Are We Asking the Right Questions? Why We Should Have a Decolonizing Discourse Based on Conscientization Rather Than Indigenizing the Curriculum

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In this paper, we pose the question of terminology and definitions associated with the concept of an Indigenized academy or curriculum. Calls to Indigenize the academy or curriculum are implicitly asking for an overlay or inclusion of Indigenous content, preferably by Indigenous peoples, as a mechanism to incorporate histories, traditions, and knowledges that are divergent to the dominant perspective(s). However, we question whether this approach is sufficient as there is no requirement on the part of the dominant group to question their role or position relative to that of Indigenous Australians. Consequently, we ask if it actually changes the norms to deconstruct racial, social, and cultural dominance in the context of colonized spaces. We further question whether such an approach has resulted in greater retention and graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. As part of our argument, we offer a critical pedagogical approach of decolonization based on conscientization. This approach to education requires an awareness, acknowledgement, and shift on the part of the dominant group that a monocultural approach to education — irrespective of disciplinary orientation — is harmful to both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community. It further offers the potential for education, and specifically psychology, to create a third space in which substantive reconciliation might occur.

Introduction

In Australia, there has been a surge of interest in the broad concept of Indigenizing the curriculum since the early 2000s (Ranzijn & Severino, 2006) which, in part, is reflective of a broader social trend towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Universities Australia, 2011). This is further reflected in the 2010 Australian Psychology Accreditation Council Standards that required the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content into the psychology curriculum at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. However, this requirement was not supported by guidelines as to how this could be achieved or what level and depth was required. More importantly, there was no recognition that the content could or should examine the philosophy or perspectives of the dominant group. Consequently, educators were not required to question or challenge the dominant themes of the curriculum and were not encouraged to authentically incorporate Aboriginal voices (Apple, 1982, 1996, 2000a, 2000b; Ogbu, 1990, 1994; Opotow, 1990). As a result, the requirement of the standards was often met through the addition of a specific lecture or by inviting a guest Aboriginal speaker to discuss the experiences of Australia's First Peoples. Such content was often delivered from a deficit perspective that highlighted social, economic, and health disadvantage without the accompanying strengths of resilience and resistance to the cultural oppression that caused the disadvantage in the first place.

The fabric of cultural understanding, values, beliefs, and behaviours that characterize a particular society is woven through multiple mechanisms, including the education system. The prevailing customs that are entrenched in the various settings people inhabit, including educational institutions, reflect the normative assumptions of the wider community which serve to assimilate the learner into the dominant cultural narratives. As a result, the add-on approach of inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content might increase the knowledge of non-Indigenous psychology students to the history of colonization and the contemporary legacy of harm that ensued, but it does not identify the unearned privilege associated with being part of the dominant group. It fails to cast light on the structural and systemic oppression (Opotow, 2001) enacted toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and it ignores the power of Whiteness that is the legacy inherited by the colonizer (Darlaston-Jones, 2011; Riggs & Selby, 2003; Sonn, Bishop, & Humphries, 2000). The underlying assumptions on which contemporary society are predicated remain unchallenged and the structural discrimination continues unabated. Consequently, the learner of psychology who transitions to the role of educator

then transmits, in turn, these unchallenged normative assumptions to the next generation of students. It is the iterative nature of these dominant reinforcing processes that must be destabilized in the educational environment to effect significant, meaningful, and sustainable change.

Contesting Dominance and Power

Education is argued to be one of the most powerful and influential sites of socialization and transmission of cultural truths (Dudgeon, Darlaston-Jones, & Clark, 2011; Leistyna, 1999; Walton, Priest, Kowal, White, Brickwood, Fox, & Paradies, 2014). As such, schools and universities provide the vehicle for students to identify their own and others' cultural identity and to navigate the complexities of a multicultural context. Consequently, these sites can also become the focal point of contestation and renegotiation of identities and roles. However, such an educational context needs to be created in a deliberate and formative manner that provides the opportunity for all players to participate in the reflexive critique necessary to facilitate such reconstitution. The current focus on Indigenizing the academy or curriculum emphasizes the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and voices into the existing curriculum and, through this, to effect change at the academy level. However, this approach fails to critique or question the dominant discourses in terms of power and privilege that are the legacy of non-Indigenous Australians. Consequently, the structural norms that shape political, economic, cultural, and social interactions remain unchallenged. Higher education and, specifically, psychology can play a significant role in creating a *third space* for substantive reconciliation to occur but this requires a fundamental shift in the philosophical frameworks that currently inform education.

Such a model of education, internationally, is reflected in a program of peace education for young children in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Situated in the critical pedagogy of Freire and drawing on the principles of *Kaupapa Māori* (Ritchie, Lockie, & Rau, 2011) which include concepts of *maungarongo* (attaining peace), *rangimārie* (peace), and *manaakitanga* (care), the program recognizes the importance of spiritual connectedness and contextual responsiveness as the mechanisms for overcoming the structural violence of colonization (Ritchie et al., 2011). Providing early childhood education in such a framework offers the benefits of contesting the dominant narratives of dispossession and power associated with the colonized space, and offers the alternative of empowered liberation. Children are presented with a legitimate narrative that reflects their culture, and their place within it, in a way that promotes and strengthens their cultural and personal identity. At the same time, it reinforces the role and position of Māori

as a strong and powerful counter-narrative to the dominant *Pakeha* (European New Zealander) voice. *Kaupapa Māori*, as a framework for self-determination, revitalized Māori cultural, political, spiritual, and educational aspirations and led to the emergence of Māori-controlled educational settings (Bishop, 2012). These early international education initiatives offer a strong and consistent form of resistance to the hegemonic discourses of disadvantage that can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure (Rico, 2013) and the role and importance of education as a site of resistance is emphasized and affirmed.

This international model of educational empowerment has also been applied to the Indigenous population in Canada. Like Aotearoa/New Zealand and Australia, Canada is a postcolonial context and the Indigenous populations are subject to similar discourses of disadvantage and exclusion derived from the structural violence of systemic racism. Consequently, similar realities exist that serve to isolate and marginalize Canadian Aboriginal peoples in education, employment, and health (Rico, 2013; Robertson, 2003). Reflecting similar outcomes to those of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Canadian Aboriginal students see little relevance in the dominant curriculum and often "resist and even reject" it as being irrelevant to their context (Silver, Mallet, Greene, & Simard, 2002, p.3). This perspective emerged from a study examining the educational experiences of Canadian First Nations peoples in Winnipeg, the biggest city in the province of Manitoba. Winnipeg has the largest population of First Nations peoples in a metropolitan city and therefore issues associated with appropriate education systems are significant. Interviews conducted with current and former students, as well as community members, illustrated the sense of isolation and de-legitimization that students can feel and the manner in which this is transmitted across generations (Silver et al., 2002). However, local or international educational contexts that reflect self-determination, empowerment, and the inclusion of cultural knowledge, experiences, and voices demonstrate the potential for change (Lewthwaite, 2007). Increasing the number of First Nations teachers; incorporating the history, culture, and knowledges from First Nations peoples into the curriculum; and identifying and resisting entrenched structural and systemic racism, both in the educational context and more broadly, were identified as being key elements of this change (Silver et al., 2002). Such approaches serve not only to support and reinforce a positive sense of self for First Nations students, but to offer the opportunity for non-Aboriginal students to learn a more complete history of their national formation and to understand their role in the contemporary reality of colonization. This provides the space for different outcomes

to be created and pursued that have the capacity to destabilize the structural disadvantage experienced by Indigenous peoples across diverse situations and settings.

There is evidence to support the notion that the economic disadvantage associated with the psychological responses to exclusion are inherited by the children, thus creating an inter-generational cycle of poverty and poor self-esteem (Edwards, 1993; Tierney & Wright, 1991). This outcome reinforces the dominant cultural narrative of individualism and competition because the person sees his or her lack of success as evidence of a lack of ability. In contrast, the persistent student learns to identify instances when poor performance is not the result of personal deficit but rather is caused by the clash of worldviews between the student and the institution. The status quo insists it is the student who must adjust his or her value base to that of the university; this, therefore, can be interpreted as systemic failure because the university is failing to acknowledge the diversity of views represented by the students. As a result of this insight, the student develops resistance strategies that enhance his or her resilience and ability to persist. The cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) associated with this personal growth is also transferred to subsequent generations who learn that, in order to achieve a goal, one needs to resist systemic barriers. This outcome also is likely to reinforce the dominant cultural narrative since it is interpreted as being through individual effort that the person was able to succeed. Consequently, both the current alternatives promote and reinforce the status quo, and society remains entrenched in an ideology that serves to segregate and isolate individuals from each other. This underscores the need for transformational change within higher education to challenge these dominant normative positions.

The Australian Higher Education Context

As recently as 1999, Reynolds (1999) published *Why Weren't We Told*, a book which identified the lack of historical and cultural knowledge Australians possessed relative to the First Nations peoples. From the time of settlement, a chronology of various government and institutional policies and practices ensured that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were separated from their families, community, and cultural roots to be educated in the beliefs and norms of the colonizer (Herbert, 2000; Hook 2013). The focus of this education was to prepare them for employment in domestic or manual labouring roles. Despite changes in policy and curriculum at all levels of education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to fare less well than their non-Indigenous counterparts and are less likely to achieve tertiary-level qualifications (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, &

Kelly, 2012). This can be linked to the dominant discourses of difference and the structural racism that remains as a direct consequence of the normative assumptions underpinning the education system as a whole (Kinnane, Wilks, Wilson, Hughes, & Thomas, 2014). Adding to the complexity, debates surrounding the definition, role, and purpose of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians serve to fuel these tensions.

Debates associated with reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian population frequently vacillate between the binary constructs of *symbolic,* as illustrated by the Apology by the Rudd Government, and *practical,* as articulated under the reign of the conservative Howard administration focusing on the provision of services (Gunstone, 2008). However, this dualism fails to address the underlying moral and human rights dimension of *substantive* reconciliation which would see the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Nations peoples, and establish the lens through which all policy, legislation, and practical redress should be framed (Dudgeon et al., 2011). Contemporary social and political responses to reconciliation are, in many ways, constrained by the lack of a clear definition of what is *meant* by reconciliation and therefore what *actions* are required to achieve it. This, in turn, in conjunction with the politicization of the reconciliation agenda, has led to confusion, tension, and the creation of *equality discourses* fuelled by the perception of non-Indigenous Australians that this is yet another instance of Indigenous peoples being given *more.* The Indigenized curriculum discourse reinforces these perceptions, as it leads to resistance from students and staff based on the misconception that this means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are privileged within the academy by such an agenda (Darlaston-Jones, 2011). Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that academics often feel inadequately prepared to teach from a different paradigm even when or if they recognize the need (Dudgeon et al., 2011).

The importation of an ideology that permitted the creation of a racial hierarchy, as well as the discourses of paternalism that permitted the formation of legislative frameworks of exclusion, provided the foundation of contemporary distrust on both sides. Early settlers brought with them the ideology of *social Darwinism,* which placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the bottom of a racial hierarchy. This notion of White supremacy was reinforced by the emerging sciences of the time, most notably psychology and the eugenics movement (Buss, 1976; Robinson, 2009). Subsequent generations have reinforced this positioning systematically through various acts of legislation, particularly the *Protection Acts* and practices. These have enacted both *structural* and *direct*

violence (Galtung, 1969) toward Indigenous Australians. In his frame-work, Galtung (1969) argues that *structural violence*, when enacted by persons and groups in positions of authority, has the potential to cause generational harm through the incremental and imperceptible discourses that create the unspoken norms and assumptions upon which society is based. Operating within an ideology that saw White settlers as superior to the Black inhabitants, British law and governance was readily installed, resulting in Indigenous peoples being denied access to the mechanisms that had sustained their communities for thousands of years (Hunter & Schwab, 2003). In addition, *direct violence* was enacted, not only by the force that was directed toward any and all resistance from Indigenous peoples, but also via the various acts of legislation that further sought to limit and control the lives of the original inhabitants. It has also been sustained over time through entrenched attitudinal assumptions and norms that position Indigenous Australians as *less than* their non-Indigenous counterparts and which have led to levels of social disadvantage that rival the poorest of developing nations (Hunter & Schwab, 2003). It is this structural disadvantage that is currently maintained by an uncontested curriculum. It renders Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' invisible in the theories and practices of psychology education, and is a direct barrier to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the discipline (Cameron & Robinson, 2014; Kinnane et al., 2014). This, alone, places a greater responsibility on psychology, as both a discipline and a profession, to be a leader in curriculum change to redress a historical and contemporary harm. Psychology wields enormous power in shaping the views and understandings of not only its own proponents and practitioners but of those of other disciplines and the wider community; this power, sadly, is not associated with the requisite responsibility to reflect ontological pluralism. The invisibility of alternate voices, knowledges, and perspectives in psychology education is illustrated by Kelleigh Ryan, an Aboriginal educator and researcher, in her reflection on her experiences as a student transitioning into her second career as a psychologist and educator.

An Indigenous Psychologist's Reflection: Kelleigh Ryan

I was fortunate enough to begin my university studies as a mature age student; hence, I was strong in my cultural heritage and had decades of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community cultural knowledge. I left school in Grade 11 and spent 24 years working my way up the career ladder: first in small businesses, then in non-government agencies, and then in the corporate world, until finally I reached a national management position in a government department. I had seen first-hand how power and privilege were allocated to those with university training and how their opinions were given priority over less qualified in-

dividuals. Governments relied on the knowledge and skills that these individuals had gained during their studies to fill positions that influenced important outcomes for many domains, such as making decisions over the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It had never occurred to me that most of these professionals had little or no understanding of Indigenous cultures.

If I thought policy writers and government officials had no understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and that racism was a result of being uneducated, I was not at all prepared for the invisibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture in university teachings. There was no knowledge of the language groups; the many nations; the understanding of belonging to land; of salt water people of desert people; of bush medicine, ceremony, and lore; or of the importance of family and community, connection to the land, and caring for the earth. I could only learn about Australian Indigenous people and their cultures from a deficit model. There were numerous cultural misunderstandings stated as facts, and it was an alienating experience that took determination to get through.

Fortunately, there was an Indigenous support unit at my university and this provided a sanctuary for me and other Indigenous students. I witnessed these staff and other students support fellow Indigenous students through racism from the wider university, and also provide support for the many complex issues of grief and loss, discrimination, illness, isolation, and homesickness. I heard first-hand the hurt felt from sitting in lectures, to hear only examples of what we know as symptoms of colonization—alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, broken families, distrust of authority, poor diet, community disorder, poor health, and depression—delivered as their cultural norms; or to sit in a tutorial where racist comments are made without any reprimand or challenge from university staff. Successful students are seen as unlike others in their culture, *different from their people*, and therefore not connected to their families, community, and culture. If you challenged this, your cultural heritage was questioned with comments such as, "Yes, but you're half caste" or "You're not a real Aboriginal like the ones that live in the desert." Comments such as, "A few good ones make it through" or "They are not like the other ones" or "They are a good role model for those others" reinforce the unspoken accusation that other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are not good enough to achieve within mainstream Australia as others have achieved. Looking back, these comments reflect a racism that remains today and that is sometimes more systemic and subtle in its form.

As a student and mother, I used to worry that if this is the system that we allow to educate the teachers who teach our children, the nurses and doctors who care for our loved ones, the police and justice system who reinforce the laws of this land, then how will we ever be treated as equals and not as the problem? Years later, I know the answer is simple for me: to keep asking that very question of other professionals, academics, power brokers, and students. I am reminded of this every day when I work to combine my professional knowledge with my cultural knowledge, to provide a culturally responsive service to clients and community.

Such a powerful narrative highlights the key deficits not only in psychology education but in the fabric of the academy and broader society (Goerke & Kickett, 2013). The degree of harm accrued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples as a direct result of dominant norms cannot be overstated. It also highlights the intersections between the person (staff member and students; Indigenous and non-Indigenous), the discipline (specifically, psychology in this context, but all others), the higher education sector, and the broader social context. What is

taught in the classroom translates into the understandings and beliefs that inform the practice of the graduate professional, which, in turn, influences the context in which she is employed as well as her personal interactions with family, friends, neighbours, and such. If the knowledge transmission is one that locates certain people in positions of supremacy and dominance while other sectors of society are labelled as deficit, this ideology infiltrates the conscious and sub-conscious practices, beliefs, and values that form the normative culture and reinforce the structural discrimination and derived harm that Galtung identified and that Ryan (and others) experienced.

Psychology Education

Psychology education has been described as mono-cultural (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010; Darlaston-Jones, 2005; Dudgeon et al., 2011) in terms of its research methodologies, history, theories, and pedagogy. Such creation of silos of knowledge has been identified as a key barrier for Indigenous student success, whereby a dichotomy between *mainstream* and *Indigenous* content reinforces the devalued or secondary relevance of the latter while simultaneously reinforcing and strengthening the former (Darlaston-Jones, 2004; Kinnane et al., 2014). Coupled with this lack of integrated knowledge in the curriculum is the lack of representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the student and staff cohort. The absence of physical presence paradoxically renders those Indigenous students who do undertake tertiary study as more highly visible and has the effect of burdening them as the repository of all things Indigenous (Kinnane et al., 2014). Personal stories of those Indigenous students who have succeeded in completing tertiary education emphasize both the notion of hyper-visibility and the lack of cultural relevance as illustrated in Ryan's personal reflection (Dudgeon et al., 2011). Nakata (2008) highlights this positioning as unhelpful, placing the Indigenous student or academic in constant conflict with both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems. These persons are often ill-equipped and unsupported due to the limitations of both systems to prepare Indigenous learners to navigate this complex area of *cultural interface*, which unknowingly forces the student or academic to form an allegiance with the knowledge system they are interpreting *cultural ways of knowing* into. A pluralistic system would enable the Indigenous student and academic to act as a conduit for both knowledge systems into the complexities of critical analysis in each domain. Similarly, there is the expectation that non-Indigenous educators already possess the knowledge and competence to incorporate Indigenous knowledges into a psychology curriculum; this, too, is inaccurate as they are, in fact, a product

of the mono-cultural nature of psychology education. This conflict is captured in the reflection by Jillene Harris, a non-Indigenous Australian woman, as she speaks of how her psychology education and training resulted in a lack of knowledge and preparation, and the personal tensions and conflict that can result.

Personal Reflection: Jillene Harris

I developed awareness and compassion for the inequity faced by Aboriginal Australians over a number of years, less through my education in psychology than through my experiences living in Redfern, New South Wales. My initial step toward action occurred five years ago when I was given the opportunity to work with the Centre for Indigenous Studies to develop a first year psychology subject course designed to teach students about Aboriginal culture, history, and contemporary issues, and to contextualize the role of psychology historically (as an oppressor) and currently (as we attempt to move forward in reconciliation). What I learned on many levels helped to increase my knowledge and shape my attitude. I became aware of my own White privilege, of my biases, and acutely aware of the racism and ignorance endemic in society. Time spent with a mentor and two Aboriginal Elders led to the realization that truly to change perspective requires a transformation in attitude and values. With time and immersion, I realized that to be inclusive, the psychology curriculum needed to change. In attempting to transition the university culture, there are those who are unaware of dominant but invisible power structures, or who deny their dominance and power. Some of these individuals have voices that are heard over everyone else when decisions are made. However, there are also people from the dominant group who wish to transform their teaching practice and who recognize the need to rebalance the discipline and decolonize psychology.

Clearly, the undergraduate and postgraduate psychology education that Harris experienced failed to provide her with the cultural knowledge and understanding necessary to work effectively as an educator, and it was as a result of her external interactions with the Centre for Indigenous Studies that allowed her to develop insight into these deficits and to take steps to redress them. This experience highlights the unspoken yet powerful influence of the epistemological foundations of psychology. The entrenched pursuit of universal laws of human behaviour embedded within a framework of White supremacy reinforces its mono-cultural perspective that reduces *the other* to the status of *subject*, whose role is to provide the counterpoint to the normative position of the White western ideal—such a framework can only be described as systemic oppression.

The concept of systemic oppression being present in higher education, and for this to be a potential trigger for non-completion, emerged as a significant component in a Western Australian study (Darlaston-Jones, 2005) and has been reaffirmed in subsequent research as playing a contributing role in the lack of participation (Kinnane et al., 2014; Riggs, 2004). More importantly though is the fact that, in having been identified, a valuable opportunity now exists to explore this concept further and to examine the structures that permit such a culture to flourish and to remain unchal-

lenged. This, in turn, allows for transformative change in higher education, generally, but in psychology teaching, in particular, that promotes a pluralist culture based on mutual respect and social justice.

Decolonizing Psychology, the Curriculum, and the Academy

As stated earlier, psychology can and should play a leading role in systemic change—not only within the discipline and profession of psychology, but in the academy and in society. Psychology as a discipline of knowledge has the capacity to shed light on human motivation and behaviour that offers a theoretical framework to understand past and contemporary injustice, and to move society toward a more equitable and sustainable future. Education offers the nexus between the personal (psychological) and the social; therefore, change at the discipline level must, by necessity, influence change at the academy level and, ultimately, beyond. However, to be effective this requires far deeper analysis of the philosophical foundations of psychology and how these might be made more visible and more pluralistic before the discipline is in a position to lead the change agenda and fulfill this potential.

In contrast to the discourse of *Indigenizing* the academy, which extends to international academic sites, we propose a *decolonization* and *conscientization* (Freire, 1970) approach, underpinned by critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000a, 2000b; Beyer & Apple, 1988; Giroux, 1983, 2001) and critical psychology (Hall, 1992; Parker, 1999; Prilleltensky, 1989, 1997, 2003; Prilleltensky & Fox, 1997; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). This approach requires an awareness, acknowledgement, and shift on the part of the dominant group that a mono-cultural approach to education, irrespective of disciplinary orientation, is harmful to both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community. A decolonization approach provides the possibility of more authentic learning relative to culture and identity which, in turn, offers the potential to achieve broader social change. This approach is philosophically different because it repositions both the dominant group and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ways that result in epistemological equivalence (Bessarab, Green, Jones, Stratton, Young, & Zubrzycki, 2014). Such equivalence means that no belief system or way of working is privileged; all are valued and respected for what they bring to the understandings of human behaviour and interactions between persons and groups. It requires an understanding that such a philosophical shift, when translated into curriculum change, is only one component in a multi-leveled complex series of interactions and interconnections that transcend the individual learner/educator dyad and expand into the deconstruction/reconstruction of the discipline, the sector, and society at large. It also

requires recognition that this process is cyclical and synergistic rather than linear, and that change at one level always impacts change in another. This approach to education requires that psychological knowledge and practice be informed by the reality that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the original inhabitants of Australia and, as such, have sovereign rights. Therefore, their voices must be central to the construction and transmission of knowledge. Establishing such a foundation of legitimacy for traditional knowledge systems goes far beyond the superficial practice of adding a few lectures or creating a standalone (often elective) unit of study. Rather, it requires an embedded approach to curriculum that incorporates knowledge across the different years of a degree and between the different topic areas. More critically, it requires critical reflexivity in relation to history, context, and privilege on the part of the educator (Ritchie et al., 2011).

Applying critical reflexivity to the construction of the curriculum as well as to teaching practices has the capacity to challenge and, therefore, change the underlying philosophical positions of the dominant group (staff and students) while at the same time making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander realities (knowledges, beliefs, cultures, and such) highly visible. This, in turn, serves to destabilize the mono-cultural orientation of psychology (and other) education, which is likely to encourage more Indigenous students to participate. Evidence suggests that this lack of cultural visibility in the curriculum is one of the principle barriers to minority group participation (Darlaston-Jones, 2005; Kinnane et al., 2014; Riggs, 2004). It also suggests that the relationship between the university culture and the student, and how this is interpreted by the student in relation to his or her self-concept, is critical in recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The past 20 years have seen significant structural change within higher education, nationally and internationally, as a result of economic rationalism and the vocational focus of the business sector influencing decision making within the sector. It has been argued that attention for the immediate future must now be focused on the *culture* of the university in order to affect social change at the institutional and societal levels (Bartell, 2003; Tierney, 1999). This is particularly relevant to a multicultural nation such as Australia, where it becomes imperative to create an educational system that is meaningful to all citizens, not just those of the dominant group.

To achieve this goal, universities need to be transformed into pluralistic spaces that expect and plan for difference within the student body (Goerke & Kickett, 2013; Tanaka, 2003). This requires recognition of the synergy between the university setting and the student. It demands understanding of the way(s) that relationships can contribute to the creation of

citizenship based on mutual respect and value *across* difference. Conse-
quently, institutions need to build flexible, inclusive cultures that expect
and value the different types of students that are entering university. This
requires a deeper and more fundamental ideological shift in that it calls
into question the dominant teaching and learning practices, in relation to
their relevance to Indigenous students and to the creation of the value base
of society. Course content must reflect this change by deconstructing the
taken for granted knowledge that is privileged and disseminated. It calls
for the discourses that maintain asymmetrical power relations (Prillel-
tensky, 2003) in the learning context and the community to be challenged
by creating a teaching and learning environment that positions the student
at the foundation (Hanno, 1999); a critical approach to education based on
the liberation theories of Freire (1970, 1998, 1999); and a reassessment of
how the content we teach privileges certain groups over others (Riggs,
2004). Such an approach requires deep scrutiny of the curriculum in rela-
tion to the types of knowledge that are taught and the hidden implications
of including or excluding other knowledge and perspectives; this includes
integration of the student's reality into the learning environment (Bartell,
2003; Yunkaporta, 2009; Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). It changes the
dynamic relative to the type of knowledge that is taught and, therefore,
privileged. This could dramatically benefit students who feel isolated and
marginalized by the dominant ideology.

Adding Indigenous content to an existing knowledge and cultural
framework does little to challenge or contest the dominance of that
framework. At best it is likely to trigger compassion based on benevo-
lence rather than socially transformative change. While such an approach
might be useful as a first step toward change, it must consciously be con-
structed as that rather than being conceived as an end in its own right.
Adopting a decolonization approach, though, promises much more as it
encourages a cultural shift by members of the dominant group that pro-
vides space for critical reflexivity and reconstruction of personal and
collective identities. Creation of this *third space* (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006)
allows the emergence of a different type of knowledge: one that incorpo-
rates and recognizes the constituting discourses that have shaped the
colonizing process that exists in contemporary spaces and questions the
legitimacy of such ideology. Such cultural change is essential if higher
education—specifically, psychology—is to play its role in the evolution
of an equitable society.

In contrast to the Indigenized curriculum which provides people with
information but fails to demonstrate how this applies in their lives, educa-
tion, and practice, conscientization *requires* such analysis and integration

(Freire, 1970). It forces critical reflexivity of the role that each person plays in the construction of their identity and how this personal identity influences the construction of the *other*; it provides the tools necessary to create change and teaches people how to use these to forge a stronger society, predicated on the values of mutual respect and social justice. This framework provides for a (re-)education of non-Indigenous students such that the histories of dispossession, the discourses of superiority that permitted it, and the applications of policy that cemented the foundations for contemporary realities are embedded into the curriculum. Therefore, rather than being conceptualized as the binary choice between symbolic gestures and practical service provision, reconciliation is viewed in more holistic terms that transcend the simplistic nature of the *either/or* dichotomy. The emphasis on non-Indigenous Australians to *own* and understand the varied histories of colonization is an important, albeit contentious, inclusion into the reconciliation and education debate.

Freire argued that, "Teaching requires a recognition that education is ideological; that it always involves ethics; it requires a capacity to be critical and to recognize our conditioning; teaching requires humility; and above all it requires critical reflection" (1998, p. xiii). This perspective is reinforced by Aronowitz (2000) when he claimed that, "[higher learning is] ... the process by which a student is motivated to participate in, even challenge, established intellectual authority" (p. 143). Such a view of education requires that a commitment to social justice and human rights be the foundation upon which the curriculum is built. Curriculum development within a critical pedagogy framework poses essential questions of the architect relating to the content and the positions adopted relative to the issues. This is embedded into the structure and format of the learning environment. Drawing on Tanaka (2002), we offer a conceptual framework and pose the following questions in order to challenge the educator and the student to consider issues that often remain hidden in the curriculum.

- *Voice*: Who has the right/power/opportunity to speak and be heard? Who is silenced by those who speak? Who speaks without authority, particularly in colonized spaces?
- *Power*: How do the multiple manifestations of power and resistance play out in our discipline and the spaces we occupy? Do we examine how power and knowledge are connected?
- *Authenticity*: Do we understand that we are situated in our own cultural space that includes issues of social, economic, and political power? What boundaries are consciously and unconsciously crossed in our practice and who is silenced by this?

- *Reflexivity*: Do we, as individuals, explore our place in society and our role in constituting the taken for granted norms that are in operation? Do we understand that our communities are cultural places and that we contribute to its creation?
- *Reconstitution*: Are we able to effect change and create environments conducive to self-determination and empowerment?

Viewing the university as a community allows for the creation of structures and processes that promote personal and collective wellbeing so that this translates into the home, work, and beyond. Thus, in creating a university environment that promotes respect and understanding across difference for its students, future leaders, managers, educators, and citizens are being trained to be respectful and understanding of others. In this way, it becomes possible to build a society that is based on the principles of social justice, equity, and peace (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Tanaka, 2003).

Universities can effect change by developing context-relevant strategies specifically targeted to their own student population. One of the principle areas of change is for universities and their staff (academic and administrative) to become reflexive practitioners, whereby they engage in constant assessment of their practices, policies, and processes in terms of the five probes discussed above: *voice, power, authenticity, self-reflexivity,* and *reconstruction*. In practical terms, this can be translated into the following set of questions:

1. *Who is it good for?* Critique the proposed action in relation to who benefits from the action.
2. *Who is disadvantaged?* Challenge the potential consequences to identify risk of harm as a consequence of the action.
3. *What discourse is reinforced by the action?* Is the proposed action hegemonic in its practice?
4. *What degree of complementarity exists in the action?* That is, the degree to which personal growth is linked to community growth.

Principal areas where this reflexive practice can be engaged effectively are the teaching and learning strategies employed by academic staff and the type of knowledge that is transmitted. These are likely to have the greatest effect by creating a learning context that is meaningful to the student and that can contribute to social change (Bessarab et al., 2014; Busch, Darlaston-Jones, & McCarthy, 2012; Kinnane et al., 2014). Evidence in support of this approach can be seen in the provision of *culturally responsive health care* (Indigenous Allied Health Australia, 2013). This model draws on the journey of education as being professionally and culturally responsive in conducting treatment through a pluralistic knowledge system lens, emphasizing that both professional and cultural skills must continue to be

enhanced to provide effective practice for Indigenous populations. Yunka-porta (2009) offers the *Eight-way Aboriginal Pedagogy Framework* as a model by which educators might shape and construct the curriculum and wider learning environment. This framework comprises interconnected teaching and learning concepts and practices (storytelling, symbols and images, learning maps, deconstruct/reconstruct) combined with community rela-tionships that provide strong connection to culture, knowledge, and voice. Consequently, this framework reflects the conceptual model offered by Tanaka and the philosophical guidance offered by Freire, and provides a mechanism by which educators might construct their teaching practice.

In responding to the themes of this special issue, we have tried to offer a different conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding the importance of authentically incorporating Aboriginal voices and knowl-edges into the curriculum as a critical first step to changing the local and international academy, and society at large. We argue that the terminology employed in the *Indigenizing the academy/curriculum* debate, which includes international contexts, reinforces a false dichotomy between dominant and subordinate that has far-reaching effects in relation to sustainable reconcil-iation and the advancement of social justice. As an alternative, we offer a decolonization approach founded on principles of conscientization and critical pedagogy. This includes an understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power. It encompasses a critique of the dominant discourses that objectify the individual rather than valuing the various subject positions each of us adopt. In this manner, a decolonization approach to education, that is founded on conscientization and enacted through critical pedagogy, provides the opportunity to create the *third space* (Darlaston-Jones, 2012; Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006) where each person understands his or her position and how this manifests the legacies of col-onization. In recognizing these subject positions, each person becomes part of a collective movement representing the possibility of something new, forged out of the shared history but moving beyond its limitations, with the prospect of building new realities based on common understanding, mutual respect, and enacting substantive reconciliation.

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