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**The need for a Reconciliation Pedagogy:
educating for a more holistic, shared Australian Cultural Heritage.**

Belinda MacGill and Theodor Wyeld
Flinders University, Australia
{ Belinda.MacGill@flinders.edu.au, Theodor.Wyeld@flinders.edu.au }

Abstract

Reconciliation is the process of reconciling differences, whether they be historical misrepresentations of cultural identity or any other site of dissonance. In the Australian context, the role of Media in portraying Indigenous persons and non-Indigenous alike has been to marginalise Indigenous history in favour of a predominantly white history. A 'Reconciliation Pedagogy' aims to educate for a more holistic, shared Australian Cultural Heritage. The key issues are: Nationalism, Racialisation and Reconciliation. This paper addresses the need for a reconciliation pedagogy, providing an overview of the issues raised and an outline for a tool for use as a teaching aid. This is a position paper exploring the potential of role plays to teach reconciliation in Australia. It proposes that a transformative education emerges through role play triggering empathy and raising questions about Indigenous cultural heritage. The relationship between games and learning is well known [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. It is through supervised role play games that we feel a more holistic shared, reconciliatory cultural heritage knowledge can be shaped. This paper concludes with some recommendations for the implementation of a more inclusive reconciliation pedagogy.

Keywords--- Reconciliation, Nationalism, Racialisation, Indigenous, Pedagogy, Role-Play, Cultural Identity.

Introduction

Reconciliation is concerned with social justice and constructions of cultural identity. Globally, the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their land is beginning to be recognised as more than a colonial act of violence. Over time, it has also had the effect of diminishing those people of their cultural identity when their cultural identity is inextricably linked to their land or the 'country' they belong to. In the Australian context, recognition of prior land ownership has only recently been formalised by various legal instruments. Reconciliation in Australia is the central goal of an active movement that aims to bring the occupying and prior cultures together to enrich the cultural heritage of the

Nation as a whole. Despite this noble goal, a more familiar, sanitised, national identity that ignores or silences the acts of violence perpetrated by the pioneering colonialists, and continued in governance, against the Indigenous peoples challenges a more open reconciliation. Nationalism is the colonialists' glorified view of their occupation of another's homeland, perpetuated in the media and history books used in schools.

While Media is one of the few vehicles for providing an educative history of Australia's cultural heritage, its role in portraying Indigenous persons and non-Indigenous alike has been to marginalise the Indigenous history in favour of a predominantly white history that glosses over transgressions of the past [6]. Too often an unbalanced view is presented in the media with apparent impunity. To redress this imbalance the Reconciliation movement aims to educate for a more holistic, shared Australian Cultural Heritage. The key issues that need to be addressed are: Nationalism, Racialisation and Reconciliation. It is the contention of the authors of this paper that, while mainstream media tends to continue to promote a sanitised Nationalist view the only other avenue to promote a more holistic reconciliation argument – is for a broader, more inclusive, shared cultural heritage directly through the education system. Hence, this paper primarily addresses the need for a 'Reconciliation Pedagogy'. It provides an overview of the issues raised and an outline for a tool for use as a teaching aid in a Reconciliation Pedagogy.

The Role of Media and Education

Visual representations in media and film have been used as a strategic device to construct an Australian nationalism. The Anglocentrism of Australian Nationalism [7, p82] uses binary constructions that maintain the dichotomy between Anglo and, what Edward Said [8] coined, 'the Other'. This is at the heart of a racialist dogma. Anglo culture remains fixed, central and is privileged in the Australian Nationalist debate. The tension between Nationalism and cultural heritage and the power of visual texts, including film and the media to construct stereotypes that inform the ideology of Nationalism underpin the need for an alternative approach.

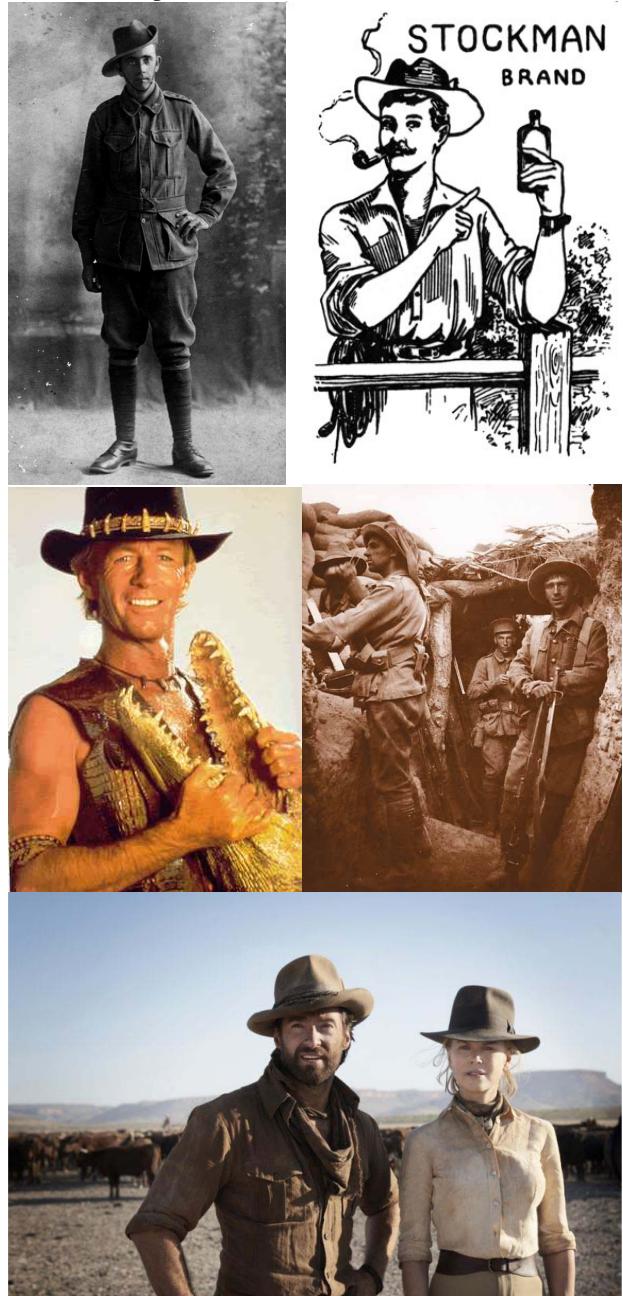
It is the contention of the authors of this paper that a Reconciliation Pedagogy in schools may be used as a means to overturn the impact of racialisation that continues to construct Indigenous people as 'the Other'. We argue that it is necessary to engage students in a deeper understanding of a shared cultural heritage in Australia that challenges the distorted elevation of an homogenous Anglo Australian identity. Moreover, it calls for a Reconciliation Pedagogy that engages students to think critically about their location in history. It is through the questioning process generated by students in a Reconciliation pedagogy that a transformative education emerges. The complexity of sovereignty is one of the key issues needed to be understood before reconciliation in Australia can be fully achieved. Whilst this issue is thorny, it is situated at the core of reconciliation. A method for addressing this in a meaningful manner is through role play. Role play as a pedagogical tool can be used to trigger empathy and raise questions about Indigenous cultural heritage. But before this can be addressed in detail the notion of Nationalism, Racialisation and cultural identity need to be defined.

Nationalism

Whether intended or not, in an insidious manner, Nationalism tends to silence the Indigenous voice and violent history of the colonialists against the first inhabitants. Nationalism is presented through visual images of diggers (conscripted soldiers in the first and second world wars) and squatters (pioneer settlers) as the makeup of the 'true' (predominantly male) Australian [9]. The power of such images has sustained Australian nationalism for the last two centuries. Nationalism as an ideological movement promulgated by cinematic images such as *Crocodile Dundee* (bush pioneer/hunter goes to NY) and *Gallipoli* (glorification of the charge on the beaches of Turkey in the first world war) among other such movies. They are considered typical Australian movies. The latest instalment in this long history of Nationalist portrayal is Baz Luhrmann's (2008) *Australia*. This film uncritically exploits the power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous representations. The perpetuation of the minority status of Indigenous peoples is maintained by such portrayals. The camera privileges colonists as the rightful owners of 'their' land and marginalises Indigenous people as less than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Aboriginal Academic Marcia Langton [10] argues such constructions call for more inter-subjective representations that are not conceptualized through the binary of black/white, and challenges the accepted norms of "hierarchical racialised systems of knowing that are [more] characteristic of Australian colonialism" [11, p1].

However, in general the persistence of a white hegemony remains largely unchallenged in Australian fiction and film. The few exceptions are invariably forced to adopt a polemic stance which prevents their message entering the mainstream consciousness, such as Indigenous writer, Ruby Langford; film maker, Rachel

Perkins; and artists Vincent Serico and Tracey Moffatt. Few non-Indigenous film makers engage in a sensitive response to Indigenous sovereignty and rights with the exception of Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr's (2006) *10 Canoes* or Phillip Noyce's (2002) *Rabbit Proof Fence*, that attempt to overturn key issues relating to sovereignty and social justice. What the regime of a nationalistic ideological representations projects is an Australia that is not a shared space, but a site of conflict.



Racialisation

Much of the portrayal of Australia as a site of conflict in the Nationalist program emerges from an inherent racialism. Racialism emerges from a racial theory that applies quasi-scientific studies to examine races as distinctly different, both physiologically and psychometrically. Europeans who studied non-European

cultures as part of their colonial push from the sixteenth century until the mid twentieth, did so in the name of a science that was used to justify colonisation and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples from an assumed position of racial superiority [12].



The intersections between racism, the media and the construction of identity are a nexus that has led to the misrecognition of Indigenous people in Australia leading to their racialisation. Misrecognition is a distortion that leads to an inequality of personhood [13, p25]. Misrecognition continues to occur on many levels due to the privileging of a Western knowledge. Aboriginal academic, Martin Nakata [14] argues that it is in the construction of this knowledge and selective historicizing that has continued to marginalize Indigenous peoples in Australia.

Currently, in the early years of primary school, 'Aboriginality' is naively presented as a survey of those few tangible artefacts that a non-Indigenous person is best equipped to recognise an equivalent for from their own cultural background. For example, dot painting accompanied by summarised stories about the dot's meanings is an activity that children can engage in that exposes them to Aboriginality. Conversely 'Australia day' is celebrated by drawings of corked hats (bush apparel used to keep the flies off the face), King Gees (clothing for working class males) and the Australian flag. The distinction between these two sets of images sets up an incommensurate binary opposite between Indigenous and non-Indigenous and typical of the sorts of distinctions students encounter throughout their education experiences. 'Culture' is the mediating term, yet it is routinely uncontested. Anglo culture and visual representations of diggers, squatters, barbeques and corked hats are centralized while dot paintings are positioned as the identity belonging to the Other [8]. Aboriginality is represented as difference in the Australian schools curriculum. It largely ignores the "dense history of racist, distorted and often offensive representation of Aboriginal people" [10, p24].

Reconciliation

After more than two centuries of European occupation of Australia, notions of reconciliation are beginning to emerge as a mainstream mechanism to

build a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Reconciliation attempts to map a shared Australian cultural heritage through acknowledging historical events from both an Indigenous and non-Indigenous point of view. The aim of reconciliation is to raise awareness and reverse the negative views that still hold currency in the media portrayal of Australian Indigenous peoples.



Reconciliation in Australia began with the 1967 Referendum giving Indigenous Australians full

citizenship rights. This was followed by the 1991 *Report of the Royal Deaths in Custody* leading to a formal State response to Reconciliation. In 1991 the Reconciliation Act was passed, and in 2001 the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was established [15]. This council developed a non-government body that is currently called Reconciliation Australia. The most recent event to promote reconciliation was Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's (February 13, 2008) *Sorry* speech which provides formal recognition of the Stolen Generations (pre 1970's legislation that saw generations of young Aboriginal children removed from their natural parents into State run institutions or white foster homes. This policy was founded on racialist stereotypes that constructed Aboriginal parents as dysfunctional.

Aboriginal people have attempted to overturn these stereotypes through embedding their perspectives and "challenging [the] discipline of history itself" [16, pxx]. Indigenous voices have gained ascendency through the reconciliation movement which is now a part of Australia's contemporary cultural heritage. Its representational forms are many and varied: flags, gatherings, tent city, events, motifs, subject of art, speeches, and so on. However, on a deeper level, the reconciliation movement is chequered by debates between 'symbolic reconciliation' and 'practical reconciliation' [15]. The question here is concerned with sovereignty and the absence of a treaty. The issue of sovereignty is often overshadowed in reconciliation debates as practical outcomes for closing the gap are seen as the most significant issue to be addressed.

Education and Reconciliation

Despite attempts to include some form of reconciliation in the national curriculum (since 2000) for pre-tertiary students this has proven to be ineffective in its current form. Teachers are either unable or unwilling to embrace its core values and there is little training available to address this. Moreover, despite the plethora of material relating to Indigenous issues in school libraries few teachers access this material in a way that reflects a 'Reconciliation Pedagogy' *per se*. Hence, the need for a more holistic reconciliation education in the national curriculum is clear:

The silence within Australia's education system regarding the history of their country and the treatment of Indigenous people leaves many Australians unable to understand the contemporary impact of past practices and the extent to which they permeate contemporary institutions. A vast number of Australians do not know any Indigenous people, do not mix with Indigenous people socially; they rarely live within Indigenous communities, whether rural or urban. This lack of contact, coupled with a lack of education about experiences and perspectives, allow Indigenous communities to become invisible appearing only to fulfill negative (or positive) stereotypes [17, p76].

The aims of a Reconciliation pedagogy is to address the omissions and silences that have distorted understandings of an inclusive Australian history. This would go some way towards, overturning the current "classroom discourse [that] represents [non-Indigenous] hegemonic understandings and interpretations of ways of being in and understanding the world" [18, p17]. The philosophical premise of a Reconciliation pedagogy stems from the emancipatory traditions in education. Theorists' concern from this tradition, namely [18, 19] and others, include addressing the gap between the idealized notion of equality and shifting consciousness in regard to everyday discrimination. Woods [21, p67], an Indigenous leader in education, argues that "Indigenous studies at all levels of educational training and across sectors are necessary for Australia to achieve reconciliation."

A reconciliation pedagogy is concerned with equality of recognition of Indigenous people and Australian cultural heritage in general. It is necessary to overcome the narrow and often inaccurate historical view presented by the Nationalist program. Nationalism's glorified view of the past; a view that holds little reality for the Indigenous population, assumes that Australian history is a white history [18]. A reconciliation pedagogy would see the curriculum content of Australian history as a contested site of many knowledges, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike [22].

The Politics of Culture

The tension in addressing the shift from a Nationalist programme to one of reconciliation is complicated by the politics of identity. Cultural identity cannot be conflated into fixed binaries, rather it is a virtual space that is lived, it is shaped by history and is triggered by sensorial, experiential, intellectual and phenomenological cues that are chosen by individuals and groups. It is constructed over time and is embodied through emotional pride in the feeling of belonging. Western cultural identity is shaped by the epistemological framework of belonging and owning nationhood through citizenship and the ontological certainties of its scientific underpinnings. This is represented through visual images of diggers and squatters and embodied through an Australian values framework, such as 'having a go' and a 'fair country' (common colloquialisms related to mateship) and materialist wealth. By contrast, Australian Aboriginal cultural identity is often marginalized and resigned to particular days, such as *Sorry* day. [23, p13] claims that "Indigenous people are constantly reminded of our place in this society by representations within the media; we are to be tolerated but not valued."

Many Indigenous people contest the mainstream Media view and therefore their identity is often linked to resistance against this misrecognition – a cyclical process that further diminishes their protests as negative in the media. Moreover, many Indigenous people ask 'to whom and why am I reconciling when my land was stolen?'

Hence, the issue that remains at the forefront when exploring issues concerned with reconciliation is to distinguish between the victors' history, as it is represented in the discursive regimes of nationalism, and the recounting of significant events, places and actions used in constructing a shared cultural heritage.

Arguably, formalisation of cultural heritage in institutions such as museums, academia and legislation applies equally problematic selection or omission processes as the Nationalist program. A reconciliationist's historical analysis of Australia's history reveals sites of massacre, stolen generation, deaths in custody and native title. All topics not ordinarily considered salient in a sanitised history – such as that promoted by the Nationalists. A Nationalist's historical analysis of Australia's history is generated through the understanding of erasure; the process of the omission of unsavoury events and the elevation of an Anglocentric viewpoint and its victories over the land. The dominant Nationalist ideology has gained currency primarily because it has greater access to the mainstream media. Hence, it is vital to critique the way certain stories are privileged in maintaining a white national history. Analysing the ongoing effects of the praxis between visual texts, values and a visual culture it is possible to track how identity is linked to feelings of belonging. [24] argue we live in a culture where cinema plays a vital role in identity formation. The routinely negative constructions of Indigenous identity in the sport and media, such as *the gang of 49* (a fictitious group of supposedly Aboriginal youths terrorising the outer suburbs of Adelaide in South Australia) have sustained deeply held mis-trust by non-Indigenous people who condense their debates into theories of racialisation.

A Reconciliation Pedagogy

If the starting point for early primary school students is to understand that Australia was invaded by colonists and that this was not a peaceful accession then a reconciliationary empathy may be invoked in their thinking. History is never linear. It is formed by multifaceted memories progressing over time in parallel. The significance of particular events may present themselves as more dominant than others but they can also be selectively recalled as more significant, hence dominate the way history is communicated. Hence, a reconciliation pedagogy would be used to provide the triggers that engage students in a deeper understanding of their locatedness inside a more integrated history. That is, their responsibility to shift consciousness and move from the stereotypes constructed by racialisation to a deeper understanding of their own standpoint within a more inclusive shared cultural heritage. This applies to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous student alike. Their locatedness informs their standpoint and positions the lens by which they see their world. [25] Standpoint theory can be used as a methodology and way of learning how to see and understand one's own otherness in a shared cultural heritage.

In order for non-Indigenous peoples to understand how the privileges they have encountered through their locatedness, in particularly those of Anglo heritage who operate as central inside the dominant culture, need a common tool, or map, to cue them to a site of reconciliatory understanding. We propose that the tool for this map is a role play game. In this role play game, students become the 'situated knower' in [25] terms; that is, they engage in the game as characters and explore complex issues concerned with colonisation and invasion. The students occupy the position of knowing through experience in a virtual context and face challenges that make them ask questions, such as, 'why did this happen?'. More broadly, the game operates as a reconciliation pedagogy through the use of standpoint theory that offers a politically grounded agenda for "the 'epistemic privilege' of the 'view from below'" [26, p268]. This 'view from below' provides the understanding that can be used to map appropriate methods of recognition in order to overturn often unconscious forms of oppression. As [13, p25] argues:

...a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being... [- their identity -] is partly shaped by the recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.

A reconciliation pedagogy attempts to overturn this misrecognition in Australia towards Indigenous people. Using a role-play game, students can engage in a playful, risk-free environment where they can act out their own involvement in a setting which fosters empathy with alternative views. It provides an opportunity to create a "broader politics of engagement" [20, p73] that racialisation has historically denied the equality of recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and personhood.

Role Play Games

According to [4] and [5] tacit knowledge is directly related to preconceived notions in learning outcomes. Tacit knowledge can be used to expand students' worldly knowledge to shift preconceived ideas to accommodate new ideas. Role play games are central in this shift in understanding. Role play is a common part of the development of a child's early socialisation. It also leads to worldly knowledge and prejudices. Using supervised role play games in the classroom exposes students to concepts and ways of thinking not ordinarily exercised other than in an environment that promotes peer-group prejudices. By guiding students through alternate views they adopt a more self-critical stance in their questioning of their own role in society.

A fun, risk-free environment where students have the freedom to explore their own understandings and inter-understandings with others fosters deep learning and skills in social reflection. The relationships between games and learning are widely discussed in the literature [1, 2, 3]. Game-like exercises compel early learners into seeking to understand the complex conventions and contradictions of social interplay to develop what [2] might have called 'a feel for the game'.

Arguably, a role play game using a game engine could provide the visual cues in a temporal-spatial site that facilitates an investigation into the complexities of reconciliation. A role play game using a game engine is only one option that is currently being explored.

Conclusion

While Nationalism still dominates the Media coverage of historical and contemporary encounters with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia the negative views projected of Indigenous people will continue. On the other hand, providing a Reconciliation Pedagogy to the National curriculum will go some way towards redressing this imbalance. By adopting a supervised role-play mode in its delivery, students will be able to explore the issues raised in a risk-free, fun, environment at their own pace. The process shifts the role of educator from instructor to facilitator. The goal of reconciliation is to engender empathy among all parties concerned. This cannot happen in the traditional top-down learning environment. Hence, we feel a role-play reconciliation pedagogy is vital for a shared Australian cultural heritage knowledge. By sharing our cultural heritage in this manner many of the prejudices and stigmas associated with the current racialist directed Nationalist agenda will be critically addressed – this would leverage the signifying hallmark of the free and egalitarian society that Australia prides itself on.

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