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Centring settler colonialism in rural Australian multicultures: race, place and local identities

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ABSTRACT

In the current age of rural mobilities and economic restructuring, the ethnic and racial compositions of rural towns across Anglosphere nations of the Global North have significantly transformed. As a result of these changes, the conditions which support rural multicultures are increasingly relevant to scholarship and policy-making. 'Everyday multiculturalism' and 'convivialities' have become key approaches within such research in rural environments. These perspectives offer important insights into understanding complex social relationships, reciprocities and circumstances of belonging in rural places. However, as UK-based critiques argue, a focus on 'everyday multiculturalism' and 'convivialities' may also risk obscuring how colonial legacies have shaped and informed racialised and classed hierarchies of belonging in distinct contexts. In this paper we turn these critiques to settler colonial Australia and its increasingly diverse rural towns. We bring together emerging literature in the study of rural migration with scholarship from Indigenous studies and anthropology on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rural social relations. Working at the intersection of these bodies of works, we argue that the histories and structures of settler colonialism be centred in research on rural multicultures, as these legacies and ongoing conditions shape social relationships in contemporary rural Australia.

Introduction

In the current age of migration and rural economic restructuring, the role and future of regional and rural towns and cities (collectively referred to hereafter as 'rural') has become of increasing concern to scholarship and policy-making in several Anglosphere nations of the Global North (e.g. Neal and Walters 2008; Moran and Mallman 2015; Miraftab 2016). A key theoretical framework through which the conditions of rural multicultures are increasingly theorised is that of 'everyday multiculturalism' and its associated concern of 'convivialities'. These approaches offer important insights into understanding complexities around rural social relationships, reciprocities and conditions of belonging, and have been mobilised in different ways to analyse social interactions, transformations

and place-making in rural towns (e.g. Neal 2002; Neal and Walters 2008; Schech 2014; Butler 2016; Miraftab 2016; Radford 2016; Wilding and Nunn 2018). However, as others have argued more broadly, particularly in the UK, these theories also risk obscuring the very conditions of colonialism, and structures of power and racisms which underpin post-colonial multicultures. They often fail to reckon with how these factors shape social relationships among people from diverse ethnic, racial and class backgrounds today (e.g. Gilroy 2004; Back, Sinha, and Bryan 2012; Nayak 2017).

In this paper we revisit the aims and critiques of 'everyday multiculturalism' and 'convivialities' as approaches to the study of multiculture, while turning this lens on rural Australia, a settler colonial state with complex and rapidly transforming rural social worlds. We argue that the ongoing nature of colonialism in Australia requires a conceptual reorientation. To progress this aim, we begin to draw together emerging literature on rural multiculturalism in Australia with scholarship in Indigenous studies and anthropology on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social relations. We argue that these latter bodies of works highlight important ways in which the colonial and racial structures of Australia's towns, their distinctive populations, geographies, historical labour conditions and local social identities, all shape social relations across differences in the rural present.[1] Working at the intersection of these fields, we contend that the histories and structures of settler colonialism be centred in research on rural multicultures, as these legacies and ongoing conditions shape social relationships in contemporary rural Australia.[2]

Background

A range of economic restructures and regional integration schemes, underpinned by late modern capitalist notions of free trade and investment, have fuelled circuits of rural international migration to meet the needs of today's rural business models (Woods 2007; Argent and Tonts 2015). This has seen international migration move beyond the typical 'gateway' cities of the post-World War II era to 'new immigrant destinations' in rural locations of the U.S., Europe, Australia and New Zealand (McAreavey and Argent 2018; Woods 2018). As a result, international migrant labour has become a key component of today's rural economies, with transnational labour forces undertaking jobs including agriculture, horticulture, agri-food processing, manufacturing, construction and care (McAreavey and Argent 2018). This large-scale displacement of labour forces, embedded in historically formed regimes of mobilities and exploitation between global regions (Harvey 2006; Lewis et al. 2015), is now central to rural revitalisation projects in many areas of the Global North (Miraftab 2016).

In this internationally competitive global market, farms and other businesses have needed to scale up to remain viable, while properties have been compelled to rely on precarious and transient labour forces (Torres, Popke, and Hapke 2006). As rural towns and networks suffer disinvestment, the closing of businesses, a minimal range of social services and supports, and ageing populations (Miraftab 2016), reprised rural business models have come to rely on a flexible and steady supply of low-wage labour to prop up their economies (McAreavey and Argent 2018). In Australia, for example, employment conditions have seen a shift away from the provision of equity schemes, subsidisation and protectionism to neoliberal policies which promote greater efficiency, self-reliance and competitiveness (Cheshire and Lawrence 2005). Several visa schemes and programmes

across the country have been designed to address the particular labour circumstances of regions and to promote the regional settlement of skilled migrants (Boese 2015). One example, the Seasonal Worker Programme, brings Pacific Islander workers to labour in the horticultural industry on a seasonal basis. Alongside the labours of settled Pacific Islanders, they form a significant part of the workforce in many rural areas of Australia (Stead 2019, 133–134). This takes place against the historical backdrop of the nineteenth century Pacific labour trade which saw thousands of Pacific Islanders 'blackbirded'. This entailed transporting people, through coercion, kidnapping or trickery, or through legal but exploitative conditions of recruitment, from their Melanesian homes to work on Australia's north-eastern cane fields (Banivanua-Mar 2007; Connell 2010; in Stead 2019, 134).

Labour mobilities are not the only processes that underpin rural mobilities in the Global North. These include and may overlap with 'lifestyle' migration, travel migration, return migration, family reunification and student mobilities (Woods 2007; Hugo 2014; McAreavey and Argent 2018). In traditional 'immigrant democracies' such as Australia, an expanding population of legal noncitizen residents through such pathways has also resulted in situations where settlement has no longer been guaranteed (Robertson 2016). Finally, rural mobilities also encompass the resettlement of asylum seekers and humanitarian refugees (Hugo 2014; McAreavey and Argent 2018). A number of countries of the Global North have adopted rural dispersal policies to manage an increase in the number of people who arrive. These may be structured around the economic and social needs of regional centres and towns, the agendas of local governments, and the mobility desires of people themselves (e.g. Hugo and Morén-Alegret 2008; Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018; Whyte, Larsen, and Fog Olwig 2019).

Amidst these transformations of rural places, the conditions of rural multicultures have become increasingly important to research and rural policy-making (e.g. Neal and Walters 2008; Moran and Mallman 2015; Miraftab 2016). As a result, a growing body of scholarship has sought to understand intercultural relationships unfolding in rural areas, notably in Australia (e.g. Schech 2014; Boese 2015; Moran and Mallman 2015; Butler 2016; 2019; Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018; Wilding and Nunn 2018), nations of Europe (e.g. Neal 2002; McAreavey and Argent 2018; Whyte, Larsen, and Fog Olwig 2019) and North America (e.g. Torres, Popke, and Hapke 2006; Miraftab 2016). There has been a strong focus in this literature on what rural community-building and different forms of settlement look like, as well as long-term recognition that settlement experiences in rural areas may differ considerably from those in urban contexts (Hugo and Morén-Alegret 2008; Wilding and Nunn 2018).

A central aim of this research has been to examine how 'local' individuals, groups and populations, and people who are newly arriving, staying or settling, have responded to social, cultural and economic transformations in rural contexts. Such research has been particularly concerned with how rural settings mediate the emergence of specific migration schemes, and with the experience of migrants and their families in specific places (e.g. Torres, Popke, and Hapke 2006; Butler 2016; 2018; Boese and Philips 2017; Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018; Wilding and Nunn 2018). Further key areas of inquiry include the importance of the quality of social relationships in the retention of rural migrants (e.g. Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018), how rural communities negotiate high rates of population turnover associated with temporary migration (e.g. Argent and Tonts 2015), and how histories of racialised labour and racisms shape conditions for

relationship-building in the present (Torres, Popke, and Hapke 2006; Miraftab 2016). In examining such questions, a growing body of scholarship has drawn on theories of multiculturalism, everyday multiculturalism and convivialities in the study of rural multicultures in order to analyse rural social interactions, social transformations and placemaking (e.g. Neal 2002; Neal and Walters 2008; Jordan, Krivokapic-Skoko, and Collins 2009; Wise 2009; Schech 2014; Butler 2016; 2019; Miraftab 2016; Radford 2016; Wilding and Nunn 2018). In the following section we review everyday multiculturalism as a theoretical approach for conceptualising multicultures and revisit critiques of this framework. We then shift this critical lens to the context of settler colonial rural Australia.

Theorising multicultures: everyday multiculturalism and its post-colonial critiques

With increased ethnic and racial diversity in high-density cities like London, Sydney, Melbourne and Singapore, 'everyday multiculturalism' emerged as a key framework through which to interrogate quotidian experiences of living with difference within urban 'multicultures'. Such research has particularly focused on the kinds of negotiations and relationships that unfold through everyday social praxis (e.g. Amin 2002; Wise and Velayutham 2009), or what Hage (1998, 233) called 'the multicultural real'. Amin's (2002) early work on 'micropublics' and the everyday negotiation of difference within small-scale contexts foregrounded much of this scholarship. Amin (2002, 967) emphasised how micro-cultures may 'privilege everyday enactment as the central site of identity and attitude formation'. Everyday multiculturalism was more formally conceived in Wise and Velayutham (2009, 3) as a field of study that brings sociological and anthropological scholarship on everyday life together through the lens of ethnography, and which takes 'a grounded approach to looking at the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter'. This prioritised people's capacities to live together while recognising and locating negotiations, conflict, hostilities and racisms, all of which may co-exist in sites of diversity.

Scholarship in this field has examined both habitual and fleeting interactions in 'micropublics' such as schools, workplaces, suburbs and neighbourhoods (e.g. Wise 2009; Harris 2013; Noble 2013; Ho, Vincent, and Butler 2015). Such studies have often drawn on 'everyday racism' (Essed 1991) as a kindred concept, and sometimes include discussions of 'cosmopolitanism' in its everyday sense (Nava 2007), while a central concern has been to recognise how commonalities are sustained and ruptured within particular social and structural conditions (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016). In recent years, everyday multiculturalism has been incorporated more concertedly into a 'convivial turn' (Neal et al. 2013; Wise and Noble 2016), with a focus on 'shared sensibilities' (Glick Schiller, Darieva, and Gruner-Domic 2011) or 'convivialities' (Wise and Noble 2016). Conviviality's recent uses have moved away from its English sense of 'happy togetherness' (Fincher 2003, 57), to adopt a broader definition of convivencia in Spanish (Overing and Passes 2000, xiii), denoting practices of living together amid cultural differences (Gilroy 2004; Wise and Noble 2016). However, it is also this focus on fleeting and momentary interactions, the emphasis on 'contact' and the downplaying of racism and unsettling encounters of difference that have long been sources of its critiques (Valentine 2008; Wilson 2017). This includes the tendency in such research to over-emphasise and celebrate positive intercultural interactions, attitudes and 'openness', while offering limited

accounts of patterns of inequality and their drivers, such as racial discrimination (Valentine 2008; Nayak 2017; Tyler 2017). Experiences such as racism may saturate people's biographies in profound ways that a narrow focus on the 'everyday' may dismiss (Essed 1991; Nayak 2017).

This raises Gilroy's (2004) earlier argument that any discussion of conviviality must also recognise the paradox that, in post-colonial multicultural societies, racisms are deeply embedded in this capacity to live together. Writing from the perspective of post-colonial urban Britain, multicultural societies, Gilroy continues, are characterised by political conditions which take on 'a very different aspect if they are understood to exist firmly in a context supplied by imperial and colonial history' (2004, 2). Ongoing racial structures of post-colonialism continue to shape relationships in contemporary multicultural contexts (Nayak 2017). As a result, everyday articulations of convivialities, and practices of doing multiculturalism, are always deeply informed by postcolonial structures and social systems of difference and belonging (Tyler 2017). In post-colonial societies, Back, Sinha, and Bryan (2012) continue, racial and other hierarchies are always established in ways that replay aspects of colonial racism, but in a form suited to the distinct post-colonial situation. Colonial legacies thus inform the contemporary hierarchies that are used to divide and rank people in the present, and which shape how belonging is achieved, granted and withheld in distinct multicultures (Back, Sinha, and Bryan 2012).

This lived legacy of departed empire in multicultures (Gilroy 2004), these authors all argue, is frequently omitted from research on everyday multiculturalism and convivialities (Back, Sinha, and Bryan 2012; Nayak 2017; Tyler 2017). But if this applies to post-colonial nations like Britain, what does it mean for how we approach multicultures in Australia, where the empire never left? The defining feature of settler colonialism, which distinguishes it from post-colonial contexts, is that the colonisers came and stayed, and settler colonialism persists through ongoing structures of systems and relationships (Wolfe 1999; 2006). Subsequent racialised thinking in settler societies like Australia remains embedded in historical narratives, in questions of who occupies the land and how they came to do so, and in the moral, political and legal implications of this occupation (Curthoys 1999, 2). What implications does this have for how to approach rural multicultures in Australia, where histories of empire and ongoing settler colonial regimes have shaped very different culturally diverse societies to those of post-colonial Britain? Indeed, the very framework of Australian 'multiculturalism' policy, with its emphasis on managing cultural difference within the liberal democratic state, has long been repudiated for recognising limited forms of personhood and difference (Povinelli 2002; Kowal 2008). At its core, the highly circumscribed and conditional forms of Indigenous identity and recognition that are central to 'multiculturalism' as a framework (Moreton-Robinson 2015) have reduced Aboriginal histories, experiences and identities to those of 'just another ethnic category' within the social landscape (Carlson 2016, 82–83).

Centring settler colonialism in rural multicultures research in Australia

At a fundamental level, the building of Britain's empire in Australia, like the US and Canada, was based in the theft, colonisation and appropriation of lands by settlers who sought to detach Indigenous people from places and move them into other zones for territorial settlement and productivity (Watson 2009; Simpson 2014). This entailed the

forced removal and reterritorialisation of people and places and underpins the nation's origin narratives and national identity today (Moreton-Robinson 2015). As Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues, the category of 'Australian' itself is a common self-positioning of White Anglo-Australians against the nation's Indigenous Other. It 'takes a great deal of work' to uphold this narrative, as it does to maintain Australia as a 'white possession' (2015, xi). Forms of white possession continue to function within the nation's regulatory mechanisms to define and circumscribe Indigenous rights and sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson 2015).

This mythic construction of rural Australia as white has been significantly addressed in critical rural scholarship. Key works have long shown how the denial of the nation's Indigenous histories and livelihoods, and subsequent ongoing processes of colonisation, are at the centre of how rural Australian landscapes have been produced and inscribed as white and/or raceless (e.g. Ramzan, Pini, and Bryant 2009; Bryant and Pini 2011). Rural spaces in Australia, referred to colloquially as 'the bush' and 'the country', have long been assembled as synonymous with whiteness and heterosexual masculinity and idealised as sources of national identity and belonging (Bryant and Pini 2011). Indeed, terms like 'country mindedness' and 'country people', which emerged in Australia to refer to (white) country people seeking to unite politically to protect their interests, have been employed to position white representations of rural life and rurality as superior to urban livelihoods (Wear 2009, 82). For much of the twentieth century, such 'agrarian myths', anchored in distinct white rural farming identities, were so central to Australian national identity that they influenced the policies of all the major political parties (Wear 2009, 84). Similarly, the notion of the 'rural idyll' has been used to romanticise ideals of white rural livelihoods across the rural Anglosphere, and has also been employed to depict Australian rural towns as depositories of communitarian and traditional values (Poiner 1990; Ramzan, Pini, and Bryant 2009). Parallel critiques in Britain have shown how white/Anglo/Celtic imaginings of rural places and the 'rural community' have both dominated pre-occupations with rurality and been central to British nation-building mythology (Neal 2002; Tyler 2006; Bressey 2009). These narratives deny 'the history of black, South Asian and minority ethnic people's relationships with the English countryside' (Neal 2002, 445; see Agyeman and Spooner 1997; Chakraborti and Garland 2004; Bressey 2009), and obscure the complex production of white identities and classed hierarchies of whiteness that are constructed within distinct rural contexts (Moore 2019).

In Australia-based studies of rural diversity, scholars have begun to further acknowledge how this racialisation of rural histories is different to the Anglo-European context. Woods (2018, 108), for example, raises this point in his discussion of 'rural cosmopolitanism at the frontier', a term he critiques for the assumption that diverse immigration and subsequent multicultural engagement in Australia are relatively new. Dufty (2009, 444) likewise stresses in her work on rural Australian racisms that, 'unlike the mostly British examples present, rural Australia does not have a long history of 'whiteness''. While we support these critiques, we argue that in the context of rural Australian multicultures this interrogation and reckoning with colonialism must go further. Given the distinctive nature of settler colonialism as an ongoing process (Wolfe 1999), and the ways in which colonialism unfolded in vastly different ways throughout non-urban Australia (Curthoys 1999; Goodall 1999), there is a need to recognise how settler colonial projects

and conditions have shaped complex Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships in places which are today being recognised as rural multicultures.

Australia, like other nations of the Global North, is undergoing profound economic, social and cultural transformation in its towns and regions beyond the metropolis (Hugo 2014). Rural Australia's incorporation into the global economy more broadly resulted in a very different spatial distribution of resources and opportunities to rural towns across the country (Cuervo and Wyn 2012). Local industry and economic histories, as well as distinct environmental variables across the country, have also brought distinct consequences for diverse rural communities (Poiner 1990; Bryant and Pini 2011). In this environment, several visa schemes and programmes have been designed to promote the regional settlement of skilled migrants (Boese 2015). This increasing government effort has aimed to steer migrants to specific places outside the nation's capital cities in order to address the particular needs of regional industries and meet market needs, to relieve pressure on urban infrastructure, and to counter population decline (Hugo 2008; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009). Since 1996, governments have applied such policies on a large scale based on State Specific and Regional Migration (SSRM) initiatives (Hugo 2008). Since 2004, changes in Australia's refugee settlement policies and practices have also encouraged people from humanitarian refugee backgrounds to settle into rural areas (McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009).

These policies have been the subject of several critiques. As Schech (2014) details, while governments presented these policies as solutions to looming concerns of population growth, employment and housing stress, critics saw these levers to be motivated by anxieties about migrant concentrations and perceived 'problems' around interethnic tensions associated with low-income urban settings. Then there are the mixed experiences of people themselves, challenges to finding work and appropriate support services, and difficulties with establishing social networks in rural places (Hugo 2008; Butler 2018; Wilding and Nunn 2018). One of the most contested areas has been underemployment and unemployment (McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009; Webb 2015). National policies like the skills shortage occupation list (SOL), which codifies qualifications and attainment of English language proficiency into a 'regime of skills' in rural and regional settings, means that although migrants are encouraged to relocate, their skills and experiences may be misrecognised and undermined vis-à-vis localised knowledge and English accents (Webb 2015).

These policies and factors have all led to increasing levels of cultural and linguistic diversity across rural Australia (Dufty-Jones and Connell 2014; Schech 2014). Yet while population change has accelerated over the past two decades, scholars have also drawn attention to greater histories of informal migrant settlement that are already a part of Australia's rural histories. This refers to historical waves of non-white/Anglo migration to rural Australia, many of which took place in response to employment in agricultural and manufacturing sectors (Jordan, Krivokapic-Skoko, and Collins 2009; McDonald-Wilmsen et al. 2009). Some rural towns have drawn on such local multicultural histories, networks and organisations to forge bastions of support for the more recent patterns of rural migrant settlement and mobilities taking place (Schech 2014; Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018; Wilding and Nunn 2018). This includes how migrant histories, agency and actions have informed and shaped rural Australian architecture, rural communities and forms of rural place-making. Jordan, Krivokapic-Skoko, and Collins (2009, 383),

for example, provide historical examples of how 'rural societies become a contested terrain as the enduring historical legacy of white power and privilege is challenged' in Australia. However, by and large Australian rural migration scholarship has not centred settler colonialism and ongoing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships to these same ends. In the following section we draw on scholarship from Indigenous studies and anthropology to show how such histories and relationships have shaped, and continue to underpin, the physical and social geographies of regional and rural places, their employment conditions, sites of social interaction, structural and social racisms, and local rural identities.

Empire, race and historical place-making in rural Australia

The development of Australia's rural towns and rural economies has unfolded within specific regional jurisdictions and has been distinctive to particular regional histories of settler colonialism (Boucher and Russell 2015). At a broad level, colonisation in Australia, based on dispossession, control and surveillance, reflected the development and imposition of a rational bureaucratic classification system that was central to projects of Western European modernity, as well as reliance on the biological sciences' development of hierarchies ordered by an assumed race (Goodall 1999, 181). Under this regime, skin colour and a supposed 'caste' system were used to control where, and with whom, people could reside. This enforced the removal of Aboriginal children from their families across all Australian states, leading to the creation of generations of 'stolen children' (Goodall 1999, 181–182). These colonial policies of racial segregation and assimilation, intersecting with religious, scientific and economic imperatives, have played a central role in the creation and geographies of rural towns, rural missions and country schools, all of which sought to segregate Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in different ways and means (Macdonald 2003; Campbell and Proctor 2014). While there were variations between jurisdictions, commonwealth and state protection legislation severely limited Aboriginal people's legal rights, and prevented people from voting, receiving welfare and moving freely between places, and making their own decisions about where to live, work and whom to marry (Davis and Langton 2016).

As Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have shown, this governance of Aboriginal people was also 'always more complicated than the blunt manifestation of yet more European orientalism' (Boucher and Russell 2015, 6; see Peters-Little 1999; Cowlishaw 2004; Ramzan, Pini, and Bryant 2009). Colonial projects of labour and farming economies, for example, relied in different ways on rural Aboriginal labour and livelihoods to have survived (Ramzan, Pini, and Bryant 2009; White 2010), with long-standing and complex industry relations having been formed through pastoralism (Gibson 2010) and horticulture (White 2010; Stead 2019). Up until the 1970s, the most common form of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in rural Australia were as 'employer-employee' (Cowlishaw 2004, 9). While Aboriginal people were denied access to their homelands, having been forcibly moved, many people lived on residential reserves on the edges of rural towns (Macdonald 2003) and one way of maintaining access was employment in local pastoral industries (Cowlishaw 2004). Peters-Little (1999), writing of her Kamilaroi elders in the Walgett region in northwest NSW, notes how memories of survival and resistance to such regimes of exploitation and discrimination are an essential component of their Aboriginality today (Vincent 2017, 48). Such conflicts deeply

inform contemporary rural identities, Peters-Little (1999, 6) continues, as rural missions, reserves and stations remain complex and crucial sites of meaning and family heritage to many Aboriginal people today (see also Bolt 2009; Carlson 2016).

Some of the everyday contexts of such colonial legacies can be seen in ethnographic studies of more remote rural towns like Wilcannia and Bourke in New South Wales (NSW), and in Ceduna in the state of South Australia (SA). Gibson's (2010) study of work identities in Wilcannia, a small country town in far west NSW, looks at how historical origins of the welfare economy structure social relationships today between local Barkindji and Ngiyampaa people and non-Aboriginal people. Prior to the 1960s, many Aboriginal men in Wilcannia were employed within the pastoral industry, which declined across the far west of the state and at various stages across the nation. This was a result of many factors, including the push for equal wages by pastoral workers in the Northern Territory (Cowlishaw 1999, in Gibson 2010, 147). A form of welfare was subsequently introduced, and this structure underpins both the highly regulated and limited zones of interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that have become the norm in many rural towns today (Gibson 2010), as well as how policies of welfare distribution have become racialised (Harell, Soroka, and Ladner 2014). Most everyday interactions in Wilcannia, Gibson (2010) contends, take place around service provision and a small number of shops in a town that remain significantly segregated by race, class and cultural mores. While this research is limited to Wilcannia, many such practices and identities around work, Gibson (2010, 144) argues, are evident in her research in the larger NSW towns of Moree and Kempsey.

Along with labour relations, co-residence and rural town planning have also been historically central to shaping everyday social relations in rural towns. Cowlishaw (2004), for example, undertook research in the rural town of Bourke where many town residents have both Black and White forebears and complex cultural differences are already a part of the mundane sociality of relationships.[3] As the same time, she contends, the town's racial hierarchy has been sustained and reproduced in different ways over time (2004, 12). Commonalities between White and Black residents in Bourke come from shared and complex histories. As Cowlishaw (2004, 112) continues, this includes the experiences of male workers, since the 1960s, of losing their niche in the pastoral industry as raised above. As ex-drovers, fencers, and shearers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men competed together for labouring jobs with the Shire Council and Development of Main Roads, and often worked side-by-side in the process. The governance and social geography of the town itself, she continues, occasions frequent engagements with people from school days, shopkeepers or their sons and daughters, Shire council workers, and shared gossip about 'blow-in' (outsider) service personnel such as teachers, bank managers and police (Cowlishaw 2004, 111–112). Vincent (2017, 2), who also examined Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal social relationships in the small rural town of Ceduna, shows how an intact racial hierarchy, based on white dominance and Aboriginal subordination, remains an entrenched part of life. Despite decades of social and economic change, Vincent (2017, 2, 168) continues, relationships between Aboriginal people and White people in Ceduna 'are characterized by a central contradiction: between lived intimacy, on the one hand, and social distance and separateness on the other', with significant energy invested in upholding race-based identities.

Positioning rural 'locals', identities and hierarchies within rural multicultures

As these scholars make clear, what we may think of as 'white' rural identities in Australia are already deeply constituted in relation to Aboriginality and settler colonialism (Povinelli 1993; Cowlishaw 2004; Moreton-Robinson 2015). Indeed, one of the long-recognised limitations of the term 'intercultural' is that, when taken at surface value, it risks reifying ethnic identities into bounded cultural units which come into 'contact' with one another (Hinkson and Smith 2005; Dalley and Martin 2015). Migration scholars have likewise long critiqued assumptions made about cultural diversity within urban multicultures, which presume that intercultural relationships are built upon the centrality of fixed cultural differences. As Harris (2016) and Noble (2009) contend, this leads intercultural engagements to be framed through 'contact' and 'encounter' discourses, and non-white migrant 'diversity' to be seen as the 'additive' to this relationship (see also Idriss 2016). Simplistic notions of intercultural relations risk erasing what the 'intercultural' already is in Australia – not the meeting or interface of separate domains or reified ethnic groups, but 'a complex field constituted through a number of micro-social *and* macro social processes' (Hinkson and Smith 2005, 159). These ongoing relationships are lived and expressed in identities which both speak to the nation's settler colonial past, and reproduce these variegated racialised hierarchies in the present (Colvin 2017). They speak to the continuing relevance of colonial racism (e.g. Back, Sinha, and Bryan 2012) as rearticulated within present local identities and stemming from particular colonial conditions. To understand these positionalities and identities in context is 'to make sense of the names given to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (Hall 1990, 225). In Australia, such identities are constructed to signify specific positionalities in local contexts in ways that are politically significant, contested and subject to change (Blambett, Myers, and Rowse 2019, 11; see Dodson 2003; Paradies 2006).

This raises the question of who constitutes a 'local' in research on rural multicultures. Rural identities are always situated within existing rural hierarchies of race, class and power (Ramzan, Pini, and Bryant 2009; Bryant and Pini 2011; Butler 2018; Moore 2019) at the same time that Aboriginal people have been systematically excluded from white conceptions of 'the local' in rural Australia (Garbutt 2011, 4–5). Scholars have also recognised that migrant 'flows' to rural areas and experiences in rural places may be significantly different in comparison to their urban counterparts. This may include, for example, feeling more vulnerable as someone from a visible ethnic minority background in a white-majority rural town (Colvin 2017; Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018) and having less access to appropriate resources, services and networks (Torres, Popke, and Hapke 2006; Butler 2018). Yet while it is crucial to recognise these differences, there is also a risk that this focus on urban-rural distinction encourages a false dichotomy between white uncontacted 'locals' and their 'encounter' with a non-white 'Other' (Colvin 2017). Rather, migration patterns and terms of settlement and localness are interpreted within existing racialised and classed rural hierarchies, and within the distinctive histories and conditions of non-metropolitan towns and regions themselves. As Colvin (2017) discerns, the challenges that come with negotiating 'difference' in rural Australia cannot be simply reduced to a lack of lived experience of 'diversity'. Current transformations

taking place in rural towns occur within the ongoing legacies and structures of settler colonialism, existing racialised and classed hierarchies, and complex local conditions of belonging and exclusion. In the following and final section of this paper, we draw on recent works on rural multicultures, which begin to reckon with settler colonialism to such ends and signpost ways forward for future scholarship.

Pathways forward and future research directions

A small body of research in Australia has begun to recognise and incorporate colonial histories and legacies into their work to understand and conceptualise the complex facets of contemporary rural multicultures. Moran and Mallman (2015, 2019) undertook a study of social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura, two middle-sized rural towns situated in the south-eastern state of Victoria. Both towns have a sizable Indigenous population compared to the rest of Victoria, while Mildura sits close to the former Namatjira Aboriginal Mission at the town of Dareton. Shepparton and Mildura also have long histories of multi-ethnic immigration, stimulated by their distinctive irrigation-based agricultural and horticultural industries, followed by a more recent in-migration of humanitarian refugee migrants (Moran and Mallman 2019, 3). Yet while the towns are considered multicultural success stories in terms of regional migration and integration, racism and discrimination experienced by Aboriginal people was frequently raised in response to questions about 'social cohesion'. As one informant, a manager of an Aboriginal organisation in Shepparton stated, 'it's all very genteel but underneath there is a very, very strong pattern of racism' (Moran and Mallman 2019, 11).

Butler (2016, 2018), who undertook ethnographic research in two primary school communities in 'Riverstone', a rural town in north-west Victoria, recounts ways in which some white/Anglo children refused to recognise forms of local Aboriginal knowledge within school learning contexts. Their refusal to participate in such exchanges is discussed in the context of a local white/Anglo settler identity which idealised moral tropes around 'fairness' and endorsed forms of anti-Aboriginal racism. This drew on salient and partial accounts of colonial history which combined archetypal Australian discourses of egalitarianism and tolerance with discriminatory and prejudiced ones (Augoustinos, Tuffin, and Rapley 1999, 374; Hage 1998). Some parents in this school community from humanitarian refugee backgrounds who participated in Butler's (2018) research had adopted local racisms towards Aboriginal families and sought to move their children out of the education pathways of Aboriginal students. This shows that not only must existing conditions of migrant communities be considered in terms of rural settlement, as others have argued (e.g. Schech 2014; Wilding and Nunn 2018), but that attention must be paid to historically-generated conditions of race and class which shape relationships in Australia's transforming rural towns. These conditions ultimately inform prejudices and racisms towards and amongst more recent arrivals from migrant and refugee humanitarian backgrounds (Butler 2018). There is a need to better understand how rural structures of white domination and rural processes of racialisation frame relationships between Aboriginal people and non-white migrants in rural towns, and in turn work to reinforce or disrupt local racial and class hierarchies (Butler 2020).

Colvin (2017), in her study of multicultural education in a regional town of 'Easthaven' in NSW, assessed the promotion of 'diversity' in a rural high school community and

examined local responses to an increase in students from humanitarian refugee backgrounds. Colvin notes that as the language of celebration of ethnic diversity is widespread in Australian multicultural policies, schools have been tasked with implementing these guidelines about promoting diversity. Yet as Curthoys (2000, cited in Colvin 2017, 4–5) argues, remnant discourses of colonialism including white superiority, segregation and assimilation, also compete with these more 'contemporary' discourses around equality, inclusion and recognition of cultural difference (see also Povinelli 1998). In rural Australian contexts, these colonial narratives have a continuing salience in local and national imaginaries. As a result, Colvin (2017, 405) continues, there are complex and contradictory ways in which official multicultural discourses are taken up within rural schools, as well as in how they are appropriated, challenged and resisted by young people. Easthaven, the site of her research, was established one hundred and fifty years ago and has been known as a 'mostly white' settlement, not only ethically but in its institutions, infrastructure, landholdings and industry. In this rural town, she continues, residents assumed that anyone who looked or sounded 'different' must be a visitor or tourist as they did not accord with imaginaries of the 'local'. Colvin (2017, 167) outlines responses to the 'blackness' of African migrants to Easthaven as a white space in broader conversations about the colonial origins of the town. While people commented on the whiteness of the town, she argues, 'the next question that appears to be rarely even contemplated, let alone asked: why are most of the people in the area white?' (2017, 167).

Wilding and Nunn (2018) provide further insight in their discussion of the negotiation of ethnic differences by considering how a small city in rural Australia has transformed in response to the arrival of Karen settlers, a community of humanitarian migrants from refugee camps on the Thai–Myanmar border. In the rural town of 'Hometown', the authors discern, the production of multiculturalism is an uneven process, characterised by practices that both support community belonging and reproduce relations of inequality. The research draws on frameworks of everyday multiculturalism to show how leaders among the town's long-term residents saw the arrival of Karen migrants as 'an opportunity to reimagine their local community as fitting more closely with national models of multiculturalism and global models of cosmopolitanism, both of which are strongly associated with the moral good' (2018, 2555). Yet, in the context of a rural community's self-proclaimed multiculturalism, they continue, 'it is important to tease out what such an assertion might mean' (2018, 2543). Wilding and Nunn note a hierarchy of multiculturalism, where Karen people are typically (though not exclusively) positioned as beneficiaries of various forms of support, while also being valued for the contribution they make to the town's sense of having a 'multicultural' identity. Recent Karen migrants are associated with a form of cosmopolitanism and deemed to be an asset for the town, while it is the long-term residents of Hometown who have greater capacity to define the normative frameworks that apply to their social encounters across such differences.

There are parallels here with scholarship on the advantages accrued by those who overtly adopt identities viewed as cosmopolitan within particular social contexts, such as schools (Reay et al. 2007; Ho, Vincent, and Butler 2015). Reay et al. (2007), for example, interrogated the contradictions of, and benefits which, white parents derived from developing a 'multiculturalist capacity' among their children in urban London. Ho, Vincent, and Butler (2015), working in Sydney, Australia, drew on Reay et al.

(2007) and Hage's (1998) notion of 'cosmo-multiculturalism' to examine the cosmopolitan traits that were encouraged and cultivated to suit white middle-class parents in a gentrifying, inner-city school community. In this context, white children's friendships with ethicised Others were viewed as accumulative assets to a child's white middle-class identity (Reay et al. 2007). Butler, Ho, and Vincent (2017) have likewise shown how, for middle class white parents in this same research sample, ideals of 'community', as well as advocating for 'worldliness', 'real world exposure', 'diversity' and communitarianism, all rewarded the middle-class self at the expense of specific Others (non-white and non-middle class). Returning to the rural example from Wilding and Nunn (2018), it is clear that the co-production of multiculturalism in Hometown is an unequal space of meanings and definitions that shape intercultural encounters. In this environment, Karen belonging is contingent on where white people draw spatial and sociocultural boundaries. Theorising the 'everyday' of everyday multiculturalism here, the authors insist, requires a complex balancing act of acknowledging the surface realities of the mundane, while also recognising the underlying social forces that shape those realities in unequal ways (Wilding and Nunn 2018; see also Boese, Moran, and Mallman 2018).

Conclusion

The circumstances of rural multiculturalism, and the conditions which support today's rural multicultures, have become increasingly important to scholarship and policy-making in Anglo-sphere nations of the Global North. In migration research, a key framework through which rural multicultures are increasingly theorised is that of everyday multiculturalism and convivialities. This approach has the potential to offer significant insights into the complex production of rural social relationships, reciprocities and circumstances of belonging. In this paper we have discussed these frameworks alongside their critiques and turned a critical lens to the study of multicultures in rural Australia. We have argued for a reorientation in the conceptualisation of rural multicultures based on the need to centre settler colonialism. Drawing on Indigenous studies and anthropology, we have briefly illustrated how rural colonial histories and legacies, ongoing rural racial and class hierarchies, and long-standing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships, significantly shape today's multicultures in the rural Australian present. We contend that scholars reckon with the specific settler colonial conditions which structure and produce local hierarchies of racialised and classed belonging and exclusion in distinct rural towns, as these inform the very complex social worlds within which more recent newcomers are today finding their feet.

Notes

1. Australia's geographic regions are defined through the Australian Standard Geographical Classification System on the basis of a measure of relative access to services (ABS Remoteness Structure). This system classifies five Remoteness Areas: Major Cities of Australia, Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia, and Very Remote Australia. See http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/remoteness±structure. In the Australia-focused literature, variations of 'rural multiculturalism' are commonly used to refer to research in 'non-metropolitan', 'regional' and 'rural' Australian towns and cities (e.g. Butler 2016; Wilding and Nunn 2018). Such locations to-date would be classified by

the ABS Remoteness Structure as Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia or Remote Australia.

2. Following the work of Frankenberg (1993) and whiteness scholars, we use the term 'white'/ 'White' throughout this paper to refer to a system of structural advantage and race privilege that is naturalised, normalised and reproduced. As Moreton-Robinson (2004, 75) argues, whiteness functions as a silent norm and 'regime of power' that has material effects in everyday life and maintains its dominance in multicultural societies via this invisibility. We also use this term to refer to our own identities, and acknowledge that whiteness profoundly shapes our field research and our work, being of White/Anglo-European Australian background (Rose Butler), and a recent migrant to Australia of White, Israeli, Jewish background (Jehonathan Ben).

3. Capital letters are employed for the terms 'Black' and 'White' to reflect their original use by the author/s being cited throughout this paper.

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