (Lai et al. 2016), signifying that early intervention may increase intervention efficacy.

The prevalence and impact of racism and racial bias evident in education is concerning. This is particularly true given that school is often the first encounter young people have with an institution and a space where they spend most of their early and crucial formative years. These incidents of discrimination have detrimental impacts on academic outcomes. For example, experiences of racial bias and racism in classrooms may lead to decreases in academic self-concept and academic achievement (Bodkin-Andrews et al. 2013; Jacoby-Senghor et al. 2016; van den Bergh et al. 2010). Racial bias in education may also lead to increases in school suspensions and expulsions of racially minoritised students (Skiba et al. 2011). These exclusionary experiences may decrease a sense of school belonging in students who experience racism. Additionally, racism at school has long-term consequences that follow students after they have left school, including detrimental impacts felt by families, their communities and society generally (e.g. the school-to-prison pipeline) (Nance 2016; Skiba et al. 2014).

Previous research examining racial disparities within educational institutions often avoids discussing the root cause, opting instead to focus on issues such as "racial difference", "culturally responsive pedagogy" or "diversity", circumventing any proper analysis of racism, racial bias or systemic barriers to achievement (Kohli et al. 2017). Avoiding identifying racism or racial bias as the root cause of racial disparities in the education system only further perpetuates the cycle of racial injustice that ultimately hinders the achievement of minoritised students and advances the interests of white students (Brayboy et al. 2007; Harper 2012). Despite the growing body of research surrounding the extent and development of racial bias and racism in young children (Baron and Banaji 2006; Pahlke et al. 2012; Rutland et al. 2010) and within school contexts (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010; Tenenbaum and Ruck 2007), there is still a paucity of information regarding the trajectory of this within Australian primary school contexts.

1.5 Educational policies in Australia

Although there is a lack of research examining racial issues in schools, all teachers are required to maintain and meet the standards expected of their government or institution. For example, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011) outlines competencies that graduate teachers must possess. AITSL (2011) states that teachers should understand how students from diverse backgrounds learn and how to promote an inclusive environment to support *all* students, regardless of their background. School settings are required to ensure that the safety and well-being of students is a priority. Additionally, the Australian curriculum indicates that it is imperative that students develop an intercultural understanding of the world (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016). Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that this vision is yet to be achieved, which has profound impacts on both racially minoritised individuals (Sellers et al. 2006; Smith et al. 2003) and racially majoritised individuals (Baron and Banaji 2006; Bigler and Liben 2007) at school and in the wider community.

1.6 Educational practice in Australia

While there are policies in place to support inclusion and belonging in schools, the extent to which these policies have been adopted and implemented is less clear. When focusing on racial issues, some educators may shy away from discussions surrounding racism and racial bias due to a lack of knowledge, a lack of confidence, and/or potential biases (Blackmore 2010). Teaching environments have instead largely advocated for egalitarian and colour-blind approaches to discussing race, which has been shown to have a counterproductive impact that may lead to greater implicit and explicit racial bias, compared to anti-racist curricula (Richeson and Nussbaum 2004). Given that these pedagogical practices appear to disadvantage some students and do not instill an adequate level of cultural or racial competency, there may be a misalignment between policy and practice within some classrooms. Furthermore, the overwhelming whiteness of the teaching profession, evident in the

lack of teachers and leaders from racially diverse backgrounds, may be a contributing factor to the maintenance of inequitable systems (Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003). Given the increasing diversity of classrooms, it is imperative that we develop ways to ensure that this diversity is reflected in teaching staff and school leaders. This will assist in providing educational equity for all students, regardless of their race or ethnicity.

There is a growing body of evidence to support the prevalence of racism in Australia (Bloch and Dreher 2009; Paradies and Cunningham 2009) and internationally (Astell-Burt et al. 2012; Gil-González et al. 2014). Understanding how this unfolds in a school setting and how it affects those from minoritised groups is imperative if we are to create equitable spaces where *all* young people have access to the curriculum and feel safe to learn. To date, much of the research surrounding racism and racial bias has been conducted internationally, with adults or adolescents who identify as African American or are located in North America (Lee 2013; Penner et al. 2010; Smith and Levinson 2012; Wong et al. 2014). Research examining intergroup attitudes and racial bias in children has also predominantly been conducted internationally, particularly in the UK and North America (Baron and Banaji 2006; Bigler and Liben 1993; Bigler and Wright 2014; Newheiser and Olson 2012; Pahlke et al. 2012; Paluck 2011; Paluck et al. 2016; Paluck and Green 2009; Patterson et al. 2013; Rutland et al. 2005, 2010). While this research has been instrumental in our understanding of the existence and impact of racism and racial bias, more research is needed with younger children, particularly in an Australian primary school context. This is especially important to examine in young children given that research indicates prejudice has the potential to develop in the beginning years of school (Raabe and Beelmann 2011).

Finally, the risks associated with racism and racial bias, and the subsequent outcomes that this has on children and the overall school culture are substantial. Therefore, it is important to examine the ways in which this may be minimised. Therefore, this scoping review and thematic analysis will examine and map what is currently understood from the literature about the extent and development of racism and racial bias within Australian primary school contexts.

2 Method

For this study, a scoping review of the literature was used (The Joanna Briggs Institute 2015), as well as a qualitative thematic analysis to further synthesise the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). While other reviews such as systematic literature reviews have utility, they aim to answer specific research questions (Arksey and O'Malley 2005; Khan 2003). In contrast, scoping reviews offer a broad view of the field and can be used to (1) uncover key concepts underpinning an area of research, (2) clarify working definitions and/or (3) clarify the conceptual boundaries of a topic (The Joanna Briggs Institute 2015). Given this study meets each of these three criteria, a scoping review was considered to be the most appropriate approach to address the research aim. The scoping review identified some themes that warranted further

exploration and as such, a thematic analysis was also conducted (Braun and Clarke 2006). The scoping review framework used six sequential stages:

1. Identifying the research question
2. Identifying relevant studies
3. Study selection
4. Charting the data
5. Collating, summarising and reporting the results
6. Consultation (optional but not included here)

Each phase of the scoping review used is further outlined:

2.1 Stage 1: identifying the research question

The focus of this scoping review was to explore racism and racial bias in Australian primary schools. To ensure that relevant literature was located, the following research question was used to guide the literature search: In what ways has the extent and development of racism and racial bias been examined and reported within Australian primary school contexts, if at all?

2.2 Stage 2: identifying the relevant studies

To assist in identifying relevant literature, a comprehensive search strategy based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria was developed (Table 1).

Initially, a broad search of the literature was conducted to develop a list of commonly used search terms relating to this topic using general terms such as *racial bias, racism, racial discrimination, racial prejudice* and *Australian primary schools*. There is a lack of uniformity in the field regarding the definition of racial bias and racism, and researchers often use these terms interchangeably and sometimes incorrectly (Paradies 2006). Therefore, a large number of search terms were generated to ensure a comprehensive search of the literature was performed. Combinations of terms were used in the search (e.g. *racial stereotypes* and *racial stereotyping*). The researchers undertook a systematic inquiry into the literature using databases ERIC, PsycINFO and ProQuest. As with most scoping reviews, the search process for this study was an iterative process (The Joanna Briggs Institute 2015). Once articles were identified through database searches, reviewers used Google Scholar and the university database to search for additional articles that may not have been identified through initial database searches.

2.2.1 Inclusion criteria

The articles selected for this scoping review were required to be peer-reviewed, Australian based educational research published between 2008 and 2018. In order to meet the inclusion criteria, studies were required to have explicitly examined racism or racial bias within a primary school context. Where studies looked at both

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time period	2008–2018	Studies outside these dates
Language	English	Non-english studies
Location	Australia	International studies
Type of article	Peer reviewed articles including reviews and meta-analyses, theses	Articles that were not peer reviewed or theses
Study focus	Articles where the main focus related to racism or racial bias in primary school contexts	Articles pertaining to any other focus areas
Population and sample	Primary school teachers/leaders, primary school students, parents of primary school students	All other employees, students or parents of children not enrolled in primary school
Setting	Primary schools	Settings where the main focus was not primary schools e.g. universities, secondary schools, early learning centres or non-primary school work places

primary and secondary schools, they were only included if the emphasis was on primary schools, that is where approximately 50% of participants were from a primary school/s.

2.2.2 Exclusion criteria

Studies that explored secondary schools, preschools, tertiary/higher education and international areas were excluded. Other potentially relevant literature may have been found using terms such as *culture, whiteness, migrants, refugees* and so forth. However, in the interest of finding a balance between sensitivity and specificity, and to avoid locating articles that were not directly examining racism, these terms were excluded. This decision was also based on information outlined in the introduction section relating to the relationship between culture, race and ethnicity. Articles may have defined racial bias in terms of multiculturalism or cultural bias and therefore may have been missed in this search. A full list of inclusion and exclusion criteria is outlined in Table 1.

2.3 Stage 3: study selection

The search process yielded a total of 2282 articles once duplicates were removed. The titles and abstracts of these articles were assessed and articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were disregarded. If the criteria were not clearly identifiable through the title or abstracts, full text versions of articles were retrieved and examined. A total of 102 full text articles were examined, resulting in six articles meeting inclusion criteria that were subsequently included in this review. There was a large discrepancy between the initial number of articles located for review, compared to the final six that met inclusion criteria. This was the result of many articles purporting to discuss racism and racial bias however, upon further inspection, it was established that these articles were more closely related to other forms of bias such as cultural or religious bias. Additionally, many articles did not relate to the context investigated in this study (i.e. primary/secondary school and location). These details were often not reported in the title or abstract sections of the publications, resulting in a higher number of full-text articles needing to be read to determine eligibility criteria. This highlights a need for authors to provide clearer demographic information about their projects.

Figure 1 outlines the phases of the search procedure in a PRISMA flowchart (Moher et al. 2009).

2.4 Stage 4: charting the data

Microsoft Excel 2016 was used to systematically chart the data from the six studies selected for inclusion. The following headings were used to categorise the studies: *Title*, *Author/s*, *Name of Journal*, *Year of Publication*, *Location*, *Sample Size*, *Age/Grade of Participants*, *Aims/Focus Area*, *Method*, *Major Findings* and *Limitations/*
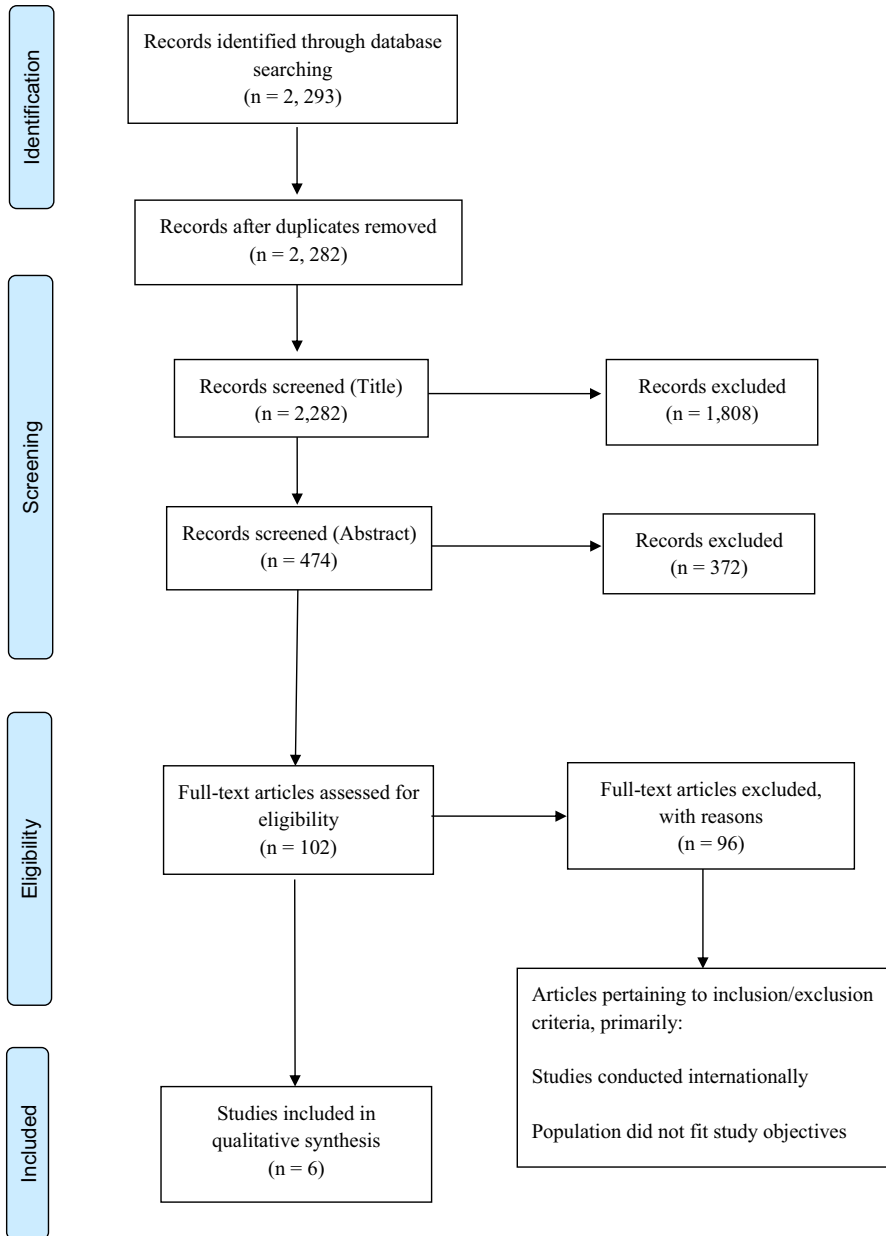
Fig. 1 Flowchart for the search and selection of articles according to PRISMA

Table 2 Included studies

Author details	Title	Year	Location	Focus population	Sample size	Study design
Forrest, Lean and dunn	Challenging racism through schools: attitudes to cultural diversity and multicultural education in Sydney, Australia	2015	Sydney (metropolitan)	Teachers (public primary and secondary)	Teachers ($n = 1309$)	Quantitative (self-report measures)
Srinivasan and Cruz**	Children colouring: speaking 'colour difference' with diversity dolls	2015	Victoria	Students (primary)	Students ($n = 127$); Schools ($n = 10$)	Qualitative (focus groups)
Priest, Perry, Ferdinand, Paradies and Kelaher***	Experiences of racism, racial/ethnic attitudes, motivated fairness and mental health outcomes among primary and secondary school students	2014	Victoria	Students (primary and secondary	Students ($n = 263$, 82.4% from primary schools); Primary schools ($n = 5$); Secondary schools ($n = 2$)	Quantitative (self-report measures)
Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Brickwood, Fox and Paradies*	Talking culture? Egalitarianism, color-blindness and racism in australian elementary schools	2014	Melbourne (metropolitan)	Teachers and students (primary)	$N = 94$; Teachers ($n = 27$); Students ($n = 67$); Schools ($n = 4$)	Qualitative (interviews, focus groups, classroom observations)
Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Fox and Paradies*	Whiteness and national identity: teacher discourses in Australian primary schools	2016	Melbourne (metropolitan)	Teachers and students (primary)	$N = 94$; $N = 94$; Teachers ($n = 27$); Students ($n = 67$); Schools ($n = 4$)	Qualitative (interviews, focus groups, classroom observations)
Priest, Walton, White, Kowal, Fox and Paradies*	You are not born being racist, are you? Discussing racism with primary aged-children	2016	Melbourne (metropolitan)	Teachers, parents and students (primary)	Teachers ($n = 27$); Students; ($n = 67$); Parents ($n = 21$); Schools ($n = 4$)	Qualitative (interviews, focus groups, classroom observations)

*Part of the same broader research project. **Part of a broader mixed-methods study (ERIS project). ***Part of a broader study (LEAD program)

Implications. Only the relevant information for this paper has been outlined in Table 2.

2.5 Stage 5: collating, summarising and reporting the results

The content derived from the charting phase was used to determine relevant focus categories where each article would be assigned. These categories included (1) attitudes towards race, racism or racial bias, (2) how adults converse with children about race, racism or racial bias, and (3) the impact of racism and racial bias on student well-being. Using this data, the most pertinent themes evident in the articles were then identified and are outlined further in the following section. Where relevant, articles and themes were included across multiple categories and this overlap is examined further in the discussion.

2.6 Data analysis techniques

A thematic analysis using the method outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006) was then conducted to explore themes that arose from the six papers. The aim of a thematic analysis is to categorise, analyse and report patterns or themes evident in the data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Clarke and Braun 2017). This was achieved using an inductive approach to be in line with the exploratory nature of the study.

Articles were read several times so that the researchers could familiarise themselves with the data. Following this, patterns were coded and collated across the articles. Initial themes and sub-themes were generated from these codes. Articles were read again to analyse how frequently these themes appeared across and within studies, as well as to ensure no important patterns were missed (theme refinement). Initially, six themes were identified as being prevalent across and within the studies. Of these themes, one had three sub-themes, one had two sub-themes, one had one sub-theme, and the remainder had no sub-themes. After further iterations and discussions of the themes, it was established that all of the sub-themes could be subsumed as part of the corresponding main theme. For example, two themes (1) competence and (2) confidence were merged to create one theme, and one theme (attitudes) did not have sufficient data to be considered an individual theme and deemed to be covered adequately in other themes (e.g. white normativity). The attitudes theme was subsequently removed as a main theme.

The first researcher conducted a thematic analysis on 100% of the included articles. An independent researcher also conducted a thematic analysis on a randomly selected portion of the included articles (67%). There was 75% agreement between the researchers. The discrepancies between the two raters were scrutinised and discussed in depth, resulting in a consensus of four major themes and discrepancies with no themes (100% agreement). The main discrepancies were about the labelling of the themes and whether or not sub-themes were warranted. For example, one researcher labelled a theme "white normativity" and the second researcher labelled it "white normative pedagogy". Through discussions, it was agreed that white normativity was a more appropriate title. This was because

white normativity was detected across multiple settings rather than solely in academic processes. Reporting of the themes is outlined in the results and discussion sections of this paper. The final themes identified in this review were (1) a lack of teacher confidence and competency regarding racial issues, (2) white normativity, (3) colour-blindness and (4) silencing.

3 Results

3.1 Demographic findings

Samples sizes ranged from 94 to 1309, with two studies focusing solely on students (Priest et al. 2014; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015), one study focusing solely on teachers (Forrest et al. 2015), two studies focusing on students and teachers (Walton et al. 2014, 2016) and one study focused on students, teachers and parents (Priest et al. 2016). All six studies were conducted in Australian primary schools. Two of the studies were conducted in both primary and secondary schools (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2014). All six studies were conducted in Victoria (Priest et al. 2014, 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016) or New South Wales (Forrest et al. 2015), the majority being in metropolitan areas (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). There was a notable absence of literature from other states and territories around Australia, especially from rural areas.

Most studies reported a mix of racial, ethnic, cultural or linguistic backgrounds in regards to students and parents, and a relatively even spread across genders (Priest et al. 2014, 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). Additionally, there was a spread of families from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers within most studies were largely White Anglo-Australian females (Forrest et al. 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). There was a spread of quantitative and qualitative research designs. Despite inclusion criteria allowing for studies published within the last decade, researchers could only locate articles that were published post 2014, indicating a lack of literature published between 2008 and 2018. Three studies were all part of the same broader research project, with most of the researchers in these studies being the same across each (Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). The scoping review highlighted the current knowledge surrounding how racism and racial bias develops, and how it is potentially perpetuated in Australian primary school settings.

3.2 Thematic analysis

Four key themes emerged from the data analysis: (1) a lack of teacher confidence and competency regarding racial issues (2) white normativity, (3) colour-blindness and (4) silencing.

3.2.1 Theme one: lack of teacher confidence and competency regarding racial issues

Some variation of teacher confidence and competency was evident across schools and teachers. However, in general, teacher confidence and competency regarding how to engage with racially diverse students and how to discuss racial issues meaningfully with children was lacking (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). Teachers generally felt ill equipped to respond to racially or culturally diverse classrooms, in terms of the varying experiences students face and the discussions that tended to ensue. For example, in Walton et al. (2016) study a student stated that she did not feel Australian and instead identified more strongly with being Somali (page 9). The teacher did not appear to understand the complexities (e.g. social constructions) regarding why this child may not identify with being Australian and instead repeatedly insisted that the student could be both "Australian and Somali", despite the students resistance to do so. The teacher reconciled this confusion by assuming that the child must have a negative view of Australians based on the demographic of where she lives. However, the teacher failed to consider other experiences, such as racism, that may have contributed to the student's identity.

The lack of teacher confidence and competency was evident implicitly, such as in the example above where the teacher appeared unaware that they did not have adequate skills to engage with this student on this particular racial identity issue. Additionally, teachers explicitly expressed a lack of competence and confidence in dealing with racially diverse students and their experiences. For example, Walton et al. (2014) found that teachers articulated a need for further professional development to assist in understanding students' diverse backgrounds and their varied experiences (page 117–118). Some teachers noted that when they do feel confident to discuss racial issues, they do not always feel that they have the support from educational leaders or the wider community (Walton et al. 2014). For example, Walton et al. (2014) reported that a teacher spoke of a parent who disagreed with class discussions about Ramadan that was part of the cultural diversity component and removed her child from the classroom as a result (page 116). This experience had a detrimental impact on the teacher's confidence in discussing racial issues with students in the future.

On the other hand, children in all of the studies showed competence when discussing topics of race, racism or racial bias (Priest et al. 2014, 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014). In Priest et al. (2016) study, when discussing the difference between being rude and being racist, most students were able to differentiate the two. They did this by identifying that being rude meant saying mean things however; being racist involves treating others negatively due to their skin colour or country of origin (page 818). This was further expressed in students' ability to disclose personal experiences of racism and in their ability to delve into discussions surrounding the socio-political and historical colonial aspects of racism. For instance, during discussions with children, Srinivasan and Cruz (2015) found that students linked shifts in racial/ethnic attitudes in society to shifts in Australia's major political party viewpoints regarding First Nations Peoples. One student in the grade 4–6 group stated the following about the darker skinned persona doll "You know how the Prime Minister said sorry to the Indigenous people, Kevin Rudd.

Before that, probably in Prep or Grade 1 they would have said she is disgusting and has a bad culture"…. "John Howard is a bad person did not want to say sorry to the Aboriginals" (page 33). Students were also able to articulate an understanding of the colonial remnants that remain within Australian society with another student saying "They'll probably think she is Australian at first and then say she is half that half that and not a pure Australian"…. "Really, Aboriginal, they were born here. People say get out of our country but it is not really their country" (page 33).

Additionally, in Priest et al. (2016) study, one student spoke of a racist exchange initiated by a white neighbour who said "You black people, go back to where you came from, go back to Africa, you don't belong here" and in response the student said "Why don't you? You don't even own this, the Aboriginal people do", again reflecting an understanding of colonial issues in Australia (page 816). Together these examples illustrate students' knowledge of socio-political issues that underpin their experiences at school and in the wider community. Children also appeared to be grappling between a strong sense of morality and emerging prejudice when attempting to understand the world around them. In the Srinivasan and Cruz (2015) study many students relied on stereotypes to discuss the persona dolls experience. For example, students assumed that the darker dolls skin colour would create a barrier to making friends, whereas the white dolls skin colour would be a protective factor against racism (page 31–34). Additionally, students also displayed a strong sense of justice in trying to understand biased views "Australia is multicultural but if we are being racist we are not multicultural"… "But no one is a true Australian. Everyone has come from another country" (page 36).

Collectively, these examples indicate that children may be more capable of engaging with topical issues of race and racism than teachers and parents realise. This lack of teacher confidence and competency in engaging with students from racially diverse backgrounds and in discussing racial issues, manifested in various issues across classrooms. The following three themes outline these issues in further detail.

3.2.2 Theme two: white normativity

The majority of the studies asserted that teachers, parents and students appeared to operate through a white normative lens (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). A white normative lens means that white culture, white ideologies and white people's position at the top of the racial hierarchy is normalised and anything or anyone that does not align with this becomes the "other" (Walton et al. 2014).

Teachers tended to amplify whiteness through white normative pedagogical practices that either explicitly or implicitly situated whiteness as the norm for which everything else is compared (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). This was commonly done by insinuating that "Australianess" was commensurate with "whiteness". For instance, during a classroom observation Walton et al. (2016) found that when expressing what it means to "Australian", some teachers emphasised stereotypical depictions of white people or white culture such as photographs of white working class "Australian" males, saying "g'day" and eating lamingtons (page 6). Students appeared to adopt this same worldview during classroom

observations. For example, in Walton et al's. (2016) study students assumed that the white people in a video clip were Australian and the non-white people were tourists. Rather than challenging these white normative views, the teacher responded, *"Why do you think tourists? You're not wrong, I'm just curious"* (page 8). Similarly, Srinivasan and Cruz (2015) found that despite introducing all persona dolls with hyphenated Australian identities (e.g. Anglo-Australian or Indigenous-Australian), children assumed that the white dolls were Australian and the non-white dolls were foreign (page 34–35).

Five studies reported some level of white normativity in schools (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). In studies that compared results across schools, those with a higher proportion of minoritised students or more emphasis on racial/cultural diversity, tended to have less emphasis on whiteness (Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). Within these schools there also appeared to be more diverse pedagogical practices being implemented. Ultimately, while teachers and parents explicitly posited that everyone should feel a sense of belonging and be treated equally, some contradicted this with views that assumed anyone who was not white was foreign and anything that did not centre whiteness was often discouraged. This white normative paradigm subsequently led to the privileging of whiteness within the classroom and the curriculum, and the othering of anyone who was not deemed to fit within the white "majority". This paradigm also led to the homogenising of what it means to be white, as well as the homogenising of "other" races/cultures.

3.2.3 Theme three: colour-blindness

Colour-blindness can be subtle and refers to the racial ideology that denying, distorting, or minimising discussions around racial differences or racism/racial bias is more desirable than drawing attention to them (Priest et al. 2016). There were varying degrees of colour-blindness that manifested in school settings. However, the majority of studies that focused on adults, namely teachers and parents, had at least some level of colour-blindness evident (Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). Teachers often utilised egalitarian messages, which focused on sameness rather than difference. For example, Walton et al. (2014) found that in some schools there was a clear acknowledgement of racial, ethnic or cultural difference. However, within this acknowledgement, greater emphasis was placed on sameness and equality regardless of difference, rather than on recognising and examining the social significance of those differences and how they may affect minoritised students (pages 114–119). While no ill intent is evident, the impact of colour-blind messages means that teachers may be colour-blind or colour-mute to some students' experiences of discrimination. This process can lead to the detrimental process called silencing (theme four).

Students also tended to adopt these same egalitarian and colour-blind views. Teachers and parents within the studies often posited that racism was not an issue within their schools and that children generally do not see race. They also expressed that when children do see race, they do not consider it during social interactions with their peers (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014). Srinivasan and Cruz (2015) work focused on children's, understandings

of race and was the only study that did not have an evident theme of colour-blindness. Children were able to discuss personal experiences of racism and expressed stereotypical depictions of people based on their race. For example, many students linked the whiteness of the dolls to increases in wealth (page 35), beauty (page 35), social likability (page 31–33) and the belief that white skin would be a protective factor against racism (page 32). Further, many students posited that the minoritised dolls would have fewer friends (page 34), possibly have clothes resembling a lower socio-economic status (page 35) and be teased more because of their darker skin tone (page 35–36).

The results from this study challenge the assertion by parents and teachers that "children don't see race". Instead, the results point to a potential misunderstanding by parents and teachers relating to children's capabilities to engage in discussions regarding racial issues, subsequently leading to missed opportunities for these much-needed conversations.

3.2.4 Theme four: silencing

Five studies implicitly or explicitly discussed silencing as a technique for responding to discussions around racism or racist incidents and reported that both adults and children used this (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). Many teachers silenced conversations in that they did not actively engage in discussions about race, racism or racial bias (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016).

In the Srinivasan and Cruz (2015) study, children expressed that adults had taught them to silence experiences of racism (e.g. by ignoring and/or walking away) (page 37–39). However, when delving deeper into these discussions, children expressed that this did not minimise racism, rather it perpetuated it (page 38). Children also discussed multiple incidents of racism in school such as people saying *"Go back to where you came from"*. In the Priest et al. (2016) study students' spoke of being called the "n-word" and having peers comment that "I don't like your skin colour" (page 816). Some children also spoke of adults in their communities directing racist insults to them such as "You f-ing black people go back to Africa" (page 816).

As well as discussing experiences of racism, Walton et al. (2014) observed students engaging in racism e.g. mocking Chinese accents by saying "ching chong chang" (page 117). Priest et al. (2016) also witnessed students using hand gestures to mock epicanthic folds and observed comments from students about Chinese people being *"rude"* and looking *"scary"* and *"weird"* (page 818). Interestingly, when some researchers shared this data with teachers and parents, they did not agree nor believe that racism occurs in their schools and maintained a view that "children don't see race", subsequently silencing the issue. This occurred even when researchers and teachers had witnessed the same racist and racialised encounters between students (Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al., 2014).

Additionally, Priest et al. (2016) rarely observed any comprehensive exploration of racism during classroom discussions surrounding policies to remove children during the 'Stolen Generations', the 'White Australia Policy' (page 824) or during a weeklong 'Aboriginal Culture' unit (page 819). Teachers also appeared reticent to

discuss racism or skin tone, often actively silencing these discussions by diverting the conversation away from these topics. In classrooms where teachers were more open to discussing racial issues, students were able to have more nuanced discussions about what constitutes racism and some even altered their views as a result of the discussions (Priest et al. 2016, pp. 824). See "Appendix" for a flow chart representing an overview of the interconnectedness of the four themes.

4 Discussion

The current study extended and mapped the current knowledge base regarding the extent and development of racism and racial bias within Australian primary school contexts. Four key themes were generated: (1) a lack of teacher confidence and competency regarding racial issues (2) white normativity, (3) colour-blindness and (4) silencing.

One of the main findings evident across all of the papers was that children have the ability to notice race from a young age. Views begin forming about certain groups of people based on their race, culture and ethnicity from as young as six to eight years old, reflected in the ages of participants in certain studies (Priest et al. 2014, 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014). Children are also capable of seeking further understanding regarding how race is conceptualised socially and how to make sense of personal and vicarious experiences of racism.

The difference evident in many studies was often how the adults around these children, namely teachers and parents, dealt with racial issues (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). Children appeared eager and able to engage in complex discussions when teachers were open to these conversations occurring. Evident across a number of studies was that children were also capable of engaging in stereotypical and sometimes racist behaviours (Priest et al. 2014, 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016). For example, students were observed expressing views such as, "I wouldn't want to be Chinese… because I think it's something with Chinese, I think they all look the same and I don't want to look the same as somebody else, it would be a bit freaky and being like Matt [a classmate]" (Priest et al. 2016, pp. 818; Walton et al. 2014, pp. 117). They were also observed mimicking accents with a mocking tone (Walton et al. 2014, pp. 117). In addition, when given the space to do so, children showed an ability to recognise and discuss socio-political and historical colonial issues (Srinivasan and Cruz 2015, pp. 33). Examples were evident across all studies that included children (Priest et al. 2014, 2016; Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014, 2016), indicating that despite some parents and teachers insistence, children observe race and have the capability to engage in discussions about racism.

The data generated from theme one suggests that teachers did not receive adequate pre-service or in-service training about racially diverse students and their experiences of racism. As a result, teachers felt under prepared to deal with issues that arose pertaining to race, racism or racial bias in the classroom. A feeling of competence and confidence tended to increase in schools that were more diverse. Whether this was a result of increased diversity or whether teachers with stronger

pro-diversity views are more inclined to work at these types of schools, is unknown. Further research is necessary to develop a better understanding of how teacher competency and confidence in engaging with racially diverse students and responding to racism can be increased in the future. Some teachers discussed not feeling supported by school leaders, parents and the wider community to engage in discussions about race with their students. This highlighted the importance of having school leaders who support the ethos of inclusion and anti-racist curricula, and who are capable of guiding their team of teachers and their students through these processes.

Theme two showed that some Australian primary school settings may be built on the foundations of white normativity. White normativity results in whiteness being situated at the peak of the racial hierarchy (Edwards 2008). The message that is then distributed to children is that "Australianess" is synonymous with "whiteness" and that whiteness is the norm for which everyone and everything else is compared and "othered". Subsequently, children in white normative contexts may embody similar views as their teachers and parents.

Theme three reflected an imbalance between the level of support children require and the level of support they are receiving at school to explore racial issues. Teachers were inclined to discuss these topics using a colour-blind approach. Colour-blindness tends to shy away from acknowledging racial differences in favour of promoting sameness (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011). While this may sound appealing, colour-blind racial ideologies are considered forms of racism given their propensity to perpetuate racial prejudice and racial inequity (Neville et al. 2013).

Teachers and parents' reliance on colour-blind approaches as a way to gloss over or deny racial differences and amplify sameness, may stem from misinformed beliefs. For example, some may incorrectly assume that discussions with children regarding race or racism is unnecessary as children do not see race and/or do not hold prejudicial views (Husband 2010). This approach may also be based on the assumption that any discussions surrounding race are inherently racist and can be harmful to children. Unfortunately, the lack of dialogue about race does not challenge the status quo or assist children to think about their views before they become ingrained and attitudes towards race are established. It also does not afford minoritised children the space to explore their experiences of racism or racial bias. It is possible that a lack of competency and confidence has resulted in many teachers adopting a colour-blind approach to discussing these issues.

Engaging in white normative and colour-blind approaches may result in egalitarian messages being used to discuss racial issues. For example, in the Walton et al. (2016) study a teacher was observed, in response to a child questioning who is and is not "Australian" respond, "we are all an international people with ties to many different cultures" (page 7). Some researchers suggest that this response could be a missed opportunity to discuss the social constructions of racial and national identity, in favour of amplifying sameness. This approach may lead to adults and children silencing instances and discussions surrounding racism and racial bias, identified in theme four. Avoiding sensitive topics does not address or combat discrimination. Instead, avoidance merely instils incorrect information in children pertaining to race and inclusion. Not challenging students' views with educational information only further perpetuates the cycle of discrimination, as children may believe that racism

is not a significant societal concern, ultimately leading to apathy and little desire to combat social justice issues (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2011).

Therefore, intervening early with accurate age and emotionally appropriate information, and understanding how this can be achieved within school contexts, is important. The studies within this review align with previous research indicating that primary school aged children are capable of understanding and engaging in discussions surrounding racial issues (Baron and Banaji 2006; Bigler and Liben 2007). However, evidence regarding the best format for intervention with children is still emerging.

International research asserts that adults tend to adopt colour-blind approaches regarding racial issues with children (Blackmore 2010; Richeson and Nussbaum 2004), as was found in theme three of the current study. This supports previous research indicating that children notice racial difference and are in need of conversations with adults to explore the social meaning of these differences, such as how various racial groups are treated within in society (Baron and Banaji 2006; Bigler and Liben 2007). Racist incidents highlighted by children in these studies align with previous research indicating that children can experience racism (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010), as well as engage in acts of racism (Mansouri and Jenkins 2010; Pachter et al. 2010). Consequently, this can negatively affect their well-being (Gaylord-Harden and Cunningham 2009; Okeke et al. 2009) and academic outcomes (Grove and Laletas 2020). Given children have the potential to act in racially prejudiced ways, they may also have the potential to develop racially biased views from a young age (Baron and Banaji 2006; Pahlke et al. 2012; Rutland et al. 2010).

When adopting a broader viewpoint of the six studies and the evident themes, an interlinking pattern begins to emerge (see "Appendix"). It appears as though there are general elements (antecedents) such as one's level of self-awareness, competency, confidence and attitudes to racial differences. These elements may impact how a teacher conducts themselves based on a student's race and how they manage classroom discussions surrounding racial issues with their students and colleagues. These antecedents may influence certain behaviours that teachers and parents engage in such as white normativity (which can lead to privileging, homogenising and othering), colour-blindness (which can result in egalitarian messages) and silencing. These behaviours individually and collectively may result in negative impacts on both minoritised and majoritised students.

This highlights potential areas for intervention in raising awareness and increasing competency and confidence in teachers, which may have a flow on effect to students' attitudes and well-being. Moving forward, it is important to understand that placing blame is not the focus, rather it is about using evidence-based techniques to address the gaps in current pedagogical practices. Additionally, understanding how to equip and support teachers and school leaders with the resources and language to engage in effective discussions surrounding racial issues with students, and with each other, is important. This will assist in breaking the cycle of discrimination and

in developing anti-racist classrooms that account for the intersecting identities of all students.

Given the results from this study, the question now is—what is known about the level of racial bias evident in students and teachers and how is this influencing the culture and sense of belonging within Australian primary schools? While there is evidently a paucity of information in Australia, what we can say with relative confidence is that children are not colour-blind to difference, they have the potential to act in racially prejudiced ways, much the same as adults do, and they are willing and capable of engaging in discussions surrounding racial issues. Most importantly though, teachers and parents are not providing adequate support for children to explore racial issues. This may be due to factors such as a lack of competency, leading to a range of inadequate techniques for discussing racial issues and combating racism (e.g. colour-blindness). This may be silencing the voices of diverse individuals, whose voices should be at the core of these issues. It is also plausible that there are multiple systemic influences at play, which can be difficult to evaluate empirically (Allen et al. 2016).

4.1 Implications

Despite inclusion criteria allowing for literature between 2008–2018, all of the six included articles were published post 2014, reflecting the infancy of this area in Australia. Given the possibility for negative bias to develop from a young age and the detrimental impact this has across the lifespan, future research should explore various avenues to understand and minimise the impact of racism and racial bias in Australian primary schools and children in general.

Additionally, as there is a lack of research in this area, there are innumerable areas that future research can explore. What researchers know currently is that teachers need more support in understanding racism and racial bias within school settings. What researchers and educators do not yet know is how best to give that support. For example, through pre-service and in-service training, professional development, anti-racist curricula or anti-bias interventions using a whole school approach. It may be worthwhile to examine this in a way that moves beyond offering ad hoc or tokenistic training, such as cultural competency workshops. These approaches reinforce sameness by homogenising racial groups and insinuate that understanding how to engage with students from various backgrounds is an option, as opposed to a job requirement.

Incorporating a top down approach and inscribing racial understanding and anti-racist competencies into government policy, to ensure that teachers and school leaders are accountable, will encourage inclusion in schools. Perhaps increasing teacher self-awareness of their own biases and worldviews may contribute to increasing their confidence in discussing these areas with children. This may be achieved by administering implicit bias questionnaires during pre-service training, as a way to support the next

generation of teachers to understand and address any biases they may have during their education. Some in-service teachers appeared to misunderstand their students' abilities to engage in discussions surrounding racial issues (Forrest et al. 2015; Priest et al. 2016; Walton et al. 2014, 2016) and in their students' potential to hold racially biased views or to engage in racist behaviours (Srinivasan and Cruz 2015; Walton et al. 2014). Therefore, offering professional development and learning to teachers would be beneficial. To increase teacher motivation to engage in training, an emphasis should be placed on the benefits of classrooms discussions about racial issues, as well as the risks of not doing so.

A clear understanding of the most effective ways to engage children about racial issues is necessary. This will offer children a space to explore their views and beliefs pertaining to race and inclusion, as well as a space to discuss their experiences of racism and racial bias. Engaging children in these topics may also help to minimise their racial bias and guide them toward more pro-social views. Future research could examine the best techniques to engage children on these topics by assessing the most crucial age for intervention and by creating interventions that minimise the reliance on white normative and colour-blind techniques. This may also assist in understanding how and when children begin to develop prejudicial views, subsequently paving the way for novel interventions that can be implemented early in development.

4.2 Limitations

While this review has its strengths, it also has its limitations. One of the main limitations was that few studies met the inclusion criteria and research aims of this article. The studies included in this review were conducted in two states and within metropolitan areas only. Therefore, a picture of rural and remote regions and other states and territories across Australia is missing, which may affect the generalisability of the results. There has been some research conducted in regional and rural Australia, such as Forrest et al's. (2017) study conducted in country New South Wales. However, this research focused on secondary school populations. Additionally, the results of this review should be interpreted with caution as only six studies were included for review. This indicates a need for additional research to explore the impact of racial bias and racism in education.

While many studies offered information in terms of mapping and conceptualising racial bias and racism in Australian primary schools, there tends to be a lack of uniformity in definitions. This lack of uniformity made it difficult to locate articles for review and may mean that some articles were missed if they discussed racial bias using different terminology such as cultural bias. In practice, having no unified definition for racism and racial bias will also negatively impact how these issues are addressed, as researchers and educators cannot develop interventions to address an issue that is not properly defined. Finally, while each of the studies within this scoping review offered valuable insight, the methodology within each was not assessed. Future research would

benefit from further reviews, such as a systematic review, to assess methodological considerations and provide opportunities for refinement in the future. Making sure that studies are methodologically sound will help ensure that future interventions to reduce racial bias within school contexts are constructed from evidence-based research and theory.

5 Conclusion

This scoping review provides new knowledge regarding the extent and development of racism and racial bias within Australian primary school settings. It is apparent that different schools are using a range of techniques to discuss and combat racism within their community. However, there appears to be a lack of consistency with how these techniques to discuss racial issues and combat racism are being implemented across schools.

A reflection from this review is that children are capable of engaging in discussions about racial issues. Not only are they capable, they are in need of these discussions in order to understand the world around them and their place within it. Unfortunately, one other aspect that was evident from this review was that adults, namely teachers and parents, are not providing children adequate space to have these discussions. Often teachers do not feel competent and/or confident having these conversations with their students. Clearly, as this review has shown, sustaining current white normative pedagogical practices only serves to maintain the status quo and is not sustainable in the context of the growing racial diversity within Australian schools.
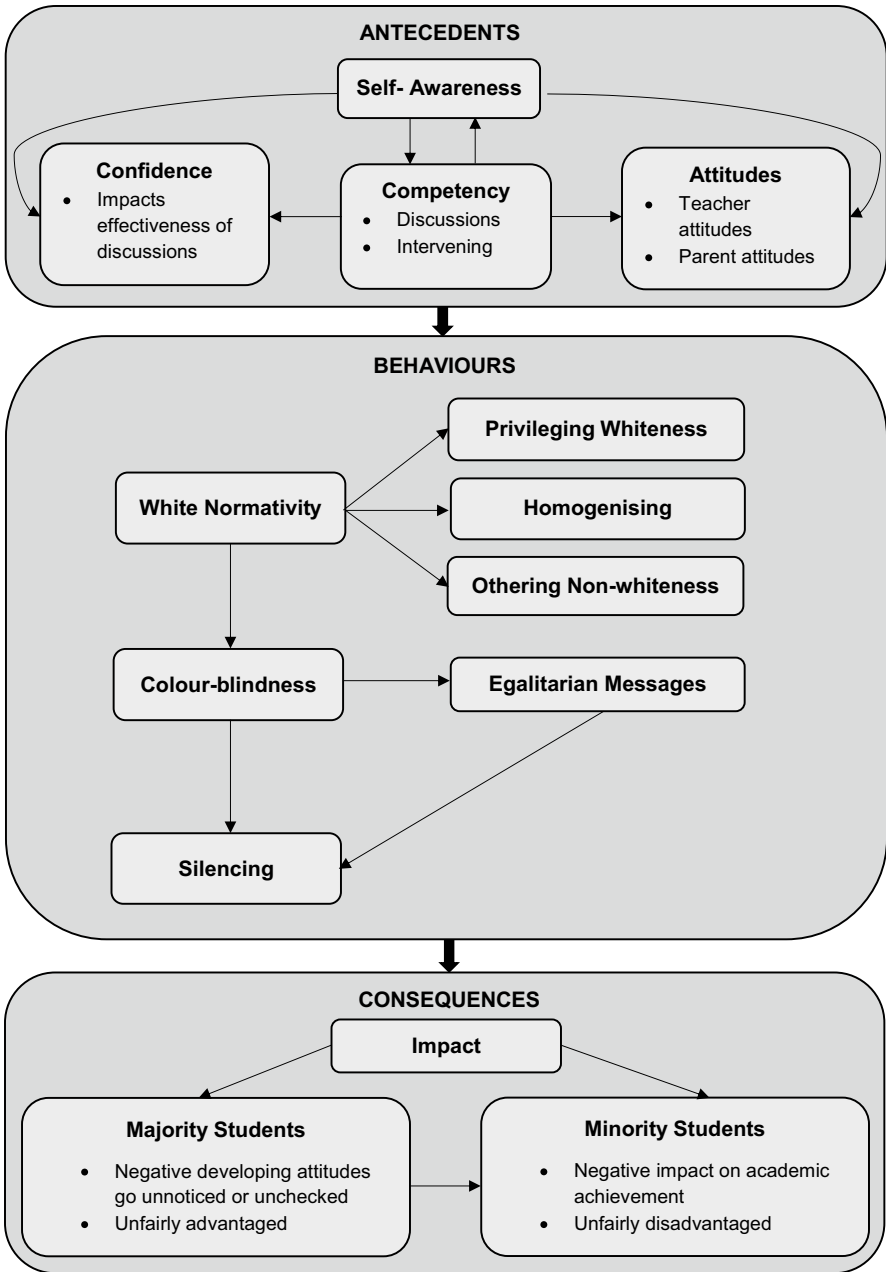
Appendix

See Fig. 2 in "Appendix".

Fig. 2 Diagram of the trajectory of racism and racial bias in schools

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