

## **Introduction: Critical theory and critical pedagogy: The student Experience**

Dawn Darlaston-Jones  
*The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle*

In the previous issue of ACP, I wrote a paper calling for a different approach to psychology education arguing that the lens we construct curriculum and theory through can determine the outcomes that ensue. The Bachelor of Behavioural Science at the University of Notre Dame (Fremantle Campus) offers students alternate perspectives on understanding human functioning in a complex social milieu. As part of the degree, students undertake a unit in the second semester of their second year examining the construction of contemporary Australian society. This includes a critical exploration of the dual legacies of colonisation and asks students to confront their own position within the settler context as a function of that colonial past. Such an analysis requires a deeper level of critical reflexivity and personal and social analysis than students might have experienced previously and as such it is a challenging and demanding unit.

In examining the construction of Australian identity at both the individual and national level, students are asked to explore Friere's concept of critical consciousness as a vehicle to understand their positionality relative to that of others in the same context. This means that instead of accepting the narrative of disadvantage constructed around Indigenous identity, students are encouraged to see the strength, courage and resilience as well as the political resistance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have exhibited since settlement occurred. Issues around moral exclusion and how this serves a neoliberal agenda of social control through fear and exclusion are also applied to the current discourses related to asylum seekers, marriage equality, and employment discrimination.

Every year I am surprised and humbled by the willingness of students to challenge themselves and their worldviews and to explore alternate perspectives. In 2014, I

offered the class the opportunity to turn their reflexive analyses into scholarly articles suitable for publication. To support the process, I facilitated a number of writing and development workshops to help them conceptualise and clarify their ideas and form them into a manuscript. It is my pleasure to introduce two of these papers in this special section. In doing so I emphasise that the ideas, commentary, and learning outcomes shared in these papers are solely the work of the authors as they reveal the process and outcomes of their experiences during this learning journey. Each of the authors focusses on different aspects of their experience in the unit but across both papers is a theme of critical reflexivity and the role this played in facilitating their learning journey. They make reference to the role of Whiteness and moral exclusion in shaping their worldviews and how disrupting this lens enabled each of them to understand their role in maintaining a status quo from which each benefited in unconscious and unspoken ways. Deconstructing identities built of privilege and power became the building blocks that enabled them to construct different possibilities not only in terms of the individual construction of 'self' but also in the construction of 'other'. Doing so opens possibilities and opportunities to work in partnership to build a different and more inclusive future.

**Address for correspondence**  
dawn.darlaston-jones@nd.edu.au