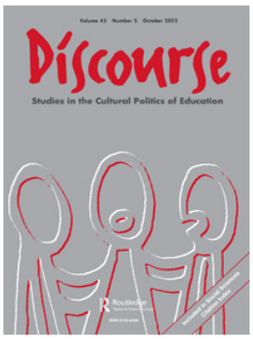

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Family stories as resources for a decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

Engagement with family stories, religious and community practices can change a teacher's conception of thought. We propose *teaching as thinking-with the world* and *teaching as thinking-with others*. These terms draw on the philosophy of new materialist thinkers in expressing the ontological impacts of context and materiality. We explore the relationship between teaching and thinking as a distributed and engaged practice by investigating family stories as an avenue for teachers to pedagogically engage with student's lived experiences. We work with students as valued contributors to the learning environment, irrespective of academic achievements. We argue that engaging with family and faith stories as constitutional of thinking about, and doing, pedagogy can challenge the persistent racism. We are interested in experiential ways of knowing and modes of paying attention to the social and emotional learning that takes place as part of a pedagogic culture of care.

KEYWORDS

Decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy; social and emotional learning; intercultural education; new materialism

Introduction

A family unit itself is a body; families act as bodies in communities, shape school communities and impact what it means to teach. Families have their own culture, a microcosmos of practices and habits, ways of being with each other and relating to each other, often based on shared language, experiences, habits, history, religion, ways of doing and being that create a sense of familiarity and belonging. Outside the family, however, children's lived experiences and histories are not always recognised or acknowledged and may be seen as a deficit (Alvarez, 2020; Zipin, 2009). This may be the case for children from migrant backgrounds as well as those from minority ethnic, religious, or cultural groups.

Children can be made to feel that they need to suppress parts of their identity in the classroom environment (Hilaski, 2020; Zipin, 2009). Contrary to this position, we argue that embracing family stories offers a way of reframing teaching that shifts the relationship between teaching and thinking and can help us to conceptualise teaching for diverse school communities. Research shows that schools are becoming more diverse in many countries (de los Ríos, López, & Morrell, 2015; Jenlink & Townes, 2009; Suni & Latomaa, 2012), and the value of reflecting cultural diversity in the curriculum is increasingly acknowledged (de los Ríos et al., 2015; Hilaski, 2020; Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2005). In Australia, where both authors are currently based, the importance of diversity and,

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in particular, the importance of cultural diversity is acknowledged in the 'Melbourne declaration', the document outlining educational goals for Victorian students (Morrison, Rigney, Hattam, & Diplock, 2019; Salter & Maxwell, 2018). However, implementing the ideas that family knowledge, embodied knowledges and cultural diversity really matter often clashes with implicit aims of the educational system. For example, while Salter and Maxwell acknowledge the inclusion of 'Intercultural Understanding' as a general part of the educational curriculum in Australia, they note that the careful management of cultural diversity and the foregrounding of social cohesion limit the ways diversity can be discussed in the classroom (Salter & Maxwell, 2018, p. 26). In the meantime, many students from minority or migrant backgrounds continue to experience racism, racial discrimination or stereotyping (Mansouri & Trembath, 2005). In addition, the often predominant focus on academic achievement in specific fields means that the capabilities of students from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds may be overlooked (Flynn, Hoy, Lea, & García, 2021; Giampapa, 2010). This is also true for other, more embodied or experiential knowledges, many of which are also shaped by the children's lived experiences (see, e.g. Engelland, 2014; Osborne, Anderson, & Robson, 2020).

A culturally responsive pedagogy that acknowledges families' unique experiences of diversity, of belonging to a minority cultural group, holding different religious beliefs, is more than a way to acknowledge that people speak different languages or have different skin colours. Such an approach also foregrounds the fact that people may have experienced difficult and even traumatic events that have also contributed to who they are (Cole, 2013), and are thus important for the people around them to know about. These experiences can unveil uncomfortable yet salient truths about the state of cultural cohesion and social justice in society and in the educational system (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Mueller, 2013; Salter & Maxwell, 2018). They may, for example, include experiences of racism, of being marginalised, of feeling excluded or not fitting in. Importantly though, culturally responsive pedagogies based on children's family stories, we argue, can reveal strengths and abilities and foreground lived, embodied and affective experiences. Engagement with these stories and the relationships that children have with their families constitutes the beginning materiality of what it means to teach a child. As such, the act of teaching needs to be rethought in relation to children's lived experiences and their family dynamics and cultures.

At the same time as we argue in favour of engaging with student's family stories in the classroom, our research and our data also complicate the role of family stories in the educational environment because they are not an easy or convenient way of relating to students from diverse or minority backgrounds. In fact, they can be mis-used as a convenient shortcut to avoid meaningful but time-consuming or complicated engagements with diversity, as we will show. They can thus become impediments to children's efforts to shape their own often fluid and sometimes fragile identities. Indeed, research across the last two decades has shown that culturally responsive pedagogies are no panacea, in particular, if they are implemented in shallow or superficial ways (see Sleeter, 2011). Family stories can reveal vulnerabilities and trauma, and care must be taken not to expose and victimise children. Partly for this reason, family stories should be scaffolded by a strength-based approach that frames cultural and linguistic diversity as an advantage rather than a deficit. We tap into decolonial theory (Bignall & Rigney, 2019; Vergès, 2021) to show how family stories can be employed to speak back to the colonial politics of curriculum knowledge. We also briefly

discuss multiliteracies theory (Burke & Hardware, 2015; Taylor, Bernhard, Garg, & Cummins, 2008) and the importance of valuing different kinds of literacy. We pay attention to the experiential and embodied knowledge that is inherent in family stories, and the relational aspect that is central to teaching, the getting-to-know-each-other, the becoming and entanglements that shape educational experiences.

Our paper aligns with others in this special issue that are, as Sharon Todd has put it, 'focused on reclaiming teaching beyond a notion of instruction' (Todd, 2021, p. 2) and are instead invested in working towards more relational, embodied pedagogies (Rousell & Chan, 2021; Säfström, 2021; Todd, 2021). We argue against what Säfström refers to as the aggression inherent in the increasingly neoliberal ideology in educational settings (Säfström, 2021), that emerges in the focus on narrow academic achievement, in the standardisation of diverse knowledges, including embodied knowledges, and pedagogic practices (Atkinson, 2021), but also, as we will see, in the persistent racism in the classroom environment. We look for practices that embrace interdependence and diversity as well as connections to other human and non-human, post-human or more-than-human beings (Kouppanou, 2022). These ideas call for an overturning of an educational system that is too compromised for reform, or at the very least, incremental changes based on practical and relatable methods that can be implemented by teachers and school staff concerned with social justice and equity (Hickey-Moody, Horn, Willcox, & Florence, 2021). With our discussion of family stories and with our use of stories from our fieldwork we provide examples of thinking-with the world and teaching as thinking-with others.

Methodology and methods

This paper draws from data collected during the 'Interfaith childhoods' project (2016–2021). The project employs a feminist creative ethnographic method. The overarching orientation is a decolonising perspective on religion, knowledge and schooling which alerts readers and researchers to the fact that 'capitalism inevitably creates invisible work and disposable lives' (Vergès, 2021, p. 2). This disposability is produced in relation to race, class, religion and knowledge. In an attempt to refuse practices of invisibilisation, our research combines multi-sited ethnography with arts-based methods for young research participants. As part of a creative ethnographic approach, arts-based methods are an excellent way for children and young people to communicate complex information. Life experiences are often hard to express in words and to translate across languages, but can be communicated through artwork in visceral and engaging ways. In this article, we examine qualitative data only, while the extensive quantitative data is considered elsewhere (Hickey-Moody, Horn, & Willcox, in press).

In our multi-sited ethnographic work, we look for everyday stories and experiences of belonging, faith attachment and 'what really matters'. These experiences are often expressed through images, words, memory, allegory, anecdotes and collaborative exchanges. Our approach to research and to what is popularly termed 'data collection' is concerned with making space to recognise subjugated, embodied and experiential knowledges. We want to make space to

> de-nationalize and decolonize the narrative of white, bourgeois feminism without obscuring internationalist, anti-racist feminist networks. We must be attentive to policies of cultural

> appropriation and be wary of powerful institutions' attraction to 'diversity'. We should not underestimate the speed with which capital is able to absorb ideas and turn them into empty slogans. Why wouldn't capital be able to incorporate the idea of decolonization or decoloniality? Capital is a colonizer; the colony is consubstantial with it. (Vergès, 2021, p. 15)

To become decolonial teachers we need to re-think teaching in relation to capitalism. We need to re-think curriculum knowledges and discourses in relation to capitalism (Säfström, 2021). We need to adopt an anti-capitalist approach that brings invisibilised and feminised knowledges from the home into our institutionalised practices (Revelles-Benavente & González, 2017). Making art with culturally and linguistically diverse children and talking to their parents is an everyday decolonising (Menon, Thapar-Björkert, & Tlostanova, 2021; Vergès, 2021) approach to a feminist, new materialist methodology (Coleman, Page, & Palmer, 2019) concerned with the agency of experience, places, matter and things. We want to bring private or family, unofficial folk knowledges into school spaces of legitimate knowledge. Our approach acknowledges the centrality and importance of vernacular culture (Fiske, 1989) and responds to the agency of matter and political landscapes that shape global flows of faith and local communities (see Harris & de Bruin, 2017). As a method, arts based or creative ethnography recognises that meaning and communication are often non-verbal and are constituted in the vital present in ways that are shaped by complex political, social and cultural histories (Hickey-Moody, 2019, 2013, 2011). The methods we have developed to de-centre dominant and often explicitly colonial stories, physically and materially make space for affective communication through emphasising the voices that emerge from migrant communities. Materialist methods span a range of media and employ various making practices. These methods articulate the fact that attachments and orientations are often experienced and performed unconsciously. Such methods may be best understood affectively: through working with the material and the unconscious.

Across 13 ethnographic sites, with over 500 research participants, research material was collected through arts-based activities and qualitative data collection: interviews and focus group discussions in schools and faith-based institutions in Australia and in the UK. Child participants were engaged in arts workshops that facilitated their exploration of ideas of 'what really matters'. Workshops also provide an opportunity for children to express themselves visually through pictures of emotions, self-portraits and other artistic projects (Hickey-Moody et al., 2021). The children's parents were invited to participate in focus group discussions where they exchanged stories of their experience of living in multicultural and super-diverse (Vertovec, 2007) communities. Folk knowledges such as children's art, experiences and family stories are resources teachers can be employed in questioning the colonial constructions and reproductions of legitimate knowledge, or visible, institutionalised knowledges. We invite you to ask: Is the role of the teacher to produce workers for capitalism? Or to recognise the embodied, cultural, religious and familial knowledges that students bring and to appreciate this expertise?

Rethinking teachable knowledges

Across much of the world, schools are becoming increasingly multicultural, composed of students from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (de los Ríos et al., 2015; Jenlink & Townes, 2009; Suni & Latomaa, 2012). Often either students or their parents have been

born overseas, which means that they need to negotiate complex personal and family experiences including migration and sometimes violence or war (Cole, 2013; Hickey-Moody & Willcox, 2019). Some students from migrant backgrounds are able to use academic success as a means of resistance (Ramos, 2021) but others face additional barriers related to growing up with non-dominant languages or with lingering trauma (Picton & Banfield, 2020). The perceptions of teachers, school staff and others in the educational environment also count. For example, research has shown that Black, non-white students and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may perform below the academic average but are also subject to harsher punishments and are perceived as more disruptive (Blitz, Anderson, & Saastamoinen, 2016). The diverse knowledges that such students may hold do not register in the academic benchmarks of institutionalised systems that rely on the subjugation and the invisibilisation of numerous forms of knowledge. Disadvantage and trauma are further reinforced if students have experienced some form of violence (Blitz et al., 2016) and are exposed to intersecting disadvantages based on their negative experiences at home and in their educational environment.

Working against the dominant knowledge hierarchy, decolonial culturally responsive curricula focus on student's individual voices and lived experiences (Villanueva, 2013) and tap into different kinds of knowledge as a means of making classrooms more inclusive (Kimanen, Alisaari, & Kallioniemi, 2019). Developed by Ladson-Billings in 1995, the term 'culturally responsive pedagogy' refers to a 'dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture' (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 467). Ladson-Billings built on the work of Cazden and Leggett (1981) and Erickson and Mohatt (1982) in arguing that a useful –

> step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. I term this pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy. (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 469)

This approach has also been termed an 'equity pedagogy' (McGee Banks & Banks, 1995). This concept is particularly powerful when combined with a strength-based approach that positions students as capable and that focuses on relationships, collaboration and respect (Berryman, Lawrence, & Lamont, 2018; Blitz et al., 2016) and a decolonial politic that employs family and folk knowledges 'to contribute to the ongoing task of intellectual decolonisation in postcolonial contexts' (Bignall & Rigney, 2019, p. 160).

Sleeter (2011) draws our attention to the myriad of ways culturally responsive pedagogies have already been implemented, and notes some of the shortcomings associated with them. Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, and Martin (2017) develop culturally responsive pedagogy as a technology of decolonisation and this is the ethic which we work to engage. A decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy not only foregrounds students' social and cultural backgrounds, but criticises the dominant knowledges that shape mainstream educational learning contexts. For migrant students in particular, language is an important issue that needs to be included in pedagogical approaches. Students from different language backgrounds can feel embarrassed about their first language and about their ethnic culture and identity at school if they feel like they do not fit in with the predominant school culture (Giampapa, 2010; Picton & Banfield, 2020). This can give children the impression

that they need to 'sacrifice their cultural identity and beliefs to adapt to those of the school' (Hilaski, 2020, p. 358). In some instances, a second language can, in fact, be seen as an obstacle to full literacy (Flynn et al., 2021). In addition, not all societies or cultures emphasise the same kinds of literacies and, with the increasing use of digital technologies, literacies are continually changing (Burke & Hardware, 2015). An emphasis on valuing lived and experiential materiality and community ontology can centre the student, and celebrate changing literacy practices.

While accommodations for super-diverse students have been included in curricula around the world, often in the form of multiliteracies theory (Masny & Waterhouse, 2011), this is not always done comprehensively or in ways that offer the space, time or resources to make a meaningful difference to students or teachers. For example, it may be up to individual teachers to embed their student's multiliteracies into classroom activities (Burke & Hardware, 2015; Giampapa, 2010). Teachers are not always well equipped to account for student's complex individual needs because they may be time-poor with large classes and limited resources. They may also not feel confident in dealing with student's complex, painful or traumatic experiences. Ladson-Billings points out that, in her study, the most successful teachers were those who could build their own culturally responsive pedagogies on top of the existing curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995a), and that some teachers may require additional support. The aim of developing decolonial culturally responsive pedagogies within schools needs to be clearly presented as a critique of dominant knowledges, a replacement of these knowledges with some recognition of folk or community knowledge and developing ways to better understand and support students with a view to changing knowledge economies and creating an inclusive school climate (Mayes, Wolfe, & Higham, 2020).

In addition, even where teachers have found ways of successfully engaging with student's individual backgrounds and experiences, navigating the school environment and its bureaucratic requirements can be a challenge for students and their families (Bernhard, 2010; Crozier & Davies, 2007). Schools do not always have systems in place to involve parents from different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Crozier & Davies, 2007). Teacher-parent meetings, interactions with other parents, reports, or other communications with school can be fraught, and negotiating other people's preconceptions can be alienating and emotionally challenging, as many of the stories told by parents in our focus groups illustrate. In addition, parents may themselves have had negative experiences related to their language or culture (Giampapa, 2010). This is in spite of the fact that parents and families' involvement can benefit children's educational experience (Goodman & Hooks, 2016).

Thinking through decolonial culturally responsive pedagogies can be a useful way of re-conceiving inclusive classroom environments, in particular for students from migrant and ethnic minority families. Engaging with student's embodied knowledges and family backgrounds is also a useful method examining contemporary racism and enabling students to develop understandings of the lived experience of their peers (Mueller, 2013), particularly in relation to race and persisting racial inequalities and systemic disadvantage (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Students who belong to visible minorities experience acts of racism and marginalisation that may be totally unfamiliar to others, and as such, these others may find it difficult to relate. Sharing narratives about such lived experiences may contribute to a greater awareness of the problems people from migrant or minority ethinc

backgrounds face, and this understanding can inform critiques of dominant knowledge systems in schooling.

Our experiences

One of our main arguments in this paper is that migrant and refugee family narratives can inform a decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy. Family narratives can help to destabilise stereotypical assumptions about minority groups through accessible and relatable narratives, they foster more inclusive classroom environments and provide resources for rethinking the role of being a teacher on a case by case basis. In illustrating this argument, we draw from data from our focus group discussions where participants spoke about their personal cultural, ethnic and religious identities and discussed the roles that religion and ethnicity have played in different stages of their lives. The affective and embodied experiences vividly come to the fore in these narratives, reinforcing the complexity of people's religious and cultural affiliations in ways that interrupt stereotypical representations of religion or ethnicity. Our participants acknowledged this complexity in our focus groups, as well as their own complex trajectories across countries and continents, which required them to continuously remake their lives and identities:

> Farha: … . a lot of the time our beliefs and our religion come down through intergenerational learning. And so we're starting to try and think about some of the ways we become who we are and how that is made and remade. I've been wondering about intergenerational experiences and beliefs and faiths and how we come to believe what we believe.

This is how Farha, one of our participants from the UK, acknowledges the importance of intergenerational learning in her family and in her body, suggesting how our bodies inherit the experiences, the beliefs and the orientations of those who have come before us. Farha recognises intergenerational learning as a multi-faceted and embodied experience, which illustrates our argument about family stories and embodied intergenerational knowledges and their role in culturally responsive pedagogies as ways to enable teachers to engage with cultural and religious difference (Giampapa, 2010). If teachers work to understand questions of race, discrimination and inclusion (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011) and family histories surrounding these, they are more likely to foreground children's unique strengths and abilities (Alvarez, 2020).

Salwa

Salwa was one of the mothers who took part in our focus group discussions in Adelaide. She was one of many participants whose narratives reflect how second-generation migrants experience the culture they inherit through their family background and through their immersion within the communities in which they come to grow up and live (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Salwa was of Palestinian background and born in Australia, and her experience as a second-generation migrant carried through her narrative and affected her sense of belonging:

> Salwa: My name is Salwa. I'm going to say I'm Palestinian Australian. Often I say I'm Australian Palestinian, because I'm in a constant battle of proving myself here, because I was born in

> Australia but to everyone else it doesn't matter that I was born in Australia. Only the other day, the doctor asked 'Where are you from, because you don't have an accent'. And I'm like ''Yes. Because I was born here.' So yes, I'm Palestinian Australian.

Salwa's story of growing up in Australia suggests a profound feeling of alienation that is not the result of her own lack of a sense of belonging but caused by the assumptions of others around her (Mansouri & Trembath, 2005). Her reference to the 'constant battle of proving myself' hints at her efforts to prove the right to belong in the face of other people's assumptions. Her narrative also shows how religion became an important part of her identity even though her family did not see it as an important aspect of their heritage:

> Salwa: I grew up in a not very religious family at all, to the point that my brothers don't even know how to pray. My parents actually didn't start practising their religion until I started showing interest in mine, and I think part of the reason I showed an interest in mine was because I went to a Catholic school and I knew I was different, and I wanted to know why I was different. And so I constantly questioned it to the point that my parents sent me to Sunday school, because even they didn't have the answers I was asking for.

For a Muslim girl to attend a Catholic school would have been confronting, in particular as Salwa felt that she lacked knowledge about her own religion, and as Salwa suggests, it made her feel uprooted from her religious and cultural heritage. Her narrative also points to her struggle with her own sense of being different. For her, this was particularly difficult because people around her did not acknowledge her ethnic or cultural identity:

> Salwa: It was very hard for me because I'm very blonde and I'm very white and I've got green eyes and so everyone wouldn't understand how I was Arab and I was Muslim. I'd go, you know, 'I'm Muslim' or 'I'm Arab', and I really did get 'No, you're not'.

These experiences suggest how many children have to leave their ethnic or linguistic identities at the school gate (Hilaski, 2020). This was in spite of the fact that Salwa's teachers at school acknowledged her religious background and attempted to include it in the classroom environment, but did so in a way that contributed to her feelings of disconnect from her cultural and religious heritage:

> Salwa: In year 2 and year 3 and year 4 I was expected to give the Ramadan lecture during religion class. I was expected to give the intro to Islam, at nine years old, and I think one of the reasons I was asking my parents all these questions was because I was being asked it at school, because the teacher knew I was different. And you know, what better way to hear [about the] Five Pillars of Islam than from a real-life Muslim. I had never prayed a day in my life when I was nine [but] I really struggled with my identity and proving myself growing up.

According to Salwa, her lack of knowledge about Islam and her own feeling of being different resulted in her increased interest in Islam as part of her identity. Even though her account suggests that her teachers at the Catholic school were trying to be inclusive and engage with her Muslim identity, Salwa felt singled out and put on the spot.

This narrative illustrates how a decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy is not an easy way to 'tick off' fraught topics in the curriculum but requires student-teacher dialogue and familiarity with student's individual life stories, as well as working to transform colonial ecologies (Bignall & Rigney, 2019; Cavanagh, Macfarlane, Glynn, & Macfarlane, 2012).

There are opportunities here to rethink what it means to teach. What does it mean to teach a Muslim student in a Catholic school? Surely, the pedagogical labour called for in this situation must extend beyond asking her to teach a class about Islam; instead, there are clear opportunities for teachers to engage with personal experience as a starting point to examine embodied and affective ways of being religious and to create spaces where students can safely discuss the impact of religious identity on their everyday experience.

Other than highlighting the complexities of culturally responsive pedagogy, Salwa's story also points to the labour involved in asserting individual cultural or religious identity for second-generation migrants, because their ideas about religious identity may clash with those of their families or the people in the communities in which they have established their lives. As religion became more important in Salwa's life, she wanted to learn more about it, even though this brought her parents' anxieties related to living as part of a visible ethnic and religious minority to the fore:

> Salwa: I wanted to wear a headscarf from when I was 16, but my parents were really against it. They were scared I was going to be discriminated against and, you know, I wouldn't find a job or I wouldn't even find a partner. That's how scared they were. And then I got to the age of 22 and I was in my second to last year of Uni and I was like 'I don't care anymore. I'm going to wear a headscarf', because it was really, really important to me to show my religion and to prove myself. I was sick of being asked why I couldn't go on pub crawl. So yeah, I was like 'Sorry, mum and dad', and put on the headscarf.

Salwa's own language and her account of 'proving herself' and her identity as a Muslim woman point to the work that is invested in forming a cultural identity reflective of the complexity of an individual in particular for second-generation migrants (Taylor et al., 2008). At the same time, Salwa's decision to wear a headscarf suggests a contestation of her cultural heritage and religion in spite of the risk of being racially harassed or discriminated against:

> Salwa: I think [my parents] always have a fear. My mum didn't start wearing a headscarf until she was in her 50s. They own a fish and chip shop in an area that was a housing trust area. So they get racist comments all the time. Do you know what I mean? To the point where we're telling one customer that we wanted to close our shop and [the customer's] response was to throw a hotdog at us and tell us where to go.

Salwa's recollections of being assaulted and harassed are part of the context in which her own way of asserting her Muslim identity by wearing a headscarf is a courageous act of defiance.

Racist attacks of different kinds were familiar to many of our participants from migrant backgrounds. While White Australians may not generally encounter this kind of discrimination, it is often familiar to those who belong to visible minorities and, in particular, women wearing the headscarf (Colic-Peisker, Mikola, & Dekker, 2019; Mansouri, 2012). Salwa also recounts other memories of racism against her family and in particular one instance that occurred at her brothers' school:

> Salwa: My brothers are very visibly Arab and they grew up in a post 9/11 era where their faces were being photoshopped on Osama Bin Laden's body and posted all over the school. So there was very much a reason for [my parent's] fear. Like there were racist comments all the time. So for me, [even though] I was quite oblivious to it because I'm the one really

> white, blonde person in my family whereas the rest of my brothers are very obviously Arab, and with Muhammad and Jamal as names, you can't really get away from it.

These narratives point to the important work teachers and schools need to do in order to educate their students about different forms of racism (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Salwa's example shows that the school environment can be a place where these struggles play out in particularly complex ways. Identity changes reflecting religion can reinforce a sense of disconnection from the dominant secular community and increase insecurity about children and young people's ethnic, cultural and religious identities.

Our discussion of Salwa's story here serves to underline how each family history provides a different context to the way a child experiences their cultural and religious affiliations and the lack of space in school for these experiences. These stories situate each child within their lived experience of culture and religion and foreground it over problematic and stereotypical assumptions (Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007). Such narratives need to be a starting point for thinking about pedagogical encounters and what it means to teach.

Pedagogy as a way of challenging racism at school

In the section above, we have argued that personal stories of culture and religion are implicated in the identity formation of second-generation migrants. These stories suggest that identities can be shaped by different experiences – of culture and religion, but also racism and marginalisation. In this section, we will discuss some of the parent's experiences in the educational system to illustrate how children from visible minorities can be disadvantaged if teachers have low levels of awareness of how to deal with cultural and linguistic diversity. Our data shows that migrant parents do not always feel accepted or understood by their children's teachers, even though it may be the teachers who perceive the parents as 'hard to reach' (Crozier & Davies, 2007). In such contexts, the act of teaching needs to be rethought in order to include the work of challenging racism and the reproduction of racist knowledge structures.

Many of the parents in our focus groups did not experience school as a place where their children were supported and accepted. One participant, Huda, recounted how her son, who was born in Australia, was discouraged by his teachers and in particular, the English language teacher, but also how the teachers seemed prejudiced towards her and her husband:

> Huda: At school, my son, his English teacher, when he first went to high school, because she [thought that] he can't speak English. He was born here, all right. She treated him like he can't speak English. She always put him down. She always said to him 'You'll never get an A in English in your whole life'. And when we went to the parent/teacher meeting, she totally ignored me. It's like I'm not there and she just spoke to my husband … like [it happens] all the time, but why do I have to, you know [deal with this]? Why? And another teacher saw him [when] he was bouncing the ball. He's like 'Stop it, you'll never be good at it'.

It is hard to imagine what could have prompted these comments and, indeed, to understand the context in which they could have emerged, but Huda's sense of her son's capacities not being acknowledged or fostered by his teachers is certainly palpable. This narrative illustrates a fundamental disconnection between teachers and migrant families, and it also shows how some teachers may have preconceived ideas

about migrant families from non-English speaking backgrounds (Crozier & Davies, 2007). This may be especially the case where children have multiple literacies (Flynn et al., 2021).

Huda also felt that the school had a limited understanding of the family's experience as Muslims and as religious minorities which, to her, became evident in the lack of empathy she experienced after the Christchurch Mosque shooting in 2019, which cost the lives of 51 people, and a further 40 people injured.

> Huda: And even after [the] Christchurch [attack], no one and even the school itself, there are some Muslims kids in the school, no one mentioned anything about it. No one came to Muslim kids and said 'Are you okay, guys?' … After Christchurch no one came to the Muslim kids and asked them if they need help.

Like the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 9/11/2001, the Christchurch massacre represented a rupture in people's experience of being a Muslim in Australia. Many felt more excluded than they had prior to the attack, and some experienced increased threats and racism. As one participant told us in a focus group:

> Hamidah: I remember like after the New Zealand incident [the Christchurch attack] my son was on the bus in the morning and he said 'Mum, two guys rode the bus after my stop and I was sitting in the front and they said [when] they went past the mosque, one of the guys said to the other: 'Ah, we should just slay them all'. [My son is] 16!

Family stories offer a significant resource for their school teachers to think about surviving this kind of public violence. More than this, after being often forced to relocate from one country to another (as was the experience of Salwa's parents, who fled the war in Palestine), and then facing discrimination again in one's new country, the family home or close community is often the only safe place amidst dangerous alternatives (Mansouri & Trembath, 2005). Hamidah and Huda' stories explain the nurturing role that the family has to play in sustaining life under threat for being Muslim or even just looking like a Muslim, and with these strategies for sustenance comes layers of multiliteracies about religion, history, geography, place belonging and more. In our work with the Interfaith Childhoods project, we try to understand the literacies and values of the home. We do this through focus group discussions with parents, and then bring these approaches into our work with children where possible. This, of course, is not always possible and is also a very resource-intensive way of working with children; however, it offers useful insights into children's worldviews and the values that shape their literacy practices. Parents' stories and family engagement provide key resources for teachers to develop strategies to challenge racism at school. Such pedagogical challenges will need to be situation specific, and will be part of the broader project of teachers questioning the ontological relationship between thinking and teaching. Can engaging with students' families and family histories be a form of collective thinking? Perhaps such collective thinking can re-frame what it might mean to teach.

Speaking back to racism and capitalism

Many participants in our focus groups had experienced racism, experiences which we see as direct extensions of capitalism. Many also thought about such attacks in ways that supported their right to be in Australia, and to be part of Australian society:

> Ahmad: So the first time we had these experiences, we went to visit my friend's house and we were about to enter the house and one lady was crossing the road and she just said 'Go back to your country!' She was the old lady. So we couldn't even react. It happened so quickly, but I felt bad. So my answer would be if someone says [something like that to] you, everyone other than Aboriginal people came to this country. Your father or mother or you, whoever it is, came to this country [from somewhere else].

These narratives suggest participants were able to reflect on their experiences, to reinforce their right to choose and express their individual identity, and to feel 'Australian' while maintaining their ethnic and religious identities. This is exemplified by Salwa deciding to wear her headscarf despite her parents' fears. As another participant told us:

> Hamidah: A friend of mine, she was walking and a guy shouted at her, 'You're in Australia, why are you dressing like that?' and she said to him 'That's because I'm in Australia. I'm free to wear whatever [I want]!'

A number of participants who experienced every-day racism also noted their aggressors' lack of knowledge about their culture and about Islam. These instances suggest how many people hold generalised and poorly informed views about migrants and yet feel justified to abuse them verbally in public. As one participant told us:

> Fayrooz: I once had a person come and ask me if I have a suicide vest under my burqa … It was my workplace. When I worked retail. I wasn't the first [Muslim] person they'd seen, but they felt comfortable enough to walk into my place of work and go 'Do you have a suicide vest under your burqa?' I said 'Get out of my shop'. Actually, I first said 'This isn't a burqa. It's a hijab.' That's actually how I dealt with it.

Many Australian teachers may never have experienced racism, but to people from visible minorities, racism is a common occurrence that impacts negatively on mental health and wellbeing (Elias, Mansouri, & Paradies, 2021). Sharing these stories in a classroom environment familiarises students with the different forms racism can take, and can foster empathy for the people who have their identities threatened and denied. In particular, in the context of the classroom, students' lived experiences and those of their families can be a pedagogical tool to discuss diversity and cultural and ethnic differences. Students' lived experiences and family pedagogies are thus valuable for exploring individual identities together with children (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). This can help children understand how everyone shares a need for constructing positive identities based on their family history.

Including student's familial and embodied experiences of religion in pedagogy

Sharing stories about the experience of racism can contribute to a decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy, but positive experiences can also be shared as a means of exploring identity, culture and religion (Alvarez, 2020). As Salwa's story in the beginning of the paper shows, teachers may want to engage with students' religions but find it difficult to do so in a way that takes account of the child's individual narrative, in particular, if teachers are unaware or unprepared for individual student's vulnerabilities or are hesitant to broach complex and fraught topics. Training and resources may be needed to prepare teachers better for this kind of engagement. And yet a pedagogy that emphasises

embodied and individual practice does not have to be complicated. One approach may be to look at embodied practices that speak to the practice of religion and the kind of micro-culture that exists on the level of individual families. Such narratives foreground the materiality of children's worlds, the tangible, embodied, affective aspects of religious and cultural life-worlds. These narratives also emphasise individual religious practice, including the way that families practise important religious events such as Ramadan. As one of our participants told us:

> Farha: I really struggle during Ramadan, but my kids love it. They can't wait for it to start. Before Ramadan, I used to do with the girls, [we do] craft that's related to Ramadan to decorate the house, so – because here we don't really feel it unless you make an effort to feel it – Ramadan is different from our countries. So we try to make it a big thing for them.

Families' individual religious life-worlds are rich, meaningful and shape the values that a particular child comes to hold. Such practices also shape children's literacy, because cultural practices are enmeshed with language and are where language learning takes place (Taylor et al., 2008). Family experiences are often also indicative of the children's particular strengths, where, for example, children use these occasions to form their attachments to their community through activities such as charitable giving:

> Nishat: During Ramadan, we also put more emphasis on charity. Charity is something we consider [important] in Islam, but during Ramadan even the kids [do this too], even if it's $10 or $5. They would want to donate it to their school or to a kid who is needy. Yeah, even the kids go 'Okay, when we do this, … we are helping a kid who doesn't [have money]'. Even last Ramadan our girls were like 'Can you please buy this? I want to donate it to this group of kids.' It needn't be expensive, just something to bring a smile to somebody's face.

As these accounts of religious life at home make plain, children's values, daily structure, sense of purpose and energy levels are established by life in the family home, especially through religious family life. These aspects of a person are fundamental to their sense of self and their orientation in the classroom, and, indeed, the world. A decolonial, culturally responsive pedagogy must begin from a position of working to understand and engage with the rhythms of daily life, the values and sensibilities that family life establishes for young people, and the practices people perceive as positive and meaningful. Teachers need to engage with students' embodied experiences of religion, their family histories, and use these resources to rethink what it means to teach.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that family histories, embodied religious practices, traditions and personal experiences present important resources for rethinking the relationship between thinking and teaching. These folk knowledges provide a way to engage with children's complex identities and to support their developing sense of belonging. At the same time, the stories our participants shared also suggest that a decolonial, anti-capitalist, culturally responsive pedagogy is not an easy and convenient way of integrating minorities or for boosting children's academic achievements. As Salwa's story shows, it is not just a case of acknowledging students belonging to a religious or cultural group, but rather, of finding a way to engage with a child's personal identity, their emotional and affective, experiential and embodied understanding of what it means to

be and to belong to a community. At the same time as we argue in favour of including family stories in the classroom, we also point to the fact that it is not only the child who is involved as a student in the class, but that their parents also take part in their educational experience, or are excluded from it. Parents build relationships with teachers and school staff and perceive themselves as part of the school community – or otherwise. Hamidah, for example, felt disappointed that her children were not better supported after the Christchurch attack, and felt that the school should have acknowledged the emotional impact on Muslim families. Salwa's example of her brother's faces being photoshopped on pictures of Osama Bin Laden points to the importance of a more anti-racist, inclusive and decolonial culturally responsive pedagogy in ensuring that students do not experience racism in the classroom. These strength-based approaches, which are focused on students' unique, sub-cultural capabilities do not fit in with a curriculum which is designed to produce workers for a capitalist economy. Schools often place the responsibility for engaging linguistically and culturally diverse children with complex histories on teachers only, but highlighting these children's unique knowledges will result in a more inclusive and supportive class environment for all students and teachers. We are not asking you to turn to philosophers in order to re-conceive the ontological relationship between teaching and thinking, but to turn to minoritarian children, young people and their families. Thinking with children, young people and their families can re-define the act of what is popularly imagined as the 'isolated' act of thinking and provide unique resources that change how we can understand the relationship between teaching and thought.

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