

Pākehā/Tauīwi meet to discuss bicultural responsibilities

Some reflections from Rose Black



Rose Black (PhD) is a Pākehā New Zealander of Irish and Scots descent. She is a registered psychologist with a Post Graduate Diploma in Community Psychology and has been a member of the NSCBI since 1994. She served as a Bicultural Director on the NZPsS Executive for four years and is currently the Director of Social Issues. She works as a researcher and advocate with Poverty Action Waikato and the Anglican Action Centre for Social Justice and offers professional supervision.

In writing these reflections I am very much aware of, in particular, the Māori members of the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI) who have generously offered their gifts of time, sharing knowledge and aroha to work on strengthening the inclusion of Māori knowledge and practices in psychology for the last 24 years.

Following the 2015 Annual Conference a call was made by some of the Pākehā members of NSCBI to invite Pākehā/Tauīwi to come together with the aim of strengthening our collective bicultural responsibilities and actions. As Pākehā/Tauīwi, what are we seeing/experiencing in psychology in relation to bicultural issues, was the main question eleven Pākehā/Tauīwi community, clinical, educational, social and academic psychologists and two students considered when they met in Hamilton on 8 October 2015. To connect with each other we firstly shared our cultural/family stories, and how we came to feel that racism was unjust. It was a profound sharing.

In the discussion about bicultural issues in psychology today three general areas came to the fore: curriculum related issues such as attracting and retaining Māori

students, frameworks, and accountability; becoming critically aware of (de)colonisation practice; and cultural supervision.

Curriculum

Curriculum issues related to attracting and retaining Māori students, teaching frameworks and accountability; becoming critically aware of (de)colonisation practice; and cultural supervision were the three themes that emerged from the discussion.

There is a genuine will to engage with some of the power structures, and the operation of institutional racism in both subtle and at times blatant ways needs to be constantly examined, addressed and challenged. That is a role that we Pākehā/Tauīwi need to recognise and support each other in finding effective and collective ways to challenge. For example, the way teaching and training programmes operate as barriers for Māori to achieve full qualifications in psychology. Some of the barriers to attracting and retaining Māori students were noted as a lack of structural and academic support, a lack of inclusion of Māori epistemologies, the time it takes, and the economic burdens such as the ongoing cost of student loans and access to student allowances for the whole period of required study. Some

academic staff are noticing increases in the stress students are experiencing and also a change in student demographics – for instance, there are now more supported students who are white, middle-class women, and fewer Māori and fewer men in professional training programmes.

Becoming critically aware of (de)colonisation practice

There is a need to create ‘useful’ psychologists who enter the local context with an understanding of biculturalism in practice. Questions were raised about the time spent in learning uncritical western frameworks at undergraduate level. A culturally appropriate, decolonising curriculum could be offered in a shorter time which would include the de-centring of Western frameworks and the centralising of indigenous concepts, in conjunction with a focus on critical approaches to psychology at stage one and the inclusion of these approaches all the way through degree structures and professional training.

There are some examples of training programmes for the ‘helping’ professions that have been developed such as the programme developed by Dawn Darlaston-Jones at Notre Dame University in Perth and some of the polytechs in Aotearoa. I would

also like to draw attention to the article by Berman, Edwards, Gavala, Robson & Ansell (2015) in this edition of *Psychology Aotearoa* as they write about the reflections, review and renewal of the Education Psychology training programme at Massey University informed by both Māori and bicultural frameworks.

In taking accountability to reduce and stop 'white' dominance in psychology it was suggested that increasing the membership of the Psychological Society was a way of strengthening a collective rather than an isolated and individual approach to decolonisation.

The process of becoming bicultural and critically aware of (de) colonising practices requires learning the nuances of a culture, changes in belief systems, and changes in our competency beliefs. While all of this takes time there is an urgency to step up and work together to develop effective skills and supportive ways of calling out practices that maintain racism, in ways that don't alienate people. We recognise the power of story and testimony, our stories can provoke change and provoke conversations and encourage others. Let's find ways to use them more.

Cultural supervision

As we discussed cultural supervision a number of points were raised. For example, the need to 'get it right' that dominates Pākehā worldview is almost at odds with Māori ways of being, and can act as a barrier to understanding different ways of knowing and being. Cultural (in) competency is often ignored or minimised in a system which emphasises and rewards 'competency' – how can we be more honest about our inter-cultural inadequacies?

Cultural supervision is not just around learning/speaking te reo, but involves embodied ways of being and knowing. For Pākehā/Tauīwi working with complex mental health issues, for example, requires more depth of understanding than is currently available. Specialist cultural supervision from Tohunga may need to be accessed to address such complexity, especially in regards to matekite, makutu, wairua and distress.

When we 'miss' opportunities to voice our concerns about issues of racism or colonisation – how do we debrief and learn collectively about how to do better next time so we don't keep repeating patterns of silence and letting things go? We need to keep on learning different responses.

We agreed that we would meet again before the end of the year, consider holding a Pākehā/Tauīwi caucus at annual NZPsS conferences, facilitate workshops, consider setting up a web-based discussion board, publish our views/thoughts/questions in NZPsS publications especially

Psychology Aotearoa and *Connections*, and learn some Pākehā songs.

"We want to be the sort of Pākehā that Māori thought they were getting when they signed the Treaty" – Mitzi Nairn