

How far are we with Indigenising psychology training curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand?

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The over-reliance on Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) paradigms and perspectives in psychology has concerned many scholars in Aotearoa New Zealand.¹⁻³ The importation of European and North American knowledge sources, and the subsequent normalisation of WEIRD psychology in Aotearoa, exemplify settler colonialism that perpetuates institutional racism through the ongoing prioritisation of Eurocentric knowledge systems in the teaching of psychology, training of psychologists and delivery of psychological services.^{1,2,4} The dominance of WEIRD psychology under a monocultural lens results in ignorance and apathy in relation to the diverse realities and aspirations of Indigenous and minoritised cultural groups.^{1,2} Consequently, Māori are in a constant struggle to exert tino rangatiratanga (self-determination) and ensure that the knowledge production and practices of psychology align with the tirohanga Māori (a Māori worldview).

Ample evidence over the past 40 years highlights the marginalisation of mātauranga (knowledge) Māori in psychology. In 1985, a survey with nine directors of psychology training programmes (including clinical, educational and community) found four programmes included some taha Māori (Māori content) and five had none.⁵ A desktop analysis of 134 psychology graduate courses in 2003 revealed only two (1.5%) were specifically Māori-focussed.³ The statistics remained relatively similar in a replicated study of 222 graduate courses in 2015, with two (0.9%) courses identified as specifically Māori-focussed while 15 (6.8%) had inclusion of Māori-focussed content.⁶ These findings illustrate the dominance of WEIRD psychological paradigms, frameworks and models in psychology programmes across Aotearoa universities that are of limited relevance to the realities of Māori.

In 2018, a claim was lodged to the Waitangi

Tribunal concerning the failure of the Crown to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles in the regulation, training and employment of psychologists.⁷ Both the New Zealand Psychologists Board (the Crown agent that accredits psychology training programmes) and universities were critiqued for not fulfilling key responsibilities. The claim stated that greater efforts are needed in order to expand programmes informed by mātauranga Māori, provide culturally safe learning environments, advance Māori participation and improve Māori education outcomes that align with the Tertiary Education Strategy.⁷ In particular, there is an urgent need to ensure professional training prepares students to attain the standards set by the core competency guidelines for psychologists.^{8,9} As universities consider their roles in meeting institutional Te Tiriti commitments (and implement changes to follow the future recommendations of the tribunal claim), it is now an appropriate time to measure the progress through a desktop analysis of Māori-focussed content in professional psychology training courses (n=139). These professional programme courses are required to be completed at a satisfactory level prior to registration as a psychologist with the New Zealand Psychologists Board. See Table 1 for the psychology training courses that we examined in 2022.

The descriptors and learning outcomes of each course were carefully analysed to identify whether they met the following categories: 1) specifically Māori-focussed; 2) inclusion of Māori-focussed content; and 3) inclusion of reference to culture (see Levy & Waitoki, 2015).⁶ Table 2 shows the majority of courses were not specifically Māori-focussed and did not include Māori-focussed content. Only four (2.9%) courses were specifically Māori-focussed: Indigenous Research Methodologies (Massey); Kaupapa Māori Psychology (Waikato); and two short courses (completed between 22 to 28 hours) that introduce the Hui Process and Meihana Model (Otago). Compared to the analysis in 2015, there were two

Table 1: Psychology training programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand in 2022.

Provider	Course(s)
Auckland University of Technology	Counselling psychology (8)
University of Auckland	Applied behaviour analysis (10); clinical psychology (5); health psychology (8)
University of Waikato	Applied behaviour analysis (8); clinical psychology (11); community psychology (7)
Massey University	Clinical psychology (13); educational psychology (15); general psychology (4)
Victoria University of Wellington	Clinical psychology (6); educational psychology (13); health psychology (7)
University of Canterbury	Child and family psychology (11); clinical psychology (9)
University of Otago	Clinical psychology (4)

Note: n indicates the total number of papers within each scope of psychology for each university.

Table 2: Māori-focussed paper content in different scopes of psychology in 2022.

	Specifically Māori-focussed (n)	Inclusion of Māori-focussed content (n)	Inclusion of culture-focussed content (n)
Applied behaviour analysis (18)	0	3	0
Child and family psychology (11)	0	1	0
Clinical psychology (48)	3	16	15
Counselling psychology (8)	0	6	2
Community psychology (7)	0	4	1
Educational psychology (28)	1	11	9
Health psychology (15)	0	5	3
General psychology (4)	0	4	0
Total (139)	4	50	30

Note: only requisite courses with coursework and practical components were examined. Each course was only coded once.

additional courses in 2022 that were specifically Māori-focussed.

One third (36.0%) of professional programme courses included Māori-focussed content. This category consists of courses that challenge students to consider Māori inequities in health and outcomes, application of Te Tiriti in psychological practice and bicultural issues. While the increase

in the number of courses reflecting taha Māori is a positive indicator, the fact that only four courses were specifically Māori-focussed suggests that programmes continue to have a strong WEIRD psychology positioning.

A smaller proportion (21.6%) of course descriptions contend that students will be taught the concepts of “cultural competency” or “cultural safety”,

which includes the development of awareness of their own positionality and cultural values. The third category also consists of courses that address cultural influences on practices and culturally relevant knowledge of working with different groups in Aotearoa, although these do not make explicit reference to biculturalism and Māori psychological practices.

The presence of Māori-focussed content is a “key indicator of disciplinary and professional commitment to Māori responsiveness, visibility and participation in psychology” (p 14).¹⁰ However, these courses must occur within a kaupapa Māori informed learning environment, otherwise the overall educational experience may be viewed as tokenistic. Of concern is that most psychology scopes do not have specifically Māori-focussed courses that centre on mātauranga Māori content. Our findings raise questions regarding the existence of genuine institutional will to decolonise psychology and bolster the responsiveness of psychology for Māori.¹⁰ While some progress is being made in introducing Māori-focussed content in psychology training curricula, there is little evidence of meaningful integration of Kaupapa Māori psychology. These results echo concerns held by Māori psychologists and academics^{2,3,11} that meaningful change must be visible, Māori centred and led by Māori.¹² Suggestions on how to improve the pace of change have been promoted;^{10,13} however, these changes require a significant shift in power and a critical understanding of epistemic and institutional racism.^{1,4}

Psychological training is an ecology that, as has been established both locally in Aotearoa^{1,14} and internationally,^{15,16} is largely monocultural and premised on WEIRD psychology. The implications of such an ecology for Indigenous and minoritised peoples who wish to assert their cultural practices or ideology is that they are not taken seriously, or that they must do the labour of decolonising the curriculum.¹⁷ At the same time, WEIRD psychology is free to dogmatically maintain its position as a holder of scientific truth without recognising its Eurocentric epistemic standpoint.^{15,16} The freedom to define the veracity of knowledge while excluding others, or by not resourcing or making space for other knowledge to flourish, is a hallmark of settler-colonial privilege. Further, given the length of time available to the profession to respond to commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, we can only agree with previous writers that entrenched patterns of institutional and epistemic racism

are a driving reason for limited Māori-focussed psychology courses.

The commissioned report by the National Standing Committee on Bicultural Issues (NSCBI), New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPsS) and New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists (NZCCP) highlighted that adequate resourcing for Māori workforce development is necessary to enable issues relevant to Māori to be explored. For example, resources based on an equity approach could grow a specialised Indigenous Psychology workforce¹⁰ and provide support for students throughout the term of their training. There are also concerns that incorporation of mātauranga Māori is done on an *ad hoc* basis as psychology continues to grapple with calls to Indigenise the discipline.^{10,14} Across the 139 reviewed psychology courses, more transparency is needed to expose insensitive consideration of Māori needs given that we found conflating references to concepts such as biculturalism and multiculturalism, and principles from Treaty (the English text) and Te Tiriti (the Māori text).

The responsibility for limited progress in psychology has often been attributed to a lack of Māori academic staff to contribute directly to teaching students, to educate colleagues and to supervise students.^{2,14,17} The lack of Māori staff in psychology constitutes a challenge for the New Zealand Psychologists Board and schools of psychology who are charged with implementing policies that will increase the visibility of Māori across all areas of psychology. These institutions have obligations to consider the implications of Te Tiriti that include proposing and implementing innovative solutions to increase Māori representation in psychology. Responses include increasing the number of Māori-focussed undergraduate courses to attract and retain more Māori students into pursuing psychology and employing Māori with expertise in mātauranga Māori (who do not necessarily have formal training in psychology) to contribute to the programme.

The current study provides preliminary insights into the ongoing challenges of ensuring that students training to become registered psychologists have sufficient Māori-focussed content and a Māori-inclusive learning environment. An in-depth analysis of course content (including other teaching materials) can provide more information on how Māori-focussed content is covered. However, the inclusion of specific reference to Māori content within the course descriptor is essential to demonstrate a commitment towards

Indigenising psychology. Our recommendation is to explicitly state which courses are indeed Māori-focussed—otherwise, there is a possibility that it is not at the point of change needed to make a difference to the learning outcomes.

The WERO team is also undertaking an upcoming study that involves replicating Abbott and Durie's 1987 research⁵ to evaluate other components of psychology training programmes, such as selection processes, prerequisite training in Te Reo (language), he tirohanga Māori, the number

of Māori academic staff and the relationship of school or departments of psychology with Māori advisory bodies. The overarching objective of the current desktop scan, and the ongoing WERO research programme, is to identify the ongoing barriers to Māori participation in psychology. The entrenched constraints and systemic racism need to be highlighted and addressed if we are to genuinely realise Te Tiriti aspirations in shaping a responsive and relevant psychology discipline and profession in Aotearoa.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Nil.

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