The Australian Community Psychologist

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From *Network* to *The Australian Community Psychologist*:
A new name, a new look, and new directions

Dawn Darlaston-Jones & Lynne Cohen
Editors

This is an exciting edition of the only Australian journal devoted to community psychology. Not only is it a special issue dedicated to Indigenous topics (mostly) presented at the last APS conference but it marks a new name, a new look, and a new direction for the journal.

As you know the editorial board has been exploring alternative names for our Journal *Network.* The impetus for this reflection came from our negotiations with a range of publishing houses who thought that the term *Network* failed to adequately capture the content of the journal. As a result, we sent a call for suggestions to all the college members around the country, from these we collated a short list of the most frequently suggested names. In the end it came down to a choice between two: *The Australian Community Psychologist* and *The Australian Journal of Community Psychology.* Each of these names received approximately similar support but due to its similarity to the American journal it was decided not to adopt the latter. Consequently it is with great pleasure that we formally announce the new name of our Journal as *The Australian Community Psychologist.*

This issue are also marks the inauguration of our new electronic format; and we would like to express our gratitude to the WA branch secretary, Anne Sibbel who created the layout and formatted the content. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this edition though is that it presents us with an opportunity to explore new directions, new forms of enquiry, and a chance to embrace alternative perspectives within our pages. In part, the special edition illustrates what we mean by this: Instead of requiring the authors, almost all of whom are Indigenous educators and researchers, to constrain their voices to meet an arbitrary form of academic writing, we chose to use a narrative style that is more appropriate to the Aboriginal tradition of story telling. In doing so we wanted to demonstrate to the scientific community that different types of knowledge hold equal validity to the dominant tradition and that it is the dominant voice that requires constraint and adaptation.

Most of the papers in this issue were presented at a symposium at the 40th APS annual conference held in Melbourne 28th September – 2nd October 2005. To introduce these papers we invited Colleen Turner, the convener of the symposium and a member of the of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Interest Group to provide an overview of each. In addition to these papers, we have also included a piece by Neil Drew in a new section called *Insight;* this section offers contributors an opportunity to discuss or present issues that they feel are important to community psychology practice; whether that be in the form of research, teaching or face to face with individuals or groups. Neil's paper illustrates this intention perfectly.

The editorial board invites your comments on these changes. We welcome submissions that illustrate the breadth and diversity of community psychology research and action in the region. This is the time for new voices, and new ways of working to emerge within our discipline, it is time to revitalise and renew, and celebrate the partnerships we share with our communities.

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Talking about sharing - Ongoing conversations about how psychology can and should work for and with Indigenous Australia

Colleen Turner

It is my pleasure and privilege to introduce what I am beginning to see as an ongoing conversation that in some ways documents the continuing evolution of Indigenous issues within Psychology in Australia. Like contributors to this special issue, I want to briefly introduce myself and place myself in context. I wrote a similar introduction to a contribution to the 2000 special issue of Australian Psychologist which read in part:

> I am a non – Aboriginal woman from Berridale in New South Wales. I am descended from Irish convicts on my father's side. My educational and professional background is in education and Psychology.
> **Now I will add**.
> I am the proud parent of a six year old girl. My daughter is Indigenous and so cross cultural conversations for me reflect how the political remains personal. My skills and professional identity are firmly invested in Community Psychology. Therefore, my current work is related to the importance of early childhood and the need to cultivate child friendly communities.

It has been six years since the publication of the last APS journal devoted to Indigenous issues. Those years have been very important in Indigenous history in Australia because of a number of events that have occurred and their impacts and implications. These have included a failure of a reconciliation movement in Australia, to provide an agreed process forward for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and the dissolution of an elected Indigenous body that was replaced with an appointed body. There have also been the "history wars" which have debated the magnitude of massacres and stolen generations in Australian history. There has been only marginal improvement in the health and well being of Australia's Indigenous peoples, which remains much worse than the health and well being of the majority of Australian's.

On a more positive note, this journal demonstrates a much needed revival of an interest, enthusiasm and activation for the long term work of developing culturally inclusive, competent and respectful psychologies. This issue includes presentations from the 2005 APS conference held in Melbourne. Those papers arose out of renewed energy and activity within the Aboriginal Interest Group of the APS. The Interest group had been meeting via teleconference for a year and acted as guides in putting together ideas for the presentations. The themes of the papers, therefore, follow the themes of the symposia and as such leave the way open to exploration of a wide range of other issues of importance to the well being of Aboriginal Australians.

Marlene describes a collaborative project involving Aboriginal Community members, and the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) in intervention and prevention of family violence in Tasmanian communities. Marlene worked with the Department of Family and Community Services, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Council, and Aboriginal Educators in family violence to assist in skilling community workers and community members in the complex task of understanding and beginning to heal the impact of family violence within Indigenous families in Tasmania. Although Marlene and the AIFS are no longer involved, that work is continuing as part of a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) program in Tasmania.

Rhonda Craven has demonstrated how powerfully the concept of academic aspirations and abilities interacts with academic performance, for both indigenous and non-Indigenous students. She has gone further and has posed an important challenge for psychologists to help make Indigenous Australians' educational dreams and aspirations a reality.

Rob and Wendy describe the process of an ongoing project aimed at developing and implementing national curriculum guidelines related to effective teaching and research in

relation to Australia's Indigenous peoples. They note the absence of such guidelines as well as the major gaps in our curricula, relative to other human service professions. Therefore, there is a gap in training undergraduate psychology students and an urgent need for strategies, resources and action that will help enhance culturally competent and responsive future practitioners.

Rebecca and Harriet take on the difficult task of exploring and reflecting on delivering and experiencing, respectively, topics dealing with race, culture and power in the context of race relations in Australia. The subjects are taught at Victoria University at third and fourth year levels of study. They provide an historical and intellectual framework of Indigenous sovereignty and use the writings of black and other minority authors as well as the writing in whiteness studies to engage students in processes of interrogating their own group memberships and the power and privilege afforded by those memberships.

They both use the notion of whiteness to explore issues of identity and power. They do so from different vantage points; Rebecca writes as an Aboriginal woman and Harriet states that she is a white, international student. Whiteness has multiple dimensions, ideological, experiential and physical, and offers a perspective that challenges non-Indigenous Australians to engage with issues of privilege and disadvantage. It problematises the normativity and taken for granted way in which those who are marked and racialised as black, while white remains 'raceless'. In a sense, whiteness provides a pedagogical tool that disrupts this normative assumption and accompanying worldviews and opens up spaces for debate.

The papers all explore aspects of education for both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people and all recognise the importance of knowing the history(s) of colonisation, oppression and racism in order to begin to understand the situation that Indigenous Australians find themselves in at the beginning of the 21st Century. The papers speak from the perspective of active practitioners in the front line of working with Indigenous communities and people. As such the language is often personal and passionate rather than detached and quantitative. The theme of discomfort is apparent in all the papers and

actively explored in Rebecca's paper. It is my hope that the discomfort expressed is the discomfort of change and of learning.

The discussion presented here is another step in the process of psychology being better able to train members of our profession to be part of the multiple solutions to racism and Indigenous disadvantage, rather than part of the problem.

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Strengths and challenges: Working towards Family Well-Being in Tasmania

Marlene Burchill
Australian Institute of Family Studies

In 2005, the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), in conjunction with Indigenous groups in Tasmania, embarked on a project to develop an accredited program to address the serious problem of domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in Tasmania. An essential feature of this project was the involvement of Indigenous people at all of its stages. This paper provides an account of my experience working on the project.

"THE PROBLEM": Domestic Violence in Aboriginal Communities in Tasmania

(a) Definitions

In this Project, the term "domestic violence" was not used. Instead we applied the broader concept of "Family Violence" as was adopted in the Attorney General's Report on "Violence in Indigenous communities" (Memmott, Stacey, Chambers & Keys, 2001). In line with the Memmott Report, family violence was broadly defined to recognise the extended nature of Indigenous families (i.e., "Kinspeople" - brothers, cousins, fathers, sons, and other Aboriginal men and women in the community).

(b) Research

Violence occurs at a disproportionate rate in Indigenous communities of Australia as outlined in the Memmott, et al Report (2001). This violence has had a devastating and traumatic effect on Indigenous communities. It is also self perpetuated in that victims can become abusers. Professor Judy Atkinson (1995) an Indigenous academic, recognised this as "intergenerational trauma". She argued "oppression and abuse are internalised by those who are oppressed and abused…Some see themselves as victims of a colonial past, while their own behaviour may be reinforcing that victimization as they perpetrate abuse on others" (p. 202). The veil of silence that exists in Indigenous communities of Australia further perpetuates the cycle of violence. One Aboriginal person attending a forum to overcome family violence stated "One of the greatest difficulties Aboriginal people face is to speak up against the "silence of acceptance" that allows those otherwise silent voices who have been violated, abused, raped or belted within an inch of this life to go unheeded …. The silence is deafening". [1]

Unfortunately, domestic violence services appear to be less effective for Aboriginal people. In order to change this Bagshaw, Chung, Couch, Lilburn, and Wadham, (2000) argue:

> *Current theories of domestic violence need to include and address a greater diversity of experiences. New approaches are needed, which may require further research* (p.6).

(c) The Tasmanian Experience

The findings of the Memmott Report were mirrored in Tasmania in the Ya Pulingina Karnia Report (2002). The report was commissioned by a group of concerned Elders and community members and funded by the Commonwealth Government. The findings of the report raised concerns for all and lifted the veil of silence for participants who related their personal experiences of sexual abuse, psychological abuse and physical abuse. The report also identified a need for change and made recommendations that need to occur in Tasmania for Aboriginal communities to move forward. In an attempt to address this problem and as a consequence of the Ya Pulingina Karnia Report, the Tasmanian Regional Aboriginal Counsellors (TRAC) contacted AIFS and invited them to develop training to equip Aboriginal people with the introductory skills for working in family and community settings. The desired result is that family violence will be reduced with the existence of skilled Aboriginal workers working directly with families to overcome family violence.

THE PROJECT: Domestic Violence Training in Tasmania

(a) Vision

Under the early guidance of TRAC, the vision was to reduce the growing incidence of family violence in Aboriginal communities in Tasmania. TRAC proceeded to negotiate a contract with AIFS to develop accredited Family Violence Training for Aboriginal workers in Tasmania. This training was designed to run for a recommended period to develop and increase a pool of qualified Aboriginal workers.

(b) The Concept

The concept of Family Well-Being is founded on the premise that community capacity building can bring about significant differences in the lives of people in their communities. Members of communities can be instrumental in achieving these goals if they are able to understand, confront and develop positive solutions to the social and emotional problems that they face.

An Aboriginal Family Well-Being approach to family violence was articulated in public policy and research documents during the 1990s with support of funding from the Partnership Against Domestic Violence.

In the Northern Territory and South Australia some Aboriginal people use the word "Punya" which translates as health. This word became extended and understood as encompassing "Well-Being" and Aboriginal groups across Australia began to engage with this concept and approach (Atkinson, 2002). Family Well-Being according to Wendy Warner (the Aboriginal trainer involved in this Project) is a term Aboriginal people can relate to. It is less confronting and reduces the shame of family violence in a way that enables and compels people to act on their own personal issues.

Family Well-Being has been culturally developed and implemented in South Australia[2] and is currently the property of Adelaide Tafe College, South Australia. Since its introduction, the value of the program to Indigenous communities in its ability to enable significant change has been recognised, with demands for delivery rising.

In recognition of the literature and important value of "Family Well Being", AIFS applied this term in preference to "Domestic Violence". AIFS also adopted an abridged version of the Family Well-Being training in South Australia because of its successful outcomes in that State. Finally, AIFS contracted the services of Wendy Warner,[3] a Yankunytjata/ Pitantjatjata woman from Adelaide who is an experienced practitioner/trainer of the accredited Family Well-Being Modules in South Australia to deliver training in Tasmania. This was in collaboration with AIFS' workers Marlene Burchill (Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Werong woman) and Liz Orr both social workers, and Colleen Turner, a psychologist, and senior researchers. Both Burchill and Orr come with many years of experience working in Aboriginal communities.

Creating change for Aboriginal communities in Tasmania meant targeting researchers with a track record in working with Aboriginal people, who were skilled and highly sensitive about their needs, and knowledgeable about the community's history, and who were more explicitly confident to take the lead to generate change for Aboriginal people.

(c) Project Methodology

Community involvement was essential in delivering "Family Well-Being" Training in Tasmania. According to Stuart (1998), there are benefits in respondents participating in research particularly those in under-represented groups previously denied access. He also argues that the principles of social justice strongly support a "participatory action research" paradigm because many projects deal with marginalised groups. Recruitment

The focus of the project was to target Aboriginal people working in agencies that provide support to members of the Aboriginal community. In keeping with the assumption that workers and clients face similar issues in the Aboriginal community, AIFS members (involved in the study) sought views from Aboriginal workers employed in government and non-government organisations. This included Elders, Aboriginal reference groups and non-Aboriginal government representatives.

Promotional activities took place in the form of invitations and flyers that were sent to Aboriginal organisations and government agencies to distribute in Tasmania. Forty people

registered to attend the two day Family Well-Being Training Forums in Burnie, Hobart and Launceston.

One vital aspect of the training was that AIFS' members with their combined skills brought the training to the community instead of requiring the community to travel to the mainland. The team was also flexible in their approach to the community's ways and needs. The training itself took place by way of "information forums" where a highly skilled Aboriginal facilitator together with AIFS' members presented the "Family Well-Being" training in Tasmania.

Consultation Vital Consultation took place between TRAC, Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal Reference Groups, Aboriginal community representatives and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organisations. Importantly, the project team attempted to reach and inform the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal organisations in Tasmania and the islands about the intended project and invited their participation.

The task of gathering information to develop "accredited domestic violence" training for Aboriginal workers took place over several months. The project took place over five phases.
Phase-One: Led by Liz Orr and Colleen Turner and Marlene Burchill, three senior researchers from AIFS in Melbourne, and later joined by Wendy Warner the Aboriginal Family Well-Being trainer from Adelaide. This team came together to develop links with major key stakeholders concerned with establishing domestic violence training.
Phase-Two: The inclusion stage; meaning proactively including those otherwise "silent voices" in communities often silenced by key players (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), and listening to their concerns and acting on those concerns whilst still maintaining positive partnerships with all those involved.
Phase-Three: Organising two day "Family Well-Being Forums" in Burnie, Hobart and Launceston.
Phase Four: Presenting the "Family Well-Being Forums in Burnie, Hobart and Launceston.
Phase Five: Final report of findings titled *Proposal to Build Sustainable Aboriginal Family*

Well-Being Training in Tasmania submitted to Family and Community Services Tasmania, March, 2005.

Pre-planning involved several site visits to Tasmania to meet those involved to discuss the processes involved with gaining accredited training. While the pre-planning stages were vital for positive outcomes, equally important for AIFS' members was getting to know those involved in the project and to maintain regular communication between all parties. In return AIFS' members were rewarded for their efforts and gained the respect and support of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people involved in the project. Many interacted with AIFS' members at community events and "checked them out".

(d)   Project Delivery
Forty people[4] enrolled in the Family Well-Being Forums held in Tasmania. All participants provided written feedback on the progress of the forums.

Wendy Warner's presentation of the Family Well-Being modules was confronting and challenging. It was also presented with deep compassion and insight. This culturally sensitive approach served to assist Aboriginal people to understand and challenge the behaviour that prevents us from moving forward as individuals. As previously outlined, Wendy Warner presented an abridged version of the "Family Well-Being" modules. This began with "basic needs".

Basic Needs Whether we are "black, white, red or yellow" we all have certain basic needs that must be met in order for us to survive. If these needs are not met, we will die or else will cease to function on a positive psychological, sociological, or emotional level.

In this instance the four components of "basic needs" presented to participants were: *spiritual, physical, mental* and *emotional* well-being. This led to the participants discussing issues to consider, things like; self care, stability in their communities, culture and personal care.

The Outcome of the Family Well-Being Training in Tasmania.

The support and efforts of many people in Tasmania led to the implementation of Family Well-Being Forums in Burnie, Launceston and

Hobart. These forums ran over a two day period at each site and were presented at Tafe colleges. It was decided that more Aboriginal people would enrol if a "neutral" site was selected to conduct the forums.

The successful engagement of community participants in Tasmania demonstrated in this project relied on the openly discussed commitment of the project team – the fact that they shared personal experiences in the forums, demonstrated they would persevere and be respectful of historical difficulties and division, that they would work in an inclusive and open manner and that they acknowledged the limits and strength of the project team being both outsider and insiders in some ways.[5]

Aboriginal people participating in the Tasmanian forums were challenged to think more broadly about the reason why Aboriginal people continue to struggle in a cycle that has continued for generations. This approach set the scene and provided an anchor for the facilitators to speak honestly and openly about their own personal experiences of domestic violence or abuse. This opened the way for participants to begin sharing their experiences, pain and traumatic events that have taken place within their own families or other Aboriginal families living in their communities. This is unlikely to have been achieved if all the project team were non-Aboriginal.

Proposal to build sustainable Aboriginal Family Well-Being Training in Tasmania

The accredited Family Well-Being training is not available to Aboriginal people residing in Tasmania at this point in time. The Curriculum for the training remains the property of Adelaide Tafe College, South Australia. While the Aboriginal people involved in the Family Well-Being project in Tasmania call for the implementation of the Family Well-Being Training, the implementation of the accredited training is currently with the Department of Family and Community Service, Tasmania.

Wendy Warner, the practitioner and Family Well-Being trainer is prepared to move to Tasmania and teach the training to Aboriginal people interested in enrolling in the course. She is prepared to travel to the Tafe Colleges at Hobart, Launceston and Burnie and train people over a three year period until they have completed all of the modules in the Family Well-Being training. Once qualified and confident, Aboriginal people will be

encouraged take control on their own accredited Family Well-Being training in Tasmania.

Once implemented, accredited training will require completion of four components of the Family Well-Being Certificates. On completion and fulfillment of these components, students will graduate with a Diploma of Family Well-Being. The course can only be offered through registered organisations and facilitated by a qualified Aboriginal Family Well-Being Trainer.

Once FaCS in Tasmania has finalised this matter,[6] it is hoped that accredited training will be implemented at Tafe Colleges in Tasmania in areas where the highest number of Aboriginal people resided such as Burnie, Launceston and Hobart.

Lessons

For the SFLEX team the key to creating change refers to working alongside people and supporting people to come up with their own ideas about creating change rather than arriving in the community and telling Aboriginal people what to do and how to go about it. It means gaining the confidence and trust of others regarding your style, the decisions that you make, and your ability to take people with you on your journey.

Burchill, (2005), offers some words of advice for non-Aboriginal people planning to work in Aboriginal communities.

> *A positive Indigenous community development model must incorporate 'yarning up not down'. Yarning up relates to "yarning for outcomes" rather than speaking down to Aboriginal people. Yarning down is an indication that the outsider knows best, or take control of the outcomes for Aboriginal people. Well meaning people come to work with us but they do the work for us and we haven't learnt how to do it (p.8).*

Another experience that stifles progressive community development outcomes is when funding organisations expect us to do things their way, but sometimes this means we lose control of the

work. They take their stories, end a project, and then we are left to deal with what is left. This can be hard work for us especially when they have written and developed a new program in their "flash language".[7]
Some feedback from the forums

Participants were aware of the personal commitment necessary for themselves to begin creating change within their communities. There was a cry for help with many participants reporting comments such as "we need the well-being training" . Another suggested the Family Well-Being forums created a "positive ripple effect, safe place to explore self, learn and then take to the community". One other participant said:
 "We will grasp all tools possible to reach the depth we need as a person and community to achieve well-being".

Conclusion

On a national level Family violence in Aboriginal communities has reached a climate of despair for all and the acceptance of this abuse is difficult for many to comprehend. Kelly (2001), an Aboriginal woman herself, provides an important explanation for this acceptance through interviews with other Aboriginal women, stating that many Aboriginal women accepted the abusive behaviour perpetrated on them as being normal. One of the women who took part in Kelly's research stated that, "its part of being black isn't it? And it's so commonplace – there is nothing remarkable about it"?

Professor Judy Atkinson (2002) argues that the acceptance of abuse has become the norm in families where there has been a cumulative intergenerational impact of trauma on trauma expressing themselves in present generations in violence on self and others.

I have been a practitioner for a number of years and a researcher for five years, working across Australia and in a Healing Agency ín Canada and within Aboriginal communities. Because I was Aboriginal, people felt that they could trust me. For this reason I was told their deep and meaningful stories. Interacting with the Aboriginal people in Tasmania was not different. These personal experiences were things that they probably

would not have told to someone who was not Aboriginal or who was an organisational worker. By listening to these otherwise silent voices I came to understand much more about the issues that they confront.

A window of opportunity for real action and change exists in Tasmania. This was a result of consultation with Indigenous groups and the involvement of skilled Indigenous people who had extensive backgrounds in healing, research and training. It was largely due to the ability of the trainers/facilitators to put forward their own experiences of violence and abuse that removed the shame and isolation of these issues. This opened dialogue that would have otherwise not been shared.

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Notes

[1] *Victorian Indigenous family violence task force final report*, December, 2003 (acknowledgement section).

[2] The Family Well-Being Certificate has been in operation for the past 12 years in South Australia and is now extended to additional levels. Increasing levels of demand and significant changes in Indigenous communities reflect the great value of the program (Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology. Course Developers, GPO Box 819, Adelaide, SA 5001, p.31).

[3] Wendy Warner has been instrumental in teaching Family Well-Being in South Australia for the past 12 years.

[4] Thirty-one females and nine males registered to attend the forums.

[5] Being non–Aboriginal and being non-Tasman Aboriginal positioned all of the members of the project team as outsider. Being Aboriginal built important links and provided insider status.

[6] Based on the outcomes of the Family Well-Being Forums and consultation with key stakeholders a comprehensive implementation and evaluation framework was developed. A three year time line was required to ensure sustainability of accredited training in Tasmania. The Final Evaluation and Action Plan was submitted to the Tasmanian Department of Family Services in March, 2005.

[7] When people write or speak in words that are difficult to understand rather that use language spoken or written in plain English, then Aboriginal people call it "flash language", "flash words" and such people are "flash talkers". This often generates resentment causing Aboriginal people to exclude these people whatever race.

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Turning Indigenous Secondary Students' Educational Disadvantage Around: How Psychologists can Begin to Make a Real Difference

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All Australian governments for decades have acknowledged that Indigenous students are the most disadvantaged Australians based upon a plethora of objective indicators including education which predicates life opportunities. Australian psychologists serving in a diversity of vital roles (e.g., school counselling, clinical psychology, academic research) have failed to adequately address this situation. This paper summarises the results of a study commissioned by the Department of Education, Science, and Training that was designed to: a) evaluate the self-concepts of Indigenous secondary students; b) identify Indigenous students' aspirations; c) elucidate Indigenous students' perceptions of barriers faced in attaining their aspirations; and d) compare and contrast the pattern of results for Indigenous students (N=517) to results for non-Indigenous students from the same schools (N=1151). Indigenous students displayed statistically significantly lower academic (school, maths, verbal) self-concepts, and aspirations in comparison to non-Indigenous peers. Indigenous students also rated 9 potential barriers with significantly higher scores compared to non-Indigenous students. The results of this investigation and the recommendations to the Commonwealth emanating from this study provide a potential turning point for strengthening Indigenous education. This paper focuses particularly on the implications of the findings for career education, family counselling, and psychological research.

Indigenous students do not enjoy educational outcomes commensurate with their non-Indigenous peers. Given education predicates life's successes, Indigenous Australians remain the most disadvantaged Australians across a plethora of socio-economic indicators. Rarely have psychological constructs been seen as potentially potent determinants of desirable educational outcomes. Yet educational psychology research with non-Indigenous students has demonstrated that specific psychological constructs impact causally upon desirable educational outcomes. For example, Marsh & Craven, (1997; in press) based on their reciprocal effects model *(REM)* and Valentine, DuBois, and Cooper's (2004) meta-analysis have demonstrated that prior academic self-concept (as opposed to self-esteem; see Marsh, Craven, & Martin, in press) and achievement each have positive effects on subsequent measures of the same constructs. They concluded that "REM research demonstrates that self-concept and performance are reciprocally related and mutually reinforcing. Improved self-concepts will lead to better performance **and** improved performance will lead to better self-

concepts" (Marsh & Craven, in press). Enhancing students' self-concepts has also been identified as an important goal of schooling in of itself as well as a "hot" causal variable that impacts upon a plethora of important educational outcomes (Craven, Marsh & Burnett, 2003). This pervasive importance of self-concept has also been espoused by Aboriginal education organizations (see Craven & Tucker, in press) and in Commonwealth reports (eg., National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1995; Purdie, Tripcony, Boulton-Lewis, Fanshawe, & Gunstone, 2000). However given the paucity of Aboriginal education research particularly in the schooling sector little is known about the nature and role of psychological constructs in relation to informing intervention for Indigenous students.

In the present investigation we addressed some of the above concerns by: (a) evaluating the self-concepts of Indigenous secondary students; (b) identifying Indigenous students' aspirations; (c) elucidating Indigenous students' perceptions of barriers faced in attaining their aspirations; and (d) comparing and contrasting the pattern of results for Indigenous students to results for non-Indigenous students from the same schools. The

implications of the study provide an important challenge for psychologists which are the focus of this paper.

Method
Participants
The research design adopted in the present investigation selected participants by recruiting Indigenous and non-Indigenous students from the same schools and geographic regions in the States of Western Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales. This sampling design, in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous students were selected from the same schools and geographic regions, enabled a strong matched research design. Participants included Indigenous and non-Indigenous secondary school students with the majority aged 14 years and over. A total of 1686 students (517 Indigenous and 1151 Non-Indigenous) from urban and rural regions participated in the quantitative component of the larger study.

Instrumentation
We utilised a newly developed short form of the SDQII Self Description Questionnaire II (the SDQII-S) to measure self-concept. This instrument is a brief version of the SDQII (Marsh, 1990) designed for use with adolescents aged 12 to 18. As with other versions of the SDQ, the SDQII-S is based on the multidimensional and hierarchical model of self-concept posited by Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976). The short form contains half of the original items from the SDQII (Marsh, 1990) and retains all 11 of its self-concept factors. The short form contains 51 items, 20 of which are negatively worded. In keeping with the SDQII, all items are scored on a 6-point Likert response scale (1 = False; 6 = True). Ellis, Marsh, and Richards (2002) have demonstrated that the new short form has good psychometric properties (reliability and factor structure) with secondary school students. In their study, reliabilities were consistently high for the 11 SDQII-S factors and multiple group confirmatory factor analyses demonstrated that the factor structure based on responses to the short form were invariant with the factor structure based on responses to the original 102-item SDQII.

We also designed a multi-item multi-scale survey (see Appendix 1.1 in Craven, Tucker, Munns, Hinkley, Marsh, and Simpson, 2005). Of particular interest to this investigation we measured students' ratings of their aspirations in multiple facets and their ratings of a series of potential barriers they may face in achieving their aspirations.

Procedures
The survey was administered orally in a standardised format by an Indigenous senior research assistant to Indigenous and non-Indigenous secondary students who volunteered to participate in the study based on informed consent. Intact classes or year groups of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students were administered the survey in a school classroom or hall.

Statistical Analyses
A series of ANOVAs were undertaken to test for differences between multiple domains of self-concept, multiple aspects of students' schooling, further education, and employment and aspirations, and students' perceptions of barriers that may stop or prevent them from achieving their aspirations whereby scores for Indigenous students were compared to scores of non-Indigenous students. These preliminary analyses also contribute to addressing the dearth of empirically sound research studies in the Aboriginal Education research literature, identified as a crucial concern by Commonwealth-commissioned studies (e.g., Bin-Sallik, Blomeley, Flowers, & Hughes; 1994a; 1994b; Bin-Sallik, 2005; Bourke, Dow & Lucas, 1994; Craven & Parente, 2003; Craven & Tucker, in press) and a recent review of Aboriginal Education research (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004).

Results and Discussion
Self-Concept
Statistically significant main effects were present for appearance, general, physical, and art self-concept, whereby Indigenous students scores were higher compared to non-Indigenous students' scores (see Table 1). Significant differences were also present for math, school, verbal, honesty, emotional, opposite sex and same sex relations self-concept, whereby scores

for Indigenous students were lower compared to scores for non-Indigenous students (see Table 1). No significant differences were present for parent self-concept. These results emphasise the importance of accounting for the multidimensionality of the self-concept construct (see Marsh & Craven, 1997) in that Indigenous participants displayed higher self-concepts in the stereotypical facets of art and physical self-concept as well as general and appearance self-concept but Indigenous students' self-concepts were lower compared to non-Indigenous students' scores for academic facets of self-concept (math, school, verbal), peer relations (opposite sex, and same sex relations) and honesty, emotional self-concept. These results are also of concern in that they demonstrate that for 7 of 11 facets of self-concept measured, Indigenous students had lower self-concept compared to their non-Indigenous peers.

Schooling Aspirations

Students were asked to respond to the question 'When would you like to leave school?' by choosing one of three options: 'As soon as I can', 'before I finish the last year of school', or 'after I finish the last year of school'. Indigenous students' scored significantly lower on the overall mean scores (*M*=2.58) compared to mean scores for non-Indigenous students (*M*=2.66). These results suggest that Indigenous students were more likely to aspire to leave school earlier than non-Indigenous students (see Figure 1).

Post-School Aspirations

Students were also asked to respond to the question 'What would you like to do after you leave school?' by choosing one of seven options: Go to university, go to TAFE for job training, get a job, work for the CDEP (Community Development Employment Programme, work for unemployment benefits), home duties, go on the dole, or other (see Figure 2). The highest percentage of Indigenous students (*n=189, 37.1%*) aimed to get a job after leaving school whilst the highest percentage of non-Indigenous students (*n=660*, 44.4%) aimed to go to university, although a significant proportion of Indigenous students (*n=153,* 30.1%) shared this aspiration. A higher percentage of Indigenous students (24.6%) compared to non-Indigenous students (19.4%) aimed to go to TAFE. A small number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students also aimed to undertake home duties or seek unemployment benefits. These results are interesting in that they suggest Indigenous students' preferences for further education are

Table 1

Mean Self-Concept Scores for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Students

	Indigenous n = 524		Non-Indigenous n = 1149		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig
Parent	4.95*	1.09	4.84	1.18	
General	4.88**	.86	4.74	.94	**
Physical	4.85	1.07	4.45	1.30	**
Same sex	4.72	1.08	4.99	.92	***
Opposite sex	4.46	1.16	4.61	1.11	*
Art	4.28	1.66	3.61	1.78	***
School	4.21	1.08	4.37	1.14	**
Appearance	4.13	1.42	3.83	1.41	**
Honesty	4.12	1.07	4.36	1.03	**
Verbal	3.81	1.30	3.94	1.32	*
Math	3.60	1.32	3.76	1.48	*
Emotional	3.35	1.27	3.69	1.28	**

Note. * p < .05, p<.01, ***p<.001 – indicate statistically significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous means.

Table 2

Breakdown of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' perceptions in regard to the amount of thought given to post-school preferences.

| | How much thought have you given to job or career and further training or education you will require | | | | |
	Don't know much	Will in next 6 months	Worked out my career options	Will work hard at my subjects for future	Total
Indigenous					
count	119	106	116	128	469
% within	25.4	22.6	2407	27.3	100
non-Indigenous					
count	187	212	382	320	1101
%within	17.0	19.3	3407	29.1	100
Total					
Count	306	318	498	448	1570
%within	19.5	20.3	3107	28.5	100
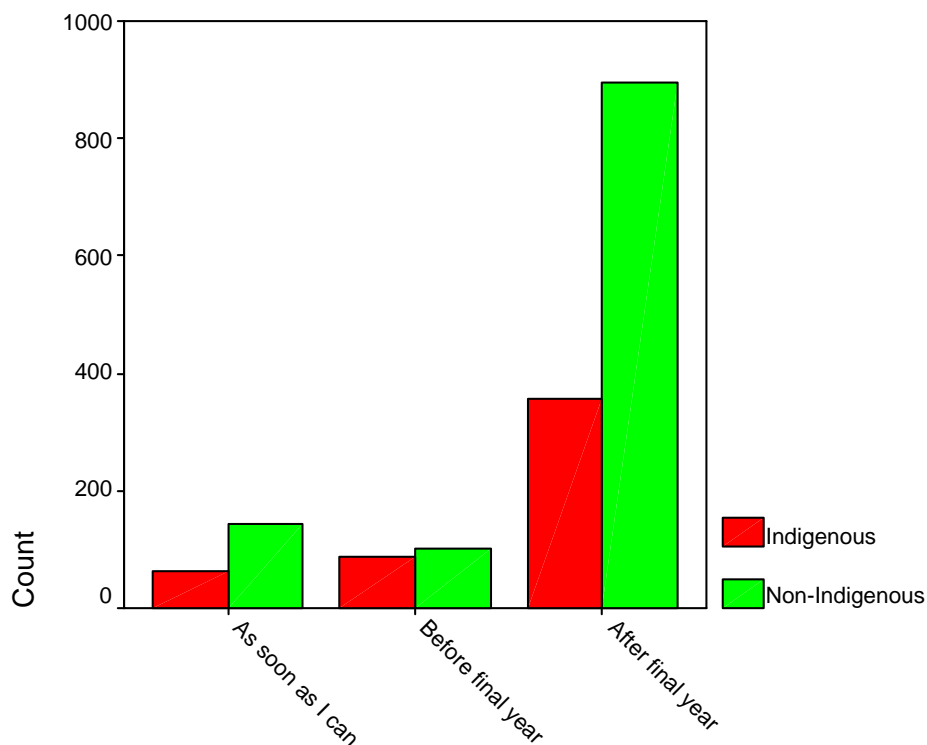
Note. Indigenous students' scored significantly lower on the overall mean scores (*M*=2.58) compared to mean scores for non-Indigenous students (*M*=2.66), indicating that they were more likely to aspire to leave school earlier than non-Indigenous students.

Figure 1: Graph of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' schooling goals

Figure 2: Graph of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' post-school aspirations

changing and are being directed to the TAFE sector (see Figure 2).

Students were also asked to indicate how much thought they had given to their post-school aspirations (see Table 2 and Figure 3). Whilst 52% of Indigenous students reported being knowledgeable about their career choice and selection of appropriate subjects to achieve their aspirations, 63.8% of non-Indigenous students were aware. As such 11.8% of Indigenous students were less likely to have identified t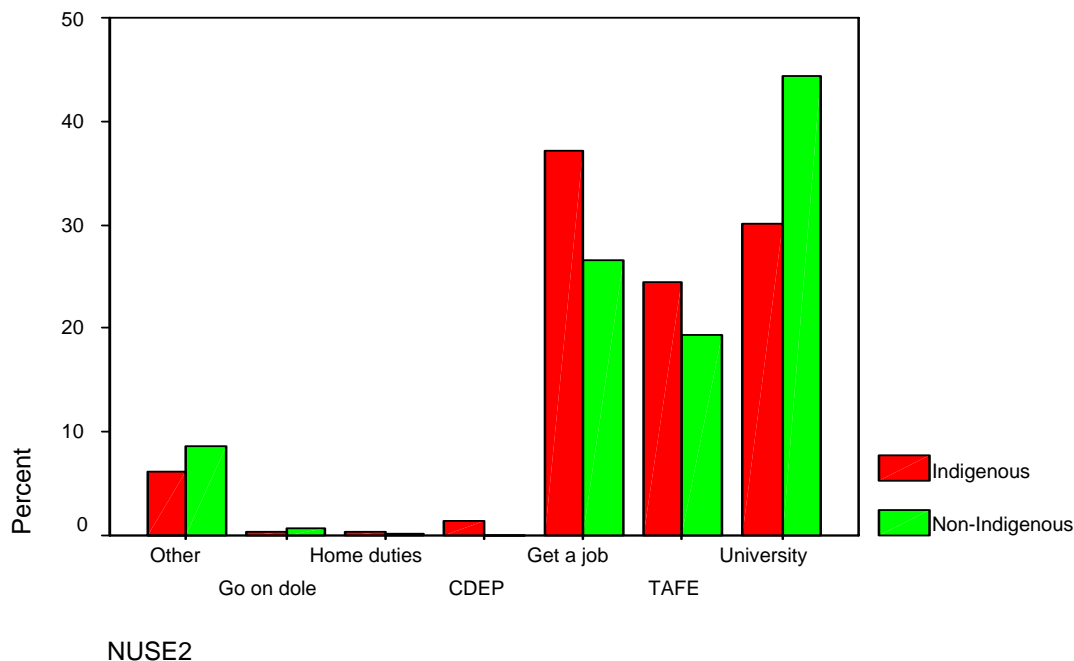heir future options and selected appropriate subjects compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. These results suggest that the knowledge base underpinning preferences for Indigenous students seems weaker than the knowledge base for non-Indigenous students.

Barriers to Achieving Aspirations

Students were asked to rate the extent to which they felt 9 factors (support of teachers, support of family, school absences, school achievement, availability of further education facilities, available job opportunities, employer attitudes, knowledge of what further education or job training advice they needed to achieve their goals, amount of career advice they had received) might limit or stop them from achieving what they wanted to do after they left school on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1

'not at all' to 5 'a great deal'.

Family support, followed by the amount of career advice they had been given, their knowledge of what further education or job training they needed to do, and their academic achievement were key barriers identified for Indigenous students (see Table 3). Non-Indigenous students also saw family support as a key barrier but the mean score was significantly lower than for Indigenous students and rated their record of achievement at school as the next largest barrier (see Table 3). These results are disturbing in that they suggest that the amount of support and encouragement students are receiving from family may limit students from achieving their aspirations. Based on ANOVAs, Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students rated all barriers with higher scores in regard to limiting or stopping them from achieving their aspirations (see Figure 4). These results suggest Indigenous students in contrast to non-Indigenous students anticipate a plethora of barriers in the process of trying to achieve their goals.

Implications

Academic self-concept scores were statistically significantly lower in comparison to scores for non-Indigenous students. This is of concern as self-concept research has established a clear mutually reinforcing relation between self-

Table 3
Mean Scores for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Students' Ratings of Barriers to Achieve their Aspirations and Results of ANOVA

	Indigenous n = 461		non-Indigenous n = 1063		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Sig
Family support	3.98	1.37	3.54	1.52	**
Career advice	3.84	1.29	3.41	1.36	**
Achievement	3.78	1.15	3.52	1.29	**
Knowledge	3.78	1.32	3.48	1.36	**
Facilities	3.73	1.31	3.39	1.39	**
Employer attitudes	3.63	1.26	2.96	1.52	**
Job opportunities	3.60	1.28	3.36	1.28	**
Teacher support	3.54	1.32	3.14	1.34	**
Absences	3.30	1.23	2.93	1.25	**
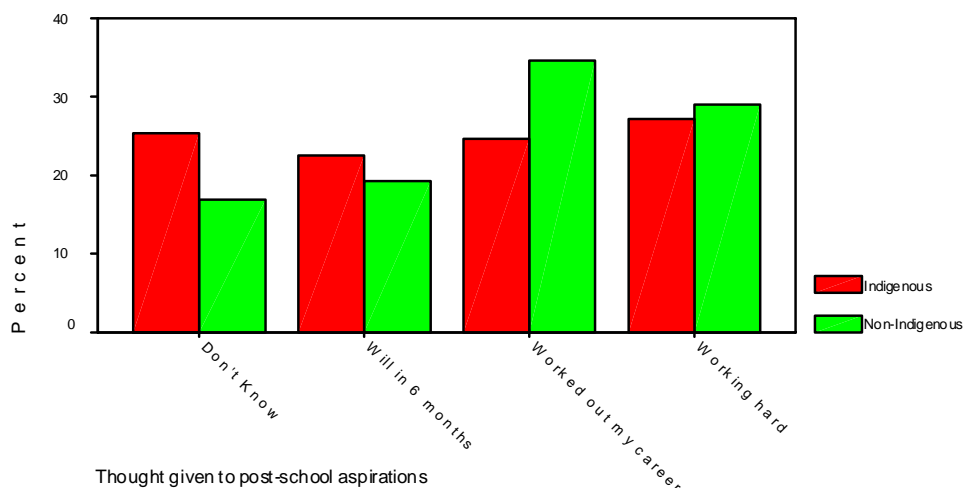
Note. Indigenous students' scored significantly lower on the overall mean scores (*M*=2.54) compared to mean scores for non-Indigenous students (*M*=2.76), indicating that they were less likely to have considered their aspirations.

Figure 3: Graph of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students' perceptions in regard to the amount of thought given to post-school preferences

concept and achievement (see Craven et al., 2003) whereby long lasting gains in achievement are unlikely unless there are associated gains in specific facets of academic self-concept. Hence enhancing Indigenous students' academic self-concepts in specific academic domains (e.g., Verbal, Maths) is a potentially potent and viable new solution to underpin intervention. Hence it is suggested that school psychologists could readily implement self-concept interventions (e.g., Craven, Marsh, & Debus, 1991) to meet individual needs and also consider implementing whole-school interventions to maximize the academic self-concepts of Indigenous students in a wide variety of academic areas.

Statistically significantly more Indigenous students in this study aspired to leaving school early and going to TAFE in comparison to non-Indigenous students and more non-Indigenous students aspired to go to university in comparison to Indigenous students. These results are consistent with those reported in government reports (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, 2003) and suggest that the TAFE sector has been successful in recruiting Indigenous students. However, given higher education predicates life opportunities, it is of concern that fewer Indigenous students aspire to enter university. Based on qualitative research associated with this study (Craven et al., 2005), Indigenous students
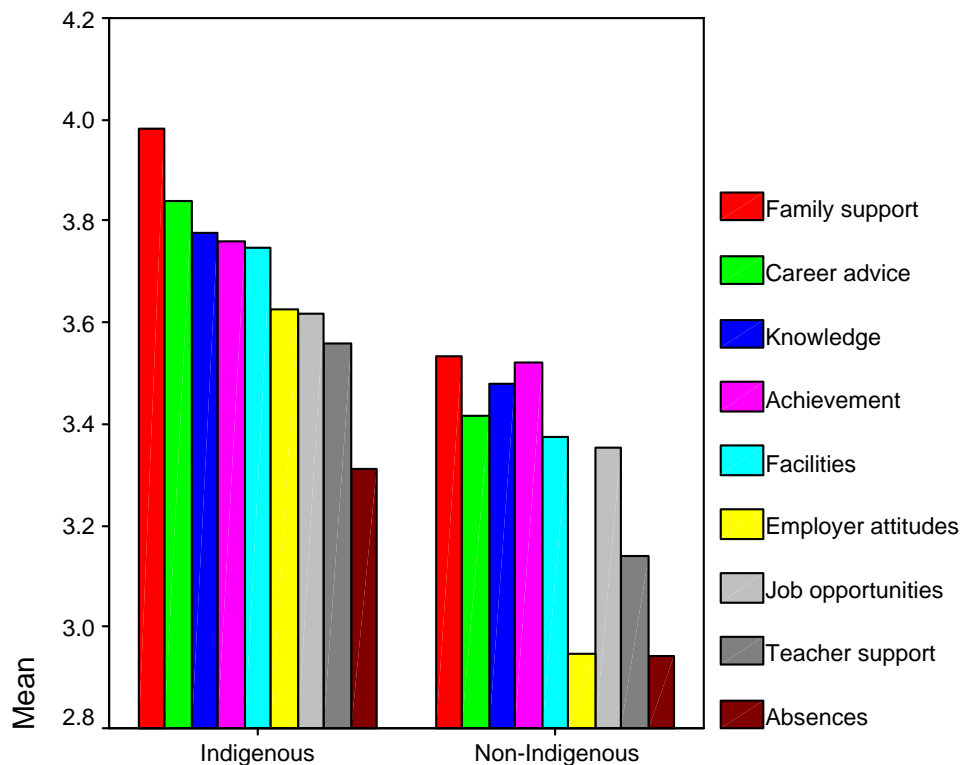
Note. Significant differences were present for all variables, whereby Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students rated all barriers with higher scores in regard to limiting or stopping them from achieving their aspirations.

Figure 4: Graph of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students' ratings in regards to barriers against achieving their aspirations

tended to set their schooling and post-schooling aspirations at lower levels compared to their non-Indigenous peers. These results suggest that psychologists could assist Indigenous students set and attain higher aspirations according to their individual interests, including strategies that encourage more Indigenous students to achieve entry to successfully complete university.

Indigenous students in comparison to non-Indigenous students were also less likely to know much about what sort of job or further education they would like to undertake. There was also often a mismatch between what type of job they desired and knowledge of school subjects and further education to achieve espoused aspirations. Clearly, the knowledge base underpinning post-schooling preferences for Indigenous students is significantly weaker than the knowledge base for non-Indigenous students. These results suggest that psychologists could assist Indigenous students to develop a stronger knowledge foundation to serve as a basis for shaping and casting

achievable aspirations. It is also recommended that the place and quality of the career education curriculum in the secondary school needs to be strengthened particularly early in the secondary years so that appropriate pathways are clearly established prior to Indigenous students being required to select secondary subjects relevant to their aspirations.

Statistically significant differences were present between ratings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in relation to family support and eight other potential barriers whereby Indigenous students perceived these as greater barriers compared to non-Indigenous students. As such Indigenous students in contrast to non-Indigenous students anticipate many barriers in the process of trying to achieve their aspirations. Findings from the qualitative component of this study (see Craven et al., in press) found that successful Indigenous students had developed a number of adaptive psychological tools to facilitate the achievement of their aspirations including the development of resiliency, high academic self-concept, and a determination to

succeed. Hence it is suggested that identifying potential barriers and formulating solutions with individuals would be a potentially useful strategy to assist students achieve their aspirations along with implementing effective strategies to optimise student resiliency, academic self-concept, and determination to succeed.

Summary

The implications emanating from the study findings summarised above have the potential to facilitate new potentially potent interventions for Indigenous students. To translate the findings of the study into action is a vital challenge. Clearly it seems beneficial to draw upon the extant psychological literature to develop such programmes (e.g., Craven, Marsh, & Burnett, 2003); fully evaluate the success of such programmes by rigorous research to extend theory, research and practice; and ensure students' psychological well-being can be 'shored up' as both an intervention and preventive strategy. The partial findings of this study outlined above suggest that there is much work to be done to make Indigenous Australians' dreams a reality and that psychologists can make a real difference in achieving such a challenging aim.

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Benchmarking the teaching of Australian Indigenous content in undergraduate psychology

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This paper discusses a teaching and learning project on incorporating Australian Indigenous content into psychology undergraduate programs. After the impetus generated by the Head of Schools meeting in Perth in 1998 and the publication of the special issue of the Australian Psychologist on Psychology and Indigenous peoples in 2000, little progress seems to have been made. The paper discusses the process of developing curriculum guidelines for psychology academics wishing to include Indigenous content. These include the need to critically examine the assumptions and history of Western psychology in relation to Indigenous peoples, the inclusion of non-conventional teaching and learning methods, staff and institutional support, and appropriate staff development. While we have been encouraged by the growing support for this process, there are also significant obstacles, including rigidity of thinking about psychology programs and the attitude that it is all too hard. It is important to get this right, since the token inclusion of Indigenous material into otherwise mainstream Western psychology courses will be ineffective in bringing about the required understanding for psychology students wishing to work with Indigenous people in their professional careers and bring about social justice.

Introduction

This paper describes the origins, progress, and next steps in a long-term project to develop curriculum guidelines to teach psychology students the skills and knowledge required to work effectively with Indigenous people. This is a collaborative project, initially between the Unaipon School (the school of Indigenous studies) and the School of Psychology at the University of South Australia, which has grown to involve an increasing number of other academics and stakeholders. Whatever success we have had so far could not have been achieved without the committed involvement of Indigenous people in South Australia and other states. It is also important to acknowledge that this project builds on work undertaken in the last ten years by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University and members of the Australian Psychological Society to raise awareness and skills in this area (Australian Psychological Society, 1997; Dudgeon, Garvey, & Pickett, 2000).

Beginnings

This project began early in 2003 when two of the authors (Keith McConnochie and Rob Ranzijn) had a brief discussion about the virtual absence of Indigenous content in the psychology programs at University of South Australia apart from a compulsory course, at that time at second year level, on cultural diversity in Australia. The accreditation guidelines of the Australian Psychological Society, which accredits all psychology programs in Australia, refer to the need for undergraduate psychology programs to include, at both introductory and advanced levels, some coverage of "Indigenous psychology." However, there is no specification

in the guidelines of what that means or how to implement it. (The term 'Indigenous psychology' is problematic and a potential barrier in itself because of the connotations for Indigenous people of the word 'psychology' for historical reasons, but discussing this issue would take up more space than is available in this paper).

Over the following year Wendy Nolan and Andy Day joined the discussion, and early in 2004 the project team developed preliminary ideas about two course proposals. The first is a compulsory first year course, based on one of the electives currently taught to psychology students by the Unaipon school (the School of Aboriginal and Islander Studies at UniSA), re-designed specifically for psychology students. The second course is a new third-year course, building on the first-year course, designed to give students graduating with a three-year psychology degree some basic skills and understanding to enable them to work with Indigenous people in the course of their professional lives (more details of these courses later in this paper).

At this time we also applied for, and received, a teaching and learning grant to expand the scope beyond just developing psychology courses to include a benchmarking component to inform academics from other disciplines wishing to incorporate Indigenous content into their programs. This grant enabled us to employ a research assistant and travel interstate to consult more widely.

Audit of psychology programs

As part of this grant we conducted an Internet-based audit of the schools of psychology throughout Australia to see what was being done to teach Australian Indigenous content in psychology programs. We found that, with very few exceptions, most psychology schools did not include Indigenous content at all, and the few that did mostly included it as part of a course on multicultural issues. However, we did discover that Chris Sonn, currently at Victoria University in Melbourne, had in the past few years mounted courses specifically on psychology and Indigenous people. Looking through his course content gave us more ideas for our own courses. We were particularly impressed by his teaching methods, which he had developed over some years of working with

Darren Garvey who works at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University in Perth (Sonn, 2004; Sonn, Garvey, Bishop, & Smith, 2000). In brief, this included the placing of the content of the courses within a critical psychology framework which questioned the appropriateness of the mainstream (primarily North American and Western European) assumptions which guide most psychological teaching and practice and the need for students to critically reflect on their experiences and reactions as they progress through the courses.

Reference group meeting

Since we were developing new courses specifically incorporating Indigenous content, we needed to have input from relevant and appropriate people working with Indigenous people. Before we went further down the path of course development, in November 2004 we convened a reference group of ten people, six of them Indigenous. Consulting a reference group including local Indigenous people is absolutely critical to success in any project of this kind (Australian Psychological Society, 2003). We asked them to comment on the skills and knowledge that they thought psychologists working with Indigenous people needed to possess, and how those skills and that knowledge could best be taught. This meeting was extremely productive and resulted in many useful suggestions for both course content and teaching practices, many of which are feeding into the curriculum guidelines that will be one of the outcomes of this project.

Road trip

Around the same time Keith and Rob went on the road. They met with Melbourne academics who had tried to introduce Indigenous content into their programs and also visited the head office of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) here in Melbourne. That visit resulted in an in-principle commitment from the APS to support our efforts in developing national curriculum guidelines to help Australian schools of psychology implement the APS requirement of incorporating Indigenous content. Rob also met Chris Sonn for the first time, who very generously shared his ideas and expertise, and out of that discussion Rob and Chris developed the idea of organising a national workshop. In

early December Rob travelled to Perth to participate in a workshop on the ethics of undertaking research into Indigenous mental health. This was organised by Tracey Westerman, the only Indigenous person in Australia with a PhD in clinical psychology (and one of only about six Indigenous psychologists in the whole of Australia). He also met Pat Dudgeon and Darren Garvey at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin, who also supported the idea of a national workshop. Consequently we applied for, and won, a second grant specifically to run the workshop.

New courses at UniSA

In the meantime we continued the process of developing the first- and third-year courses and getting them through the approval process. This was completed in May 2005, and the new courses will be offered for the first time in 2006. It may be useful to give some description of these courses. The first-year course, 'Indigenous Australians: Culture and Colonisation', will be compulsory for all first-year psychology students and will be taught by the Unaipon School. It is designed to give psychology students a good background in the history and contemporary context of Indigenous Australians and the psychological consequences of colonisation and dispossession, with particular reference to the past, present and future role of psychologists and the profession of psychology.

The third-year course, 'Psychology and Indigenous Peoples', is an elective course at this time (we would like it to be compulsory in the future if possible), to be taught in seminar format to classes with a maximum of fifteen students. In addition to theoretical content, this course will have a critical element (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, & Misra, 1996; Riggs, 2004), deconstructing the history and politics of the role of psychology in Indigenous lives (Sonn, 2004) and including a consideration of the role of the profession in helping to bring about social justice. It will be largely experiential, including field trips to Indigenous organisations and the inclusion of Indigenous guest speakers. A large part of the assessment will be a reflective journal in which the students will record their impressions and the ways in which they are being challenged by the course.

The ongoing involvement of members of

the reference group and other stakeholders is essential for the sustainability of these courses. We also feel that strong institutional support, from the university, the school, and the APS, are essential to overcome the barriers in developing and implementing such courses and particularly to ensure that they continue beyond more than a few years.

From the comments of the reference group and other professionals, it has become clear that there is also a great need for a Masters-level course. It is also evident, in comments from participants in the workshop described below that there is also a great deficit in skills in working with Indigenous people among psychologists already in the field.

While we were developing our course proposals, and in the lead-up to the workshop, one of our reference group members drew our attention to the national curriculum guidelines produced by the Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools (CDAMS) over the last few years (Phillips, 2004). We were very interested to read the CDAMS documents which, with some differences due to the different disciplines, accorded with the guidelines and principles we were developing for the psychology project. The CDAMS project was initiated by Indigenous doctors, who had recognised that the instruction given in medical schools about working with Indigenous people was inadequate. We thought it would be useful to get input from the CDAMS project and consequently invited Dr Tamara Mackean, one of the participants in that project, to speak at our workshop.

Workshop: 'Psychology and Indigenous Australians: Effective Teaching and Practice'

The workshop was held on July 22nd at Nunkuwarrin Yunti, the Adelaide location of the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Service and other community services and facilities. The purpose was two-fold: to obtain wider input from the field, including interstate perspectives, about course content and teaching methods, and to initiate a support and resource network to assist other academics in developing appropriate courses in their institutions. Invitations were sent, via the Heads of Schools of Psychology around Australia, to interested academics and also, via other networks, to

practising psychologists, students, Indigenous workers, and other interested people. We received financial and other support from the Aboriginal Health Division (SA), Mental Health Services (SA), the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (Commonwealth), and the Australian Psychological Society. There were 80 participants, including fifteen people from other Australian states. It was a very rich experience, and very challenging for many. The workshop was facilitated by Darren Garvey from Curtin University.

The feature of the morning session was a series of five panel presentations, four of them by Indigenous people, presenting their perspectives on such topics as the role of the profession of psychology, psychological assessment, psychological intervention, and barriers to working effectively with Indigenous people. The presentations were very moving and powerful, based on deep personal experiences.

The panel presentations were followed by small group discussions during which participants filled in worksheets noting their ideas about the skills and knowledge which they thought should be included in psychology courses.

In the afternoon there were two guest speakers: Chris Sonn who spoke about his experiences in delivering courses about Indigenous issues to psychology students, and Tamara Mackean who spoke about the development of curriculum guidelines for medical students.

They were followed by a second set of small group discussions in which participants filled in another worksheet, this time on how courses should best be taught. Both sets of worksheets were collected, and the workshop proceedings were audiotaped (with permission). The worksheets and proceedings will be available in a comprehensive report early in 2006. Some of the main points coming from the preliminary analysis of the proceedings are:
The "what" (skills and knowledge which should be included in psychology courses). The content should include:

> Basic knowledge of the effects of history and current problems on Indigenous people, and of Indigenous culture
> A consideration of different methods/"lenses" for analysing and

applying psychological knowledge. A critical approach, recognising and deconstructing the assumptions of western psychology, and a holistic view, a willingness to acquire a way of applying knowledge that is not reductionist, are essential
> Teaching of practical skills and their application – working with Indigenous experts and knowledge, understanding respectful ways of interacting and building relationships, and flexibility in applying standard psychological practices
> The key role of personal qualities and values, particularly flexibility, openness, and the ability to reflect on one's own practice

The "how" (structure of course and teaching methods)

> Ideally, psychology programs should include both stand-alone and integrated courses incorporating Indigenous content
> Ideally courses should be "core" (central and compulsory) rather than elective
> Teaching of the courses should be a partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics and professionals
> Teaching methods should include a mixture of lectures, case studies, field trips, reflective journals, and set readings

Apart from input into curriculum guidelines, there were three main outcomes from the workshop
> the initiation of a long-term support and resource network;
> an enhanced recognition of the difficulties and barriers in this process, including despondency from academics about the magnitude of the task, resistance to change, and institutional inflexibility; and
> immense goodwill and support for the process, especially from Indigenous people and the sponsors.

There was strong interest in holding the workshop as an annual event to keep the momentum going and to enable people to share their experiences and learn from and support each other. It is likely that another workshop will be held in the middle of 2006.

Next steps

The project team is currently (at the time of writing) working, in consultation with the APS, on developing the national curriculum guidelines, a process which will continue in 2006. We hope to obtain further funding, preferably for a five-year period, to set up a website, develop and collate resources, and support psychology academics wanting to develop courses. We intend to write one or more resource books which will incorporate and unpack the curriculum guidelines. Other possible developments include expanding and developing international links, especially with colleagues in Canada, the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand, and seminars for professional psychologists and related professionals.

We have come a long way since that informal chat over a cup of coffee. As the Kev Carmody song goes, "From little things big things grow." There is still a long way to go but we are enthusiastic and encouraged to continue. It's a fascinating and rewarding process and immensely interesting. We would strongly encourage anyone wanting to incorporate Indigenous content into their programs and are willing to help in whatever way we can.

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Discomfort: The university student and Indigenous peoples

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In this paper I explore some of the challenges of teaching Indigenous issues to non-Indigenous students. I speak as an Indigenous person and focus on the notion of discomfort. I suggest that the discomfort largely stems from a lack of knowledge about the history race relations, misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples, and ongoing exclusion. I suggest that students must be introduced to Australian history from an Indigenous perspective and that sovereignty should be central to this foundation. Suggestions are

Before I begin this paper, Indigenous custom dictates that I first introduce myself so as to provide my cultural location and to provide an avenue for connection on a political, cultural and social level (Martin, 2003). My name is Rebecca Gerrett-Magee. I am the child of an Indigenous father and a non-Indigenous mother. I came into this world amidst much grief, turmoil and racism. My mother was placed in a home and had to fight tooth and nail to keep me, while my father was charged with raping the girl he loved and denied access to his first-born child. This happened in Echuca, Victoria in 1974 and occurred because my mother was white and my Father was black. As long as I can remember, I have been aware of my parents' story. But, despite not the words for their experiences, I have always been aware of racism -- it has been the context of my life and drives me to do the work I do.

Some of you may look at me and see a white skinned woman. However, I have only ever felt Aboriginal. I have in my heart and spirit a feeling of deep connection spiritually, culturally and historically to the land and to my people. This connection, I struggle to verbalise or explain and it is a connection which non-Indigenous people find almost impossible to understand. This connection and sense of belonging is what it means to me to be Aboriginal, not the colour of your skin. Indigenous belonging is defined by country and not race. Moreton-Robinson (2003) wrote: Indigenous people's sense of home and place are configured differently to that of migrants. There is no other homeland that provides a point of origin, or place for multiple identities. Instead our rendering of place, home and country

through our ontological relation to country is the basis for our ownership (p. 37). Therefore, when I introduce myself, I say I am a Yorta Yorta woman from the Murray River region of Victoria and New South Wales because this is who I am.

This paper comes out of many discussions with colleagues, my students and with my sister-girls; some heated, some frustrating, some sad, some confused but mostly they have been extremely intense and enlightening. The question that continually arose in one form or another from these discussions was; how does one teach another about Indigenous peoples? How does one teach non-Indigenous people about a variety of topics, including our history, our connection or the contemporary issues we face, without paralysing them? This is the challenge that anyone who chooses to take on Indigenous issues within the classroom will face. Based on my experiences to date, there are many different issues that arise, but in this paper I want to focus on the issue of discomfort.

Discomfort

Students respond in different ways to the content and processes involved in introducing Indigenous issues. More often than not feelings of discomfort arise in non-Indigenous students, particularly those students who were born and educated in Australia. The degree of discomfort will vary depending upon teaching techniques and on how much prior knowledge students may have regarding Indigenous peoples and our communities, but it will arise. Why is this so? Why do non-Indigenous students find it difficult to open themselves to the stories and experiences of Indigenous peoples; our ways of knowing, being and doing? What is it about the truth of

our history and cultures that they seem unable to process or cope with? Why do they take it so personally? How does the teacher/lecturer overcome these often paralysing feelings?

Dominant stories and good intentions.

In my view these feelings are rooted in students' ignorance regarding the true history of Australia and in the taken for granted ideas and stereotypes they hold about Indigenous Australia. It is an unfortunate truth in Australia that Indigenous people and our Indigeneity has been defined and displayed through processes of constructing and transmitting culture to the mainstream by non-Indigenous people. Indigenous peoples are usually presented negatively. Non-Indigenous people associate cycles of addiction, crime and abuse with Aboriginality. These representations are often stripped of any historical grounding and connections to the negative hangover of our continual colonisation. To a large extent, this can be attributed to the absence of Indigenous Australia within educational curricula at all levels of the education system as well as our absence in the processes of contemporary Australian cultural production. Larbalestier (2004) argues that British representations of black and white people together with the processes of colonisation has played an integral part in the way Australians think about Australia and has been framed within the perceived good intentions of the colonisers. This idea that 'they' (the colonisers) were just doing what they thought was right has been an attitude that has persisted since 1788 and has also been a major source of discomfort for students when it is challenged, whether implicitly so or not.

It's in the past.

This idea of doing good has been reinforced with historical rhetoric that portrays the invasion as a peaceful 'settlement' with a few isolated incidences of frontier violence, and hence the colonisers and their inheritors as mostly good people (Larbalestier, 2004). The consequence for Indigenous peoples of this preconceived notion that has been embedded in the history of Australia and in the national psyche of the Australian people is enormous, as it has seen the injustices of the past largely

ignored and dismissed as not that bad, with no recognition given to their continual impact upon Indigenous communities today. Many students that I have taught have adopted the language and positions of 'they should just get over it', 'it wasn't that bad' or 'it all happened so long ago why are they still carrying on about it'. These statements unfortunately show no understanding of the real history of Australia nor do they give any credence to how the past informs the present for Indigenous peoples and our communities. Therefore, I believe to begin to contest these attitudes one must expose students to the complete picture of the history of Australia, regardless of the discipline that one is teaching. The current plight of Indigenous people must be understood within the context of a history of colonisation and ongoing race relations characterised by dominance and subjugation. The importance of history

Indigenous peoples diversity.

An historical examination should begin with the exploration of traditional Indigenous society before invasion because it is important to tell of the ways Indigenous societies functioned prior to invasion. This serves to provide students with a better understanding of the enormous impact that colonisation has and continues to have on Indigenous peoples. However, by undertaking this task the teacher/lecturer risks homogenising Indigenous people if they generalise and speak in absolutes. In my classes I speak only about the Indigenous people of Victoria, as I am an Indigenous person of Victoria and would therefore not presume to speak about mobs from other countries and because that is where my classes are located. Often teachers/lecturers base their classes on communities in the Northern Territory or far North Queensland as there is a perception that this is where the 'real' Indigenous people are so to give the student a 'real' understanding of Indigenous peoples they must study the 'real blackfellas' who live semi-traditionally not the urban 'blacks' who have 'lost' many of their traditional ways. However, having said that I have used examples from these communities as a way of signifying the diversity of Indigenous peoples and by demonstrating that many times our only similarities are our Aboriginality.

Furthermore, I only impart knowledge to my students that which I have permission to talk about, or that I have gained from published works where cultural protocols of information dissemination have been followed.

Sovereignty and belonging.

An historical exploration should also include an examination of Indigenous Sovereignty and hence the lie of '*Terra Nullius*'. I have found that Indigenous Sovereignty plays a valuable role, once it is understood, in anchoring non-Indigenous students within the study of Indigenous peoples and our communities. In some ways Indigenous Sovereignty is about recognising Indigenous people as custodians of country, with rights to country. It is about recognising traditional lore as it relates to Indigenous nations within Australia -- it is akin to the basis of the treaty of *Waitangi* in New Zealand. Belonging is defined by connections to country (Moreton-Robinson, 2003). This can be a difficult concept for most non-Indigenous students to interpret and understand, and can be a long and arduous process for the teacher/lecturer but a valuable journey nonetheless when one sees the proverbial penny drop. Once students understand the concept of Indigenous Sovereignty and what it means to Indigenous people and our right to self-determination, the level of discomfort becomes more manageable for the teacher/lecturer and becomes easier to navigate for the student. Indigenous Sovereignty should be used as a standpoint and must be incorporated into all classes.

Additionally, an historical background will include an exploration of the destructive processes of colonisation including, frontier violence (massacres, poisoning, rape etc.), the protection period (missions, dog-tags, reserves etc.) and the assimilation period (Stolen Generations, half-caste acts etc.) (see Lowe, 1994; Reynolds, 1987, 1989). Indigenous resistance to these processes need to be included so that the myth of Indigenous passivity can be addressed. It is important to stress that Indigenous people continue and will continue to resist oppression. These processes were devastating to Indigenous peoples and have caused many of the social, mental and health problems that exist in our communities today

they will be a source of much discomfort and hence resistance for students. However, they must be explored without censorship or 'watering down' so that students begin to understand the extent of the genocide inflicted upon Indigenous peoples and the role it continues to play in our communities. Furthermore, I have found that by giving students the version of Indigenous history from my perspective as an Indigenous person, they are able to connect on an intellectual level as well as an emotional one, which often has a greater impact upon them than the academic content they receive.

Whiteness and history.

In addition to the historical analysis, I have found the notion of whiteness and different ways of theorising whiteness useful to explore our own group memberships (see also, Aveling, 2001, 2004; Nicoll, 2004). Broadly speaking, the study of whiteness is concerned with and can act as a way of turning the focus away from the problematic 'Indigenous other' to a focus to problematising dominance, normativity and privilege (Frankenberg, 1993). In Frankenberg's (1993) view whiteness is not only about the markings of skin, it is also about the experiences afforded because of our group memberships and the worldview and ideology that privileges particular groups as superior. By engaging the notion of whiteness students are asked to think of the dialectical relationship between black and white, dominance and subjugation. For many, the writing about whiteness brings into clearer focus invisible ethnic identities. This can be enormously confronting to students who have never thought about racism in terms of their identities. This may be a major source of their discomfort and often pain. Nicoll (2004) describes the attitudes and reactions of her students when undertaking such studies as defensive and claiming to be the victims of reverse racism. Although these reactions may seem to be extreme they are, in my experience, commonplace.

However, I believe that if students have some historical foundation when they begin this process to work from their discomfort will be easier to use and work through, as a certain amount of discomfort is good as it signifies that you are reaching your students. However, when

discomfort completely paralyses the student it becomes problematic for the individual student and potentially also for Indigenous peoples and our communities. Unfortunately, when this happens nothing changes and Indigenous peoples remain the poorest, unhealthiest, most persecuted, most imprisoned, addicted and marginalised members of Australian society. Part of overcoming these feelings lie in students being made aware of the truth of Australia's black history and our dispossession so that they come to realise how the past informs the present for Indigenous community. Until this happens reconciliation will never become a lived reality.

What has been helpful for me?

So how does the teacher/lecturer help students navigate their discomfort throughout such an emotive and confronting exploration? I do not believe there is a blueprint that one can design and implement in any situation for any group of students, what is taught and how it is transmitted depends upon the particular group of students and upon the individual lecturers/ teachers. However, I believe that there are some strategies, that when implemented, work for most students regardless of the discipline. These include:

- Create a *safe space* that allows students to express themselves without fear of causing offence or saying the wrong thing. This is important because it allows students to express what they are really thinking which moves the class discussion and lectures in the direction that students need it to go for them. This sees the lecturer/teacher able to address many students' long held beliefs regarding Indigenous peoples and our communities without directly confronting them.
- *Consult* with local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community organisations, co-operatives, land councils or Local Aboriginal Education Consultancy Groups (LAECG's, see the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc at http://www.vaeai.org.au/) etc. regarding cultural content, local history and protocols. This is particularly important for non-Indigenous lecturers/teachers who usually have the same amount of knowledge regarding Indigenous peoples as students. Many universities will also have an Indigenous Unit

or student support centres that will have resources, access to local community and may also have Indigenous academic staff who can be utilised for guest lectures or for consultation regarding curriculum.

- *Invite* relevant Indigenous community members to act as guest lecturers or co-teachers. This is important for three reasons. Firstly, it brings Indigenous community to the classes and will reflect Indigenous points of view. Secondly, because the relationship the teacher/lecturer establishes with the Indigenous community is in itself a valuable teaching tool because you are modelling appropriate behaviour and attitudes to your students. Lastly, because who better to hear it from than the people your students are studying.
- Use a *variety of teaching styles* that not only cater to multiple intelligences but also to reinforce the importance of Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. In my classes I use a variety of mediums to reinforce the issues and main points of my lectures, including visual, written and oral material.
- The majority of material used in classes should be from Indigenous people whether they be artists, academics, writers, poets, filmmakers etc. This material gives students a unique perspective on the issues raised in classes and also gives an authoritative voice to Indigenous people within the classroom, which for many students will be the first time they have associated Indigenous people with qualities of power and authority.
- As every class and hence every student is different, *know your student*s. You must be aware of the dynamics of your classes and student group so that you know how far you can push them, what material they will respond to and the best way to impart knowledge to them. This is important regardless of the discipline you are teaching in or of the age or year level of your students. One should know their students whether they are teaching in Grade Prep or at Postgraduate level.
- *Give voice* to the discomfort and resistance being experienced by students. In my classes I have found that by naming the discomfort and giving students an opportunity to explore it through class discussion and through a journal that is part of their assessment it aids the

teacher/lecturer in managing it and the student in navigating it. By giving the discomfort voice it also acts as a valuable way of unpacking its sources and the processes that maintain it.

By using these techniques and through an historical exploration of Indigenous communities and our people, students will begin to address their own worldviews and positions of privilege within society. This is an important starting point to engaging in the ongoing process of challenging oppressing practices.

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"I'm White! Oh I See!" An international student perspective on National Curriculum Guidelines for Indigenous issues in psychology

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Written as a first person narrative, I present my experiences of being a student in a unit that was designed to address issues around race, culture and power, as part of the psychology curriculum. The notion of whiteness emerged as a key issue for me, particularly for how it enabled me to discover myself as a 'cultural being'. I also explore the experience of discomfort in class and use these insights to highlight some implications for the curriculum.

As a student participant in a unit addressing issues of race, culture and power, I was asked if I would like to reflect on my experiences of the unit as part of a forum to promote incorporating Indigenous issues into the psychology curriculum. Being a white, international, student, I expect that my perspective was seen to offer an additional angle to the debate. My experience in the unit led me to acknowledge the need for students to embrace cultural competence as a lifelong journey and not as something that ends with the last class. Thus, despite feeling a little daunted by the prospect of presenting on a subject so new to me, I felt both a desire and an obligation to accept the challenge.

Being enrolled in this unit demanded that students attend one two-hour class weekly, for 12 weeks. A book of readings was compiled by the unit coordinator/lecturer and each week, in groups of two and three, students were responsible for initiating a class discussion based on the readings. As part of the assessment, students were required to write a journal documenting their reflections on both the readings and class discussion. This journal served to inform our essays, as well as encouraging us to embrace our own subjectivities and engage in a process of critical reflexivity (Parker, 2005).

Exploring the notion of whiteness in class was particularly significant for me. It enabled me to identify as a 'cultural being' (Sonn, 2005, personal communication), as a white person, and to understand how whiteness has created the 'other'. It also allowed me to examine how whiteness has been taken for granted and can afford a person certain privileges and, in this way, gave me the opportunity to discover whiteness as a form of power and oppression. Talking about whiteness also opened up a discussion about racism. In this paper, I attempt to explore these aspects of learning about whiteness and consider how it relates to the sense of discomfort that appeared to permeate class engagement with Indigenous and cultural issues.

Indigenous issues are still not a compulsory component of the Australian psychology curriculum. This is despite over a decade of action targeted at raising awareness of the social and professional responsibilities of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) towards Australia's Indigenous peoples (Gridley, Davidson, Dudgeon, Pickett & Sanson, 2000). This is also despite incorporation of relevant guidelines for education and training in the companion booklet to the APS Code of Ethics (APS, 2002). Addressing these issues as part of the psychology curriculum creates opportunities for students to think about what it might mean to work across cultural boundaries. It introduces cultural competence as a social justice issue, and exposes the need to develop frameworks to equip students to better work with culture and cultural variations. This paper is a contribution to the collection of voices that are still shouting for the inclusion of Indigenous and cultural content in the curriculum.

Understanding racism through the lens of whiteness

Racism is inherently intertwined with issues of power and oppression, and I believe that it was through exploring the concept of whiteness in class that enabled me to better understand how racism manifests and is perpetuated. I also became aware of how a dialogue around whiteness gave me an opportunity to explore my own subjectivity, and my part in reinforcing racism, and this link demonstrated to me a clear

justification for initiating a dialogue around whiteness.

One of the authors of a class reading (Carter, 1997) asked 'is white a race?' While the answer may be in dispute, I think it is an important question to ask as it draws attention to how whiteness has been taken for granted. White people seem to be unaware of themselves as white, and have a reluctance "to think of themselves as white or to view whiteness as having any social meaning" (Phoenix, 1997, p.195). I discovered that being white did mean something and it was not a neutral nothingness (Frankenberg, 1993). And further, that when white people look at racism, "we tend to view it as an issue that people of colour face and have to struggle with, but not as an issue that generally involves or implicates us" (Frankenberg, 1993, p.6).

A paper entitled 'I'm White! So what?' (Phoenix, 1997) immediately appealed to me as it explored young Londoners' views on race and colour. Being a Londoner myself, I think part of what drew me to Melbourne was its 'multiculturalism'. I have often valued and taken pride in having had such a grand exposure to so many different people, and my resultant 'everyone-is-the-same', or 'people-are-just-people', attitude. Phoenix (1997) demonstrated how young white Londoners have not really considered being 'white', hence the title of her paper. However, young people from mixed parentage, or those who identify as black, mostly have had no choice but to consider what it means to be white or black. This article helped me to realise that my whiteness was something that I had not thought about, and it was critical towards understanding my own attitudes. I thought that by adopting a 'people-are-just-people' attitude it equated with not being racist. In reality, this 'colour-blind' attitude is just not possible where race is concerned (Carter, 1997). I thought that by being politically correct, using appropriate language, and respecting everyone it demonstrated my non-racist attitudes. Of course I knew of white people's oppression of black people, but it was not until I read this article that I began to acknowledge my own positioning as a white person, as a member of an oppressive group. I had not truly embraced my own powerful and privileged standpoint.

This revelation about privilege did not mean that I regarded there to be a simple dichotomy between black and white. On the contrary, discussing the range of experiences and perceptions of people in class raised my awareness of the blurriness of the line between black and white. For example, often 'whiteness' was defined and assumed according to skin colour. However, several students challenged these assumptions in their claims that, despite having light-coloured skin, they did not identify as 'white'.

This class clarified that racism was relevant to me, and not something that I could remain detached from. In a public debate about reconciliation, Lillian Holt stated that this country can only move forward if white people start looking at themselves, and their part in race relations (Holt, 2005). Similarly, I believe that we cannot address racism until white people understand what it is to be white, and grasp the concept of 'othering' (e.g. MacNaughton & Davis, 2001). This extends beyond thinking about race as a biological phenomenon, as defined by skin colour. Rather, it is about addressing issues of power and oppression.

Silence and good intentions reinforce racism

In talking about whiteness, I came to realise how it puts the discussion about racism on the table, making it accessible to debate. Currently, some people are so unsure about how to speak, not wanting to offend, it appears that they attempt to censor themselves to be 'politically-correct'. An atmosphere of silence is created. Surely it is unhealthy if we can't discuss what is on our minds (Manne; cited in Rees, 1999). To another extreme, there is a danger of being so preoccupied with delivering unconditional positive regard, and unequivocal and unquestioning belief in what the marginalised have to say, that it is done at the expense of any critical evaluation (Cowlishaw, 2004). This eventuates in inequity at the other end of the scale (i.e. positive discrimination), and in essence leads to the same end – racism.

There are many well-meaning individuals who, in trying to avoid being racist and protect others from racism (Cowlishaw, 2004), avoid talking about race altogether. I realised that, to my horror, I was one of these 'well-meaning'

individuals, and that by not acknowledging race I was "at best failing to challenge racism and, at worst, aiding and abetting it" (Frankenberg, 1993, p.3). I experienced an 'intense frustration' that came from not being able to "get it", or to "get it right" (Frankenberg, 1993, p.4). It made me realise the need to accept that having good intentions, and being well-meaning, does not necessarily demonstrate that we are not racist. If someone is hurt, does it matter what our intentions were? (Kalantzis; cited in Rees, 1999) There is a need to separate out our intentions from potentially negative outcomes (Duckett, 2005). Perhaps it is only the outcomes that can tell us whether something is racist or not.

From past experience, I have learnt not to talk about race, or deny that it exists. However, by keeping quiet and not allowing racism and its impact to be discussed there is less understanding of the issues and worse, a continuation of the status quo and oppression (Phoenix, 1997). I believe that we have to address the impacts of racism and highlight the ongoing imbalances in power. However we have to remember that racism is entrenched. We live in a racist society. While people may be less explicitly racist than they used to be, there is still institutional and cultural racism (Carter, 1997; Cowlishaw, 2004). The impact of institutional and cultural racism is easily illustrated by noting the differences in factors such as socio-economic status, poverty, health and educational outcomes across racial groups.

Having grown up in a racist society, in London, I believe that racism is to some extent unavoidable. In light of this, I think that whiteness and racism are issues that we need to be more open about and explore. We cannot make progress by using avoidant and defensive coping techniques. Rather, we need to explore our avoidant and defensive behaviour. I am a member of an oppressed group. I am gay and yet I certainly have anti-gay thoughts and emotions. Some might call it 'internalised homophobia'. I am sure that people who are the subject of racism also have racist attitudes and beliefs towards others i.e. that racism is colour-blind. My point is that homophobic and racist thoughts are inevitable and they are not restricted to members of oppressed groups. The key to addressing the 'inevitability' of discrimination lies in our

capacity to be reflective, recognise racism as it occurs, examine the exclusionary processes that are taking place, and make it imperative to talk about openly.

For me it was eye-opening to see things from this new perspective. When people in class raised issues about not identifying as white, I was not so interested in talking about it. I was fixated on my own learning, and happily exploring my thoughts of what it meant to be white. In wanting to talk only about whiteness, I also felt a sense of guilt. After all, it was my own perspective, the white perspective that was dominating again. I wondered whether it was a better situation before, when the white preoccupation with 'others' (and not themselves) had at least allowed for the 'others' to get a mention. In this way, I could relate to the argument that allowing a discourse about whiteness may simply serve to reinforce the power and privilege of white people, and give white people more of an excuse to talk about themselves (Bellear, 2005). In essence, it provides an excuse for self-indulgence. While I do not deny the disadvantages of a discourse around whiteness, I think that they are far outweighed by the benefits.

It has been suggested that silence about racism, and the notion that racism is colour-blind, originates from a lack of self-reflection, and hence that discussion and self-reflection about one's own race is extremely important (Carter, 1997; Phoenix, 1997). Before this class, I had never really considered what 'white' meant. From my privileged position I could afford to think in those ways about 'others', and was unaware that in the same breath that I was saying that 'everyone is the same' I could also be talking about 'others'. Carter (1997) claimed that his schooling gave him no training in seeing himself "as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture" (p.206). By this comment, Carter implied that there was a certain level of responsibility for the curriculum, and educators, to address issues around power and oppression. The impact of introducing such material into the psychology curriculum is explored in the next section.

Discomfort and personal development

I identified three broad themes in support of including Indigenous and cultural issues into the psychology curriculum. Firstly, it puts mainstream psychology, as a discipline, into context and exposes its monocultural nature. Secondly, by exposing the discipline's limitations, it raises awareness about power and privileges, and therefore can promote professional practice and development. Finally, it creates an opportunity for personal development through an exploration of our emotional reactions to such material, in particular discomfort. This third and final theme was the one chosen as a topic for discussion at the forum, and it is to the subject of discomfort that this section now turns.

The emotional reactions and responses that emerged when exploring Indigenous and cultural issues in class were significant and varied. Many students expressed discomfort when the concept of whiteness was introduced. In particular, this was due to feeling compelled to identify themselves as white, as they felt it was analogous to admitting that they were racist. Personally, I felt that with a greater understanding of the concept of racism, acknowledging myself as white became easier to manage. For, in learning that racism can manifest in different forms (e.g. individual, institutional, cultural, old, new etc.), it made it easier to understand how an individual with predominantly 'good intentions' can, at the same time, also participate in racism. For example, that by going with the flow, and simply by being a part of current institutions and systems, we can also be aiding and abetting racism (Frankenberg, 1993). This was an important discovery for me, and I felt that it enabled me to find a way to distance myself from, and manage, the 'guilt' and fear that I was experiencing.

Also of note in the class were issues around self-censorship. I described to the class how I had felt my inhibitions lessen significantly with the realisation that there were no right answers. A fellow student quickly responded that while there may not be any right answers there can certainly be wrong ones. This was an interesting point, and one of particular significance considering the nature of the unit. In retrospect, I don't believe that there can be 'wrong' answers, only different opinions, and

that this classroom should have provided a forum in which these different perspectives could be explored. Despite this, many people expressed that they were often uncomfortable in speaking their minds for fear of either appearing ignorant, or of causing offence. One student, in particular, stated that she felt that the class dynamics had changed considerably since the first class. She, for one, felt more inhibited about saying things for fear of offending someone.

People experienced the content and process of class in a range of different ways. In our final class, one student noted that the unit had been a huge struggle for her. Another student noted that she felt a pressure to clarify her identity. Someone else noted that 'your right to speak is being challenged if you are scared to speak up', and another responded that 'by not wanting to hurt someone's feelings, you are assuming they are inferior'. I felt that such comments demonstrated significant learning and illustrated how the objectives of the unit, particularly around promoting critical reflexivity, had been met.

However, I feel it pertinent to describe another incident that also occurred in the final class. One student described how she had felt like the sole minority and that she had felt 'shot down'. She said that she didn't want to speak and how she had learnt to know when to shut up. This upset me. It felt like we had failed. I felt sad and disillusioned and thought that if we cannot get it right (i.e. be inclusive and provide a safe environment) in this class, and if we aren't able to talk about how she felt in this environment, where else will it be done? I wanted to talk about why she felt the way she did and what could have been done to make it better, but I realised that it would not be respecting her choice to remain silent.

The rollercoaster of class dynamics, experiences of discomfort, feeling unsafe, and not feeling like we could trust one another has enormous implications for teaching about such issues in any curriculum. I think it highlights the need to examine how the inevitable vulnerability of students is negotiated and managed. How do we keep it safe for everyone? Or is the need to bring students out of their comfort zones, and feel a little exposed and vulnerable, a necessary part of the learning process? Could it backfire

and simply serve to build resistance and a further lack of motivation to want to change and address these challenges headlong? When does discomfort become paralysing? (Selby, 2004) And does it fragment the group, whereby people are forced to take sides? (Sonn, June 2005, personal communication)

In summary, I think that my own personal discomfort in class revolved less around feelings of fear and guilt (that I sensed was more central to the experience of my classmates) but more around ignorance and wanting to get it right. Exploring the nature of discomfort, therefore, may be particularly useful towards identifying how class discussions may be better facilitated to encourage positive reflection. I wondered whether my enthusiasm and engagement with the material was enhanced by my 'willingness' to feel comfortable, lost, uncertain, and vulnerable, as noted by Sonn (2004). Or, whether it was due to my upbringing in another country that meant that I experienced less baggage, less guilt, and so could engage more freely with the material. While I did align myself with the colonisers, perhaps I was better able to detach myself from feelings of fear and guilt, because I had not been brought up in Australia. These are certainly questions that might have implications for teaching about Indigenous issues in the psychology curriculum. It is to the implications for the curriculum that I turn to conclude this paper.

Implications for curriculum

Having the opportunity to learn about race, culture and power has revealed to me the importance of these issues becoming a compulsory component of the psychology curriculum. I discovered that it was also not a debate restricted to the field of psychology. For example, the discipline of social work has also experienced a 'cultural vacuum' in its curriculum, and efforts to address this vacuum are often "tokenistic and limited by structural restraints" (Briskman, 2003, p.99). Briskman (2003) noted that the key to overcoming tokenistic attempts to incorporate cultural issues lie within the quality of the teaching and the need to engage in critical frameworks. There is also a need to make visible the package of 'unearned assets' that comes with being white (McIntosh,

1998; cited in Briskman, 2003). In this way, Briskman's (2003) observations appear to be consistent with my own experiences, especially the need to think critically.

Certainly, it appears that an adequate curriculum goes beyond just teaching about other cultures. "Cultural competence is more than learning about others; it is about learning about ourselves, our subjectivities and the numerous ways in which the different discourses available can undermine cultural boundary crossing" (Sonn, 2004, p.146). Thus to ensure 'quality' teaching we need to develop a culture of racial awareness. Introducing critical theory and a dialogue around whiteness into the curriculum may be one way to do this. However, this can often be challenging, and requires willingness from students to feel uncomfortable, lost and powerless (Sonn, 2004).

I became aware of how this unit had discouraged some of my classmates from wanting to address Indigenous issues in the future as it was perceived to be too hard. Getting put off, however, when things get too difficult and "hiding from uncomfortable experiences" means that we do our work less well (Selby, 2004, p.143). The fact that non-Indigenous students felt that they had a choice to engage with these issues highlighted a fundamental inequity, whereby Indigenous peoples often do not have the luxury of such a choice. Perhaps, for this reason, students should not have the choice to learn about such issues, and instead it should be made a compulsory component of the curriculum.

My experience in this unit encouraged me to conclude that teaching and learning about Australian Indigenous issues should not only be on the agenda at a tertiary level, it should also be addressed at an early childhood level. There is clearly a need to find ways to successfully and respectfully prevent and/or challenge the 'othering' of Indigenous peoples and their cultures (MacNaughton & Davis, 2001). One way to do this is firstly to avoid homogenising Indigenous Australians into a collective 'they', and secondly to avoid building knowledge of Indigenous Australians that always positions them as different to the centre (MacNaughton & Davis, 2001). Introducing such material at the early childhood stage has the potential to reduce

the likelihood that students will be offered limited and tokenistic opportunities at tertiary level, because they will already be familiar with its messages. It may also make the content and process of units that address cultural issues less confronting and uncomfortable.

Given the current climate of a lack of content around issues of race and culture in the psychology curriculum, I think it is important to be mindful of where students are at and what they already know, to effectively build upon their knowledge and engage them appropriately. Often basic knowledge of Indigenous history is absent (Gerrett, this issue) which means that incorporating an Indigenous component into the curriculum will, certainly at this stage, have to allow time for covering the historical aspects. More importantly than the content, however, are student's reactions to it. Addressing Indigenous issues and racism can often reveal a dark and gloomy story. With little to smile about, it can often be met with feelings of frustration, hopelessness and ultimately avoidance and resistance. Therefore, in identifying the benchmark criteria for such a curriculum, we firstly need to address how to bring about, and facilitate, a readiness to engage. Having engaged students, we then need to address how to ensure that their engagement does not stop with the last class.

Conclusion

As well as needing to ensure that those "taught are not silenced in the process", there is also a "need to ensure we support a tolerance for uncertainty and chaos" (Selby, 2004, p.151). While this is certainly hard, it is not too hard. Too often, psychologists (and many other welfare professionals) are deterred from attempting to tackle Indigenous issues because they are too hard or they feel unqualified to do so. Once we can begin to accept our vulnerability and limited knowledge, explore our own subjectivities, and engage in critically reflexive processes, it has the potential to pave new pathways for developing cultural competence.

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The Seagull Imperative

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In Australia, many Community Psychologists are University based academics desperately juggling the competing demands of their institutions and their commitment to community engagement. We are all under pressure to generate outcomes on behalf of our respective institutions.

Unfortunately, we often find that our commitment to principled practice is at odds with the demands of University research bodies. We must of necessity accrue academic currency, the coin of the tertiary realm, if we are to scale the dizzy heights of academe. The most valuable denominations of academic currency are of course the refereed journal articles and research funding. To build our balance we often default to the Seagull Imperative. The seagull imperative is an insidious form of academic corrosion eating away our commitment to principled practice. As many of you will know a 'seagull' is a researcher or consultant who flies into a community; craps all over everything then leaves the community to tidy up the mess. It is no surprise that many communities have become both burdened with meaningless research reports and disenchanted with researchers/consultants, regardless of how well intentioned they are. Many people in Indigenous communities will say with a sense of resignation, rather than any real sense of satisfaction, "Welcome to our world!"

In a recent project I was involved with in a regional community, the research team approached the community with a plan to gather data using the traditional survey and workshop methods. The community was outraged, "Here", they said, dumping 15 to 20 reports on the table, "These have been done over the last 10 years and nothing has come of any of them. Go away and read them. If, after that, you have any further questions, we'll be happy to talk to you!" Ok… don't beat around the bush, tell us what you really think! When we did as requested we found that there was relatively little more we needed, which the community, incidentally, was delighted to provide.

In a similar vein, I recently had an epiphany (of sorts). I had been visiting, somewhat sporadically, a remote regional community as part of a project to document the experiences that young Aboriginal people had with authoritative institutions, such as the school, police, DCD and the local shire. On my third or fourth visit, which typically lasted two to three days, I turned the corner from the airport road into the main street. I could see many community members going about their business. As I took in the scene, a thought popped, as they say in a good Mills and Boon, unbidden to my mind. The thought was something like' "What the f %& k do you think you are doing?!" I didn't know the answer to that question so took several months to think through how I could better engage authentically with the community. I thought long and hard about Langer's notion of mindfulness versus mindlessness; I thought deeply about reflective practice; I ruminated endlessly about the colonising practices of non Indigenous researchers throughout history; I re-read Pat Dudgeon, Harry Pickett and Darren Garvey's book; I thought about the double whammy of a seagull flying in to crap all over a community that historically has been crapped on by every stratum of Australian society; I even began to introspect (God help me) more fully on what Chris Sonn and Meredith Green have been saying about Whiteness. In short, I took a good hard look at myself and gave myself a good talking to.

Having said that, I did manage to resist the temptation to wear the hair shirt (I don't remember reading anything in Isaac Prilleltensky's work about the *hair shirt* imperative but will go back and have another look just to be certain). This time of

contemplation was of enormous personal and professional benefit but needless to say I am now in deep shit with the funding body for failing to deliver the 'outcomes' of the research (this despite my repeated attempts to reposition the research as an engagement exercise). Nevertheless, I am disinclined to apologise for attempting to honour principled practice. Have I got it right now? No certainly not. However, with the support of the local community, I feel that at last the research (no… let me rephrase that) the *collaborative community project* is at least on the right track. University funded research generally supports projects whereas community psychologists seek authentic partnerships. We should vest genuine ownership in the community and stay in for the long haul. Money is, or ought to be, a secondary consideration; something we can seek in partnership with the community if we find we have shared aspirations and goals. This demands we reconfigure the roles and responsibilities for University - Community engagement. By chance, as I was writing this piece, I spoke to Sandra Stoddard of the Australian University Community Engagement Alliance and she expressed it beautifully. She pointed out that our work with communities should be transformational not transactional (I wish I'd said that!). That observation echoes Sampson's critique of psychology in the early 80s when he talked about transformative versus reproductive practice. To the extent that we do not challenge the status quo, we collude in the reproduction of existing marginalising, alienating, disempowering…and yes…often inherently racist practices. The structure, purpose and function of traditional University research practices do not lend themselves to reflective practice and the development of long term enduring collaborative relationships with community. The seagull imperative is inherently reproductive.

The challenge of engaging in transformative practice has defeated many over the years. I am encouraged by recent initiatives, particularly on the part of government funding agencies, to focus less on research 'projects' and more on research 'partnerships' but there is clearly a long way to go. The goals of accruing academic currency and building enduring partnerships are not ipso facto mutually exclusive, but to achieve both is rather more complicated and demanding. However, I am still troubled by the observation that in our 'sheltered workshops for the overly clever', when ignorant people get together the whole is often less than the sum of its parts. And in universities, as in many large organisations, ignorant people seem to gravitate towards one another and often, depressingly, into positions of relative power (Vice Chancellor!.. umm..ahh…er…hi! If you happen to be reading this; naturally it goes without saying that I do not include our esteemed institution in this robust critique… love your work…ahh.. cheers… ☺ !).

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