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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a literature review of academic debates relating to the *Australian Curriculum: History* (ACH), in particular subjective constructions of teaching Australian History and Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' histories. The literature reviewed from a socio-political lens, examines functions of power/knowledge operating in discourses of education to illuminate how teachers, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders, take up and/or resist subjectivities constructing them. Drawing from the toolbox of post-structuralism, this literature review troubles the notion of the non-Indigenous perspective as dominant, and the teacher as an active, non-critical participant in the process.

Keywords: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; History teaching; teaching subjectivities; poststructuralism; Australian Curriculum; Australian history.

Introduction: What's the problem?

In five years since the 2013 mandatory implementation of the Australian Curriculum: History (ACH) (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, (ACARA), 2012) for all state schools, little attention has been paid to primary/secondary teachers' pedagogical engagement of concepts presented [about Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' knowledges and understandings](#). Even less attention has focused on the discursive ways in which teachers, and the teaching of history, is constructed, understood, and taken up within the field of education. Since Clark's (2006) thesis exploring discursive formations of Australian history in Australian schools, there appears to be a significant lack of literature published investigating how teachers are positioned in discourses of Australian history. Rather, the preponderance of scholarly literature has tended to focus on theoretical discussions about conceptualisation of the ACH; responses to its purpose and implementation; questioning reflections of nationalism; raising concerns for teachers' qualifications; and examining portrayals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and perspectives within it (see, Burgess & Cavanagh, 2015; Harrison, 2017; Shipp, 2012; Vass, 2017). The purpose of my paper in this context is to conduct an investigation of academic responses to the ACH, in particular the subjective construction of Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' histories, to explain functions of power/knowledge operating on teachers as subjects in discourses of education.

Theoretical Methodology

[In this paper, I review scholarly literature relating to the discursive constructions of teachers, and the teaching of history, from a poststructuralist theoretical positioning.](#) Primarily, I draw upon Foucault's (1972) formative work on discourses as bodies of socially constructed

knowledge, to highlight how teachers as subjects in education are constituted by, and constitute, the conditions under which they operate. Examining functions and meanings of language within discourses of Australian history enables investigation of ways in which subjectivities relating to teachers, and the teaching of history, are constructed and normalised (Foucault, 1972). Zeegers (2001) speaks to the importance of such examinations, saying that:

Discourses [are] major considerations in human social activity, such as teaching and learning, as they constrain the possibilities of thought, keeping the unthinkable at bay so that certain discourses are privileged over others by virtue of their unquestioned application. These considerations open up concepts of marginalised and privileged discourses, and the networks of conditions that maintain their position within fields of knowledge (p. 350).

Drawing from the toolbox of post-structuralism then, enables me to trouble the notion of the non-Indigenous perspective as dominant, and the teacher as an active, non-critical participant in the process within scholarly literature.

While notions of cross-cultural education are discussed throughout, the purpose of this literature review is to conduct an investigation of academic responses to the ACH, in particular the subjective construction of Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' histories, to explain functions of power/knowledge operating on teachers as subjects in discourses of education. While an argument could be made for the application of race-based theories, such as Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and Critical Whiteness Theory (Fredericks, 2009; Moreton-Robinson, 2004) to further theorise functions of racism in education, the focus on difference and factors that maintain binary dichotomies couched within these theories is inconsistent with the purpose of this review. Rather, my decision to conduct this literature review from a poststructuralist theoretical framework is consistent with Nakata's (1997) discussion of cultural schematising. Nakata

(1997) asserts that understanding of concepts via race-based theories 'is constrained by the same epistemological frameworks' (p. 28) of binary dichotomies. He argues:

It makes sense to understand the constraints under which current discourse operate, discourses that also contribute to, participate in and circulate, and respond to questions of these. In that way, processes for understanding different positions are brought to the fore (Nakata, 1997, p. 319).

Given this, rather than investigating discourses to disrupt and interrogate issues of race in the scholarly literature, I foreground how and under what conditions teachers, and the teaching of history, are discussed.

Literature Review

Teachers positioning in pre-irruption Literature

Clark's (2006) thesis is the most recent account of teachers' and students' experiences of learning and teaching about Australia's history in Australian schools. Yet Clark (2006) does not offer any suggestions to remedy such concerns, nor investigate the capacity to which teachers are constructed within the discourses, or ways in which subjectivities of Aboriginality, and Torres Strait Islandership are taken up/resisted in curriculum. Rather, Clark (2006) maps discursively the conditions under which political and pedagogical anxiety has converged in discourses of Australian history education since the 1960s to inform a political agenda used to conceptualise and present a particular Australian Eurocentric national identity (Clark, 2006: 2009; Ditchburn, 2012; Guyver, 2009). [The politicisation of Australian identity as inextricably couched within power/knowledge relations of Eurocentrism is made visible in ACH statements such as 'the extent of European imperial expansion and different responses' \(ACARA, 2012\), positioning them as privileged in discourses of Australian history.](#) In this

context, the subject position of the teacher is considered – seemingly unconsciously – as the uncritical conduit through which knowledge of Australian history is filtered through the lens of European supremacy.

Parkes (2007) argues that as a result of cultural political movements¹ since the 1980s a new historiography was produced which ‘broke the Great Australian Silence around Indigenous history’ (p. 386). This gave rise to academic debates known as the history wars. *The History Wars* emerged as a space of inquiry from Clark and Macintyre’s (2004) examination of ways in which non-Indigenous Australians, academics, and politicians in particular, engage Australian history from a ‘black armband²’ or ‘white blindfold³’ approach. In these discussions, the role of teaching is largely absent. This reinforces the notion that attention to subjectivities of learning and teaching is not a priority in the study of Australian history. Rather, the assumption is made that teachers will simply take up ideologies presented in curriculum and present them in an uncritical manner, such as ‘It was an era of nationalism and imperialism, and the colonisation of Australia was part of the expansion of European power’ (ACARA, 2012). These nationalistic ideologies background concepts of critical social consciousness and reflexivity and results in ‘undeniable lived effects [that] govern how teachers address contemporary issues (Maxwell, Lowe, & Salter, 2018, p. 173).

Yates and Collins (2008) argue that since the 1980s, ‘a strong utilitarian vision of education, a particular form of Australian egalitarianism’ (p. 15) has been the key agenda for curriculum development. They argue that politicians and their representatives create curricula

¹ A selection of political movements occurring since the 1980s in Australia include; the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976 (NT), the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1996), The *Mabo vs Queensland* case (1992), the Bringing them Home report (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997), and the first National Sorry Day (Reconciliation Australia, 2013).

² Coined by Blainey (1993) *black armband* describes a view of Australian history as disgraceful with *historians* focusing on violence, exploitation, racism, and other forms of discrimination in Australian history.

³ A white blindfold approach emphasises progress, inclusion, and innovation, and European leadership of Australian society (Ferrier, 1999).

to exemplify nationalistic concerns of the privileged (Yates & Collins, 2008); an argument reflected in other studies (Bunda, 2012; Gilbert, 2011; Parkes, 2007). Clark (2010) says:

Politicians use history in many ways. They make history, they often write history ... politicians use the past to demonstrate their own historical significance and their fidelity to national traditions (p. 120).

Yates and Collins (2008) observe that over this period a shift from students examining Australian history, to engaging with it, occurred within Australian education practices. With it an epistemological modification occurs that sees the construction of the subject teacher shift from a passive conduit for knowledge transfer, to the passive still avenue through which interest of Australian history from the European perspective may be garnered.

(re)Constructions of the subject teacher in scholarly debates about the ACH

When the shaping paper for the ACH (National Curriculum Board (NCB), 2009) was released in 2009, it precipitated a re-emergence of scholarly debate about the purpose of a national history curriculum; how nationalistic ideologies are reflected within history curricula; the capacity to which teachers are qualified to teach history; and how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and perspectives are portrayed. *The shape of the Australian curriculum paper V 4.0* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2013) is presented as an essential national guiding curriculum document designed to improve the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system. As an extension of this, the focus of the ACH is stated to develop a world-class education system in Australia, one designed to produce future Australians who possess essential life and work skills for the 21st century global community (ACARA, 2013). Education scholars took issue with these statements, characterising the national curriculum as a knee-jerk reaction to political concerns over Australia's perceived low international ranking in education (Burgess, 2009; Ditchburn, 2012).

As Maxwell et al. (2018) discuss in detail, the commissioned review of the Australian Curriculum led by Kevin Donnelly and Kenneth Wiltshire:

Set the ground work [sic] for both problem construction and solution; the problem is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' outcomes are deficient; the solution can be partially found in a curriculum which sets consistent standards for all students and enables achievement of them via cultural content (p. 166).

Cary and Pruyn (2015) argue that developing a national curriculum from competitive neo-liberal ideologies promotes an Australian education system focused solely on producing skilled, employable citizens. As this is done, an education system focused on human values, respect for difference and local connections is backgrounded, and the notion of European dominance, as asserted in the homogenous and hegemonic curriculum, is maintained.

European dominance is reinforced in the ACH via content descriptions such as 'key people, events and ideas in the development of Australian self-government and democracy, including, the role of founders, key features of constitutional development, the importance of British and Western influences in the formation of Australia's system of government' (ACARA, 2012), thus promoting hegemonic western explorations of Australian history. This results in a curriculum that backgrounds Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives, while simultaneously raising questions about how teachers ought to plan and deliver school-based Australian history programs through a privileged Eurocentric lens. Constructing the subject teacher as trainer, one who works within set frameworks to assess students' uptake of predetermined knowledge, 'works to condition consciousness [by] structuring thought in ways that cloud and hinder' (Salter & Maxwell, 2018, p. 18) the possibility to speak back to dominant ideologies.

Scholars taking issue with Eurocentric nationalistic ideologies argue that such notions became centralised because the writers of that curriculum are themselves of European descent

(Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013; Henderson, 2009; Vass, 2012). According to Henderson (2009), when language reflecting privileged perspectives is used to construct curricula, ‘powerful perceptions or truths become embedded in official discourses [and are taken up] as official histories and curriculum documents’ (p. 8). This may be seen in statements such as ‘this time period [1750-1901] provides an opportunity for students to gain an understanding of Asian-European relations including the European discovery and settlement of Australia and the responses of Indigenous peoples’ (NCB, 2009, p. 10). Henderson (2009) argues that Eurocentric perspectives have been privileged and foregrounded in past and present Australian history curricula because of the ways in which dominant groups use language to construct shared norms. These shared norms function as truth in power/knowledge relations of discourses to support implementation of the ACH as a depersonalised, hegemonic, and homogenised document. It legitimises Eurocentric perspectives as privileged and dominant, and backgrounds all other possible perspectives. In these spaces, the subject teacher is situated to take up the curriculum apparatus in an uncritical manner so that concepts of cultural inclusivity are positioned as something to be examined from the margins (Perso & Hayward, 2015; Sefa Dei, 2000).

Following the Australian government’s announcement in 2008 that a national curriculum was to be implemented mandatorily in all state schools from 2011, scholarly debate on ways in which the curriculum would engage Australia’s 21st century students intensified. These debates brought to light tensions of power/knowledge relations in discourses of politics, and the priorities of nationalistic sentiments couched within the Australian education system, on the international stage (Carey & Pruyn, 2015). International scholarship (see for example, Fisher, 2012; Hargraves, 1996; Zajda, 2015) highlights that history curriculum, as a technique of power/knowledge relations for nation building purposes is not a new area of critique. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the

functions of this in depth, understanding subjectivities of nation building narratives within curriculum, particularly in Countries where one foreign force has risen to a dominant position, demonstrates the pervasiveness of Eurocentric techniques of nationalism couched within power/knowledge relations. Kennedy (2009) argues that a 'national curriculum should not just be about correcting a deficit [but ought to] embrace notions of community responsibilities and obligations' (p. 7). While Salter (2010) argues that 'national identity [was] no longer the priority for globalised critical thinking students' (p. 2), Ultimately, Kennedy (2009) maintains that 'any debates about a national curriculum are really debates about a nation's soul, its values, and its beliefs' (p. 6). In this manner, subjectivities maintain construction of teachers as knowledge holders, while at the same time locating them as points through which students' interact with knowledge to engage notions of active citizenship.

Henderson (2009) argues however, that by focusing on engagement only students are ill-equipped culturally to operate competently in a culturally diverse global world. Rather, students require opportunities to:

Engage a range of historiographical approaches, so they can critique traditional Western epistemologies that have shaped representations of [Australian] history and navigate the cultural diversity they will encounter within Australia and throughout the region (Henderson, 2009, p. 5).

While professional organisations⁴ have lobbied successfully to ensure attempts at whitewashing⁵ controversial language in the ACH are not taken up, academic literature has tended to focus on teacher and student school-based engagement with the curriculum. Rather

⁴ Professional organisations such as the *Aboriginal Studies Association* (<http://www.aboriginalstudies.com.au/>), *History Teachers' Association of Australia* (<http://www.historyteacher.org.au/>) and the *Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc* (<http://www.vaeai.org.au/>).

⁵ Whitewashing is a hegemonic practice that renders racially contentious issues, such as the invasion of mainland Australia by European explorers, 'to disavow the legacy of colonisation and racialised hierarchy within Australian society' (Moore, 2012, p. 10).

than critique and interrogate power/knowledge relations couched within cross-cultural learning, the literature explores how practices of racism play out in a 'complex and challenging education climate of increasing cultural diversity' (Vass, 2017, p. 453). A strong trend of inquiry within this field, is exploration of ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives may be incorporated into mainstream curriculum (see Austin & Hickey, 2011; McKnight, 2015; Shipp, 2012; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009) via cultural immersion pedagogy (see Burgess & Cavanagh, 2015; Harrison, 2017; [author et al], 2016). Science teachers, in Austin and Hickey's (2011) study for example, engage pedagogical processes that draw on current scholarly discussions and demonstrate critical engagement in weighing up the benefits and challenges associated with incorporating different perspectives. Meanwhile, [author] (2017) thesis demonstrates the importance of teachers' engaging critically with local Aboriginal peoples' perspectives in Secondary schools to overcome issues of decreased pedagogical confidence, feelings of constraint, and issues of cultural/racial sensitivity that position them in spaces of compliance. In these studies, the notion of the subject teacher shifts from a passive conduit through which knowledge flows, to an active agent of learning in which knowledge is funnelled and interrogated critically.

Scholarly debate exploring different pedagogical strategies, or ways in which teachers engage with Australian history at a primary/secondary level, since the first draft of the ACH being released in 2009, is scarce. Where the literature does talk about engagement, a critical enquiry lens emerges particularly around the influence of teacher qualifications and experiences of curriculum (Blaskett, 2009; Carey & Pruyn, 2015). Henderson (2011) highlights a 'broad consensus [assuming] that teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student learning outcomes' (p. 10). Yet, in the same paper, questions the capacity of tertiary institutions to prepare teachers adequately with skills and knowledge to interrogate presented concepts in the ACH (Henderson, 2011).

The idea of the teacher as fundamental to student engagement with Australian history is a recurrent theme in the literature. Clark (2009) argues for the ‘importance of teaching students to do history in the classroom and encouraging them to be historians’ (p. 756), but Henderson (2009) counter-argues by asserting that many teachers do not have the adequate skills or knowledge to do so. In these discourses of teaching history, subjectivities of compliance, qualifications, and legitimised knowledge construct the ideological perception of what teachers of history should do, teach about, and assess. [By way of example, in the ACH, teachers are encouraged to develop ‘students’ historical knowledge, understanding and skills by inquiry questions \[and\] the use and interpretation of sources’ \(ACARA, 2013\).](#) Here, we read that once again teachers are situated as the fixed conduit through which specialised and specific forms of knowledge imparted from higher education spaces is funnelled to the willing student. [In doing so, the notion of teachers as active agents interrogating concepts presented in the ACH, such as ‘the extension of settlement, including the effects of contact’ \(ACARA, 2013\), is backgrounded.](#)

Teachers’ engagement with ACH constructions of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders

Academic discussions of teachers’ engagement with Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives in the ACH range across several main areas: from questioning in whose interests and through which voice the ACH has been written (Guyver, 2009; Parkes, 2007), to questioning the ways in which the ACH constructs Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives on Australian history (O’Dowd, 2012; Vass, 2012; Williamson & Dalal, 2007), and how teachers engage critically with such concepts (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Hart, Whatman, McLaughlin, & Sharma-Brymer, 2012; Nakata, 2011). In the early stages of the ACH’s release, there was considerable concern about the extent to which the curriculum reflected a hegemonic and homogenising Eurocentric perspective of Surveying the landscape

Australian history. This argument contrasts markedly with the justification of the cross-curricula priority area, as seeking to enable students ‘to develop an understanding of the past and present experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their identity and the continuing value of their culture’ (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2014).

As Clark (2004) and Parkes (2007) argued before the implementation of the ACH, metanarratives that continuously attempt to silence/exclude Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives in Australian history have been a salient feature of curricula for the past three decades. Smith (1980, cited in Henderson, 2009, p. 6) refers to the notion of a locked cupboard of Australian history to explain how the savagery of contact, organised tribal resistances, and productive, as well as destructive, relations between non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal peoples, and Torres Strait Islanders has been omitted from Australian history. Similarly, Phillips (2005, cited in Henderson, 2009, p. 9) discusses how Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives have been, and continue to be, depicted as remnants of a static past in Australian history curricula. [Parkes \(2007\) adds a further dimension to this, arguing that:](#)

[Despite the age of European imperialism being officially over, history as both metanarrative and the narrative technology \[apparatus\] that positions us as peoples in relation to one another lingers \(p. 392\).](#)

It could be argued that notions of nationalist imperialism has continued to manifest in Australian history curricula over the past three decades via shared norms that continue to present Australia’s history in a sanitised manner; one that reflects privileged European positions. [This is observed once again and most prominently in the Year 9 ACH with the key inquiry question of, ‘what was the origin, development, significance and long-term impact of imperialism in this period?’ \(ACARA, 2012\).](#) There are a number of studies (Burgess, 2009; Ditchburn, 2012; Guyver, 2009; Nakata, Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2014; O’Dowd, 2012; Salter, *Surveying the landscape*

2010) that discuss ways in which Eurocentrism occurs through processes of exclusion, silencing, or superficial examination of other possible perspectives of the same history. In particular, Vass (2012) puts forward the argument that whiteness enables the exclusion of 'Indigenous voices by denying the legitimacy and value of non-Western epistemologies and ontologies' (p. 181). This raises questions then about how teachers are positioned to take up sanitised versions of Australian history and/or to challenge them as they design and deliver school-based programs aligned to the ACH, particularly when the ACH signposts throughout the curriculum when links to Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures could be made (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Icon for links to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the discursive impacts of such visual techniques of power/knowledge relations, it is worth noting that in the most recent online version of the ACH (ACARA, 2018b), this specific cross-curricula icon has superseded from the main page. It has been replaced in favour of a general capabilities icon for intercultural understanding (Figure 2), visible only by clicking the hyperlinked elaboration.

Figure 2: Icon for links to Intercultural Understanding

Where literature focuses on ways in which Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives have been positioned as *other* in the curriculum, discussions tends to occur in the context of the 'history wars' (Clark & MacIntyre, 2004). Consequently, the curriculum

constructs the manner in which perspectives other than Eurocentric privileged ones may be discussed. Rose (2007), writing from an Aboriginal standpoint, refers to such sanitised versions of Australian history as *The silent Apartheid*. This type of history as Rose (2007) argues,

Gains sustenance from the relegation of Indigenous knowledge, culture and tradition to the fringe of the curriculum ... it is further nourished by seeing culture and tradition merely as a training outcome or at worse as tree hugging or feel-good activity rather than a competency (p. 2).

To this, Nakata (1997) adds:

[While] cultural difference is a valid and accurate way of giving representation to [relationship between Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islanders, and non-Indigenous Australians], in the process of deploying this representational schema something else that is crucial to understanding [other] positions is submerged (p. 311).

It is clear that processes of othering continue to create and maintain subjectivities that refuse to acknowledge and, in reality, write Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders positions out of history. Binary examinations that position one group as other in discourses of Australian history were dominant during the 1990s. By the mid-2000s however, the degree to which Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives were positioned and taken up to disrupt privileged discourses of Australian history began to emerge (Chiriyankandath, 2007; Clark, 2004; Levin, 2001). It is possible that this was in response to Nakata's (1997) call for increased academic attention to be made to power/knowledge relations and examinations of 'how we are all caught up and in constant tension' (p. 320). Yet, the prevalence of othering processes employed by the ACH, when taken up and shared across Australian education system institutions, depoliticises Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait

Islanders so that they are ‘accepted as other and secondary to all Western positions’ (Nakata, 1997, p. 238).

The ACH instructs teachers to embed Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives in all learning areas, where possible, depending on their relevance to particular domains via the *Cross Curriculum Priority (CCP) Areas* (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, (ACARA), 2018). Though fashioned as a ‘conceptual framework to provide context for learning’ (ACARA, 2018), Maxwell, Lowe, and Salter (2017) argue that in reality the CCPs operate to ‘perpetuate historic racialisation and actively construct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, histories and knowledges as deficit’ (p. 162).

When teachers unquestioningly take up hegemonic Eurocentric perspectives presented in history curricula they ‘produce a cross-cultural relation inside and outside the classroom [which] adds another layer of entrenched Eurocentric superiority’ (Burgess, 2009, p. 3). The long-lasting effects of this creates a ‘cultural paradigm [that] works to silence [Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’] viewpoints of their experiences [and instead constructs understandings of them] in schooling as a subject only theorised in a pre-figured way – as culturally different’ (Nakata, 1997, p. 315).

In their analysis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts tagged in the English, Science, History and Mathematics domains of *The Australian Curriculum Victorian Essential Learning Standards* (AusVELS⁶) (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2012), Lowe and Yunkaporta (2013) argue that there is a significant absence of content that challenges privileged hegemonic agenda of the ACH. They assert that such deficits constrain how teachers and students may explore critically significant moments of intervention and injustice in Australia’s history that continue to impact the lives of Aboriginal peoples and

⁶ AusVels is the curriculum used by all Victorian state schools from Foundation (Prep) to Year 10. It draws on the Australian Curriculum to develop a framework that reflects the priorities and approaches to teaching and learning espoused by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET).

Torres Strait Islanders today (see also Buckskin, 2015; Bunda, 2015; Nakata, 1997). This further maintains the hegemonic lens embedded in the ACH, silences other possible lenses (such as a social justice one), and fails:

To provide students with the learning opportunities to examine past and ongoing conflicts over the right to land, appraise and evaluate the statutory and judicial processes of the state that denied [Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander] sovereign legal rights to Country, or appreciate that our cultural practices are representative of unique epistemologies (Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013, p. 11).

The literature suggests that foundations for critical engagement and analysis of Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives on Australian history is developed over time and is influenced by teachers' acquisition of knowledge (Austin & Hickey, 2011; O'Dowd, 2010). If teachers are not taught to analyse critically whose voices and whose perspectives are reflected in studies relating to the ACH, then privileged Eurocentric perspectives continue to permeate school-based programs through discursive techniques of power/knowledge relations and regimes of truth (Bunda, 2015; Forrest, Elias, & Paradies, 2016; Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013; Parkes, 2007; Perso & Hayward, 2015). By way of example, Harrison and Greenfield (2011) state that:

There is considerable confusion over the use of Aboriginal *perspectives* [original emphasis] and Aboriginal *knowledge*, with the two concepts being used interchangeably [by teachers] to refer to content about Aboriginal people ... quality teaching of Aboriginal perspectives is contingent upon the teacher's conceptualisation of Aboriginal knowledge as that which is always grounded in place and only meaningful in the context in which it is produced (p. 66).

In this manner, the subject position of the teacher is structured by normalised processes of education, yet, raises questions about how Initial teacher Education Programs (IEPs) may adequately prepare them to critically engage and understand hegemonic representations of

Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders presented in the ACH. At the same time, it opens spaces to explore how teachers may engage with and present Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' voices in culturally/racially sensitive and responsive ways if they have not been taught to do this during their IEP and/or guided by the ACH.

The influence of Initial Teacher Education Programs (IEPs) on the teaching of history

The Australian tertiary education sector is where the majority of Australian literature on educating teachers about Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' in history curriculum manifest. Such studies tend to focus on the processes by which Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and non-Indigenous academics encourage pre-service teachers (PSTs) to analyse their own privilege through whiteness theories and/or critical race studies (see Fredericks, 2009; Moore, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2004), and/or immersion-based activities (see Goddard & Gribble, 2006; Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007; Zhao, Meyers, & Meyers, 2009). Ma Rhea and Russell (2012) suggest that best-practice models to educating PSTs occur through developing multi-dimensional knowledge production. This model engages PSTs in both professional technical knowledge and knowledge held by Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as a means of better preparing them for in-service practice (see also [author et al], 2016). Rose and Jones (2012) argue against this approach however, suggesting that teachers need guidance in the form of cultural protocols to develop more culturally/racially appropriate pedagogical skills that engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of Australian history.

Forms of decolonial pedagogy, a method by which teachers may challenge Eurocentric perspectives presented in the ACH, is a common theme throughout the literature (De Lissovoy, 2010; Doxtater, 2004; Nakata et al., 2012). Offering an alternative view, Nakata (1997) argues that teachers 'need to consider the dynamic life worlds and the complex interplay between what is known as history by [Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait
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Islanders] and what [non-Indigenous peoples] know as history’ (p. 32). This approach encourages individuals to ‘resist the normalisation and translation of Indigenous knowledges within Western frameworks’ (Williamson & Dalal, 2007, p. 56). Yet to do so, teachers need to be supported to develop [knowledge, understanding, and skills](#) that enable them to challenge privileged subjectivities, and therefore to step beyond simplistic dualities of culture/race presented in the ACH.

However, a comprehensive review of IEPs by Moreton-Robinson, Kolopenuk, and Robinson (2012) indicates that there is a lack of evidence to suggest that decolonial programs are successful in increasing teachers’ engagement of Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives in school-based history curricula. The literature suggests rather that teachers’ commitment to developing knowledge and understandings of Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives in Australian history is reliant on their individual dedication to personal growth and inclusive pedagogy (Bunda, 2015; Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; McKnight, 2015; Nakata, 2011). McKeich (2009) adds further dimension to this by saying that inclusion of Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives on Australian history is ‘dependent on the commitment of educators to engage with local Indigenous peoples’ (p. 52). Yet, for Rose and Jones (2012), ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture awareness [ought to be considered] merely the trigger and not the end product’ (p. 185) of a career-long commitment to incorporating Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives in school-based programs of the ACH.

Proposed culturally-forward pedagogical practices

The notion of localising Aboriginal peoples’ and Torres Strait Islanders’ perspectives within history curriculum is suggested in the literature as a means of creating meaningful and engaging teaching and learning programs (Haynes, 2009; Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013; Nakata, 1997: 2010; Nakata et al., 2012; Rose & Jones, 2012). The purpose of a localised approach is

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to foreground the diversity of Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' experiences across the continent in order to understand better how Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders 'have been inscribed into [the Australian History story] through epistemological relations of them and us' (Nakata, 1997, p. 38). O'Dowd (2012) argues that teachers resisting notions of inclusivity to localise Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives do so because 'they do not know how to teach Aboriginal studies and have not sought to develop these skills' (p. 100). Nakata (2011) takes this further, claiming that:

Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum should not be equated to the inclusion of Indigenous content ... teachers need to be thinking about when the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is critical to the objectives of learning ... as something that will assist them in their cross-cultural teaching work with Indigenous students (p. 7).

He suggests further that teachers could benefit from developing 'awareness of the small steps that can be taken towards the goal of incorporating Indigenous perspectives' (Nakata, 2011, p. 7) as a means of disrupting the privileged colonial frameworks that shape content in the ACH. Critically examining the 'dynamic life worlds of a complex interplay of knowledge about what is known as history by [Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders] and what [non-Indigenous Australians] know as history' (Nakata, 1997, p. 32) calls into question, and makes visible, constructed subjectivities that inform shared norms of Eurocentrism. While opening avenues for considering how Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islander perspectives may be engaged in school-based Australian History programs, it simultaneously raises questions about how teachers may engage them critically. It opens spaces for examining how teachers may acquire a career-long commitment to developing knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islander's perspectives after they graduate from IEPs, particularly if they are situated within imposed hegemonic agendas that constantly seek to background and attempt to silence those perspectives on Australian history.

Where to from here?

Although there has been, and continues to be, robust discussion on ways in which the ACH is engaged in political and education arenas (Clark, 2004; Gilbert, 2011; Lowe & Yunkaporta, 2013), exploration and discussion of teachers', Aboriginal peoples', and Torres Strait Islanders' responses has been limited. The literature tends to focus on the conditions under which Australian history has been conceptualised to reflect privileged hegemonic Eurocentric perspectives (Ditchburn, 2012; Yates & Collins, 2008), as well as the ways in which students engage with Australian history in general (Clark, 2009). It illuminates dominant ideologies of education that are taken up to position the teacher as a passive conduit for the transfer and acquisition of knowledge to students. Only in recent studies does the literature begin to view teachers as critical participants in discourses of history education. In these discussions, teachers are constructed as change agents who resist actively normalised truths of Australian history in curriculum.

While this review identifies a significant lack of Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' voices, scholarly research written from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander positions is emerging (Foley, 2003; Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Nakata, 2007b). Yet, literature on ways in which teachers engage with the ACH, in particular, Aboriginal peoples' and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives at a primary /secondary school level is limited. Identifying common themes emerging in scholarly discussions concerned with discursive formations of the *Australian Curriculum: History (ACH)* in this review provides a comprehensive foundation upon which to conduct more nuanced explorations of power/knowledge relations that construct and maintain subjectivities in discourses of Australian history. I argue there is a need for illuminating in-service secondary teacher

educators' understandings of the perceptions and challenges associated with teaching Australian history, so that ways in which teachers /schools may engage with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations for more culturally/racially responsive/appropriate school-based programs aligned to the ACH may be identified.

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