



Psychological research has increasingly evidenced the predominately unsuccessful application of Western psychological methodology and delivery with indigenous populations. Aotearoa statistical analyses demonstrate over-representation of Maori in Mental Health and Corrections-related populations. Governmental agency responses acknowledge the necessity of different approaches, including within psychology.

Multiple strategies involve practical and financial encouragement for developing Maori practitioners and researchers, including cultural components in psychological training, employment of Maori consultants, ethical scrutiny of research on Maori populations, and Maori representation on professional and regulatory bodies.

Keriata Paterson's Presidential Address to the 2006 Joint Conference of the Australian & New Zealand Psychological Societies discusses resistance as a continuing reality, rendering difficult the progression of psychology into a safe environment with application by and for Maori, and wider acceptance of culturally appropriate modalities of service provision.

PSYCHOLOGY: CULTURE AND PRACTICE — A NEW SCIENCE

A point of reflection: Thinking of the last indigenous psychologist you worked with, how did you support them?

In this korero/discussion I refer to bi-culturalism as the relationship between the indigenous people and the non-indigenous. This is not ignoring a need for multi-culturalism, which is also important. It is prioritising the addressing of social inequities which have arisen by virtue of colonisation, and that we as psychologists have the power to provide some form of acknowledgement and redress within our own profession.

What is my qualification to speak on this issue? I was one of two recipients of the Corrections Psychological Services Maori Bursaries. This was the second allocation, approximately 11 years ago. Following two years with this service, working with predominantly Maori clients, I worked within and alongside Po Te Ata Tu Maori Mental Health team in Rotorua, for seven years. This wonderful learning experience rendered a stark contrast with subsequent experience in a pakeha service. I am now in private practice working across Hauraki and Waikato regions, and again working with Maori and non-Maori clients and supervisees, through Corrections and Intervention Services.

Along with other Maori practitioners, I am able to confirm what psychological research has increasingly evidenced: the predominantly unsuccessful application of Western psychological methodology and delivery with Indigenous populations. Without adaptation or delivery by practitioners who intimately know the culture and can act within the norms, can be culturally and physically similar to the population, a chasm can exist between well-meaning and need wherein fall the best intentions of the psychologist and the needs of the "recipient".

In Aotearoa, old news is that statistical analyses demonstrate over-representation by Maori in Mental Health and Corrections-related populations. Governmental agency responses acknowledge the necessity of different approaches, including within psychology. Although in some areas the combination of psychological techniques such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Tikanga Maori are well recognised as being most effective, there is still some question about which element rendered the treatment effective - was it the psychological treatment or the Tikanga element? I believe that sometimes the psychological element is over-rated and the Tikanga element under-rated.

Of course it is difficult to determine proportionate credit. Those who have experienced the combination and those programmes (mainly in Corrections, such as Montgomery House), which measure recidivism rates and can provide hard evidence, only really know that the combination can work.

Similarly Maori Clinical Psychologists who work in Maori Treatment Units are able to report successful outcomes. An important part of that success is also the supported on-going well-being of the Maori psychologists within that paradigm. One of the great pleasures is the support of the psychologist within his or her culture. One of the stressors is sometimes the responsibility of providing the clinical viewpoint within and around the cultural. This can be particularly the case where the two are of incompatible belief systems. Regarding Dr Sharples moving speech earlier, were his experiences of the birds being stilled, his mother "on his shoulder", and his kaitiaki, the hawk, soaring in the sky above him what we would call experiences of the Wairua (spiritual), and positively significant? Or would you think he was having a psychotic episode and have him assessed by a psychiatrist? This is a story rendering vivid the uneasy fit between two very different paradigms - the spiritual versus the scientific.

Would you, the majority of Western culture, be surprised to know that many of us, the "other cultured", have such stories to tell? I know that some of you have experienced similar spiritual events, but would not feel so safe to share them. What a shame, that as a profession which daily deals with the personal, and all that entails in others' lives, we can be so judgemental and concrete. As psychologists we are really dealing with the unseen ourselves!

New Zealand suffers from a hardening of attitudes towards cultural inclusion in programmes and services. This is partly the result of the radical social changes made by such agencies as the Department of Social Welfare as it was known when Pu Ao Te Ata Tu was brought into practice. Years of socially acceptable racism were suddenly declared unacceptable. Where genuine change did not occur, the visible became submersed in enforced "political correctness".

We represent a discipline which has its various origins in overseas countries such as Austria and the United States. Currently, some psychologists espouse Eastern philosophies and wisdom in the form of "Mindfulness". Would that Kaupapa Maori Psychology was so fashionably attractive to more than the current faithful who are pioneering this field! With fashion comes funding, with funding, comes training and establishment of a literature base.

What is the collective social responsibility of this country's psychologists? In Aotearoa the revival of Maori culture from colonisation's historical assimilationist policies has begun to address the acculturation difficulties faced by the mature population. Loss of language, loss of knowledge of whakapapa, tikanga, land, and therefore lost identity, have wrought inestimable damage on several generations. The renaissance of pride in Te Ao Maori, has brought about the opportunities to learn what had been denied many, by the punishing attitudes of the agencies of governmental oppression in schools, and government departments across all areas of social control.

Of those generations, those who have to a greater or lesser degree lost the cloak of identity, have had several options. We have opportunities to find our way slowly back through university or school-provided courses, Ataarangi, Tribal Wananga and so forth. Those who arrived in time to be schooled in Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Maori, and now Iwi Whare Wananga, are so fortunate to be coming through with a pride in, and knowledge of their identity. As psychologists we know that this truly will alleviate and counter the hostilities and blocks, which may be placed in their paths of life.

We know that a strong sense of identity increases psychological resilience. For Maori and other less individualistic cultures, the identity is meaningless as "self" - it is "self in relationship to others" - across time (the generations), across history (tribal and colonisation), and across the present, in whanaungatanga, the familial inter-relationships, in belonging to the whenua, in being able to speak a language which embodies the culture, a different culture from that which is taught in most Psychology Departments.

What a long hiko we are on

Resistance in this profession is a continuing reality, rendering difficult the progression of psychology into a safe environment with application by and for Maori, and wider acceptance of culturally appropriate modalities of service provision. It can be extremely unsafe to practice a bi-cultural form of psychology among Pakeha psychologists who have not been politicised. There is the danger that the blend of cultural input to the psychological may be seen as an undisciplined drift from sound psychological practice. However those with wider vision recognise that there must be a move towards rendering psychological service delivery more culturally approachable, accessible and trustworthy to the increasing indigenous population who may seek to avail themselves of this type of service. It is truly pioneering in a field which states often that it does not know how to successfully approach the treatment of a population. It is a serious issue.

Collectively and individually, what can psychologists do? Individually, psychologists can take the time and effort to seek exposure to the culture of Tangata Whenua, of the people of the land we inhabit. Individually, we can attempt to understand and be supportive and even protective of the very few indigenous psychologists around us. As Managers, we can support and provide funding and a safe environment for their Maori clinicians

and researchers. As a body, we can seek to influence the profession of psychology at all levels, to ensure that the psychology workforce is up-skilled and attitudinally adjusted to true bi-culturalism.

Due to the efforts of the Maori representation on Professional and Regulatory bodies, and those who support them, bi-cultural awareness and ability is increasingly going to be an essential and mandatory part of the New Zealand psychologist's kete. There is a lot yet to achieve. We know that the newer "generations" of psychologists have had a measure of education towards sensitivity, and some have come a long way towards comfort and skill.

Other national strategies have involved practical and financial encouragement for developing Maori practitioners and researchers, including cultural components in psychological training, employment of Maori consultants, and ethical scrutiny of research on Maori populations.

Still, what we need most is to support the Maori psychologists who are in the ranks of developing experience. They are often on a lonely path, where their external supports may support them, but sparse distribution of funding and other reasons often mean their supports are not able to walk alongside them. Today, in the presentations of the Henry Rongomau Bennett Scholarships, we saw the proud whanau support of the recipients. Although the whanau have loved and supported their wives, partners, children, mokopuna, how can they ever really understand what "their psychologist" is going through?!

It is difficult to study and work within majority culture learning institutions. It often requires the repression of characteristics, which may otherwise have had expression. There are also different community expectations of the indigenous psychologist or psychologist in training. In the workplace, they often carry the weight of their agency's expectations that they will fulfil a cultural consultancy need the agency has previously been unable to fill. With all the extra stressors, even the unseen and unimagined, these students and practitioners need your support. They are pioneers in a very new field.

What is involved in the establishment of a new science? Analysis and hypotheses: "Western psychological science doesn't seem to be very effective with this population - do we need to try something different, something they can relate to better?" Experimental trials: "we could add some Tikanga Maori to CBT and see how it interacts - with a Maori practitioner; with a pakeha practitioner". Replication: "are we finding that this effect is occurring consistently with this combination?" Literature: There is a growing body of literature - but it is a very young science. From literature there will be movement towards respect - and "respectability".

What a long hiko (walk, journey) we are on. When I joined the Society there were not many brown faces at Conference. Each year it seems there are more. Considering the status 20 years ago, the Society could say there has been progress. Perhaps, though, the Society is simply benefiting from educational, funding, and other initiatives. There remains much work to be done. Those with mono-cultural perspectives, e oho! Kia mataara - your world is changing.