

REFLECTIONS¹ OF THE BICULTURAL SYMPOSIUM

Held at the 38th Annual Conference of the New Zealand Psychological Society in Dunedin (1st – 4th September 2005).

By Bridgette Masters-Awatere, co-chair (with Michelle Levy) of the Bicultural Symposium

This year the response to the symposium was very positive. The symposium ran over two days (starting on Friday afternoon and carrying on through Saturday). As far as I'm aware, this was the first time that the bicultural symposium had to be relocated to a bigger room due to the number of interested participants exceeding the seating capacity of the designated room.

There were eight paper presentations with five being made as either pair or group presentations and the remainder given as individual papers. Half of the presentations were from Waikato University; others were from Auckland and Massey Universities.

After a slight delay caused by the relocation to the main lecture theatre, the session began on Friday after lunch with Melissa Taitimu of Auckland University. Melissa explored concepts of schizophrenia from a Kaupapa Maori perspective and challenged participants to consider the culturally-bound nature of schizophrenia diagnosis. Melissa's presentation was followed by that of Linda Nikora, Yvonne Te Pohe and Kyro Courtney-Clarke. Linda shared the teaching details of the 200 level psychology course (Culture, Ethnicity & Psychology) while Yvonne and Kyro shared their personal experiences and described their analysis of their reflections in light of course content. Their learning experiences and reflections contained directives on the application of this course to many New Zealanders.

“As far as I'm aware, this was the first time that the bicultural symposium had to be relocated to a bigger room due to the number of interested participants exceeding the seating capacity of the designated room.”

The final paper of the first day was presented by Paul Hirini of Massey University. Paul talked about his analysis of key stakeholder interviews with prominent Maori health researchers as part of a project on suicide among Maori that has been funded by the Ministry of Health.

Travel disruptions meant that the second day of the symposium needed to be reorganised. Nathaniel Pihama and Saburo Omura, whose presentation had originally been intended as a poster, started the session with a discussion on the efficacy of Kaupapa Maori Tutorials as a mechanism to help first year students in psychology at Waikato. Their presentation was followed by Mohi Rua, Karen McRae, Shiloh Groot and Helen Ellis who talked about the third year cultural paper (Maori Development and Psychology), also at the University of Waikato. With the support of Mohi Rua, the students of this course were able to reflect on their personal experiences and how these provided real life case studies that enabled them to grasp the concepts of the paper. The final speakers in the slot before the lunch break were Keri Thompson and Tamati Amuketi who presented evaluations undertaken by the Maori and Psychology Research Unit (MPRU) as case study examples of different support programmes for Maori students. The projects Keri and Tamati talked about involved an evaluation of the School of Science and another from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Waikato University, and then two evaluations of Te Rau Puawai from Massey University. At the conclusion of their presentation some useful considerations for support programmes were presented to the audience by Keri Thompson.

After lunch, the symposium continued with a joint presentation by Jhanitra Gavala and Paul Hirini of Massey University. They asked the audience to consider the role of M ori males in psychology by arguing that such a voice has not been prominent in the profession. One of the key issues for Paul was the need of psychology to allow space for Maori psychologists to gather, debate, consider and research the application of psychology to M atauranga Maori. Their presentation generated a number of questions. Unfortunately, travel-related re-scheduling meant discussion had to be curtailed as Jhanitra had to leave to present in another session.

The final session of the bicultural symposium was presented by Kararaea Te Whata of Auckland University. Recipient of the President's Scholarship in 2004, Kararaea presented her Masters thesis research, which involved redesigning a Maori identity scale which she then administered to over 400 Maori participants. The data presented so far seemed to captivate the audience, and we look forward to seeing the final results.

From discussions with presenters and attendees it was clear that there were an interesting range of papers that could apply to different fields of psychology. While some presenters had specifically asked to present in the bicultural symposium, some

¹ This summary provides an overview of the bicultural symposium from the perspective of one of the session chairs.

had thought their papers might be more useful to an audience in another stream. Organisers of future conferences should consider inviting people to nominate their preferred symposium on the abstract submission form. This strategy would eliminate papers being clustered together in a Bicultural session simply because of the mention of Maori in the abstract or title.

On the other hand, some of the students appreciated the opportunity to present in a stream that specifically acknowledged their position as student researchers. (Some were novice presenters.) It was felt that the option of presenting in a stream specifically for student presenters would be more supportive and enhance participation from students from the various universities around the country.

For others who are more experienced at presenting there were suggestions that their papers would be better placed within the appropriate field of psychology, whether that be clinical, community, industrial and organisational, justice or whatever symposium. In considering the joint conference with the Australian Psychological Society, careful planning and negotiation will be important to ensure that a safe space is provided for the indigenous psychologists of both countries. It is important, however, to ensure that such a strategy happens beyond the international conference next year to become part of the standard programme planning practice for each annual conference.

As a final word, both Michelle and I would like to thank all those who presented papers, attended the presentations and as such provided value support for the bicultural symposium. Without your support it would be extremely difficult for the symposium to take place.

BICULTURAL SYMPOSIUM CHAIRS

Bridgette Masters-Awatere and Michelle Levy were the 2004-2005 Bicultural Directors on the NZPsS Executive. Their contribution to the growth of bicultural awareness within the Society has been considerable. They are currently active members of the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI).

Michelle Levy

Community Psychologist

Senior Policy Analyst, Te Puni Kokiri, Wellington (3yrs); Mental Health Research & Development Strategy, Maori Health Research & Policy Advisor (5yrs); Assistant Lecturer, Kaupapa Maori, Psychology Department, University of Waikato (5yrs); currently based in Hamilton as self employed consultant primarily focused on Maori mental health. In process of completing doctoral studies focused on indigenous psychology in Aotearoa.

Bridgette Masters-Awatere (Te Rarawa, Ngai Te Rangi, Tuwharetoa ki Kawerau) BSocSc; MSocSc; PGDipPsych(Comm); MNZPsS; current PhD candidate.

Bridgette is an Assistant Lecturer in Kaupapa Maori and Community Psychology within the Psychology Department at the University of Waikato, and is one of a small number of Maori registered psychologists. Prior to joining the Waikato team, Bridgette worked as a Tutor at Tairāwhiti Polytechnic and as a researcher/trainer at Auckland University. For the past eight years Bridgette has been an evaluation researcher & trainer.

sexual dysfunction
2006 *clinical practice, research & trends*

Queenstown, New Zealand

06-09 April 2006

Conference

You are invited to attend the 2006 multi-disciplinary Australian and New Zealand Sexual Dysfunction Conference. The conference programme will centre on recent developments and research in the clinical treatment and understanding of sexual problems for males, females and couples. This programme is ideally suited for Psychologists and Counsellors who work with couples with sexual problems. Keynote speakers include Prof Sandra Leiblum USA, Dr John Dean UK, and Prof Lorraine Dennerstein Australia.

- Call for Submissions – Papers or Posters close 09 December
- Register before 24 December for the Earlybird Registration fee and to go into the draw for a case of Cental Otago wines

For more details please visit our website www.conferenceteam.co.nz/sexualdysfunction
Email: marg@conferenceteam.co.nz Phone: (+64) 3 343 5902