THEORY AND RESEARCH ON BULLYING AND RACISM FROM AN ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper offers a brief review of research on the impact of bullying and racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Australia. The overarching emphasis was on the variety of physical, social, mental, and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth, whilst also critiquing the prevailing literature with regard to its inclusion and sensitivity towards the importance of culture and connected values. Within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research setting, although a strong base of research on the impact of racism has emerged, research on the impact of bullying is more recent. In addition, while there may be considerable overlap as to the individual impact of bullying and racism, racism research has identified a wider cultural/identity-threat that bullying research (with a few exceptions) has largely ignored. As a result, there is a need to be sensitive to cultural differences with regard to both the types and effects of racism and bullying, and that efforts to understand and to lessen the prevalence of racism and bullying should be framed within the development of a culturally sensitive and secure framework (Coffin, 2008).

Within the last decade, there has been an increasing research emphasis on the impact of bullying and racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth (Bodkin-Andrews, O'Rourke, Grant, Denson, & Craven, 2010; Coffin, Larson, & Cross, 2010; Priest, Paradies, Stevens, & Bailie, 2010; Priest, Paradies, Stewart, & Luke, 2011; Priest, Paradies, Gunthorpe, Cairney, & Sayers, 2011; Zubrick et al., 2010). Although the national and international research attests to the significant and negative impact such interpersonal stresses may have over the educational engagement and emotional and social well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, very little research has sought to reconcile any similarities or differences in the underlying theoretical and empirical foundations of bullying and racism (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Sullivan, 2005). From an Australian perspective, the implications of such a lack of clarity between these two interpersonal stressors may limit the utility of action-based research seeking to minimise the prevalence and impact of racism and/or bullying on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students. Indeed, currently it is not clear whether successful bullying interventional strategies (e.g., Olweus, & Limber, 2010; Parada, Craven, & Marsh, 2008) can adequately account for the prevalence and impact of racism, or whether strategies to combat racism and its impact (e.g., Paradies, 2005) can reduce the prevalence and experiences of bullying. It is the aim of this paper to review the existing empirical and theoretical conceptualisations of bullying and racism, and critique such research from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational and psychological perspectives. Indeed, although research suggests some overlap between conceptualising racism and bullying as a significant inter-personal stressor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, existing literature on racism suggests, that unlike bullying, the negative impact of racism can occur across multiple levels (e.g., macro racism) or manifestations that may implicate one's group/collective/cultural membership and identification (see also Mellor, 2003; Sanson, et al., 1998; Paradies, 2006

Warnings from the past

Prior to any attempt to draw implications from knowledge and evidence, drawn from non-Aboriginal Australian perspectives, to that of the unique and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, it is critical that researchers be acutely aware of the heightened risk of fallacies of cultural understanding and inaccurate generalisations (Walter, 2010). Undeniably, the history of Western psychological and educational theory, research, and practice has been significantly flawed in its initial attempts to understand the unique experiences and perceptions of Indigenous or First Peoples across many countries (Adair, 2006; Kovach, 2009). Indeed, Western theory has not only been considered biased in its treatment (and dismissal) of diverse Indigenous psychologies and learning practices, but also too forceful in attempting to 'import' epistemological frameworks that fail to fit the very essence of the cultures they attempt to represent (Adair, 2006). Across often cited areas of intelligence, morality, education, physical and mental health, this imbalance between Western and Indigenous knowledges was deeply related to the development of now maligned deficit theorising, where 'difference' was falsely explained by assumptions of biological or cultural deficiencies (Fernando, 2003). Such reasoning is now recognised as one of the most enduring and significant factors contributing to the wide range of inequities many Indigenous nations still endure today (Cooke, Mitrou, Lawrence, Guimond, & Beavon, 2007). As such, it is critical to recognise that complacency with regard to the alleged demise of deficit models and reasoning must continually be treated with caution (Fernando, 2003).

From the perspective of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Ranzijn, McConnochie, and Nolan (2009) list three clear characteristics of deficit reasoning that emerged within the Australian research context: 1) theoretical models were based on the developmental norms of Western cultures; 2) those falling outside the Western norms (e.g., Aboriginal children) were deemed deficient; and 3) resulting interventionist practice was designed to minimise identified differences by bringing 'deficient' children closer to Western white middle-class norms. Such deficit reasoning, arguably of good intent, ultimately resulted in a series of racist policies and practices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including assimilative educational policies and

the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, often referred to as the Stolen Generations (Ranzijn, et al., 2009). Although recent academic research has largely abandoned its push for such policies given the emergence of new culturally integrative and inclusive frameworks, some spectres of deficit orientations remain. For example, in considering the wide range of educational inequities suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (when compared to non-Aboriginal students), and the history of deficit approaches, a report by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA – 2006, p.16) suggests that the inequities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal students have become so accepted that while "the 'deficit' view is now contested, the perception that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are to blame for their poor educational outcomes lingers on." The report calls for a paradigm shift where the explanations of educational failure move away from characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their community, and instead focus on engaging and respecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their culture outside the limitations of Western perspectives (Adair, 2006; Fernando, 2003; Ranzijn, et al., 2009).

It may be argued that both in international and national settings, bullying and racism research can be criticized as being too limited by Western oriented perspectives on theory and empirical research (Coffin, et al., 2010; Essed, 1990; Fernando, 2003; Mellor, 2003). Certainly, until recently Indigenous or First Peoples voices have largely been silent as to understanding the nature of racism and bullying.

Racism

International literature has produced a long line of research exploring the negative impact of discrimination and racism, which has been associated with not only increased levels of socio-economic disadvantage (Feagin & Feagin, 2002; Gee and Ro, 2009; and Hodson et al., 2004), but also a lowered sense of overall quality of life, increased levels of stress, maladaptive coping strategies, lowered sense of individual and collective identity and esteem, heightened physiological ill health, and suicide (Allport, 1954; Brondolo, Rieppi, Kelly & Gerin, 2003; Essed, 1990; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Klornoff, Landrine & Ullman, 1999; Paradies, 2006; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Williams & Mohammed, 2009). From an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective, early research exploring racism was limited by an overemphasis on more macro-orientated social justice and policy contexts (e.g., the nature of assimilation policies, McConnochie, Hollinsworth, & Pettman, 1989), which did little to assess the direct impact of racism on the individual and collective wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In addition, research largely focussed on the attitudes of those who may hold prejudices and discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (e.g., Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Sale, 1999; Jordan, 1984; Pedersen, Griffiths, Consos, Bishop, & Walker, 2000). An early example of such research can be found in the work of Jordan (1984), who identified 17 dimensions as potential descriptors of varying groups of individuals. Of these dimensions, 289 non-Aboriginal high school students were required to judge whether Aboriginal Australians were more positive (e.g., trustworthy) or negative (e.g., untrustworthy) on any one dimension. Of the 17 traits, 13 of them were deemed more appropriate when considered in the negative context by at least 59% of the students. These traits included drinking too much, aggressive, unreliable, and don't keep jobs. Jordan concluded that this was an example of the blatant prejudicial attitudes held against Aboriginal Australians.

Later research began to suggest that more blatant prejudicial attitudes aimed at Aboriginal Australian may be diminishing. That is, in a sample of 223 Perth residents, Pedersen measured blatant or overt racist attitudes (e.g., endorsement of segregation and agreement with strong negative stereotypes such as being lazy or untrustworthy) and more subtle, modern, or covert racist attitudes (e.g., opposition to affirmative action programs and denial of the existence of racism) against Aboriginal Australians. Although overt and covert forms of racism were significantly correlated ($r = .55$), covert racism was significantly more prevalent than blatant racism, especially considering that 58% scored above the midpoint for covert racism, yet only 21% did so for blatant racism. Pedersen and Walker also raise the

point that in an earlier study by Walker (1994), over 50% of the participants scored above the mid-point on the same blatant racism scale. Although Pedersen and Walker suggest caution in comparing the two studies, they argue that such a comparison may suggest that blatant racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is on the decline (see also Augoustinos, Tuffin, & Sale. 1999; Pedersen, Dudgeon, Watt, & Griffiths, 2006; Pedersen, Griffiths, Consos, Bishop, & Walker, 2000).

Although such results are certainly valid within the context of prejudicial attitudes directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it has since been argued that the lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice (namely those targeted by racism) may have resulted in an misrepresentation of not only the nature and prevalence of racism today, but also the detrimental impact racism may have on the livelihood of Aboriginal Australians (Mellor, 2003). For example Mellor (2003), through a series of semi-structured and open-ended interviews with 34 Aboriginal Australians adults, found that a diversity of discriminatory events were experienced, ranging from verbal racism (e.g., name calling, jokes), behavioural racism (e.g., avoidance, assault), overt discrimination (e.g., denial of services, over-application of punishment) and macro-discrimination (e.g., media misinformation, selective views on history). More so, the frequency in which the participants experienced these forms of racism led Mellor to conclude that:

> The argument that there is a cultural norm against racism... may thus be misleading, at least in the Australian context. Not only was it the norm for participants in this study to have experienced racism in their daily lives but much of the racism experienced was one-on-one, blatant, old fashioned racism (p. 483).

The findings of Mellor (2003) were echoed by the quantitative research of Dunn, Forrest, Pe-Pua, Hynes, and Maeder-Han (2009), who, in a survey of over 4000 participants living within Australia, not only found considerable cultural variation in the rate of experiencing varying forms of racism, but also that for some cultural groups, the rate of reporting racists experiences was substantially higher than the rate of prejudicial attitudes being reported by the whole sample. Although only 12% of the *total* sample reported being prejudiced towards other ethnic/cultural groups, over 63% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants reported experiencing racism (thus highlighting the wide discrepancy between those who report racism and those who report prejudicial attitudes).

With research suggesting that the nature of experiencing racism may differ substantially from the nature of racist attitudes possessed by others (Paradies, 2006), it is critical that theory and practice acknowledge the implications of such a discrepancy when assessing the impact of racism (Branscombe & Schmitt, 2002; Essed, 1990). Indeed, a key Australian Psychological Society position paper (Sanson et al., 1998) moved beyond the covert/blatant dichotomy highlighted in how prejudicial attitudes and behaviours have held an unrelenting grip—historically and contemporarily—across the interpersonal structure of Australia's multicultural society. From this, it was argued that especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, racism was complex, malleable, and persistent across time not only in how it was expressed, but also in its insidious effects on those who find themselves, or their cultural groups, targeted by racism. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, they highlighted the unique historical stressors that other minority groups have not endured within Australia, including: colonisation and loss of sovereignty and dispossession from traditional lands to benefit the rest of the population. Additionally, in efforts to right these social injustices and reverse the generational disadvantages emerging from them (e.g., the over-turning of 'terra-nullius'), there has been an emergence of fear, resistance, insecurity, and false beliefs within the non-Aboriginal population (see also Dunn, et al., 2009; Pedersen, Clark, Dudgeon, and Grifiths, 2005). In considering the findings of this review (Sanson, et al., 1998), and those of Mellor (2003), it is not surprising that subsequent research has found that racism does significantly impact upon Australia's Aboriginal population (see Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008), including Aboriginal children and youth (De Plevitz, 2007; Priest, Paradies, Gunthorpe, Cairney, & Sayers, 2011).

In a large scale study on the social and emotional health and wellbeing in Aboriginal children and

youth in Western Australia, Zubrick and colleagues (2005) found perceptions of racism to be significantly associated with increased levels of health risk behaviours such as alcohol consumption, cigarette and marijuana use, in addition to significantly increasing the likelihood of reporting clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties and experiencing suicidal thoughts. Empirical evidence has also found that the cross-generational effects of racism significantly impacts upon Aboriginal children and youth. For example, De Maio, et al. (2005) found that Aboriginal children, brought up by carers who were forcibly removed from their homes as children, were significantly more likely to be at high risk of clinically significant emotional or behavioural difficulties. Priest, Paradies, Stevens, and Bailie (2010) also found that Aboriginal carers who experienced racism were significantly more likely to report illness in their children (aged 7 years or less), independent of varying background variables (i.e., the child's sex, age, time spent in day care, and time spent breast-feeding). Priest, Paradies, Stewart, and Luke (2011) also identified more direct effects of racism on Aboriginal young people within Victoria, where it was found that not only did the majority of participants experience racism, but such experiences were significantly associated with a poorer sense of general and mental health, and increased levels of depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.

Recent research suggests that the impact of racism is not limited to physical and mental health outcomes, but also schooling and career aspirations of Aboriginal students. Both Lester (2000) and Craven and Tucker (2003) found that Aboriginal students are likely to fear and endure difficulties in peer, teacher, and employer relationships due to racism, in addition to having to contend with more subtle indications of covert racism expressed in unfair expectations and stereotypical misconceptions. Such findings support the identification of racism as one of the largest barriers for Aboriginal students attaining their school aspirations and life goals (Howard, 2002; Parente, Craven & Munns, 2003; Schwab, 1999). A series of quantitative findings have also emerged to illuminate the impact of perceived racism on Aboriginal high-school students' educational outcomes. First, Bodkin-Andrews, Seaton, Nelson, Craven, and Yeung (2010) found as Aboriginal students experienced increased levels of racism, their performance in spelling and mathematics tests were significantly hampered over and above any positive effects from higher levels of self-esteem. Bodkin-Andrews, O'Rourke, et al. (2010) also found, after controlling for home educational resources and their confidence in their academic ability, that heightened experiences of racism was associated with lower grades across English, Math, and Science, and increased levels of academic disengagement.

In summary, a series of quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that the impact of racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth is significant, substantive, extends across physical, social, health, educational, and socio-economic outcomes, with detrimental effects that may extend across generations. Clearly, this indicates that racism should not be treated lightly. Since national and international research has clearly shown that racism and stereotypes have differential effects across diverse cultural groups (Bodkin-Andrews, Denson, & Craven, 2011; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), it is critical that care be taken when attempting to fit racism within the framework of more general Western models (e.g., Lazarus, & Folkman, 1984; Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrom, 2001; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009) that guide stress related research (Fernando, 2003).

Bullying

There has been a significant proliferation in national and international research attempting to define and identify the impact of bullying within schools and beyond (Marsh, Nagengast, Morin, Parada, Craven, & Hamilton, 2011; Juvonen & Graham, 2004). Regardless of how bullying may be conceptualised, akin to experiences of racism and discrimination, there is a consensus as to the harmful effects that forms of bullying can have on the physical, mental, and educational well-being of school children and youth (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008; Rigby 2007; Ryan & Smith, 2009). Indeed, the existing literature paints a devastating picture for students who are forced to endure bullying in schools. Research has suggested that experiences of being bullied are associated with higher levels of depression and suicide (Kerlikowske, 2003); anxiety and poorer educational

performance (Ballard, Tucky & Remley, 1999); absenteeism (Nansel et al., 2001; Rigby, 1997) as well as short and long-term impairment of self-perceptions (e.g., self-esteem and multiple dimensions of self-concepts) and interpersonal relations (Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Marsh, Parada, Craven, & Finger, 2004). To add to the impetus of these findings, recent Australian research has suggested that rates of bullying within schools has largely remained consistent, even though there has been increased academic and public media attention focused on bullying and its reduction within Australian schools (Cross, Epstein, Hearn, Slee, Shaw, & Monks, 2011).

Despite the consensus as to the negative impact of bullying on children and youth within the schooling system, there is some controversy as to its definition and how to conceptualise and measure its structure (Juvonen & Graham, 2004; Marsh, et al., 2011). Arguably, the most cited definitions of bullying comes from Olweus (1991), who suggests that this inter-personal stressor consists of repeated negative behaviours over time that result from an imbalance of power relations. Although it has drawn some criticism (Juvonen & Graham, 2004), numerous researchers have adopted this general definition and further expanded upon this by conceptualising bullying orientated behaviours in a three factor framework; namely physical, verbal, and social bullying (Crick, et al., 2001; Marsh, et al., 2004). Indeed, within the Australian context, strong findings have emerged with regard to the psychometric validity of this three factor model of bullying across not only those who are targeted by bullying, but also perpetrators and bystanders of bullying (Marsh et al., 2004; Marsh, et al., 2011).

The issue of bullying is also being addressed within recent Aboriginal Australian research, as a number of findings are emerging identifying how bullying impacts upon Aboriginal Australian students (Coffin, et al., 2010; Zubrick, et al., 2005; Thomson, Burns, & McLoughlin, 2012). Within a large-scale Western Australian research project, Zubrick and colleagues (2005) found that a significant number of Aboriginal youth frequently experienced bullying from their school peers, and such experiences were associated with an increased risk of smoking, marijuana use, and increased levels of anger and sadness. More recent research by Coffin and colleagues (2010) investigated the nature, prevalence and impact of bullying impacting upon Aboriginal children and youth within traditional area of the Yamaji peoples (a region in mid-west Western Australia). Of the 128 children and youth interviewed, all reported that bullying happened within their school, with 40% experiencing or witnessing bullying every day. Partially supporting the non-Aboriginal Australian research findings, these experiences were typified by physical and verbal bullying, although there seemed to be little evidence of social bullying. Interviews with carers and community representatives revealed that the bullying resulted in a sense of fear, lowered academic achievement, higher rates of absenteeism, behaviour problems and an increased risk of suicide for the Aboriginal children victimised.

One of the most distinctive findings to emerge from this research was that the vast majority of bullying were amongst Aboriginal children and youth (not involving non-Aboriginal students), and were often associated with wider family and community hostilities. Coffin and colleagues (2010) interpreted this finding as a possible example of internalised racism where students were being punished for either being too Aboriginal or not Aboriginal enough. Relating this finding to larger family and community issues, the cross-generational impact of bullying and conflict becomes apparent (largely missing from wider Australian and international research), as do the issues of social, economic, and historical disadvantage (including the impacts of colonisation and policies of assimilation). In short, although there may be some observable overlap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal focussed bullying research, there were discernible differences, especially with regard to wider issues outside the schooling environment. As with the theoretical inconsistencies between perpetrator and target-based research on racism impacting upon Aboriginal Australians (Mellor, 2003), it appears there may be a number of important theoretical distinctions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal bullying research.

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Linking Bullying and Racism

As noted above, little research has directly sought to link bullying and racism as interpersonal stressors, although some research and theory has incorporated both phenomena (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Sullivan, 2005). One of the few empirical papers to explore this issue can be found in a recent large-scale study by Larochette, Murphy, and Craig, (2010). Including participants from over 100 Canadian schools, it was found that being a victim of general bullying and racial bullying were only moderately related (r = .30), suggesting relative independence of these two constructs. In addition, when compared to general bullying, the experience of racial bullying was spread widely across nearly all cultural groups identified within the study (African-Canadian, East Asian-Canadian, Native-Canadian and South East Asian-Canadian). One limitation of the study though was little consideration given to the impact of bullying and racism on the students themselves.

Although not in the school context, the potential impact of racially based bullying has been addressed by Fox and Stallworth (2005), who investigated the nature and impact of bullying and racism within a U.S. workplace using a sample of White, Asian, African American and Hispanic/Latino employees. A number of important findings emerged from this study, the first of which being the correlations between the bullying and racism measures, as they differed substantially according to the identity of the participants (Asian r = .76; African American, r = .55; Hispanic/Latino, r = .13; White, r = .22), thus partially supporting the findings of Larochette, et al. (2010). In focussing on the impact of bullying and racism though, differential relations with increased workplace emotional strain and increased counter-productive behaviour were evident. In particular, bullying was associated with higher levels of emotional strain for all participant groups, yet for racism the only significant association with strain was for the African American participants. Bullying was significantly associated with counter-productive workplace behaviour for the African American and Hispanic groups only. Yet for racism, significant associations with counter-productivity were found only for the African-American and White participant groups. In summing up the complexity of these findings, Fox and Stallworth stated that "relations among expectations, perceptions, sensitivities, and experiences of being the target of subtle racial and ethnic incivility need to be disentangled and closely analysed" (pp.453-54). The importance of this conclusion further substantiates the position of this research that suggests that racism (and bullying) must be carefully understood with regard to its differential effects across diverse cultural groups (Bodkin-Andrews, Denson, & Craven, 2011; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Brondolo et al., 2011).

To further complicate this issue, some researchers have begun to embrace the label 'racist bullying' (e.g., Sullivan, 2005), despite some evidence suggesting that the two constructs (namely bullying and racism) may be somewhat distinct with regard to frequency (Coffin, et al., 2010; Zubrick et al., 2005) and impact (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). The implications of such an approach could give rise to not only inaccurate claims stemming from empirical studies using this operationalisation, but may confuse the foundations of action based research that must remain sensitive to cultural variation. For example, Sullivan (2005) claimed that research on "racist bullying is relatively sparse and our understanding of this form of bullying is limited" (p. 120). The two research articles Sullivan subsequently cited on racist bullying were centred on racist-name calling, which are the most common form of interpersonal racism, one of the most researched forms of racism to date (e.g., Allport, 1954; Essed, 1990; Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Mellor, 2003; Paradies & Cunningham, 2009; Sanson, et al., 1998).

To Sullivan's (2005) credit, the review identifies a clear and critical distinction in that racism can occur across multiple levels or manifestations; that it can be internalised, interpersonal, institutional and macro orientated; and that it also implicates one's group/collective/cultural membership and identification (see also Mellor, 2003; Sanson, et al., 1998; Paradies, 2006). In contrast, most conceptualisations of bullying occur at the individual level (Marsh et al., 2011), with little sensitivity to notions of cultural identity, broader community issues, socio-economic and historical disadvantage or oppression (Cross, et al., 2010; Ranzijn, et al., 2009).

Identity, Racism and Bullying

To date, what is clear is that within bullying and racism research, little attempt has been made to consolidate theory and research behind these two significant interpersonal stressors. That bullying and racism can at times be closely associated (Fox & Stallworth, 2005; Sullivan, 2005) raises the possibility that very distinct foundations for interventional research may be crossed (Paradies, et al., 2008). As suggested by Sullivan (2005) though, considerable care should be taken in recognising how racism may be unique from bullying, particularly across varying cultural (minority and majority) groups. More specifically, attention should be focused on the potential wider impact of racism, where individual harm may emerge from broader forms of racism (e.g., macro racism), in addition to tapping long standing negative stereotypes and stigma (identity threat) that may vary across differing cultures.

One theoretical model that clearly articulates the variation in wider identity threat is that of the Rejection/Identification of Discrimination (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), in which a key feature of this model is the recognition of the position of one's group within the wider societal setting, and how such group positioning may moderate the degree of harm discrimination may cause. Schmitt and Branscombe, in reviewing the evidence for this theory, highlight that in considering the implications of varying group positioning (e.g., minority/majority, advantaged/disadvantaged), one must recognise how levels of *internalisation*, *stability*, and *controllability* may interact to either buffer or exacerbate the impact of discriminatory experiences.

For *internalisation,* in considering whether a discriminatory event may be externalised (it is the fault of the racist/bully) or internalised (it is indicative of the self), one must recognise that discrimination may be an attack on not only the individual, but also their shared group identity. The multifaceted nature of discrimination for some groups may then increase the likelihood of discrimination becoming internalised, and thus potentially being more harmful (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). In considering *stability,* the frequency in which discrimination may target not only the individual, but also the group in which they identify with must also be considered. The implication here is that for groups frequently targeted by discrimination, such negative experiences will be stable over time (as opposed to being a localised, rarer event), and potentially more draining and harmful. Finally, *controllability* refers specifically to the power of a particular group within the wider social structure. Schmitt and Branscombe argue that if discrimination emanates from a representative of a more powerful or privileged group, a disadvantaged group member may have a lower sense of control of the situation than if the roles were reversed.

The positioning of one's group identification could potentially play a significant role in the degree to which not only is racism, bullying, and racist bullying experienced, but also the level of impact these interpersonal stressors may have. There is also evidence that the strength of one's ethnic/racial identity has substantial but complex effects on the degree of experienced racism and the extent of its impacts on health and wellbeing (Brondolo et al., 2009). In short, Schmitt and Branscombe (2002, p. 174) clearly argued that:

> For disadvantaged groups, attributions to prejudice will be harmful, because they implicate an aspect of the self that can result in uncontrollable negative treatment across a wide variety of situations. In privileged groups, prejudicial treatment is attributed to an aspect of the self that only infrequently results in negative outcomes... attributions to prejudice... have very different consequences for disadvantaged and privileged groups.

Conclusion

Although this paper has attempted to highlight the detrimental impacts of racism and bullying for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the overarching emphasis was to highlight the need to look beyond interpersonal interactions to understand the implications associated with wider group or cultural identification, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indeed, the risk of

framing our understanding of bullying and racism solely in a more individualistic, Western framework may again see the rise of deficit reasoning (Ranzijn, et al., 2009), or at the very least see a repeat of possible misconceptions that emerged within earlier racism based literature (e.g., the inadequacy of the cover/blatant racism distinction to represent the actual lived experiences of Aboriginal Australians – Mellor, 2003). This is not to state that the strong anti-bullying advancements made recently within the Australian research setting should be ignored (Craven, et al., 2008; Paradies, et al., 2008), but rather an uncritical acceptance of such models may be inadequate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students unless the uniqueness and vast diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are more carefully considered (Coffin, 2008). Indeed as argued by Coffin, et al., (2010), "bullying involving Aboriginal children and youth cannot be effectively tackled by mainstream programs that fail to understand and engage with their cultural, familial and socio-economic realities" (p. 78).

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