

# Towards a Psychology for Aotearoa

## INTRODUCTION

*This contribution is a combination of the pragmatic and the ideal, derived from our efforts to advance Maori initiatives in the Department of Psychology at Auckland University. We acknowledge the efforts and pain of numerous Maori students and Maori staff who have been at the sharp end of the experience that gives rise to these suggestions.*

*It is not in any sense a comprehensive solution to the problems that Psychology generates when it attempts to deal with the issue of its relationship with Maoridom. Rather it is a list of measures that have made or could make a positive difference to the experience and learning of Maori who interface with the discipline.*

*In general, assuming a genuine commitment to a working biculturalism on the part of staff and departments, our view is that what is required is a fully-resourced, intellectual and physical environment in which Maori can consider, research and develop facets of their own cultural practices that they determine are parallel to or overlap with what we call Psychology. We recognise that even with the most ardent commitment institutions will not produce such changes immediately, which highlights the need to deliver short term measures to alleviate the current crisis in tertiary training of Maori. Such stopgaps should not be seen as an end in themselves and this point is reflected in a constant tension in this paper between the need to reach existing Maori students and staff and the imperative to empower Maori structures and personnel for the long haul.*

*We have taken an approach which considers a number of divisions of the people who make up a department in recognition of the point that the needs and requirements of various groups differ markedly. We recognise that there are also variations within the groups that mean that not all needs will be met by the initial suggestions, and that requirements evolve with time and need to be checked out via consultation at regular intervals. We also recognise the differentiation of some of the activities of the department and look separately at these facets before making a brief summary of our position.*

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## STEPS AND TIPS

### Maori Students

In our experience there are two main issues with respect to Maori students within the established institution recruitment in Stage 1 Psychology courses and retention of students at higher levels. To this end our approach centres on making the Psychology option attractive to Maori students and the Department itself a Maori-friendly environment.

#### Attracting Maori students:

- \* Establish recruitment efforts in schools; if possible by senior Maori students.
- \* Put a welcome in departmental handbooks; in both Maori and English.
- \* Have visible Maori staff.
- \* Provide for departmental liaison with intending Maori students - to answer pre-decision queries about courses.
- \* Put in place a preferential entry scheme and acknowledge varying qualifications when selection is being made.
- \* Include and advertise Maori course content.

#### Retention:

- \* Recognise that Maori students in carry a double load of commitments and responsibility - to their own community and culture and to the Tauwi institution.
- \* Have a powhiri at the beginning of the year to acknowledge the presence of Maori students.
- \* Employ Maori tutors for mainstream tutorials.
- \* Create additional Maori tutorials incorporating peer tutoring, tuakana-teina, cooperative study.

- \* Facilitate support groups and networking.
- \* Have social functions (i.e. parties).
- \* Make room in courses for guest lectures by Maori people.
- \* Ensure on-going support by lecturers and other staff (e.g. secretaries).
- \* Make course content relevant (see Teaching below).
- \* Provide space for kohanga (study room).
- \* Provide copies of course texts for student use in kohanga.

### **Tauwiwi students**

Tauwiwi make up the bulk of students in courses in psychology and as such function as a crucial peer group or context for Maori experience. Courses need to provide for the education of this group on Treaty issues in order to equip them for professional careers in a bicultural context and to enhance the environment in which Maori interface with psychology.

- \* Provide departmental resourcing for workshops, for example, on Treaty issues, biculturalism.
- \* Include course content on what biculturalism means for Tauwiwi.
- \* Give an outline (in departmental handbooks) of the commitment to biculturalism that is expected of Tauwiwi students in the department.
- \* Facilitate support groups and networking for Tauwiwi students working on issues of biculturalism.

### **Maori staff**

Maori staff are a crucial part of the development of Maori initiatives in psychology. They provide support and a focus for Maori students and lead the research and development in their field.

- \* Get some (at least two) but don't forget appropriate consultation processes.
- \* Facilitate powhiri and other appropriate forms for ceremonial occasions.
- \* Recognize Maori qualifications in appointment decisions.
- \* Acknowledge the double commitments (to both Maori and Tauwiwi worlds) of Maori staff.
- \* Provide resources, for example, to enable the establishment of programmes, community liaison and networking, student support. This also includes the provision of space.

### **Tauwiwi staff**

Tauwiwi staff need to recognise the power they wield as operatives within the established structures and examine the challenges of a Treaty-based analysis of their institution and worldview. The crucial thing is a commitment to include issues in practice ('walk the walk') both at a personal level and within a department.

- \* Become bicultural!
- \* Actively support Maori initiatives in the department.
- \* Develop and resource consultation networks with Maori within the University (staff and students) and in the community.
- \* Provide departmental resourcing for and staff commitment to workshops, for example, on Treaty issues, biculturalism.
- \* Address the challenges raised by Maori and deal with the theoretical and methodological infrastructure of the discipline.
- \* Develop and publicise a departmental policy on biculturalism (see Appendix).
- \* Develop and encourage a bicultural perspective within specialty areas and courses (and in students being taught).
- \* Develop suitable teaching resources/textbooks to support the material you introduce.

### **Teaching by Tauwiwi staff**

Academic staff have a lot of leeway in what they teach students and it is often the content of courses that attracts students back into a department. If Maori students are to be 'attracted' then staff need to acknowledge Maori perspectives and knowledge within their courses.

- \* Resource Maori tutorials within normal tutorial schedules.
- \* Encourage (including resource) tutors to attend workshops on Treaty issues, biculturalism.
- \* Acknowledge Maori viewpoints in assignment options.
- \* Be flexible in the marking of assignments from Maori students, for example, it may be appropriate to get these marked by a Maori staff (or community) member.
- \* Include a bicultural perspective in course content.
- \* Do not pick on Maori students in tutorials or lectures in order to get 'the Maori viewpoint'.

## Research

In this section we address mainly the concerns we have about research that considers Maori issues and/or involves Maori participants. Such research should stem from a Maori centre rather than more traditional practices of including Maori subjects to examine how they differ from other cultural groups.

- \* Consult with Maori networks as to issues, approaches, etc.
- \* Acknowledge Maori self-determination regarding important research issues and methods for Maori.
- \* Provide adequate resourcing for any Maori person acting in a consultancy capacity.
- \* Support and resource both Maori research and collaborative work.
- \* Develop a Treaty-based commitment to research in Maori issues and Maori-Pakeha relations.
- \* Recognize the need for research that will benefit and be of use to the Maori community.

## Practice

It is well known that established clinical practice does not meet the needs of Maori clients. To redress this problem we need to begin to establish and resource programmes developed and controlled by Maori people. In the short term we need to train more Maori psychologists and to educate Tauwi psychologists. To begin this process we need to:

- \* Consult with Maori networks on training needs, working with Maori clients, placements, etc.
- \* Establish a Maori consultancy group to act in conjunction with any professional programme.
- \* Provide adequate resourcing for any Maori person acting in a consultancy capacity.
- \* Develop a theory and practice of Biculturalism from within the discipline.
- \* Resource and support the development of a Maori-based programme.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Throughout this paper we have referred to the Maori community which we believe is crucial to the success of Maori initiatives in the discipline. While it is given little acknowledgment within the University, it is this community which, to a major extent, supplies the cultural and material resources

and commitment which sustain Maori students and staff in Tauwi institutions. The consultative structures and procedures we commend are really only the tip of the ice as far as a meaningful biculturalism is concerned. From a full and formal recognition of our Treaty partnership all the necessary expressions of biculturalism would flow. This is the challenge which underpins the suggestions carried here for psychology.

In our actual situation, it is tempting to view the issue of developing Maori initiatives in psychology as a kind of catch 22 in which the powers that be will not move until the need, as measured by the numbers of Maori students or popular demand for Treaty-based courses, justifies change. However we know from efforts applied in the name of feminist psychology, where neither numbers nor interest are issues, that such forces wield little influence with the establishment, revealing the extent to which personal and institutional politics are the main barriers to change.

It is our view therefore that the first responsibility for movement toward a psychology for Aotearoa rests with the incumbent staff in departments. We believe that this is a very serious and urgent responsibility because of the ravages wrought by colonialism on the Maori people. Equally the issue is one that goes to the very heart of Tauwi identity and our place in this country and the South Pacific.

Psychology as a 'people's science' can and should be providing a lead, fostering debate and pushing for change and justice.

## APPENDIX

We have Departmental support for the inclusion of this evolving policy as an Appendix to this article. This policy has not been adopted by the Department; a broad consultation process is currently being undertaken that involves Maori academics and community people, the University's EEO Officer and senior academics and administrators, as well as other interested parties. It is reprinted here to show how the Department has tried to encapsulate their commitment to the Treaty in a public policy statement. May you benefit from this attempt to invent a bicultural Psychology Department wheel.

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## EVOLVING POLICY ON THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

**Introduction**

It is the aim of this policy to achieve equity of outcome for Maori and Tauwi within the Psychology Department. Equity is the application of the principles of fairness and natural justice. It involves the sharing of resources and power with Tangata Whenua so that equal outcomes can be achieved. Where parties do not begin on an equal footing, to achieve equity of outcome requires an inequitable allocation of resources and power.

We regard honouring the Treaty of Waitangi as the fundamental step in establishing a just and equitable society in Aotearoa. Therefore the Department will give high priority to implementing the Treaty in our own policies, teaching and research.

The Department has a strong commitment to developing and maintaining a partnership with Maori individuals and groups who have expertise in Psychology, including Maori academics and professionals, Maori students of psychology and interested parties from the broader Maori community. This partnership is essential to the successful implementation of this policy.

**Policy**

1. The Department commits itself to the principle of biculturalism.
2. Departmental policy and action will reflect a Maori perspective and the right of Maori to determine their own needs, problems and solutions.
3. The Department actively supports the teaching of Maori psychology.
4. Teaching within the Department should reflect and actively promote a bicultural perspective wherever it is relevant. Within the bounds of the University's regulations policies this may include the practice of culturally appropriate methods of learning and assessment.
5. In relation to 3 and 4 above, it is acknowledged that the delivery of both bicultural and Maori content may differ for Maori and Tauwi students.
6. The Department encourages and supports all staff to demonstrate appropriate understanding and knowledge of bicultural issues or to be currently engaged in acquiring such knowledge.
7. The Department commits itself to consultation with appropriate Maori community groups regarding teaching, research and administration.
8. The Department acknowledges the need of Maori communities for appropriately trained psychology professionals.

**Practice**

1. Maori students are actively encouraged to apply for entry to courses and the Department commits itself to a recruitment and selection procedure which ensures an equitable representation of Maori students.
2. The Department gives recognition to Maori values, experience and skills in language and culture, management, organisation, leadership, teamwork, communication and flexibility, as qualifications, particularly in relation to staff appointments and student entry to restricted courses.
3. The Department undertakes to adequately resource Maori staff and acknowledges the extra area of responsibility of these staff members in supporting Maori students and their iwi (i.e. community responsibilities).
4. The Department provides support for Maori students through an ongoing tutorial programme and culturally appropriate tutors.
5. Staff are encouraged to undertake organised programmes of professional development to equip them to put into practice the above policy.
6. Academic staff are asked to include information in their annual reports on how they are implementing this policy in their teaching, research, contact with students and (where appropriate) practice.
7. The Department commits itself each year to convene a hui for the purpose of reviewing policies outlined here, for reporting on action and progress in achieving these stated and implied aims, and for generating such new policy as might be appropriate.