THE CHALLENGE OF WHITENESS
Equality of recognition of ethics of care paradigms

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Whiteness is commonly understood as race privilege where Anglo manners, values, behaviours and modes of care are centralised and normalised within systems of knowledge, such as in the law and education. This article examines the way whiteness operates in the education system through the marginalisation of Indigenous employees — in particular, the Aboriginal Community Education Officer ('ACEO'). It will be argued that discrimination is maintained through the misrecognition of ACEOs' complex roles in schools. This article reveals the two-fold process by which ACEOs experience discrimination: firstly, through institutional racism that is maintained through 'narrow understandings of what is normal'[1]; and secondly, through the subsequent profiling of ACEOs who care for students within an Indigenous ethics of care framework.

Ethics of care is a moral theory where 'care is both value and practice'.[2] Indigenous ethics of care practices are based on the values, mores and responsibilities inherent within extended families that value community responses to care (although they may vary from community to community). Indigenous ethics of care is concerned with 'relational' subjects rather than atomistic individuals as constructed in liberalism. A community approach to care differs from the nuclear family model regarding responsibilities of children and dependents.

Ethics of care practices are entirely shaped by cultural values and acts of emotional labour that are expressed through manners and mores that are raced, classed and gendered. Non-Indigenous teachers and Student Services Officers ('SSO') care for students in schools through the performances of white ethics of care in the way they relate to each other, the language they use, and the codes of respect and engagement. When an Indigenous student does not respond to these codes, such as by not looking at the teacher, speaking 'nunga' (a code signifying language use and identity of Indigenous people in metropolitan areas throughout Adelaide, South Australia) or resisting the performance of whiteness in the school, they are routinely identified as disrespectful. ACEOs are expected by staff, such as principals and teachers, to resolve Indigenous student issues that may in fact arise from dissonance caused by a failure of teachers to recognise what they bring to class as raced subjects.

Despite such onerous expectations, ACEOs are marginalised in schools on an institutional level due to their low status in the school, as well on a personal level through an absence of recognition of their complex roles. As this article reveals, such marginalisation is experienced as discrimination. While ACEOs' working conditions have improved, the 'redistribution'[3] of better working conditions has not eliminated discrimination in the workplace. The cyclical pattern that perpetuates an absence of recognition of ACEOs will be addressed in relation to both institutionalised racism, as well as direct discrimination experienced by ACEOs as a result of ignorance by many staff in schools regarding the role of ACEOs.

Historical overview

The first equivalent of ACEOs was documented in the Ernabella Mission School in 1940 as unpaid employees who were named Anangu Teaching Assistants. They taught in and supported the bilingual school where Pitjantjatjara was taught.[4] There is no record of payment of ACEOs until 1966 when the first Aboriginal pre-school assistant was 'appointed by the Kindergarten Union to Point Pearce Preschool'.[5] The Premier of South Australia lobbied the Commonwealth government to fund Aboriginal Teacher Aides through Aboriginal Affairs directly after the 1967 Commonwealth referendum that enabled Indigenous people to be included in the census. In 1969 the Department of Education and Children's Services employed Aboriginal Teacher Aides in remote communities as a form of positive discrimination. In December 1981 Aboriginal School Assistants were re-named Aboriginal Education Workers ('AEW') and in 2008 their name was changed to ACEOs.

The working conditions of ACEOs have improved in recent history in terms of their wage and entitlements, reflecting the historical moves to re-distribute wages and working conditions for Indigenous employees in general.[6] However, the redistribution of better working conditions did not culminate in equality in the workplace for ACEOs, as discriminatory practices remain for ACEOs in the form of status subordination.

ACEOs' primary roles include supporting individual students in the classroom, working with students in the Nunga room (a room set aside for Indigenous students), and negotiating with family members regarding student progress and behaviour management. They are also expected to conduct Home Visits, which involves visiting students' parents (and often include aunties, uncles and grandparents) and engaging with the local Indigenous community. ACEOs are also expected to act as a liaison between the community

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1. David Hollinsworth, *Race and Racism in Australia* (2nd ed,1998) 5.

2. Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: personal, political, and global* (2006) 9.

3. Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (2003) 10.

4. See Bill Edwards and Bruce Underwood, 'Changes in education as hunters and gatherers settle: Pitjantjatjara education in South Australia', in Caroline Dyer (ed), *The education of nomadic peoples: current issues, future prospects* (2006) 101, 108.

5. Pat Buckskin, Bill Hignett and Christine Davis, *Ara Kuwaritjakutu project: Towards a new way, Stages 1&2 A research project into the working conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers* (1994) 26.

6. See Jennifer Nielsen, 'Images of the Aboriginal' (1998) 11 *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 83–106.

and school. This seemingly neutral role is complex, as the interests of the school may not be shared by the community. This places ACEOs in a divisive position where they are commonly named 'educational police' by the community, or 'inadequate' as an employee by the school. ACEOs' 'care' work requires relationship-building with Indigenous community members, and often these members are relatives, further exacerbating the strain of emotional labour conducted when students are in trouble with the school. The majority of this labour is performed by women as the majority of ACEOs are women.[7]

A comparable position to ACEOs in schools are SSOs, employed to support students with learning difficulties, as well as support students under the direction of the teacher in class. SSOs are almost exclusively mothers of children who attend school.[8] SSOs' roles are different from those expected of ACEOs, as they are not required to conduct Home Visits to parents or extended family members of students from the school, nor are they expected to liaise with Indigenous communities regarding social, cultural, behavioural and educational issues. Neither position requires a university degree to be employed in the school — unlike conventional teachers — yet they all are involved in teaching and learning. SSOs and ACEOs both occupy low-status positions in school, yet ACEOs are expected to address complex community issues and respond to Indigenous student behaviour, unlike SSOs who have no external role to play.

ACEOs' responsibilities extend beyond the school as an Indigenous ethics of care model includes caring where and when care is needed. Non-Indigenous teachers and SSOs care inside school hours, and then the parents resume their role. This is another seemingly neutral understanding of care practices, however it is a normalised view that excludes understandings of extended family responsibilities to which ACEOs are accountable. ACEOs' care work is not remunerated and moreover the expectation of both the community and the school leads to emotional exhaustion. According to the Williams and Thorpe study, ACEOs suffered from a high rate of 'burn out' due to the clash between community and school values.[9] ACEOs operate through both the values of white and Indigenous ethics of care practices that require particular performances, such as following protocol within the community context and negotiating with students to engage with a system that historically classed Indigenous people as a deficit race.

Osborne and Tait's research on Indigenous education highlighted the prevalence of theories between the 1960s–80s that were informed by deficit and cultural deprivation ideas.[10] Deficit theory was applied to Indigenous students and cultural deprivation theory blamed Indigenous parents and community mores for low student learning outcomes. These theories normalised a disadvantage model to represent Indigenous people as lacking or as incapable of education. As a result of such historical constructions of Indigenous caring models that inform Indigenous

teaching/learning paradigms, ACEOs also suffer from status subordination.

During the 1960s–80s, ACEOs were defined by culturalism, that 'refer[s] to the use of particular anthropological notions of "culture" by which "Indigenous culture" enters the field as "already read" '.[11] ACEOs were constructed as ineffective employees in schools due to their perceived absence of [Anglo] knowledge coupled with the 'walkabout' stereotype that was informed by culturalism. The deficit models influenced non-Indigenous teachers' choice to generate parity in their working relations with ACEOs. While both ACEOs and SSOs are not equal to teachers in the hierarchy of schools, ACEOs' misrecognition continues to impact on their status in schools. This is unlike SSOs who occupy school space without question or negative constructions, because they are located in whiteness when they reflect the values, mores and ideologies of the school's values.

Furthermore, the role of ACEOs is low paid and thereby situated as a 'working class' position that contains limited cultural capital, in contrast to SSOs (generally married and middle class), teachers and principals. ACEOs are located by constructions of race, class and gender that allow for the conditions that lead to their marginalisation. It is argued that status subordination and misrecognition of ACEOs' roles is a form of discrimination. ACEOs are not only subject to endemic racism in Australia as Indigenous peoples, but this racism is maintained and reinforced through normalised institutional systems that do not view Indigenous knowledges, methods of care and acts of engagement with community as valuable. Instead, it is perceived as a necessary evil in order to retain Indigenous students within the school and to manage Indigenous student behaviour.

Absence of recognition

This article emerged from my research as an Anglo-Australian who worked as a teacher with ACEOs in a remote Aboriginal school, and 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with ACEOs working in South Australian state schools. A common theme raised by all the ACEOs in the interviews conducted between 2002 and 2006 was the absence of recognition of their work in schools by non-Indigenous staff and the consequent feeling of marginalisation in the workplace. Indeed, 85 per cent of the interviewees commented on their experiences of misrecognition by non-Indigenous staff, including SSOs, teachers, principals and administrators. Some interviewees expressed such experiences in the following terms:

> You still feel like you are hitting your head against a brick wall, saying, 'Don't you know what we do in a school, don't you know what we are employed to do?' ... It is about teachers' value — whether you are valued in the school';[12]

> 'Who are you and what are you doing?';[13]

> 'I am just a 'dot, comma, slash';[14]

> 'They look at me strange and I say, "I am an AEW [ACEO] — it's like I have to help these kids". I have to really justify

7. In 1994, 80.2% of ACEOs were women and this had declined by 2005 to approximately 70% (Aboriginal Education Unit) which reflects the current statistics – see Buckskin et al, above n5, 32.

8. See Patricia Bourke, *The experiences of teacher aides who support students with disabilities and learning difficulties: a phenomenological study* (D Phil Thesis, QUT, 2008) 175

9. See Claire Williams and Bill Thorpe, *Aboriginal workers and managers, history, emotional and community labour and occupational health and safety in South Australia* (2003) 71.

10. See Barry Osborne and Steven Tait, 'Listen, learn, understand, teach. Social justice and teaching Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal Students', in Gary Partington (ed), *Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*, (1988) 76–95.

11. Cathryn McConaghy, *Rethinking Indigenous Education* (2000) xi.

12. Interview with Sue, 2 February 2000.

13. Interview with Lucy, 1 June 2002.

14. Interview with Harry, 6 May 2001.

ACEOs' 'care' work requires relationship-building with Indigenous community members, and often these members are relatives, further exacerbating the strain of emotional labour conducted when students are in trouble with the school.

my role. In a way I would like to think everyone would know what our role is.';[15]

'A lot of AEWs don't go into the staffroom. I think they should because it is in the staffroom that you hear the true shit that comes out of people's mouth. I learnt it all. I defended people in the classroom. So I walked out and made a big fuss so that I would let them know that they had offended me. There was one time I was in the kitchen and this teacher [an AERT] came up to me and she said. "You speak really good English" and I'm going "What!!" I said, "Yeah, I do, don't I — I'm so glad you noticed" '.[16]

In the above extracts, it is clear that there is a lack of understanding regarding the role of ACEOs which culminates into status subordination, as the respondents all express feelings of marginalisation as a result of their misrecognition. Moreover, the final interviewee reveals the extent of ignorance in certain schools regarding Indigenous people, thereby highlighting the level of endemic racism in Australia. The earlier comment, about being 'a dot' or 'a slash' also signifies the institutionalised manner in which Indigenous people have been ordered, managed and controlled by bureaucratic structures. Having to justify one's role and explain what one does in schools reveals the level at which ACEOs are not included in activities of daily work life with colleagues, further supporting the claim that many ACEOs are indirectly discriminated against in schools. Due to the level of ignorance regarding Indigenous history, people and politics, the ACEO's position is continually subject to institutionalised racism that is endemic in Australia.

ACEOs have been employed as a 'special measure' to address truancy, Indigenous learning outcomes, retention, and to provide cross-cultural work, yet such work hinges on an ability to operate in the border zones between the schools' model of care[17]— the nuclear model — and an extended model of care often valued and embodied in Indigenous communities.

Schools de-legitimise Indigenous ethics of care when ACEOs' contributions, fields of knowledge, and social capital, are questioned through the surveillance of their activities in daily school life. According to Williams and Thorpe, ACEOs 'stood out in the data as having the highest exposure to a particular kind of racism toward Aboriginal people, namely "constantly under extra scrutiny" '.[18] ACEOs are often marginalised through acts of surveillance which assume that when an ACEO is late he or she is lazy, or has gone 'walkabout', or some other stereotypical racist notion. Routinely, ACEOs argue that they are collecting

students, addressing parents' needs, or responding to emergency issues. These emergencies are often in the form of behaviour management that is regularly left to the ACEOs to address, despite the fact that it is the teacher's responsibility. These issues reflect a form of institutionalised racism that is fed by an endemic racism, which is supported within education by a general failure to address race-blindness within schools.

A non-Indigenous teacher's race-blindness[19] in caring practices inhibits Indigenous student-learning outcomes on many subtle and unseen levels, for example, by lowering expectations, not code-switching between differing values systems, and maintaining stereotypes and misconceptions regarding behaviour management. Care is the mediating factor in pedagogy and race-blindness is maintained through the normative paradigm of white ethics of care in Australian schools. Whiteness operates in the form of a privilege where non-Indigenous employees in schools can ignore their collegial obligations to ACEOs. There has been training and development, workshops and other attempts to overturn ignorance regarding the role of ACEOs in schools. While there are always exceptions, the default position is a continued failure of many colleagues in schools to work collaboratively with ACEOs. The experience of ACEOs reflected in the following quote reveals that an absence of recognition limits equality in the workplace.

[O]ne of the things that I find difficult is that staff members in your sites, not just in this school, they never really understand what your role is, and over the last 20 years that hasn't changed at all. We still have teachers saying, 'What is it that you do?' We have done T & D [Training and Development] about roles on AEWs or around the Ab[original] Ed[ucation] teams within schools and in particular what the roles of AEWs are. And we have been very clear about what their roles are and the T & D. And even when you are working one to one with someone they still say, 'Can you come and do this?' and I will actually say, 'No, that is not part of my role. If you need that to happen you may need to speak to the classroom teacher or the school counsellor or the school principal within the school'. So I think over the last 20 years that hasn't changed.[20]

There is a distinction between a lack of clarity regarding the role of ACEOs and the mechanisms that render ACEOs' work invisible. Lack of clarity may be addressed through engaging with ACEOs; in this case, the concern is engaging with ACEOs in order to understand their complex roles. However, when non-Indigenous teachers rely on homogenised constructions of Indigenous people, they return to a default view of

15. Interview with Matthew, 5 April 2002.

16. Interview with Alison, 6 July 2004.

17. See Henry Giroux, *Border Crossings, Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*, (2nd ed, 2005).

18. Williams and Thorpe, above n 12, 80.

19. See Margaret Wilder, 'Culture, race, and schooling: Toward a non-color-blind ethic of care' (1999) 63 *The Educational Forum* 356–362.

20. Interview, above n 12.

ACEOs — that is one of low expectations, and the view that they are value-added employees. Therefore, their role is perceived on a surface level that is informed by stereotypes, such as 'she's gone walkabout again', rather than granting an ACEO the benefit of the doubt that they are addressing an important student issue that requires emotional labour. When non-Indigenous teachers fail to recognise race, class and gender inside their own classrooms they re-centre whiteness thereby reaffirming 'otherness' and rendering ACEOs' roles invisible or, at the very least, illegitimate employees in the school. An absence of recognition of collegial relations inside an institution is problematic as it reinforces status subordination and denies the possibility of transformation in educational settings in relation to Indigenous students' needs. An ACEO's response to these acts of invisibility was expressed in the following interview by Matthew, who works in a metropolitan school in Adelaide:

> I don't want to be seen as a servant, or the assistant, or the educational slave, the disposable staff member. I want to be valued as an AEW for the uniqueness of my role. And I don't think that is always the case. I can be dominated quite harshly sometimes by some teaching staff and I think it has to do with not totally understanding our roles. I think there needs to be something there — right? If you are having an AEW there, you have to allow for some sort of partnership and I don't think that happens.[21]

There is an intersection between being valued and thereby being recognised. When there is a failure to see what is of value, such as ACEOs' ethics of care practices, their work is not seen, therefore invisible. Similarly, the historical relationship between white master and black slave is a recurring theme for many ACEOs. Whiteness operates through power relations that are structured by the institution and historical colonial practices. In the school context, it is easy for teachers to ignore ACEOs when their role is perceived as supplementary and secondary, rather than intrinsic, to student learning outcomes. Lucy, an ACEO, argues that an absence of recognition occurs as a result of teacher ignorance regarding the role of ACEOs, as she states, 'A lot of people are too ignorant… I think that is why we have a lot of problems because the role is not clear'.[22]

Ignorance is the privilege of whiteness and operates through the unexamined hegemony of a white ethics of care that serves to marginalise and deny agency to many ACEOs. When there is an absence of recognition the impact generally silences ACEOs, or conversely fuels anger that is read as a distorted reaction to a seemingly neutral issue. Yet Lucy, for example, works both in and outside of school hours as a member of an extended family network, and says:

> That responsibility never leaves you even though you are not on duty if you see a kid out on the street and they need your help. They often come up and ask for help: 'I don't have a dollar, or can you find mum, or so and so is in trouble.' You actually do and find yourself going over and trying to help them. Their parents rely on your support outside of school.[23]

These acts of emotional labour reflect the expectations inherent in Indigenous ethics of care. It is assumed that

your role is not just located in the school, but in all locations of daily life. Students assume 'connectedness' when ACEOs greet them and support them in the streets, when they conduct Home Visits, and when ACEOs assume the responsibility as a guide and mentor. ACEOs are the 'familiar face' for Indigenous students and they express behaviour 'of familiarity'.[24] Moreover, as Lucy states, parents expect ACEOs to always be available as this is the expectation of an extended family model of care. Yet, the fight to be recognised in schools continues to impact on the daily life of many ACEOs, whereby Indigenous standpoints are marginalised as they operate outside of whiteness.

Ethics of care, whiteness and the intersections of race, class and gender

Noddings, a white ethics of care theorist, argues that caring by teachers includes both 'engrossment' and 'motivational displacement' This entrenches the ideology involving a connection to an individual child, where the caregiver feels and desires to build, a meaningful relationship based on trust and reciprocity (mother/child; teacher/student).[25] Yet, as Rolón-Dow argues, this reciprocation generally occurs as a result of synonymous caring paradigms,[26] which rebuts Noddings' colour-blind ethics of care model regarding her seemingly neutral focus on interpersonal relationships.[27] The issue of the absence of synonymous caring paradigms in schools between non-Indigenous teachers and Indigenous students is outlined by Sue, an ACEO who has worked in the schools for over twenty years:

> ACEOs can make a huge difference for an Aboriginal child in school. They are that link that has to happen and they are the link for kids as well. They show that somebody cares. Because any kid will say , 'Oh, my teacher doesn't care', but with an Aboriginal person in the school — and they talk to that person; they know that person cares — they know that person is going to be there for them and that is really important for any kid.[28]

ACEOs care factor includes their social capital that links the school and the community. Moreover, ACEOs' knowledge of students' lives and their understanding of how to enact care is 'socially situated' and this knowledge is further informed by 'knowing' the impact of racisms in Australia.[29] The 'view from below'[30] is a phrase that implies marginality that is not 'objective'/ 'traditional' knowledge, but instead an experiential knowledge that is 'culturally mapped'.[31] In this way Indigenous ethics of care varies from location to location, but in all cases in Australia, whiteness impacts on the structures of such caring paradigms.

Thompson argues that ethics of care is not 'a freestanding set of domestic values uncontaminated by the oppressive values of the public sphere'.[32] Non-Indigenous teachers are not required to extend their ethics of care beyond the classroom and it is their privilege to be centralised inside the education system whereby the acts of 'engrossment' and 'motivational displacement' that are informed by white ethics of care is embedded and acknowledged as central to their role as teachers theoretically and in practice. Conversely,

21. Interview, above n 15.

22. Interview, above n 13.

23. Ibid.

24. Buckskin et al, above n 5.

25. Nel Noddings, *Caring: a feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (1984).

26. Rosalie Rolón-Dow, 'Critical care: a color(full) analysis of care narratives in the schooling experiences of Puerto Rican girls' (2005) 42 *American Educational Research Journal* 77–111.

27. Ibid.

28. Interview, above n 12.

29. Sandra Harding, 'Introduction' in Sandra Harding (ed), *The feminist standpoint theory reader: intellectual and political controversies* (2004) 1–15, 7.

30. Margaret Davies and Nan Seuffert, 'Knowledge, identity, and the politics of law' (2000) 11 *Hastings Women's Law Journal* 259, 273.

31. Ibid 281.

32. Audrey Thompson, 'Not the color purple: Black feminist lessons for educational caring' (1998) 68 *Harvard Educational Review* 522, 530.

A non-Indigenous teacher's race-blindness[19] in caring practices inhibits Indigenous student-learning outcomes on many subtle and unseen levels, for example, by lowering expectations, not code-switching between differing values systems, and maintaining stereotypes and misconceptions regarding behaviour management.

the marginalisation of ACEOs' care work is arguably an act of racial discrimination raised in Section 9(1)a of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* (Cth).

Section 9 of the *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* (Cth) ('RDA'): the cycle of whiteness

Section 9 of the RDA is based on Part 1, Article 1, of the *International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*, and utilises the principle of indirect discrimination. The following passage from section 9(1)a of the RDA outlines the term racial discrimination:

> [T]he term 'racial discrimination' shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

By favouring, both explicitly and implicitly, a white ethics of care over an Indigenous ethics of care model, the Australian school system denies ACEOs the opportunity to address Indigenous students' needs and operates as a form of indirect discrimination. This penchant for approving a white ethics of care involves adopting a 'distinction … [and] preference', 'based on race colour, descent …or ethnic origin', that has the 'effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition', 'on an equal footing', of Indigenous cultural values. Given the general application of the definition of racial discrimination under the RDA, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a right to cultural equality in relation to care ethics may be described as a 'human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life'.

However, due to the inherent whiteness of the legal system it is difficult to prove that an absence of recognition is in fact a form of race discrimination. As Nielson argues, the notion of racial discrimination is couched in 'unlikely behaviour that is the sole domain of the "guilty" '.[33] The complainant in the case of an ACEO arguing against such acts of discrimination would be subject to the Briginshaw test. Such a test is considered a universal legal tool, and by definition becomes conflated as a whiteness tool, where 'discrimination cannot be inferred when more probable and innocent explanations are open on the evidence'.[34] The use of innocence is a form of whiteness that veils ignorance.

Ignorance of Indigenous ethics of care models denies equality of recognition of ACEOs' work and status

in schools. Whilst ignorance cannot be charged as an act of race discrimination, the perpetuation of it as a practice is possibly the location in which it can be challenged. The following transcript is an example of institutionalised racism:

> You pulled me into the office and you said, if those two over there, the Bursar and the people over at the canteen and they talk about the Aboriginal staff and the Aboriginal kids and how they get money — try not to worry about it too much — you know — they just don't mean it. And I said — you pull me in and explained to me and you didn't once pull them in and say how dare you — and explain about that funding and explain about the need for it — but no, it is better for you to pull me in and explain to me to be silent and not to worry about their racism. I have never forgiven you for that. I did a good job and I have never forgiven you for that. He said, for what? I said you re-enforced their racism. You didn't demand that they know… and that is what I have been talking about at every school I ask, where is the anti-racism policy, what's the stuff you want taught and I did it every day.[35]

This quote is significant as it highlights how institutional racism maintains white privilege that leads to the absence of recognition of personhood whereby, the 'withholding of recognition can be a form of oppression.'[36] This withholding of recognition is an act of whiteness that is represented by the principals failure to address racist comments in the school. This is discrimination that exists in institutions that impact on the daily life of ACEOs. Furthermore, the principal's response highlights the ways in which ACEOs are marginalised through misrecognition in schools, without recourse, despite anti-racism policies in educational sites. The status model provides a direction out of misrecognition as it permits 'one to justify claims for recognition as morally binding under modern conditions of value pluralism'.[37] However, in order to overturn misrecognition it is necessary to 'deinstitutionalise patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation'.[38]

In order to argue for parity of participation in schools between ACEOs and their colleagues, it is necessary to reveal that participants have not been provided with adequate institutional support. Recognition of the broader link between care and education needs to be contextualised in order for ACEOs to achieve parity of participation in schools. Currently, this only depends on the good will of some teachers who understand the complexity of their role. ACEOs as 'recognition claimants must show that the institutionalized patterns of cultural value deny them the necessary inter-subjective

33. Jennifer Nielsen, 'Abstract', (Paper presented at the Borderlands conference, 2006).

34. *Alone v Homeswest* (1992) EOC 92–392 at 78.

35. Interview, above n 16.

36. Charles Taylor, 'The politics of recognition' in Amy Gutmann (ed), *Multiculturalism. Examining the Politics of Recognition* (1994) 36.

37. Fraser and Honneth, above n 3, 30.

38. Ibid 31.

conditions'.[39] DECS (and other institutions) need to provide the tools 'for educators to interrogate their own complicity with forms of domination that connect and reconfigure the centres and peripheries of power'?[40] De-centering whiteness and arguing for equality of recognition of caring paradigms in schools is an avenue to overturn the continued misrecognition of ACEOs in schools.

Conclusion

If we understand that whiteness is a strategic and historical act of status elevation of Anglo-centrism, then a key feature of social justice in the systems we operate through, such as law and education, must be reconfigured. This process requires a focus on achieving 'parity of recognition' which would include systems within systems that serve to bring about status equalisation mechanisms that embody an 'ethics of inter-subjective exchange'.[41] Misrecognition of ACEOs limits their status due to the fact that their care work is not identified as work, and thereby their roles are marginalised.

Understanding how the absence of recognition of Indigenous ethics of care models, that operate through extended family, de-legitimates ACEOs' care work in schools is important as the consequent flow on from this position is the status subordination of ACEOs in schools, which maintains a cyclical pattern of discrimination. Innocence is used to disguise the ignorance of many non-Indigenous teachers in schools, which perpetuates the centrality of white ethics of care, thereby masking non-Indigenous teachers' responsibility to know and engage with ACEOs on an equal footing as colleagues. Conversely, ACEOs' recognition in the workplace will provide transformative practices that address the needs of Indigenous students, thereby increasing positive learning outcomes and greater opportunities for better health and employment.

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39. Ibid 38.

40. Giroux, above n 17, 16.

41. Sidonie Smith and Kay Schaffer, *Human rights and narrated lives: the ethics of recognition* (2004) 121.

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