Teaching cultural competence in undergraduate psychology programs: A focus on working with Indigenous Australians

Rob Ranzijn and Keith McConnochie

ICOPE Conference Sydney
July 8 2010

Acknowledgments

• Traditional owners
• Wendy Nolan
• Reference group and colleagues around Australia
Why teach psychology courses with Australian Indigenous content?

- Social justice – redressing Indigenous disadvantage
- Working effectively requires cultural competence
- National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce
- APAC accreditation standards

Why teach psychology courses with Australian Indigenous content?

- UniSA Policy (2005): *all* undergraduate courses to include Indigenous content
How teach psychology courses with Australian Indigenous content?

• Curriculum guidelines developed through focus group, series of workshops 2005-6, seminars around Australia 2007-8, conferences 2007-8 as part of ALTC Competitive Grant
• Story in Ranzijn et al Australian Psychologist article (2008)
• Curriculum guidelines on project website: www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/pia

Courses at UniSA

Compulsory first-year course ‘Indigenous Australians: Culture and Colonisation’
run for psychology students by David Unaipon
College of Indigenous Education and Research (DUCIER)
200 students per year

Elective third-year course ‘Psychology and Indigenous Australians’
run jointly by DUCIER and School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy
60 students in 2009

Both taught continuously since 2006
### Structure of first-year course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Psychology and Indigenous Australians: Past, present and future</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Cultural competency; language and meaning</td>
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<td>Contrasting knowledge systems</td>
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<td>Socialisation and identity</td>
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<td>Colonisation 1: policies and practices</td>
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<td>Colonisation 2: legacies of the Stolen Generations</td>
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<td>Dimensions of racism</td>
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<td>Power and privilege</td>
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<td>Psychological consequences of colonisation</td>
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<td>Contemporary contexts 1</td>
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<td>Contemporary contexts 2</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Working effectively in Indigenous contexts</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Course close: smoking ceremony</td>
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### Structure of third-year course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Cultural competence; culture and world-views</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transgenerational trauma - The psychological consequences of colonisation</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Pathways to disadvantage, pathways to resilience</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Stolen Generations</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Privilege and racism</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Contemporary Indigenous contexts</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The Ways of Working model</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Field Trip – wetlands tour at Warriparinga (Living Kaurna Cultural Centre)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Student presentations 1/Working in Indigenous contexts 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Student presentations 2/Working in Indigenous contexts 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Student presentations 3/Working in Indigenous contexts 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Student presentations 4/Working in Indigenous contexts 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The future – your role</td>
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</table>
Third-year compared to first-year course

- Much more interactive
- Small group work with and without lecturer/tutor involvement (without is better for working through issues best dealt with among students themselves)
- In latter part of course, focus on preparation for possible employment in Indigenous contexts the following year

Common issue: Student discomfort
Example: No place for whites?

• Reading: Koolmatrie and Williams (2000)

• Ross Williams interviews Joylene Koolmatrie about her narrative therapy work with survivors of the Stolen Generations

• RW: This can be an intense emotional experience when someone’s telling their story, and you’re able to open these workshops by telling your own story, which is a bit like all of theirs. This would be hard for someone who hadn’t been through that kind of experience to do.

• JK: Exactly. That’s why I have fears of White people working with Indigenous people, why I think they can’t really come in there and relate. Their stories are different, they can’t relate in the same way and they can’t open up the group and allow that level of healing to happen.
Reflective journals

• Students will be required to write in this each week. For each week, students will be asked to write the following:
  – 1. The main thoughts that occurred to you as you read each (of two) compulsory reading – at least two points (at least one paragraph for each reading)
  – 2. At least two discussion questions or discussion points from each reading (which could be discussed in class the week after)
  – 3. Reflections and impressions from the lecture/presentation material for that week (at least one paragraph)
  – 4. Reflections and impressions from the class or small group discussions or other exercises for that week (at least one paragraph)
  – 5. Any other comments or questions (optional)

Student’s reactions: Week 4 journal entries after reading article

• [Koolmatrie] strongly stated that a white person is not able to be involved effectively in this process because they will only create a dependence situation. This made me feel, as a white person, useless and ashamed that I could not play a major role in fixing what people of my own race caused.

• It was sobering to consider that we as white people consider that we are the ones who must help Indigenous people over their grief and trauma. When from an Indigenous viewpoint this appears as arrogance coming from a group least qualified to help in a spiritual and cultural sense.
Responses after small group discussions – Week 5

• I think I can definitely say that our group discussion of the first reading demonstrated a feeling as though we may not be able to help or do anything. **We all felt as though we were being attacked before even getting a chance to understand aspects of unresolved grief.**

• It seems **there is still a feeling of wanting to look at these issues in a way that still puts us as the dominant culture at the centre of the issue**, instead of looking from the perspective of the people whose lives have been affected by the past. **Articles that make us feel better** like Rosemary’s resonate more than articles that define areas where white culture should stand back and take a directed role from Indigenous People as to where they may be helpful, rather than taking centre stage in the healing process. Unless we are able to accept our limitations in this process I don’t think we will be of much use.

• The discussion about the [Koolmatrie] article was a bit difficult. **Classmates commented on the fact that they were feeling hurt about what was said in the first article – white people can’t help.** It seemed, from my point of view, that people forgot about the focus of the article: that white man can’t help to heal those from the stolen generations as 1) they don’t understand it (cultural competence) and 2) this could damage the level of healing that the Indigenous person can achieve as well as making the whole process harder.
Working through the issue as the weeks progressed

• I felt that [Andy Day’s] presentation inspired me further and allowed me to realise that it is possible for ‘white’ psychologists to work with Indigenous people.

• After reading earlier articles I was beginning to come to the conclusion that there may not be a role for white practitioners. However, Vicary and Westerman’s [study] found that they see an important role for non-Indigenous practitioners.

• [Re Vicary and Westerman reading:] it may be useful and inspiring for the class to know that what we are doing is significant and useful and important as we learn that participants in the study did admit that those practitioners who were culturally competent in their service delivery were more likely to be successful in their work. This to me on a more positive note reinforces that we can still make significant contributions even though we are non-Indigenous.
The Talking Stick – one strategy for dealing with discomfort

• Introduced partway through the course in 2009 after some students mentioned in their journals that they were afraid to say what they had heard other people say about Aboriginal people in case fellow students misconstrued their words as indicating that they themselves were racist.

‘Talking Stick’ – guidelines for speakers

• Each person in turn to take the Talking Stick and say something about their feelings or other reactions about the ‘privilege’ discussion last week, or if they were not there to say something about the course in general.
• Start by stating your name.
‘Talking Stick’ – guidelines for speakers

• Speak for no more than 15-20 seconds, then pass the stick to the next person on the left
• The next person waits for about 10 sec before speaking
• Only the person with the Talking Stick will speak, the others remain silent

‘Talking Stick’ – guidelines for speakers

• It’s not a conversation or discussion
• It’s not a point-scoring exercise – don’t try to be clever or impress other people
• When you speak, try not to respond or react to what someone else has said, stick to your own thoughts and feelings
• It may be useful to start with “I felt/feel….” or “I thought/think…..”, but use whatever form of words you feel comfortable with
‘Talking Stick’ – guidelines for listeners

• Listen with deep respect to what the person is saying
• Do not make any judgement about what they say, and do not make any verbal response
• If one of the speakers gets upset, try not to react to that, let them feel what they feel

Results

• Took 45 minutes to get around the 45 students present
• Remarkably effective and moving
• In many cases, students reported that they really saw their fellow students for the first time
• Dramatic change in class dynamics subsequently – much freer, more open, more fun and more engaged discussions
What can you do with a three-year degree in psychology?

Examples of job opportunities in Indigenous contexts for three-year graduates

• Advertisements from *Koori Mail* Nov 2009
Cooktown District Community Centre
PO Box 763, Cooktown 4895
T: (07) 4069 6098  F: (07) 4069 6924

POSITIONS VACANT

We are seeking enthusiastic and suitably qualified applicants to work with the Indigenous Domestic & Family Violence Program within the Cooktown, Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal and Laura areas.

CHILDREN’S DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLOR

Based in Cooktown this position will provide specialised counselling to victims of domestic and family violence. This new 3 year pilot program will also provide outreach services to the communities of Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal and Laura and aims to provide an early intervention and prevention counseling service in conjunction with the Children’s Domestic & Family Violence Counsellor.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNSELLOR

Based in Cooktown this position will provide specialised counselling to children who have witnessed or been affected by domestic & family violence. This new 3 year pilot program will also provide outreach services to the communities of Hope Vale, Wujal Wujal and Laura and aims to provide an early intervention and prevention counseling service in conjunction with the Domestic Violence Counsellor.

Both of these positions are permanent full-time SACS level 6 and are funded by the Department of Communities.

For more information and a position description please contact: Alston Ward - Coordinator
Cooktown District Community Centre, 13 Charles St, PO Box 763, Cooktown. T: (07) 4069 6098  F: (07) 4069 6924
E: reception@cooktowndoc.org.au

Applications close: 5pm, Friday 23rd October 2009.

VIYAC Project Officer

This is a 12 month position.

Full time (35 hour week) and remuneration is $26,751 per annum, plus superannuation.
This role will be offered at a salary packet of $39,751 per annum for the position.
This position is located in the Melbourne CBD.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply.

This is an opportunity for a person with sound coordination and interpersonal skills to support a network of women and Torres Strait Islander young people to pass on their knowledge. You will be expected to work with volunteers and key partners to achieve project outcomes. You will need to be able to balance multiple tasks and bring enthusiasm to a team.

VIYAC is a state-wide network of volunteer women’s groups working to support women’s education, employment and community. It is a key component of the Strategic Plan for Gender Equality with the South East Aboriginal Victoria (SEAV) and is the peak body for the Victorian women’s sector and the peak body of this state. For further information about VIYAC visit www.viyc.org.

Key Selection Criteria:

- Experience in an environment working with 5 and 15 years old volunteer women’s group volunteers.
- Experience in indigenous culture and community engagement.
- Good knowledge of current issues facing indigenous young people in Victoria.
- Experience in working with young people to support them in their development.
- Experience in working with women in a mutual support environment.
- Ability to work with volunteers and key partners.
- High level communication skills, particularly the ability to facilitate in a variety of settings.
- Good written and oral communication skills.
- Good organizational and report writing skills.
- Good Computer skills.
- Experience in coordinating, training and teaching volunteers.
- Good ability to balance multiple tasks effectively within a team environment.
- Ability to plan strategically.
- Good knowledge of social justice and the women’s community sector.

For a full position description and for any queries, contact: Stu and Projects VIC@victoria.acm.org.au 6977 4545
Effective Date: 15th November 2009

Applications are to be submitted to the Manager, Peggie Heffernan, 101 Myrtle Street, Melbourne 3000. Closing Date: 5pm Friday 23rd November 2009.
Link-Up (QLD) Aboriginal Corporation exists to enhance the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by recruiting others over the age of eighteen years who have experienced enforced separation from their families and communities through adoption, foster care, institutionalisation, removal and institutionalisation.

Caseworker positions (Brisbane, Cairns)
Link-Up caseworkers focus on recruiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults with their families and communities. A major focus of this work involves coordinating the validation, research, hiring, support, reunification, and administration elements of the Link-Up procedure.

Counsellor position (Brisbane)
Link-Up counselling provides a range of counselling and social and emotional wellbeing supports for clients at all stages of the tracing, finding, and reunion process, as required by and agreed with the client.

Administration Officer position (Brisbane)
An administrative person is required to provide timely administrative support services to Link-Up staff in order to maintain high-quality services to clients and the efficient running of the organisation.

To apply: Position descriptions including salary rates and essential criteria for each position can be accessed via the website http://www.link-udp.org.au/notices.html
All applicants must address the selection criteria and return it with a CV by 5:00pm Thursday 9th November 2006.

Interviews will be held on Monday 13th November 2006.

Preferably email your applications to: mangroves-link-up.org.au or post to:
2771 Mckinlay
PO Box 5487 West End, Brisbane Q: 4101

If you have any queries please call Mick Angelirops (07) 3205 0885 or FREECALL 1800 200 855.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply.

LOVE YOUR WORK

DANDENONG & DISTRICT ABORIGINES CO-OPERATIVE LTD
Incorporating Bunurung Health Service
Exciting Job Opportunities

The Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative provides culturally appropriate community services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in the Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula, and Western Districts. The positions are open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are for the following positions:

STOLEN GENERATION
SUPPORT WORKER
3 Days per Week

A position is available to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients from the Stolen Generations.

The applicant will be required to provide support to clients, have a strong knowledge of the Government reports on the Stolen Generations and work with other support agencies.

This position requires excellent communication and computer skills. Remuneration as per SACO Award 2000.

YOUTH SUPPORT WORKER
3 Days per Week

The Youth Worker is responsible for the delivery of support services for our Aboriginal youth. The main aim of this position is to reduce contact with the criminal justice system and improve educational outcomes. The applicant must have demonstrated effective casework, case management, and group work skills, have the capacity to relate to young people and an understanding of issues confronting Aboriginal youth. Remuneration as per SACO Award. Qualified Youth Worker.

Details of job descriptions, selection criteria and general enquiries for these positions are available from Andrew Gardiner or Robin Evans at the Co-operative on (03) 9794 2773.

Applications must be submitted to: Mr Andrew Gardiner, C.E.O.
Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-operative Limited
PO Box 683 Dandenong Victoria 3175

6/07/2010
Aboriginal Community Development Officer

- Parramatta location
- Permanent full-time position
- Excellent salary packaging

Would you like to make a real difference to vulnerable communities? In this role you will be responsible for increasing the participation of Indigenous clients and volunteers through community consultation and engagement.

To be successful in this role you will possess highly developed organisational, administrative and networking skills, an understanding of cross-cultural issues and the ability to establish and maintain relationships with Indigenous communities.

Previous experience in the community sector or recruiting and training volunteers could see this position being attractive to you.

If you are passionate about improving the lives of vulnerable people and would like to find out more please visit our careers page at

www.redcross.org.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are encouraged to apply.

Applications close on 19th October 2009.

Australian Red Cross

THE POWER OF HUMANITY

Relief in times of crisis, be it big or small, care when it’s needed most and commitment when others turn away. Red Cross is there for people in need, no matter who you are, no matter where you live.

Aboriginal Intensive Support and Case Management Worker

JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES

Carewest is a recently funded Department of Families, Communities and the third sector not-for-profit organisation. We are seeking an Aboriginal Coordinator to work with the Department’s Aboriginal Targeted Case Management Program. The program provides intensive community-based case management services to Aboriginal people living in the community.

Your role will be to work with Aboriginal communities and with individuals to prevent family breakdown and increase their capacity to manage the challenges of life. You will also be responsible for the ongoing development of the program.

You will have:
- A commitment to Aboriginal social, cultural and economic issues and a demonstrated understanding of these issues
- An understanding of the principles of community development
- Excellent communication, organisational and interpersonal skills
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Salary range: $43,900 - $62,200

Applicants should have a degree in social work or a related field, or equivalent experience.

Applications close on 4th September 2009.

For more information about this position, please contact: Kevin Shirt, Manager, Aboriginal Targeted Case Management Program on 1300 245 876.

JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES

Aboriginal Intensive Support and Case Management Worker

Coordinating Aboriginal Community Support Service

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CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL ALCOHOL PROGRAMMES UNIT (CAAAPU)

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL ALCOHOL PROGRAM UNIT

TREATMENT MANAGER

The CAAAPU Treatment Manager is responsible for the delivery of quality residential rehabilitation, treatment services and educational programs to the highest standard, for CAAAPU clients with Alcohol and other drug related issues.

The Treatment Manager will play a key role in researching, planning, co-ordinating and managing the delivery of treatment programs; will direct and lead a team of health professionals and workers, and will strive to build a safe and effective healing place that equips Aboriginal peoples with the tools to lead healthy, sober and productive lifestyles. The Treatment Manager will work closely with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, and the Chief Executive Officer.

 carácter, habits and satisfactory Police checks are among the conditions of employment for all successful applicants.

To be considered for interview, applicants must address all the selection criteria for this position. Copies of the Selection Criteria can be obtained by telephoning the CAAAPU Office (08) 9955 5336 or by email request to: krystle.parker@caapu.org.au

Applications Close on Friday 7th August 2009 and must be sent in writing to the Manager, Office Administration, CAAAPU PO Box 8669, Alice Springs NT 0871 or by email at krystle.parker@caapu.org.au.

CAAAPU is an equal opportunity employer.

Aboriginal people are strongly encouraged to apply for this position.

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VACRO

Established 1872

VACRO is seeking a suitably qualified or experienced person for the full-time, fixed term position of

Case Manager - Aboriginal Intensive Support

The successful applicant will be involved in the delivery of intensive case management, in collaboration with Aboriginal organisations and services, to assist in the successful reintegration back into the community of Aboriginal men and women with multiple and complex needs who are about to exit prison.

The right person for this position will have a very strong background in case management, along with significant experience in working with Aboriginal people, knowledge of Aboriginal service providers and extensive cultural competency. A current driver’s license, a Police Record Check and Working with Children Permit will be required.


Applications close:

19 October 2009
Examples of student feedback
2009
• This course has completely overturned (maybe some of) the aspects which I have learnt in the previous courses. This course has increased my curiosity to get to know more about Indigenous Australians and I hope I can get involved with Indigenous clients in future practices.

• It gave me a new and positive perspective in Indigenous issues and made me interested in the subject. As a result of this course I am determined to volunteer my time for Indigenous affairs and would like to expand my experience in this area. The way that the course was designed gave students a great opportunity to express their point of view in a safe environment.
• I really enjoyed this course, which actually shocked me because at first I was not going to enrol in this class because I believed it would be too similar to the first year course. I was fortunately wrong and learnt so much that I know I will take away from this course, it will most definitely help me in my future career.

• I felt that a lot of the personal reflection was very beneficial and allowed me to take away from the course something that other courses have not provided; the feeling of personal growth
Some of the challenges for the future

• Long-term sustainability – teaching staff and resourcing
• Threats from ‘internationalisation’ and even from ‘cultural competence’ (“What about all the other cultures in Australia?”)
• ‘There’s not enough room’ in an already crowded curriculum (this is a myth, actually)

Final thoughts

• It’s hard work, challenging, and extremely rewarding
• Courses such as these address all of the Graduate Attributes and help to prepare three-year graduates for a large range of rewarding careers