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# Rehabilitating Psychology in Australia: The Journey from Colonising Agent to Cultural Broker

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ABSTRACT *Historically, research, theory and practice have focused on promoting and maintaining Western privilege through Western knowledge and Western ways of knowing that deny the validity of Indigenous knowledge and culture. In Australia, psychology, in particular, has been complicit in the colonising process and, as a dominant discourse, has a documented past that has been ethnocentric and has objectified, dehumanised, and devalued those from culturally different groups. It has acted as an agent for assimilation and oppression. As psychotherapists who may be invited into the lives of Indigenous clients, we need to develop reflective competency in, and respect for, the distinct and diverse nature of Indigenous cultural identity and experience if we are to successfully forge meaningful therapeutic alliances. We need to engage in a journey of decolonisation. Such a journey will take many of us through two mindscapes, two worlds. Decolonisation is not a simple process. Managing its complexity requires personal, professional, and social introspection, and commitment to change. This paper offers a model for decolonisation which can support this process. Central to the success of this model will be the role psychotherapists can play as change agents and cultural brokers in developing approaches which are fully committed to genuine reconciliation. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

**Key words:** decolonisation; reconciliation; Indigenous psychology

The process of decolonisation will require more than passing a law to remove oppression or highlight the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge and cultural identity. It will demand a full and honest acknowledgement of history, a history where psychological theory and practice have been complicit in the processes of colonisation and assimilation. A movement away from colonisation will only occur when non-Indigenous Australians participate in a debate which will allow them to question their own institutions and ways of seeing – only then will they truly hear Indigenous concerns and be able to relate to their experience (Watson, 2007). This, however, will require a massive shift in understanding, and a new way of seeing the world which will inevitably "unsettle the settler" (de Costa & Clark, 2011, p. 332). Past and current wrongs need to be fully recognised, and issues relating to grief, loss, and shame addressed. Shame breeds fear. If left to

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smoulder it reduces tolerance for vulnerability and invariably leads to denial, anger, and retaliation. Efforts to instil pride in the nation state traditionally rely on focusing on past and current glories while shameful actions are erased. A shift in how shame is viewed may be central in avoiding these outcomes. If the dichotomy between shame-as-bad and pride-as-good can be transcended (Zembylas, 2008), it may be possible to explore the constructive, productive qualities of shame in a way that can aid decolonisation and enrich our society.

Central to the role of the psychotherapist is their ability to help clients and communities resolve negative symptoms of "shame-proneness". Change in the dynamic occurs when, through a compassionate, non-judgmental approach, the client/community is supported and encouraged to develop empathy and understanding for themselves and for the debilitating position in which they find themselves. In this role, psychotherapists may be ideally positioned to offer a "cultural bridge" for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to explore, contain, and constructively address damaging shame dynamics, and any cultural taboos that may impede opportunities for healing. Through this process, hope may be established, enabling progress to be made towards a more socially just society – one in which critique and possibility strengthen values of freedom and equality.

## DECOLONISATION – A PROCESS OF TRUTH, TRANSFORMATION, AND RECONCILIATION

Psychotherapy is a political activity which functions both to liberate as well as to subjugate, depending on the political agenda and cultural dominance of the society in which it is developed (Bruner, 1990; Schmid, 2014). Although psychotherapists profess social justice and human rights as central to the ethics of our profession, too often we are the beneficiaries of the systems which oppress the people we work with, highlighting the need to engage in conversations about power and privilege. To build conditions for sustainable healing that will be strong enough to address the legacy of past wrongs and challenge the continuation of current ones, we will also need to effectively challenge our own professional history. Only then will we, as a profession, be able to create and support conditions that can lead to lasting reconciliation and healing.

Burgess (as cited in Muller, 2007) developed a five-stage decolonisation model which may offer a structure for this process. In Burgess' model the five stages are:

1. Rediscovery and recovery
2. Mourning
3. Dreaming
4. Commitment
5. Action

to which Muller (2014) added a sixth stage, "Healing & Forgiveness", which she located as stage three, after "Mourning" and before "Dreaming". In this paper another new stage, "Acknowledging Current Realities", is added and inserted before "Rediscovery and Recovery". The structure of this revised model is as follows:

1. Acknowledging current realities
2. Rediscovery and recovery
3. Mourning


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4. Healing and forgiveness
5. Dreaming
6. Commitment
7. Action

This model is neither linear nor sequential. The "stages" do not have rigid boundaries. There are no time limits for progressing through or returning to previous stages, rather movement through the model is most likely to be circular (Muller, 2014). The flexibility of the model allows it to apply to an individual journey, that of the psychotherapist, for example, and their client, for both must make this journey. It can also be used to work with families, communities, and nation states. In this paper, the model is applied to the development of pathways to decolonisation in Australia. Future papers may examine its application to other scenarios such as the profound consequences and legacy of civil war and ethnic cleansing.

## ACKNOWLEDGING CURRENT REALITIES – A TALE OF TWO NATIONS

According to a Credit Suisse report released in 2013, Australians, for the second consecutive year, are the richest people in the world. The mean wealth per adult is just over US $400,000, second only to Switzerland. There are 1.12 million Australians classed as US-dollar millionaires. Of the 34 advanced countries studied, Australia has the eighth best growth figures. While Australians account for 0.36% of the world's population, they represent 3.78% of the world's top wealthiest 1% (as cited in Main, 2013).

An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey, used by Credit Suisse, revealed that the poorest 20% of households, measured by income, hold 12% of net wealth, while the richest 20% hold 36%, a ratio of about 3:1. The most important source of inequality related to whether household members were employed or not. An important secondary factor, dependent, of course, on income was whether they owned property (Whiteford, 2014). Income inequality has risen since the mid-1990s. In June 2014, Oxfam reported that the richest 1% of Australians owned the same wealth as the entire bottom 60%. "The Oxfam Australia report" also found that the nation's nine richest individuals had a net worth of US $54.8 billion, which was more than the combined bottom 20% of the population, or 4.54 million people (as cited in Hurst, 2014).

If Indigenous Australians were surveyed as a stand-alone population, however, the second richest people in the world rating would drop to 122nd, reflecting the fact that many Indigenous communities languish in third-world conditions despite Australia's wealth (Georgatos, 2013a).

Indigenous people in Australia make up approximately 2.5–3% of the Australian population (Dudgeon, Wright, Paradies, Garvey, & Walker, 2014; Pilger, 2014). Although the majority live in urban settings, Indigenous people are more widely distributed across the country than non-Indigenous Australians, constituting a much higher proportion of the population in the Northern Territory and more remote areas in Western Australia and Queensland (Dudgeon *et al*., 2014). Indigenous Australians remain the most disadvantaged group in Australia.

Australia has the world's fourth highest life expectancy, at 82 years. Indigenous males in the Northern Territory, however, have a life expectancy, on average, of 52 years. For Indigenous women the gap in life expectancy can vary from 10 or 20 years compared to non-Indigenous women (Georgatos, 2013b). Pilger (2014) reported that life expectancy in towns a short flight from Sydney can be as low as 37 years. Mortality rates for Indigenous people of all ages are twice


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that of non-Indigenous people (Dudgeon *et al*., 2014). The long-term health conditions responsible for much of the ill health experienced by Indigenous people include circulatory diseases (including heart disease), diabetes, respiratory diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, kidney disease, and eye and ear problems. Dickensian diseases remain rife. Australia is the only developed country not to have eradicated trachoma, a condition that continues to blind Indigenous children (Pilger, 2014).

In the Northern Territory, 7% of the region's population is homeless; 90% of that figure are Indigenous people (Georgatos, 2013b). It is estimated the Northern Territory will be 12,000 houses short of demand by 2020 (Glenday, 2010). The severity of the housing shortage among Indigenous peoples in the Northern Territory was described by Anderson and Wild (2007): "The waiting time for a house on the Tiwi Islands is 50 years – the average life expectancy of a Tiwi man is 48 years" (p. 197).

Australia has the lowest suicide rate of the world's top 10 nations but Indigenous Australians have the highest youth suicide rates in the world. Nationally, suicide death rates are twice that of non-Indigenous people. In the Kimberley region, Western Australian's tourist mecca, some communities and towns have Indigenous suicide rates that are 100 times the national average. A Northern Territory Select Committee on Youth Suicide report (2012) highlighted the young ages at which Indigenous youth were committing suicide as well as the rise in numbers of young Indigenous women committing suicide. Comparison of suicide data from 2001–2005 and 2006–2010 revealed that the suicide rate doubled for youth aged between 10 and 17, in contrast to non-Indigenous youth suicide, which dropped during the same period (Georgatos, 2013c).

Dudgeon *et al*. (2014) reported homicide rates that are six times higher for Indigenous people compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts. Hospitalisation rates for injuries caused by assault are seven times the rate for Indigenous men and 31 times as high for Indigenous women. Both Indigenous men and women experience more than double the rate of victimisation experienced by the rest of the Australian population.

The removal of Indigenous children is now more widespread than at any time during the last 100 years. Nearly 14,000 Indigenous children were taken into "care" by state services in 2013. This is five times the number taken when the *Bringing Them Home* report on the "Stolen Generations" was tabled in Federal Parliament in 1997 (Pilger, 2014). *Bringing Them Home* described the removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities as a form of genocide. In Australia, more than a third of all children removed from homes are Indigenous (Pilger, 2014; Safi, 2014). In New South Wales, one in ten Indigenous children live in state care with around a third in the care of white families (Safi, 2014). According to Dudgeon *et al*. (2014), the practice of removing Indigenous children from their families and communities was not only driven by the policy of assimilation, but also aimed to achieve the disintegration of Indigenous communities and to transform the unique relationship Indigenous people have with their environment. As the authors note, the trans-generational effects of the policies of forced removal on emotional and social wellbeing are profound and enduring.

Between 2000 and 2010 Indigenous people were imprisoned at 14 times the rate of non-Indigenous people, with the rate increasing by 59% for Indigenous woman and 35% for Indigenous men during this period (Dudgeon *et al*., 2014). Indigenous people are 20 times more likely to be in jail in Western Australia than their non-Indigenous counterparts. This is the highest rate in Australia. Western Australia also imprisons more Indigenous juveniles in proportion to the population than any other Australian state. An Indigenous child is 40 times more likely to be in


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custody than a non-Indigenous child. Crimes committed by Indigenous people are often motivated by poverty, substance abuse, mental illness, or any combination of the three (McQuire, 2013). Robinson (2013) identified a number of cases in which Indigenous boys received the harshest sentences for stealing ever recorded for juveniles in New South Wales.

The United Nations Human Development Index (a measure of the quality of life across 187 nations) ranked Australians as being second highest with regard to the number of years of schooling achieved and the standard of school performance (as cited in Georgatos, 2013a). The available research and policy literature pertaining to the educational experience of Indigenous students, however, again reflected a picture of profound disadvantage in comparison to non-Indigenous counterparts (Dudgeon *et al*., 2014). Anderson and Wild (2007) highlighted teaching in an inappropriate language, inadequate housing, and poor school attendance as common themes emerging from their inquiry into the provision of education to Indigenous children in the Northern Territory. Their report highlighted that 94% of Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory had no pre-school, 56% had no secondary school, and for 27% the nearest primary school was more than 50 km away from where children lived. Where schools endeavoured to link curricula content to Indigenous interests and values, attendance rates increased by up to 92% (Anderson & Wild, 2007).

Writers from many different fields have highlighted the reality and consequences of what can be described as "shame-based trauma" suffered through the loss of a valued identity and the inferior racial and cultural image with which Indigenous people have been forcibly indoctrinated (Dudgeon *et al*., 2014; Hunter, 1993; Pilger, 1989, 2014). It is little wonder responses to losses of such magnitude manifest in suicide and interpersonal violence. As Gilbert (1977) stated:

> It is my thesis that Aboriginal Australia underwent a rape of the soul so profound that the blight continues in the mind of most blacks today. It is a psychological blight, more than anything else, that causes the conditions we see on the reserves and missions. And it is repeated down the generations. (p. 3)

Pilger (2014) stated that current government policy remained focused on assimilation. He believed that euphemisms such as "reconciliation" and "stronger futures" continue to cover plans for social engineering and reflect an enduring insidious racism within the political elite, the bureaucracy, and the wider Australian society. Today the question of race remains central to Australian politics and, therefore, to Australian life. Moreton-Robinson (2007) highlighted the central role played by race in the transition from colony to nation state, while writers such as Markus (2001), Hage (2003), and Mawani (2011) have suggested that race has been made a central and integral element in nation building and national identity through exclusion or assimilation.

As white people in our society control the main institutions, they are able to claim the social and cultural mainstream, which means white understandings and practices are regarded as normative. As a result, white privilege has been successful in ensuring all types of benefit continues to be directed towards and received by white people, while maintaining a lack of explicit awareness of this process within white society. The concept of privilege does not infer that all white people are wealthy or powerful, rather it acknowledges aspects of class, patriarchy, and Christian hegemony which can be accessed to the benefit of the dominant group, leading directly to the oppression of those considered the "other". Individual accomplishment as well as material and/or professional success say little about larger institutional truths. The maintenance of whiteness


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and white racial unconsciousness interact in a mutually-reinforcing relationship (Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Garvey, 2007). For those who benefit, privilege is the norm and is therefore outside conscious scrutiny. Simply not recognising whiteness reproduces its power (Green & Sonn, 2006). Having set the parameters of national identity, racial identity development for white people is typically very slow due to the luxury of living in largely uncontested ignorance (Wise, 2011).

What does it mean to be white in a nation that was created for the benefit of white people? Do those of us who are white we reflect on our experience of being white, of being born belonging? The white experience is so different to the Indigenous one. To develop any real level of understanding necessitates that we actively pursue the meaning and effect of an experience that is alien to us. To achieve this we need to realise and understand how racialised our white lives are before we can truly begin to accept the nature of the problem and strive to be part of the solution to it, personally and professionally.

## REDISCOVERY AND RECOVERY

The past is always in the present. It is only by understanding the past that we become more able to critique the present and actively shape the future. “History” is rarely encompassed within a single story. Those who write “history” generally seek to ensure that the official record flatters them through direct lies and distortions of the truth (Gott, 2011; Marr, 2012; Muller, 2014; Wise, 2011). The cost of living such lies, however, can be enormous, sacrificing, as it does, personal and national coherence. In Australia the British Empire was established and maintained through “bloodshed, violence, brutality, conquest and war” (Gott, 2011, p. 1). Two imperial traditions were established – that of the conquerors and that of the conquered. The use of language was an important medium in separating these two traditions. Words such as “incidents”, “encounters”, and “skirmishes” can be found in “official” histories and classroom text books. These words, however, belie the true nature of massacre, genocide, and annihilation. The fact the colonisation of Australia was possible only through military conquest involving physical and cultural extermination (Gott, 2011; Marr, 2012) has been muddied over time by what Chomsky (2010) termed “the benefit of self-induced blindness … that includes selective historical amnesia” (p. 10). The “Great Australian Silence” was how Stanner (cited in Curthoys, Beckett, & Hinkson, 2008) described the structural processes used by White Australia to develop a “a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale” (p. 233). The preferred script is one that regards Empire as “an imaginative, civilizing enterprise, reluctantly undertaken, that brought the benefits of modern society to backward peoples” (Gott, 2011, p. 3). Gott, however, suggested that “the rulers of the British Empire will one day be perceived to rank with the dictators of the 20th century as the authors of crimes against humanity on an infamous scale” (p. 5).

The notion of Australia being “terra nullius”, “empty land”, or “land belonging to no-one” persisted from 1788, when Captain Cook declared it so, until it was successfully challenged through a High Court case in 1992, known as the *Mabo* decision. In his diary, however, Cook wrote in glowing terms about the people he declared did not exist in this land that was empty. He commented on their “vigour, their health and their clean, lice-free hair” (Marr, 2012, p. 357) and was impressed by the equality of their society and their lack of interest in material objects. He believed they were happy and fulfilled “far happier than Europeans” (Gott, 2011, p. 84). Cook also recorded how Indigenous people on the shoreline of New South Wales in 1788 “seemed resolved to oppose our landing” (p. 84).


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Indigenous Australian culture is the longest recorded continuous culture in the world. Prior to colonisation, Indigenous peoples maintained a high level of resource management which sustained a viable hunting and gathering pattern of life. Seasonal harvesting of regional resources, maintenance of kinship groups, and religious practices ensured continued wellbeing and cultural integrity. Traditional systems of education involved lifelong processes designed to empower the whole community. They were oriented towards promotion to higher levels of knowledge and involved the training of doctors, lawyers, teachers, geographers, chemists, botanists, communicators (with the living and spirit world), linguists, historians, etc. to specialist levels (Atkinson, 2002; Sykes, 1986). A majestic land management achievement was maintained (French, 2013; Gammage, 2011) which was "not merely sustainable, but abundant, convenient and predictable" (Reynolds, 2011, p. 3). The colonists, however, "failed to recognise the living larder around them. Over the next two hundred years European settlers would destroy much of the bounty of the land" (French, 2013, p. 169). According to Reynolds (2011), the reason this superb level of land management was denied had to do with the colonial conceit that Indigenous peoples made no use of the land.

Indigenous education maintained continuity between grandparents, parents, and children, and focused on cultural growth and knowledge. Indigenous identity, sense of community, and culture are inseparable. Historically, within Indigenous societies, group and kinship systems were woven into the fabric of religious and economic life, and were voiced through practices and patterns of reciprocity and obligation. A sense of identity was achieved through the performance of traditional rituals linked to the "Dreaming" or "Dreamtime" which permeated Indigenous life, linking scared knowledge with moral truth (Attwood & Magowan, 2001; Bell, 2009; Gammage, 2011; Muller, 2014). One of the aims of colonisation was to eradicate these rites and rituals and attempt to wipe out collective memory, traditions, culture, and identity (Collard, 2000). The lie of Indigenous "backwardness" was, according to Reynolds (2011), "just too useful to be cast aside" (p. xxiii).

As psychotherapists, we need to acknowledge historic truths and current realities fully and in a way that enables us and our clients to regard history as offering opportunity and hope, not determinism. Psychology has been complicit in the processes of colonisation and assimilation, and remains largely a white, class-based activity where constructions of personhood and identity are drawn from culturally familiar norms. Chomsky (2012) advised, "Historical amnesia is a very dangerous phenomenon, not only because it undermines moral and intellectual integrity, but also because it lays the groundwork for crimes that lie ahead" (p. 149). The continuation of colonisation appears assured as long as Indigenous people remain the scapegoats for white explanations of Indigenous disadvantage – explanations that ensure white people do not regards themselves as part of the problem (Green & Sonn, 2006). Acknowledging and owning this complicit history may help psychotherapists avoid making the mistakes of the past, and enable us to move forward towards new inclusive approaches based on mutual respect and learning. An honest and inclusive knowledge of history could establish a renewed, invigorated sense of identity for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Dudgeon, 2000; Muller, 2014).

## MOURNING

The journey to decolonisation will require a massive shift in understanding, and a new way of embracing both historical wrongs and unsavoury current realities. This may lead to feelings of shame, guilt, anger, a sense of hopelessness, and excruciating levels of loss and grief. There is


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a danger of people becoming overwhelmed by the nature and scale of the stories being discovered/rediscovered, and becoming trapped in the Mourning stage. Grief, if it becomes toxic could well impede or halt progress towards healing. Engaging or re-engaging in the other stages of the model, such as healing and forgiveness, and dreaming (of a preferred future) can ease the grip of the mourning stage (Muller, 2014). Effective therapeutic support can play an invaluable role in managing the dangers inherent in the successful re-authoring of our shared history and multi-storied reality.

Grief is how we react to loss in our lives. As loss can be experienced on different levels, it is important to operate within a framework that highlights its multi-layered effects. Weenolsen (1988) offered a framework particularly well suited to this context. This framework starts with addressing the primary loss, the issue that dominates, before looking at secondary, derivative, and concrete losses. This is followed by addressing holistic loss, abstract losses such as status, dreams, and feelings of security, and self-conceptual loss, the changes in how one sees oneself within the context of the loss, and finally, metaphorical loss regarding our belief systems and world view. Using a framework such as this may help in developing pathways to support those who are moving through grief and loss reactions to a place of transcendence, a place where individuals and communities can become strong.

## HEALING AND FORGIVENESS: RECLAIMING WELLBEING AND HARMONY

In developing the new stage three, healing and forgiveness, Muller (2014) offered a space to reclaim wellbeing and harmony. She regarded this stage as both central to, and a goal of, decolonisation. Other stages can be assessed from within this stage: "it is possible to rediscover knowledge, mourn in safety, dream of a decolonisation future, make commitments, and take action from within Healing and Forgiveness" (p. 231). Healing and forgiveness does not mean ignoring past wrongs or abandoning the right to justice, rather "it is a stage where a person might find harmony within themselves and with others" (p. 218).

Colonisation corrupts both the coloniser and the colonised (Marr, 2012). It brutalises and humiliates, making it difficult to live up to our own high ideals and experience respect for ourselves and each other. Laenui (as cited in Muller, 2014) advised:

> true decolonisation is far more than simply replacing Indigenous or previously colonised peoples into the positions held by the colonisers … Cultural codes need to be clarified and challenges made to the D.I.E. (Domination, Individualism and Exclusion) culture that is dominant and replaced with cultural codes of respect and connectedness, collectiveness and inclusion (p. 61).

To achieve a decolonised future, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people need to heal. How this can be achieved will largely remain a separate process as each group needs to address the issues contingent to their circumstances. As Koolmatrie and Williams (2000) advised non-Indigenous psychologists and psychotherapists: "Deal with the issue of what your people have done to our people, what your ancestors have done to our ancestors, then we might be able to help one another" (p. 164).

The process of change may be a gradual, accumulative experience, or it may take the form of rapid and unexpected change through sudden deep insights. However the process unfolds, the process of decolonisation will necessitate transformation within the personality structure. The


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change process may be precipitated by, and overlap with, a sense of divided self, despair, a sense of hopelessness, and a disintegration of cognitive structure. Through an enhanced understanding of this process, psychotherapists increase their ability to facilitate deep and lasting change in a vulnerable population. Utilising the decolonisation model may provide opportunities for psychotherapists to support adaptive growth and resilience through providing a safe place for clients to explore deeply held cognitive schemas about the world, question individual and collective value systems, and re-examine issues of identity. The goal is not to replace one story with another but to empower clients to participate in a continuous process of creating and transforming meaning (McLeod, 1997).

All truths about human functioning are relative to the kind of lens through which they are viewed and the language through which they are examined. How do we learn to reconcile the notion of an "inner self" that forms the basis for decision-making and action with a self-identity that is defined externally by place, kinship, duty, and tradition of historical connectedness? Utilising a humanist, client-centred approach which accepts the nature of the lived experience and guides the existential exploration of meaning making may offer real benefit. The integration of new truths may result in a significant departure from a previously held self and world views. Cognitive processing and social support play an important role in attaining a new sense of balance and way of being in the world.

The use of narrative is a cognitive instrument; a primary means of making sense and understanding. Through meaning-making, tragedy, trauma, and loss may become more bearable. Stories become not only vehicles for learning and understanding, they also become a means for remembrance. Through this process, narrative becomes a fundamental mnemonic act. The story becomes more than a series of events. Story becomes an expressive embodiment of all that has taken place. By understanding the past, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are better able to critique the present and actively shape the future.

Healing comprises physical, spiritual, psychological, social, collective, and restorative components. Restoration necessitates a holistic approach to healing in relation to the emotional, spiritual, and physical nexus in terms of the individual and the collective, the political and the cultural. The restoring of wellbeing, spiritually, emotionally, physically and materially, will require the involvement of psychotherapists in culturally competent practices.

The presence of Indigenous people in Australia has been significant and long-standing. To survive in such a diverse location, subject as it is to a range of climates and environments, speaks of great resilience and the ability to adapt both individually and collectively (Garvey, 2007). Indigenous people speak about an "inner spirit" that connects them to their community and country. "Liyarn" or "Liyarn Ngarn" comes from the Yawuru language from the Broome area of Western Australia and means "the coming together of spirit". This "coming together of the spirit" is at the heart of Indigenous holistic health (Henderson-Yates, 2008). Other Indigenous names for this concept include "Ngarlu", a Karajarri word meaning the place of the inner spirit (Roe, 2000). Randal (2006) highlighted the importance of "Kanyini" or "connectedness" to life and life's purpose. There are four elements of Kanyini:

- *Tjukurrpa* Belief system
- *Kurunpa* Spirituality
- *Ngura* Land
- *Walytja* Family


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Kanyini is nurtured through caring and practicing responsibility. To be a "whole" person all four aspects of Kanyini have to be connected and maintained.

Ungunmerr (1995) offered the gift of *Dadirri* to non-Aboriginal Australians. She described *Dadirri* as:

> inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. *Dadirri* recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. It is something like what you call "contemplation". When I experience *dadirri*, I am made whole again … I can find my peace in this silent awareness. There is no need for words. A big part of *dadirra* is listening. Through the years we have listened to our stories. They are told and sung, over and over, as the seasons go by … the stories and songs sink quietly into our minds and we hold them deep inside. The contemplative way of *dadirri* spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace. It makes us feel whole again. (pp. 179–180)

These are the elements inherent in Indigenous culture that promote, restore, and maintain health and wellbeing. To have endured for so long indicates these Indigenous knowledge systems are both functional and adaptive in their content and health-promoting in their goals.

## DREAMING

Dreaming involves imagining a better future for all Australians and planning how this can be achieved. The dreaming stage is crucial for imaging a decolonised future (Muller, 2014). Through the dreaming stage hope may be established, enabling progress to be made towards a more socially just society – one in which critique and possibility strengthen values of freedom and equality. A future that is inclusive, based on respect and connectedness, requires considerable commitment and collective planning.

## COMMITMENT

Emerging from the dreaming phase provides the opportunity to move towards the type of society we wish to create. According to Corey and Corey (2006), the paradoxical theory of change holds that change tends to occur when we become aware of "*what we are*, as opposed to trying to become *what we are not*. The more we attempt to deny some aspect of our being, the more we remain the same" (p. 5). Change becomes possible when we accept who we are and commit to working towards achieving who we want to become. When we embrace a vision, does this embrace not allow us to acknowledge and understand "both our collective and disparate pasts and our possible and potential futures?" (Mathur, 2011, p. 8).

McLeod (1997) stated that stories and storytelling present the primary points of connection between what goes on in therapy and what goes on in culture as a whole. It is essential the therapist can provide the means for people to tell the stories they need to tell in the ways they need to tell them. Although each therapist brings to their work a repertoire of personal experiences and values, their theoretical perspective, traditionally, has evolved through an educational system that places little value on stories. Rediscovering the power of stories, learning to apply hermeneutic, postmodern modes of understanding which challenge the notion of "privileged discourse", appears essential to the task ahead (Jenkins, 2013).


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Story takes us into other worlds of language and knowing in ways that can transform us. Stories are media of knowledge. To access that knowledge, however, rhetorical or pedagogical questions (commonly used in traditional psychotherapy and counselling) need to be replaced by therapeutic questions that welcome many possible answers, thus encouraging the evolution of new personal realities, new agency and meaning.

## ACTION

In this state, the "current picture" is transformed into the "preferred picture" (Egan, 2010).

## CONCLUSION

The denial of equity to one group of Australians diminishes all Australians. To allow Australia's Indigenous peoples to continue to suffer such inequity is deeply shameful. Recognition of the past and the creation of reconciliatory agreements remain critical to achieving a more unified and egalitarian society. At present, achievements in terms of these key issues are still made against the tide of social attitudes. Reconciliation in Australia will only happen when those attitudes undergo radical change and Australia breaks out of its colonial construct. Racism has to be properly addressed if social justice and reconciliation are to be achieved.

Zembylas (2008) described political struggles on national identity as struggles for recognition – recognition that past injustices occurred and continue to shape the present. If current political and cultural values of shame can be rehabilitated to a point where shame can be used to create openings conducive to constructive self-criticism and self-reflection, "shame and dignity can be intertwined" (Zembylas, 2008, p. 267) in ways that promote cultural solidarity. Psychotherapy discourses that tackle the political and social uses of shame will empower therapists and their clients and client communities to add a significant dimension to contemporary discussions regarding genuine reconciliation. There is a role here for Indigenous and non-Indigenous brokers who can determine the cultural markers in this process. A partnership is required that seeks to develop therapeutic approaches which are interventive in dealing with the impact of the harm experienced and preventive in avoiding further harm occurring. This may allow us to work towards spaces of: "Decolonisation, through the process of Truth, Transformation and Reconciliation".

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