

It's Very 'White' Isn't It! Challenging Monoculturalism in Social Work and Welfare Education

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Introduction

When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing (Rich 1986, p. 199).

They seize upon me and ask me all these questions, saying what can I do, continually asking how I can solve their problems, and it's quite draining to tell you the truth...I say to white women now 'It's not for me to educate you into doing something about the problem' (Huggins 1998, p. 62).

This article describes an action research project undertaken by the authors with the aim of challenging what we saw as the mostly monocultural approach of social welfare education. We are four non-Indigenous academic women with approximately 40 years collective experience in teaching a welfare curriculum to a predominantly female student group with decreasing numbers of Indigenous students. Dual purposes informed the

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The authors are four non-Indigenous, female, experienced tertiary educators in the School of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University in Townsville, Australia.

Dorothy Savage was the Indigenous mentor/consultant to the project described in this paper. Without Dorothy working collaboratively with us, the project would not have been possible. Karen Martin acted as a mentor for one of the authors prior to the commencement of this project and her insights and support were invaluable.

ongoing development of our teaching. First, we wanted to move further away from a monocultural approach toward one more inclusive of, more respectful of, and more relevant to North Queensland's Indigenous student body and communities and to all the students enrolled in our degree programs. Second, we wanted to action change on a number of teaching and learning levels for the long-term goal that our student body and consequently our graduate body would reflect more accurately our regional Indigenous profile.

In complete agreement with Shah (1989) and the words of both Rich (1986) and Huggins (1998) which opened this paper, we consider it is our obligation to act and work for change when we recognise the absence of Indigenous perspectives in our work.

Considering the Literature

Recognising the Need for Greater Inclusion

In this twenty-first century, Australia is a multicultural nation of approximately 20 million people, two per cent of whom are Indigenous, either Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander (ABS 2000). To be Indigenous in the Australian context is to be descended from groups which have been resident for more than 40,000 years. Since British settlement in 1788, Australian history has been characterised by colonisation, dispossession from land and resulting marginalisation of the Indigenous peoples (Reynolds 1989). Within this historical and the contemporary context, Indigenous knowledge also has been marginalised.

Indigenous Australians face enormous social and economic disadvantage, which underlines the importance of adequate support for programs aimed at addressing that disadvantage. Participation in higher education is but one area which can contribute to increased mobility and opportunity for Indigenous Australians (NTEU 2000). Many authors and educators now call all students' attention to the historical veil of silence surrounding issues of colonisation for Indigenous peoples of the world, and call for serious and honest engagement with Indigenous issues for a shared future (McDonald and Coleman 1999; Ruwhiu 1999; Kalantzis 2001). What is less common is the collaborative development of curriculum, which builds on, and is sensitive to previous cultural learning, thus holding meaning for all students consuming it (McTaggart 1991).

Newble and Cannon (1995) write that university teachers should be progressively evaluating what they are doing and how course designs and plans are working out in practice. With reference to social work and welfare educators, Fook, Jones and Ryan (2000) and others call for critical reflection and the development and implementation of inclusive practices (Lynn, Pye, Atkinson and Peyton-Smith 1990; Lewis 1998).

Despite the authors' commitment to the facilitation of rich learning for all students, critical reflection (Lewis 1998; Fook 1999) enabled us to admit that our teaching represented a narrow, culturally-biased view of relevant knowledge and skills for social work and welfare practice. This was somewhat at odds with our espoused theories;

theories of inclusiveness from professions grounded in values of anti-racist and socially just practice (AASW Code of Ethics 1999). As non-Indigenous academic women co-teaching degree programs in which the student groups are predominantly non-Indigenous women, we began this collegial project with the goal of 'Indigenising' our curriculum to promote appropriate, meaningful student learning (Lewis 1998; McCormack 2001).

For the purposes of the project described in this article, the term 'Indigenise' is defined as active efforts to render more visible Indigenous people in the North Queensland and Australian context (Brown 1988), within social work and welfare education and the teaching practices of our School. New content and teaching resources, improved teaching styles, enriched student learning, and specific publications related to teaching and learning, were the envisaged outcomes from the project.

Centralising Indigenous Content

We were interested in addressing locally what appeared to be a widespread deficit in Australian social work and welfare curricula. One of the authors had attended a national social work 'Reflective Educators' workshop and a national 'Excellence in Tertiary Teaching' forum in 1998 in Melbourne. These forums further highlighted what Indigenous scholars had already identified as inadequacies in tertiary curriculum (Watson 1988; Nakata and Muspratt 1994; Moreton-Robinson 2000). Indigenous knowledge, skills, ways of learning and ways of knowing barely rated a mention.

Deficits in social work and welfare education are not confined to Australia. Galloway (1993) and Bar-on (1999) highlight some of the primary cultural problems in social work and welfare education. These include:

- the centrality of the individual as the focus of social work theory and practice;
- the focus on individual pathology;
- the process of social work intervention;
- solutions which are defined by values of self-determination, self-help and confidentiality, and the language of social work;
- the exportation of white, western, capitalist social work and welfare models and practices to students and clients.

In the New Zealand context, Ruwhiu (1999, p. 32) asserts that 'eurocentric interpretations of welfare and wellbeing' in social work and community work university education, and demands to be 'self development centred', have led to high attrition rates for Maori students. Burgess, Crosskill and Larose-Jones believe that lecturers in social work education are 'eurocentric' and that this practice 'denies a proper education' and serves to 'perpetuate racism and discrimination' in white students (cited in McDonald and Coleman 1999, p. 30). Dominelli (1997) calls for a shift in social work curriculum, with movement in antiracist directions away from the arrogance of the status quo.

Notwithstanding the deficits in social work education highlighted in the literature above, we acknowledge that there has been significant contribution made in the past, and more recently, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous social workers (Watson 1988; Atkinson

and Peyton-Smith 1990; Lynn, Pye, Lynn, Thorpe, Miles, Cutts, Butcher and Ford 1998; Bessarab 2000; Gilbert 2001; Bennett and Zubrzycki 2003). The foundations had already been laid. Available literature offered a clear direction for changes we sought to make.

The unique publication *Murri Way!* by Lynn, Thorpe, Miles, Cutts, Butcher and Ford (1998) is local to our own geographical position in North Queensland, and indeed one of us was involved in this work. Lynn et al. (1998) assert that curricula of social work and welfare courses 'strongly reflect(s) the models and value base of western society' (p. 1). They call, as others do, for the Indigenisation of social work and courses for 'culturally appropriate education and training' and the valuing of the 'cultural resources and material experiences' of these marginalised groups (Nakata and Muspratt 1994; Lynn et al 1998, pp. 2 & 81-83). On a similar but different note, Atkinson and Peyton-Smith (in Lynn et al. 1990) ask 'How are we to design a program which will work for Aboriginals and also operate effectively in a white society?' (p. 84) They argue that 'it is not acceptable to assume they (Indigenous graduates) will only be employed by black agencies' and they offer the view that 'both black and white' perspectives must be incorporated into the course (p. 85).

Some authors have argued that Aboriginal learning styles need consideration, yet others identify it is culturally appropriate forms of education delivery and culturally appropriate assessment that are most relevant for Indigenous students' success in the tertiary education system (Lampert and Lilley 1996; Christensen and Lilley 1997).

We considered that our curriculum could offer more respect and recognition of Indigenous knowledge and in turn, this change could improve the numbers of Indigenous students studying within our School. These student numbers are currently well below population percentages in North Queensland (School of Social Work and Community Welfare AASW Accreditation Document 2000). Further, education which models respect in working across cultures for all future graduates working in North Queensland is a necessity. Of BSW students at James Cook University, 92 per cent identify North Queensland as their normal place of residence (School of Social Work and Community Welfare AASW Accreditation Document 2000).

Through our action research project we sought to make a collaborative contribution to the shift away from the 'status quo' in welfare education (Dominelli 1997, p. 61). Our project attempted to address the additional cautionary note from Lynn et al. (1998) that indigenisation of social work and welfare curricula 'requires more than an add-on, piece meal approach' (p. 88). Instead it takes up their recommendation that 'indigenising social welfare curriculum will assist in and strengthen the work being undertaken in rethinking social work and welfare practice'. As Lynn (2001) states:

Under the modernist project, Indigenous social welfare work approaches have been silenced and relegated to the periphery as deficit theory and practice in the landscape of social work (p. 903).

We sought to address this deficit in our teaching practice.

Research aims and design

The project was funded to allow the time-release of four staff members for two hours weekly for 12 weeks and for the employment of an Indigenous adviser/mentor to the project. The project used a mutual-collaborative action research model (Masters 1995). The project aims were modelled on the work of Hall (1995). Within this model the research plan is outlined by one researcher however the specific planning and weekly sessions are collaborative. Within the action research cycle, the aims were to:

- undertake curriculum development which enabled teaching staff to move further away from a monocultural curriculum toward one more appropriate for Indigenous students and more relevant for all graduates entering the North Queensland community;
- support and encourage the ongoing development of teaching practices and/or delivery of content for culturally inclusive education and optimal learning;
- reinforce the reality that curriculum review and development involves taking time to critically reflect upon personal teaching styles and practices;
- present and publish outcomes, thereby promoting a culture where educators are encouraged to critically examine their curriculum, improve its Indigenous content and develop more appropriate delivery of such content.

As a group of non-Indigenous academic women, we were cognisant of what was achievable and what was not appropriate for us to do. One goal our School had sought for some time, but failed to bring to fruition, was the employment of Indigenous teaching staff. Though we acknowledge this lack of Indigenous teachers, we deeply believed that we had a responsibility to facilitate change within our own curriculum. We undertook this challenge with the help of an Indigenous advisor/mentor. We did so acknowledging the argument presented by Huggins (1998) that white women have placed Black women in the position of assisting white women to 'unlearn their racism', therefore placing Black women in a 'maid service position' (p. 61). Feedback from the advisor suggests that this was not an outcome of this research and in her words the project represented 'good practice...worth sharing across the whole institution' (Savage 2002).

The literature indicated that action research has evolved to become a systematic, cyclical inquiry that is collective, collaborative, reflective, and critical (Carr and Kemmis 1983; Kemmis and McTaggart 1988) and one that presents teachers with an opportunity to become skilled researchers of their own practice (Shumsky 1958; Carr and Kemmis 1983; Hall 1995; King 1995). We considered that an action research methodology was congruent with the project aims and long-term goals (Hall 1995). Twelve meetings over a semester facilitated critical reflection and collective action, and individual project development and implementation. These meetings were characterised by passionate group discussion, critical reflection and feedback. The process of securing an Indigenous adviser/mentor to the project was a lengthy one. This further served to illustrate for us the

importance of taking time and making time in planning a curriculum review process with the goal of challenging monoculturalism. The project was clearly linked to our University's priority objectives regarding highest quality teaching, increased Indigenous student numbers and the support and valuing of the work of members of the University community. This paper focuses on the personal reflections of each author as they applied change to their individual teaching.

Collective Struggles and Individual Progress

We each chose to focus on a different aspect of teaching in order to contribute to the project. In this section we recount our individual focus areas.

Susan: Countering a deficit in my teaching style and resources

I have been working in the School in casual, part-time and full-time capacities since 1991. The title of this article takes its name from a memorable moment for me. I had been working, prior to the funding of this project, with an Indigenous tertiary educator who was acting as a mentor in my struggles to be more inclusive of Indigenous ways of working and learning in my teaching. On this occasion I shared with my mentor my latest subject outline and lecture series plan for a second year 'skills' subject. The objectives of this subject were to develop students' interpersonal communication skills and group work skills for social work and welfare practice. I had been working diligently on this plan (my mentor was unaware of my concentrated effort on this particular document) and I felt at least some sense of achievement. However, her summary comment, "It's very 'white' isn't it!" certainly challenged my sense of progress.

In the planning phase, after reflection on my priorities and needs for this project, I identified two personal objectives:

- i) to examine and gain feedback on my teaching with regard to Indigenous respectful, inclusive style, content and delivery, and
- ii) to produce a resource which would be of value to students studying within our School.

In seeking to enact objective one, I videoed one of my lectures in a second year subject, *Working Across Cultures*, and played this to colleagues. Colleagues' observations and feedback was very useful, as were my own reflections. Suggestions from academic colleagues and from our Indigenous consultant to the project, were that I make more links throughout my presentation, offering clarification and connections within and between topics, and that I give more opportunity for student involvement and discussion. Further suggestions were to give concrete examples from the local community and a traditional owner perspective where possible, to reduce the didactic nature of the presentation, and to make more use of storytelling as a learning tool. These echoed comments from my earlier mentor. It is acknowledged that this feedback incorporated suggestions for teaching that were not exclusively aimed at Indigenous students.

Additionally, as a part of my self-critique and reflection as researcher of my own teaching, I analysed my presentation using the evaluation questions in Lambert and Lilley (1996, pp. 10-13) on evaluating the appropriateness of presented materials. Examples of such questions include: 'Is the author (cited as source of information) Indigenous?'; 'Do materials reflect the cultural diversity of Indigenous Australian communities?'; 'Does the material present an exotic emphasis?'; 'Is the material endorsed by the Indigenous community?'; 'What are Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' responses to the content?'; and 'What are the qualifications of the author/speaker to address Indigenous issues?'. These were challenging questions to which I did not have satisfactory answers. Within the second 'acting' phase of this action research project I was committed to taking further steps in the next semester to incorporate all feedback.

Regarding my second objective work is ongoing, with the help of a research assistant, to develop an annotated bibliography as a teaching and learning resource. Such a publication will offer key text and document references for reading on such topics as Indigenous health, Indigenous history, reconciliation, welfare rights, treaty, and other topics that students studying within our School should read to gain a necessary understanding of Indigenous issues. The completed bibliography will be modelled on a publication obtained from the School of Social Work, Massey University, New Zealand.

Jane: Field teaching at JCU

While the above reflection is focused on improvements in teaching style and the development of new resources, I chose to concentrate my reflections and actions at the program level. My teaching responsibilities lie within the field education program. While this School delivers two programs, in this project I focused on the field education component of the Bachelor of Social Work program. Twenty-eight weeks of unpaid practical field experience is a requirement of the four-year Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree at James Cook University. Students undertake two block placements.

These accreditation requirements for field education in the BSW are onerous and perpetuate the exclusion of Indigenous people as both field educators and students. Our consultant to the action research project identified that in her view and the view of her colleagues, many more Indigenous people would seek to become social workers if the AASW Accreditation Guidelines were more respectful of the 'ways of knowing' of Indigenous practitioners. Many are practising welfare professionals, but are not eligible for membership of the AASW due to the rigidity of the rules. Twenty-eight weeks of unpaid field placement is an unrealistic expectation of Indigenous people who are family breadwinners, but who may seek to become social workers. It was our view that there could be other ways to accredit the knowledge of Indigenous practitioners, which could be developed collaboratively.

My first aim was to introduce the issue of the monocultural nature of the social work curriculum, with students in the classroom setting. The timing of the project in the second semester (July to November) of 2001 coincided with the fourth year placement cycle. I undertook to organise a half-day forum within the integration program where three

female Indigenous welfare practitioners spoke to the student group about two major issues of concern to the project:

1. The practitioners spoke about their own work and the way they went about their practice, the themes resonating with those developed by Lynn et al, (1998). They outlined the benefits and limitations of their own educational experiences within the hegemonic social work educational context. They detailed how they used their Indigenous knowledge to complement and often challenge the Western discursive practices about which they had been educated.
2. The practitioners spoke about how they wished for non-Indigenous social workers to collaborate with Indigenous people as service users and as colleagues. They called for the valuing and honouring of the experiences of Indigenous people as a minority group within Australian society. In relation to the way non-Indigenous social workers engage with Indigenous colleagues, they were keen for students, soon to be graduates, to understand and support the ways in which Indigenous practitioners may operate differently. Their comments are a reflection of those from authors in this field (HREOC 1997; Smart and Manawaroa Gray 2000).

This forum has proved to be a valuable feature of our field education program.

The second task I undertook, as project participant, was to engage in an email discussion nationally with field education colleagues in social work schools about the issues emerging from the project.

In light of discussion with our Indigenous advisor it seemed timely to debate the issue of the racism contained in the AASW Accreditation Guidelines (2000) in these email discussions. The initial approach to the entire email list drew no response. After further discussion with colleagues, I decided to target key players in field education nationally. I emailed a number of contributors to the text *Fieldwork in the Human Services* edited by Cooper and Briggs (2000). In my own work, I had found this to be a valuable and innovative resource. The subsequent response was very positive. We decided to pursue this issue strategically, and on a national level, through a range of forums including a national social work and welfare educators' conference. In their email responses, several educators spoke of the belief that this development was well overdue, and that change was inevitable.

It is important that the developments that have been pursued throughout this part of the project not be seen as calling for a reduction in professional standards. This would be naive and counter-productive given the struggle social work is engaged in within the broader human services field to withstand the managerial attempts to erode its mission (Ife 1997). However, it is our conviction that more lateral ways exist to demonstrate knowledge and challenge 'some of the values, biases and assumptions about human behaviour that underlie human services field work' (Smart and Manawaroa Gray 2000, p. 96).

I admit to some reservations about the project's ability to foster widespread change. The exclusion of Indigenous people from educational processes and more broadly, from Australian society is far-reaching and has complex inter-related causes. The privilege we enjoy as non-Indigenous Australians and as non-Indigenous academics is also far-reaching. Broadly we need to question ourselves critically as to how far we would go to challenge the monocultural essence of social work education. Would we lobby for designated Indigenous staff positions if it required us to relinquish our own permanent, secure jobs?

Debra: Valuing Indigenous experience in the exploration of Australian social policy issues

I have taught at universities in Queensland and the Northern Territory for about 12 years and most of that time I have worked with first year students as they participate in the generic, introductory social policy subject. In my experience the content of such subjects attempts to introduce students to key issues of Australian social policy and the nature of social work and welfare practice in Australia.

As well as imparting information about social issues these introductory social policy subjects are for most students their introduction to social work and welfare culture. Questions about the nature of social work and welfare practice, the goals, purposes and values of practice are answered through the assumptions implicitly and explicitly represented in teaching practices. Teaching in these subjects is an opportunity to inform and model an inclusive social work practice that not only claims to respect and value Indigenous knowledge and skill but also explicitly demonstrates such a claim. I have often felt my efforts to do this have been unsuccessful and tokenistic.

I have tried many strategies in my attempts to do this in a better way. My early attempts included the delivery of one lecture drawing heavily on the writings of Henry Reynolds (1989; 1996) and Charles Perkins (1990), introducing students to the silenced history of colonisation/invasion and linking that experience to the experiences of disadvantage. On reflection I believe this approach was inappropriate as, in allocating one lecture, I was depicting Indigenous experience as problematic and just one of a list of 'problems' that social workers need to 'deal with'.

Recognising these shortcomings, I have invited an Indigenous speaker to visit the class and discuss the social welfare issues relating particularly to and for Indigenous people. Again, reflecting on the unintended but nonetheless apparent assumptions behind such an approach, has rendered such a strategy problematic. It suggests that I have no responsibility for these issues and for the education of a student group, which is predominantly non-Indigenous, and that any perceived deficits or flaws in the curriculum can be rectified by one Indigenous 'guest speaker'. My dissatisfaction with such an approach was highlighted by the work of Jackie Huggins (1998) and Tannoch-Bland (2001). Huggins (1998) is particularly critical of non-Indigenous women who fail to accept responsibility for admitting their own racism and doing something about it. These sentiments have strongly influenced this project.

When I was initially approached about being a part of this action research project it was my constant dilemmas with this first year teaching that I immediately wanted to focus on. Participation in this project provided me with a space and the time to reflect on my own teaching, to talk about other strategies, to consider other possibilities, to examine other curricula and to prepare and trial an alternative subject format. The most valuable part of this research project for me was the opportunity to discuss my concerns with my colleagues and the opportunity to gather feedback from the project's mentor/advisor, herself an Indigenous social welfare practitioner. As a result of these discussions I have changed my approach to the delivery of material in this subject.

In my most recent experience as a teacher in this subject, I identified clearly to students as a non-Indigenous woman and shared my intent to centralise the experience of Indigenous people within the subject. I was explicit about my intention to centralise Indigenous social welfare issues as a way of raising the conscious awareness of non-Indigenous students (the majority of the student body in this class) and of acknowledging and valuing the experience and history of the few Indigenous students present.

I attempted to integrate an Indigenous perspective about each of the broad social issues discussed each week. The lecture entitled 'Indigenous Social Welfare Issues' was cut from the outline and each class included some analysis or at least raised questions about the experience of Indigenous people in relation to the issues under discussion. I asked all guest speakers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to talk about how Indigenous people were particularly affected if at all by certain issues. I used readings that identified general issues and others that highlighted particular Indigenous concerns about that general issue. Instead of 'the Indigenous experience' being relegated to one specialist lecture, every lecture and every tutorial attempted to integrate the implications and consequences of social policy issues for at least some Indigenous people.

These goals were not always achieved. Sometimes I could not find resources that gave the class or I any insight into the viewpoints, ideas or attitudes of Indigenous people about certain issues. I was keen to avoid any expectation that Indigenous students would be placed in a position of speaking for Indigenous people unless they chose to do so. I do not think this issue was completely resolved. Sometimes we just did not know what might be the consequences or implications of some issues for some Indigenous people.

Despite this, I believe that this attempt to centralise Indigenous experience within the content of this subject was positive and worth pursuing. The feedback provided by non-Indigenous students at the end of the subject indicated a heightened awareness of Indigenous structural disadvantage and less of a willingness to seek individual causes for social issues. Students spoke positively about accessing resources outside the mainstream social work and welfare literature such as the journal, *Aboriginal Health Worker*, and published and unpublished papers by Indigenous authors such as Noel Pearson (2000; 2002), Charles Perkins (1990), and Marcia Langton (2002). There were regular opportunities for students (especially non-Indigenous students) to discuss their response to the organisation of the subject. We were able to use students' experiences of

discomfort and defensiveness to begin a process of reflection and introspection that may be significant in later learning. Students began to challenge each other to consider an Indigenous perspective and began in small ways to consider a range of sources for such a perspective.

I acknowledge that this is a very small step and for some perhaps an obvious one. Co-teaching with an Indigenous person, further exploration of Indigenous resources and a continuing examination of my own teaching style and practice remain ongoing goals and activities. However participation in this project provided the catalyst for some significant change in my personal teaching practices which have had some consequences in the response of students.

Nonie: Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into an undergraduate women's studies class

The Centre for Women's Studies operates within the School of Social Work and Community Welfare. I am the Director of the Centre and the coordinator of the first year undergraduate subject, *Australian Women's Studies*. This subject aims to introduce students to a range of feminist issues, examining these within the context of Australian women's experience. Guest lecturers from diverse backgrounds present to the class in areas such as women and politics, family life, women and writing, women and violence and the backlash against feminism. Consistent with the feminist dictum 'the personal is political' the experiences of individual women are valued and guest lecturers are encouraged to bring their unique perspective to their lecture subject area.

It is in the context of a subject that focuses on Australian women's experiences, as the subject matter and the mode of delivery, that I attempted to incorporate the perspectives of Indigenous women. Prior to the instigation of this project I had emphasised in class that the experience of women is not singular and not wholly governed by their gender. The impact of class and race may be a more powerful influence on the lives of many women, particularly Indigenous women. This limited acknowledgment was the extent of my incorporation of an understanding of Indigenous women's lives.

In response to this project I developed a number of strategies to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into *Australian Women's Studies*. These strategies were based upon advice received from the Indigenous advisor to this project and a review of relevant literature. The strategies I developed aimed to expose non-Indigenous students to Indigenous women's experiences and also to create a classroom environment that may be more comfortable for Indigenous students.

The first strategy entailed broadening the reference material available to students undertaking the course. I located books relating to Indigenous women's lives, ordered them if they were not held in the University library, and included these publications in the reference list attached to the subject outline. Examples of writings in this area include Huggins (1998), Kartinyeri (2000) and Moreton-Robinson (2000).

The second strategy involved changing the assessment guidelines for the subject. The impetus for this change in assessment strategies came from Woods, Wanatjura, Colin, Mick, Lynch and Ward (2000), where the benefits of working together on projects rather than individually were emphasised as consistent with Indigenous ways of working. Students were encouraged to work on their tutorial presentations and assignments in pairs rather than individually as previously required.

The Indigenous project consultant recommended that Indigenous guest lecturers be recruited for the course. The crucial point about this recommendation was that Indigenous lecturers should be recruited with the possibility of lecturing in any of the subject areas covered in the course and not as the 'Indigenous lecturer' talking about Black women and feminism. I initially contacted three Indigenous women to be guest lecturers and one woman was available to lecture. I offered all subject areas to the lecturer as possible areas for her to speak to. The Indigenous lecturer chose according to her own experience, 'women and family life' and 'women and violence'. I encouraged the lecturer, as I do with all guest lecturers for this subject, to speak to the subject area from her own understanding and experience. As all women's experience exists in complex contexts influenced by their gender, class and race, guest lecturers too reflect this complexity as they draw on their understandings and experiences of the subject area.

Reflecting upon the content of the 'women and family life' lecture and a student's journal response to this lecture provides an insight into the potential of this process. The lecturer spoke of five generations of women in her family, positioning herself as a bridge between the generations, remembering her grandmother's struggles and talking about her expectations for the life possibilities for her own granddaughters. This unique insight into family life from an Indigenous women's perspective was positively received by students with many students approaching the lecturer to discuss their reactions after the lecture was finished. The following quote from a student's reflective journal illustrates the learning achieved from this lecture:

Dorothy's story really illustrated the way that women are automatically relegated to domestic duties and in Dorothy's case this was from a very young age. Her story also illustrates the way women's hardship is amplified when the woman is from an aboriginal background. Not only did Dorothy have to deal with and challenge society's expectations of a woman but also the hardship of racism from being of an indigenous heritage in Australia. The hard facts of Dorothy's life story, not only as a woman but as an aboriginal, was the fact that Dorothy isn't the only one to tell stories of this nature. Women all over the world have battled and are still battling with the historically structured patriarchal society that they, we, live in. (Nicole's Journal)

My initial reflection on the process of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into *Australian Women's Studies* has revealed two issues worth noting. Firstly, it would have

been ideal to have more than one Indigenous guest lecturer, but contacting possible lecturers in the community and establishing trust and dialogue takes time and was not achievable with the first attempt to incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the subject. Secondly, it was important to be open to Indigenous lecturers choosing the subject areas they wanted to address, consistent with their experience and to determine the content of their own lectures. This meant I had to let go of controlling every aspect of the subject and not just tokenistically 'allow' an Indigenous lecturer to come and 'do the Indigenous women and feminism lecture'. The philosophical context of a women's studies subject, valuing the experience of women's lives and acknowledging the power structures within which they exist, provides a context where, I would argue, the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives may not only be appropriate but also possible.

Key Resolves and Ongoing Change

One of our key resolves from this project was that this initiative not be limited to the funding timeframe. Rather, we were committed to ongoing implementation of strategies to resist monoculturalism and, to work actively towards inclusive curriculum and recognition of Indigenous knowledge. Outcomes include continued integration of an Indigenous perspective, and voice where possible, within the subjects that were the focus in this project and, in other subjects we teach. Further, there has been continued participation from some Indigenous elders in our Women's Studies program and we believe that trust has been forged and increased credibility has been established. We continue to pursue recognition of Indigenous knowledge at a local and a national level.

One recurring query from those with whom we discussed the project, and one we had pondered ourselves, was the legitimacy of non-Indigenous teachers taking action to reconcile Indigenous knowledge in social welfare curricula. We resolved that non-Indigenous academics can claim a legitimate space to undertake action. Notwithstanding possibilities for collaborative work with Indigenous colleagues, we believe that non-Indigenous social welfare educators can further the reconciliation process between the academy and Indigenous people by recognising that it is their responsibility to acknowledge and reconcile multiple knowledges within their own curriculum for inclusive, Indigenous respectful education for all students.

Conclusion

With regard to achieving the aims of the project discussed in this paper, we have developed processes that have allowed us to move further away from a monocultural social work and welfare curricula, towards a more inclusive model. As illustrated in this article, action research processes have assisted in this quest. The fact remains though that this project represents a start. This is a 'work in progress', where reflection, Indigenous and non-Indigenous student and colleague feedback, and Indigenous local community members will be ongoing guides for our critical, reflective, tertiary teaching practices.

We accept that it is our responsibility and obligation to enact change in these areas that are about our own practice. Although this project was conceptualised and funded for a specific timeframe, each of us has ongoing strategies, ideas and plans we will continue to pursue. We join voices with the pioneers of the past in calling for the acceleration of broad-ranging change for a more inclusive, anti-racist, social work and welfare curriculum. Social work and welfare practice that ignores the critical importance of such change has no place in 21st century Australia.

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