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Published by
The College of Community Psychologists of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd

ISSN 1835-7393

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- Full page $100
- 1/2 page $50
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Dignity, diversity, and resistance:  
A bicultural, community-led approach to transforming social responses to domestic violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Social problems of domestic violence have been a focus of community and Government attention in Aotearoa New Zealand for over four decades. This article presents early research findings in a community-based social change project that focuses on acts of resistance to interpersonal violence. The praxis of the Tu Mai Awa project is informed by interweaving Māori protocols, principles, and values, with principles of Response-Based Practice, in which domestic violence is recognised as a gendered social problem that is supported by psychologising attributions and other discursive operations. In the first half of this article we present Tu Mai Awa’s framework for a biculturally sensitive and consistent approach to interventions with victims and perpetrators of violence, and to systems advocacy with organisations and institutions across the sector. In the second half of the article, we present findings of research conducted with project participants that aimed to better understand the scope of personal experiences that inform Tu Mai Awa practice. The findings are presented as a thematic analysis of diverse experiences leading to a common commitment to work for non-violent futures, and an analysis of the storylines for telling how we have come to our commitments for change.

In the decade from 2000-2010, New Zealand women experienced the highest rate of IPV [intimate partner violence], and specifically sexual violence from intimate partners, of any women in all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries reporting (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014, p.19).

Communities and Government in Aotearoa New Zealand have been attempting to address domestic violence as a social problem for over four decades. Statistical evidence of the significance of family violence as a social problem that urgently needs to be addressed is complex and controversial. Terms are not always defined consistently and analysed data is not always comparable. Population level studies are rare, and data is often collected from operational databases that change as operational policies and procedures change and are not designed for research (for further discussion, see Gulliver & Fanslow, 2012). Nevertheless, such sources remain the best available indicators of the scope of the problem. Data released by New Zealand Police show that there were 101,981 family violence investigations in 2014 and 62,923 family violence investigations where at least one child under the age of 16 years was linked to the investigation (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2015). This data provides evidence of high levels of domestic violence in a population of around 4 million people, however Police estimate that only 18-25% of family violence incidents are reported to them (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). These estimates suggest that the actual incidence of violence in New Zealand homes is much higher than Police data reveals.

For the purposes of the social change project discussed in this paper, we reflect on intimate violence using language commonly used in much of the literature and in the sector that deals with relationship violence.
The term ‘family violence’ broadly encompasses all forms of violence that occur in family relationships, including intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, elder abuse, and sibling abuse. ‘Domestic violence’ is often used synonymously with intimate partner violence and child abuse, which are closely connected because in the majority of situations where children are victims of family violence, women are also being victimised by their partners. It is currently the term used in legislation in Aotearoa New Zealand to encompass diverse forms of familial and close non-familial relationships (Domestic Violence Act, 2013). However, we are mindful that the use of common terminologies occludes social and cultural contexts in which movement against relational violence occurs (Stewart, 2004), and that the problematic use of broad terminologies is compounded at intersections of race, culture, gender, and language (Morgan & Coombes, 2013). We are also mindful that the term ‘violence’ is itself commonly associated with physical assault. This is an association that neglects other dynamics of relationship violence, for example in the use of coercive control operating through abusive strategies, tailored by intimate partners to the psychology of their victims (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). Nevertheless, limitations arising from use of generic terms do not preclude recognition of the social problem of domestic violence. Although legislation and Government policy uses gender-neutral language, the wider community sector frequently recognises that domestic violence is more often a particular form of violence against women, which significantly affects New Zealand women and their children.

Communities became involved in addressing domestic violence well before any Government recognition of the problem. In the late 1970s, women’s refuges were established and the reform of legislation and policy that began in the mid-1980s was largely influenced by the advocacy and lobbying of community organisations, like refuge and rape crisis (Morgan & Coombes, 2013). Community responses to family violence have developed into co-ordinated networks that now include police, and sometimes specialist Family Violence Courts. Services offered to victims include safety assessments and planning, referrals to other social agencies including budgeting or housing services, alcohol and other drug services, children’s programmes and parenting support. Refuges still provide emergency accommodation, and often run safety programmes for women and children who have been victimised at home. Mobilising communities to sanction local responses to domestic violence is now recognised as a particularly effective strategy for addressing the harms done through domestic violence (Hann & Trewartha, 2015).

**Biculturalism: Three Houses**

Biculturalism emerged in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 20th Century, in the context of political struggle by Māori to redress the social injustices of racism and the power of colonising dominance that dictates the terms by which Māori and Pākehā/tauiwi/non-Māori come together in partnerships (Coombes & Morgan, 2015; Smith, 1999). Complex and controversial, biculturalism serves as a symbolic system advocating for genuine partnership - a coalition - between Maori and Pākehā that enables space for indigenous self-determination (Bennett & Liu, 2017; Thomas & Nikora, 1996; Simon-Kumar, 2018). The understanding of biculturalism mobilised in this project is informed by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) and Māori explanations of how the spirit and intent of Māori agreement to Te Tiriti can guide bicultural practice. In this study, we deploy the work of prominent Māori academic, Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (1998), who uses a metaphor of three houses to explain how a partnership of two cultures works from a perspective that is respectful of each culture. The three houses are the ‘Tikanga Māori House,’ the ‘Tikanga Pākehā House’ and the ‘Treaty House’. In **Te ao Māori**, the Māori world, the human body takes on the form of a wharenui, or meeting house: face, arms, and thighs form the walls, the ribs and spine...
form the beams of the roof. *Wairua*, or spirit, embraces the whole, and the wellbeing of the whole is present in and through the *wairua* of the self and of the visitors. Royal’s three-houses model of biculturalism recognises that each party to *Te Tiriti* has their own *wharenui* in which to develop autonomously, and that both parties are committed to operating in concord, represented by the *Tiriti/Treaty* house, within which they come together to engage in dialogue and act in partnership.

**Tikanga Māori House**

Māori protocols, principles, and values are brought from the ‘Tikanga Māori House’ to guide partnerships between Māori and non-Māori. Relational practices of *whanaungatanga* enable participants to connect with one another through stories that build a sense of shared experiences and values. In what follows, we briefly reflect on five principles that provide specific guidance to the Tu Mai Awa social change project, using English interpretations of Māori protocols, and observing as we do so that language is powerfully interrelated with identity and belonging, so translation is always problematic. Words and phrases from one language do not neatly correspond with concepts that they may appear to resemble in other languages; thus our interpretative efforts are necessarily inadequate and contestable.

The principle of *whakamanawa* focuses attention on responsiveness to those journeying from states of oppression (all forms of abuse) to emancipation. The principle reminds us to encourage, inspire, and instil confidence to achieve, and to be free of subjugation. The principle of *whakapapa* challenges us to be mindful how people connect to one another and to places, events, activities, significant values, ideologies and beliefs. It reminds us to consider relational connectivity and how people are woven together. The principle of *manaakitanga* emphasises cooperative and interdependent acts of support, care, hospitality and protection of others that connect us through reciprocity and collaboration for mutual benefit. The principle of *rangitiratanga* concerns leadership, and recognises that leadership styles and approaches vary. *Rangitiratanga* values qualities such as integrity, negotiation skills, expertise, and wisdom, and includes styles of leadership that involve working collaboratively with others. Diversity is important and leaders of all kinds are recognised for the contributions of their different styles and qualities. Finally, the principle of *wairuatanga* brings spirit to the foreground. It is not only concerned with spiritual matters, but extends more broadly to a collective consciousness of the spirit of life, including all aspects of being Māori, and might be further extended in a more general sense to embrace all aspects of holistically located humanity.

**Tikanga Pākehā House**

From the ‘Tikanga Pākehā House’ we bring principles of Response-Based Practice (RBP), an approach to domestic violence interventions and advocacy in which domestic violence is recognised as a gendered social problem that is supported by the ways in which language shapes responses to violence, victims and perpetrators. Coates and Wade (2004, 2007) observed judicial predispositions in sexual assault trial judgments to account for sexual assaults by drawing on psychologising attributions such as alcohol and drug abuse, dysfunctional family upbringing, stress and trauma, and loss of control. Psychologising attributions engage with other linguistic devices to systematically reformulate deliberate acts of violence as non-deliberate and non-violent acts, through four specific discursive operations that limit the quality of social responses: by concealing violence, mitigating perpetrator responsibility, concealing victims' resistance, and blaming or pathologising the victim. This suggests that there is an indissoluble link between problems of violence and discursive practices of representing violence (Coates & Wade, 2004, 2007).

Response-Based Practice is guided by core principles concerning responses to violence (for further discussion, see Coates & Wade, 2004, 2007; Todd, Wade, &
Renoux, 2004; Wade, 1997; Weaver-Dunlop, Todd, Ogden & Craik, 2007). These principles cover the ubiquity of resistance to violence and abuse; the subtlety and ambiguity of some forms of resistance; and the purposefulness of violence and abuse.

Recognising that resistance to victimisation is present wherever there is violence and abuse, RBP acknowledges there are many situations in which victims act to avoid escalating violence against them. Acts of resistance may be virtually unrecognisable to anyone other than the victim herself. For example, a woman might borrow milk from a neighbour rather than risk asking for money to shop. The request to borrow milk is not easily recognised as an act of resistance to violence yet it is a purposeful act that serves to uphold her dignity and improve her safety.

Subtle acts of resistance are not easily discerned by those outside the relationship. Domestic violence is still often regarded as a ‘private matter’, and acts of resistance as well as acts of violence and abuse may be hidden from those who are not involved. Along with resisting violence, victims are often acting to resist negative social responses to their victimisation. Concealing or minimising violence may avoid responses like victim-blaming, or excusing the perpetrator. Subtle forms of resistance avert others’ negative judgements, including degrading responses. As a consequence resistance to abuse may be invisible to anyone other than the victim (Weaver-Dunlop et. al., 2007; Coates & Wade, 2004).

Often perpetrators also conceal their violence and present themselves to others as amiable and pleasant. They are aware of victims’ resistance to abuse even when victims are compliant to resist escalating violence. Perpetrators act to prevent victims from resisting. For example, a perpetrator might belittle his partner in front of someone from whom she could seek support to embarrass her and undermine any potential alliance for her safety.

RBP acknowledges that acts of violence and concealment are deliberate. Although some perpetrators claim that they are only abusive or violent when they lose control of their emotions, RBP emphasises their ability to be non-abusive and respectful. Treating perpetrators as agents with choices upholds their dignity and RBP aims to inspire perseverance in becoming free from violence.

**The Treaty House**

When brought together in the Treaty House, principles of tikanga Māori and Response Based Practice have enabled us to evolve a framework for a biculturally sensitive, consistent approach to interventions with victims and perpetrators of violence, and to systems advocacy with organisations and institutions across the sector. Through discussion and collaboration, learning from each other, and sharing our experiences we agreed four action initiatives: working reflexively, upholding dignity, intervening safely, and engaging social analysis.

Through reflexivity, Response-Based Practice mobilises language that reveals violence, clarifies perpetrator responsibility, honours victims' resistance and responses, and contests blaming and pathologising victims. Reflexivity involves acknowledging to ourselves and to others that language weaves us together and connects us as we work for social responses that inspire movement towards freedom from violence.

Dignity is crucial to healthy social relationships, and preserving dignity is central to our social organisation as an affirmation of social worth. We benefit through engaging in practices that uphold the dignity of others, and prioritise support, care, respect and collaboration. Concealing violence, blaming victims, and excusing perpetrators for their actions are social responses that do not accord victims, perpetrators, or our interconnectedness the dignity that we need for social and community wellbeing.

Whether we are working with victims, perpetrators, organisations, institutions, or each other, safety is our priority. Our understanding of safety includes not only eliminating abuse and preserving dignity, but also caring for and respecting diversity, maintaining our own and respecting others’
integrity, and collaborating and negotiating when we encounter challenges.

As we recognise that violence, abuse, dignity, and safety are social phenomena, we are obliged to acknowledge and understand our interconnectedness rather than treating people as autonomous individuals. By mobilising social analysis techniques in our work, we aim to open pathways and move towards a collective consciousness of communities free from violence.

Tu Mai Awa

At its heart, Tu Mai Awa is a community-based social change project that focuses on acts of resistance to interpersonal violence. The project is named for a Māori image of two rivers feeding into the same moana, a single body of water. This metaphor reflects ways in which the project operates additively alongside other initiatives responding to interpersonal violence, as well as parallel processes of working with individuals at the personal level and with agencies to achieve systemic change in wider society. The project involves a diverse range of practitioners, therapists, youth workers, educators, victim advocates, refuge workers, facilitators, lawyers, artists – anyone who is experienced in, or open to, incorporating Māori principles into their practice and wants to be involved in developing and advocating more positive social responses to domestic violence. There is no formal organisation involved with the community network of practitioners who are involved with Tu Mai Awa, and membership of the network is fluid. At the time we undertook this study, members who formed the project were employed in various service organisations that constitute the Family Violence sector, while others worked independently or were employees of organisations that were not specifically focused on Family Violence interventions, although they worked with clients affected by violence in their homes. The day to day work of the Tu Mai Awa community was and is diverse. Client work might involve individual women, men or children; group programmes for victims, perpetrators or children; and whānau based interventions or family work with Pākehā clients. Advocacy work could involve formal roles for representing and speaking for clients within the legal or welfare systems, being actively involved in community mobilisation to bring change in more community-based settings, or challenging practices within formal organisations where members of the group have opportunities to advocate for systems change. The research team have also been regarded as members of the network, although our roles are very different, and we maintain our relationships in the community through consultation on research rather than participating in RPB training, case reviews, or community action plans that other members of the network meet together to work on. While we are regarded as members of the community, we do not participate in research that we are conducting to ensure that no conflicts of interest arise. The diversity of practitioners and practices engaged by members of the Tu Mai Awa network respected our mutual commitment to various processes of social responsiveness to violence in our homes as well as the specificity and differences amongst ourselves, our communities and our clients.

The Current Study

As Tu Mai Awa has developed, many stories have been told among the practitioners in the context of reflexively questioning their responses to those who experience intimate violence. Each of these stories are different, each specific to practitioners whose courage and determination to resist intimate partner violence bring them to embark on journeys committed to ending its devastating impact on families, whānau, communities, and the turanga or foundations of our future, our children. Sometimes these stories are intertwined together as reflections on resistance, survival, struggle, and commitment to change. They converge and diverge among those who have spoken with us, rarely mapping neatly to reveal archetypes of domestic violence: those who are, or are not victims, those who do, or do not survive, those who have, or have not perpetrated abuse, and those who are, or are not respectful of the dignity of others. Yet in
their retelling, we locate shared understandings within our differences.

Consistent with how the practitioners of Tu Mai Awa value reflexivity, each other, and the diverse knowledge they bring to Tu Mai Awa’s praxis, they chose to focus the first research project on the stories of their own experiences. By gathering and analysing the practitioners’ stories, we aim to share understandings of the complex social issues we are addressing, and facilitate better understanding of our commitments, collaborations and the meanings of RBP work in our bicultural context.

Practitioners’ stories are also like a braided river – a network of discrete awa or waterways that interweave their paths. Each story has a standpoint that is unique, specific, and located within the social, cultural, and historical trajectories of the raconteur’s life. Yet along these discrete life-courses common themes emerge. These are the touch-points where stories overlap, where channels unite.

**Method**

Consistent with our aims to share and enrich our understandings, we sought research strategies that accommodated diversity, and that enabled us to analytically interpret the meanings of stories told by participants. Our research depended upon participant practitioners from the Tu Mai Awa project storying their everyday experiences and understandings of intimate family violence, and we aimed to honour the integrity of participant understandings by foregrounding their voices.

The design of our study is qualitative, employing semi structured interviews with the members of the project to gather their experiential stories. Experiential narrative studies are among many approaches to narrative research which are not prescriptive in their methods and are primarily concerned with understanding the meaning of participants’ experiences from their perspectives (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2013). In designing interviews, we were guided by Hydén’s (2014) teller-focused semi-structured interview principles, developed specifically for narrative interviews in sensitive areas to ensure that the researcher does not become the dominant party in the interview process. The interview schedule was structured around an open starter question asking about the participant’s experiences working in the area of family violence, leading up to their decision to join the Tu Mai Awa project. Prompts relating to experiences of social responses to victims and perpetrators as well as institutional responses and the participant’s interest and experience of RBP were available to facilitate story-telling should they be needed.

All of the Tu Mai Awa practitioners were invited to participate in the study and nine volunteered to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted by a member of the research team who did not have an ongoing relationship with the Tu Mai Awa project. Participants were assured that privacy would be protected, although it was acknowledged that some participants may wish to share their contribution to the research with others in the team. Interviews were transcribed by the interviewer and all identifying material removed. Participants were able to review and make changes to their transcripts before analysis took place.

The ethical protocol for the study was reviewed by senior researchers, assessed as low risk and registered with the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

In the first phase of our research, our goal has been to identify commonalities, and specifically focus our analysis to address how practitioners’ experiences of social responses to family violence inform their current knowledge and understanding of the work of responding to family violence. We addressed this goal by using a situated approach to thematic analysis of narrative data that acknowledges how each of us makes meaning of our experiences within a broader social context that impinges upon our personal constructions of meaning. At the same time, this approach maintains a focus on the material conditions and the limitations of our realities (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

We conducted a second phase of analysis to identify storylines through which the participants’ personal narratives were
organised. Following Mishler’s conceptualisation of narratives as “socially situated actions” and identity performances (2004, p.19), storylines contextualise the particularities of our personal accounts, and enabled insights to the situations and experiences of others based on plausibility of the storyline, rather than through some quantitative measure of the lived-world of the individual. By following the perspective of the participant, stories are understood holistically, and are able to connect seemingly diverse meanings and experiences (Murray & Sools, 2014). In this way, our narratives become political acts through which it is possible to move from the specific/singular to the more general/shared (Denzin, 2003).

**Thematic Analysis**

Six themes emerged from our thematic analysis: an intimacy with violence; an awakening of a social/political conscience; a sense of outrage at the injustice of victim-blaming and frustrations with “the system”; a recognition of a need for transformational interventions that orchestrate social change; a desire to foreground the diversity in the stories of those closest to violent relationships; and an urge to re-language those stories in order to counter toxic effects of psychologising attributions and other damaging linguistic devices. These are the themes that speak most clearly to our braided river, the similarities and differences in our commitments to the journey of transformation that draws us together. We discuss these themes in the following sections

**Intimacy with Violence**

Our early experiences are quite different, yet there are intersections among our stories where we share intimate appreciations of the issues of domestic violence and loss of agency. Among us are survivors of domestic violence and child abuse, as well as sexual violence:

*I grew up with a father who was at times violent . . . violence has always been part of my context* (Peter).

*I’ve had an interest in family violence and mental health because of my own kind of upbringing really* (Mātai).

So there was a lot of sexualised violence in my life when I was a child. Then when I was 22 a guy broke into my house. I went through the court process. He was up on charges of burglary and attempted rape... I went to go because he pleaded not guilty. He wasn’t guilty, wasn’t guilty. I had to go to court. They were going to make me testify. Then the morning of the court thing he changed his plea. So then they weren’t going to let me in (Gwen).

Gwen’s experiences as a client herself and her experiences of working with others speak to the marginalisation of victims within the justice system, and to the problematic outcomes of marginalisation:

*When I got to the door [of the courtroom] this security guard went, “Well who are you?” I said, “I want to go in there.” He said, “But you can only go in there if you are friends or family of the defendant.” . . . I was just mortified. I thought there’s no way one has to go through this.* (Gwen).

*A young woman that I’m working with . . . her father was incredibly violent towards her for years and years - she’s 19 now - but the courts kept making her go back to her father; she had to have shared custody. . . It ended up everyone was getting upset all the time so she would cover up her bruises; she would just cover it up and say, “No I’m okay . . . I’ve got this guy who absolutely abuses the crap out of me, a mother who wasn’t able to protect me and a system that didn’t protect me, I’m freaking out, I’m cutting (self-harming)”* (Gwen).
While coming from different backgrounds, where for the most part some of us felt “surrounded by love”, we seem to still share a similarly uneasy intimacy in our early life experiences with violence and powerlessness in various manifest forms. Tara tells of:

A lot of different stories through many generations and on both sides of my family . . . [ranging from] extreme physical violence . . . [to] having to function in a very patriarchal sort of social environment (Tara).

Some of us reprise our exposure to violence through becoming involved in women’s crisis initiatives. Marion describes her early volunteer work with Women’s Refuge as “a bit of an accident”, and something that she had no real attachment to initially. However, over time her engagement changed:

Pretty much everything I was doing with my study somehow tracked back to family violence and that just carried on right through (Marion).

Peter’s early involvement in setting up and running a provincial youth centre parallels these experiences:

Most of the kids that came down to the youth centre . . . were from families where there was violence (Peter).

Mātai’s experience in a mental health setting also speaks to the extent that we recognised the pervasiveness of domestic violence in our particular work contexts:

I was working in the [mental health unit at ...] with people from the moderate to severe end of mental health. I did see quite a bit of [domestic] violence and I don’t think that was because of the mental health stuff (Mātai).

Awakening Social/Political Conscience

Awakening our social and political consciousness thematically braids together the various moral trajectories that support our commitment to transforming domestic violence. For Tara, her development has been shaped by her parents: role models of social awareness and the moral responsibility to take action in pursuit of liberation from oppressive social structures:

It just transformed my way of thinking about how people relate to one another and I just thought that was such a cool thing (Tara).

As Tara’s awareness of global issues of social injustice around her has grown, so too has her awareness of the finer nuances of social disharmony in her immediate surroundings:

When you see around you what you believe to be social injustice, whether it’s people having more than others, like, you know, the disparity between rich and poor or people being discriminated against . . . you become aware of it happening in the world . . . and then you start to notice it in your own community as well (Tara).

For Peter, growing up in a wider context of pervasive violence and social revolution had a similar impact on his pathway to work in family violence.

There was lots of violence . . . but also really amazing scenes of freedom and justice . . . during high school became I guess interested in issues of social justice . . . issues of oppression, and, sort of, the antidotes for that (Peter).

Hana’s pathway has been influenced by her work in conflicting jurisdictions of the law – working in the criminal court to defend perpetrators of family violence, while working in the family court to protect victims of domestic violence. Hana understands her movement between these two worlds by recognising that the offenders are themselves often victims of systemic intergenerational inequalities:

Just that child with that mother in the family court, that has been failed by the system at some level, or who has seen that violence and then becomes that perpetrator (Hana).

Underlying these different pathways is a common interest in issues of social justice.
Participants talk of a “sense of fairness” and of the injustices of oppression, poverty, and powerlessness. They recount stories involving negative social responses to victims of violence, and in these discourses they give voice to stories that honour victim resistance. All talk of wanting to make a difference at a systemic level, to transform, rather than ameliorate, social conditions that lend themselves to violent outcomes. They voice frustration and feelings of powerlessness to effect these changes:

> Everything’s all ambulance at the bottom of the cliff stuff . . . there’s nothing proactive about what we’re doing. We’re trying to keep women and children safe and, you know, we talk about being political and try to create social change but not effectively (Marion).

> The underlining principle for me . . . is acknowledging that these people have mana and dignity and being able to uphold that and nurture that, sometimes draw that out of themselves, and to help maybe restore, enhance, rebuild, reframe their own dignity [so] that they have power (Reiko).

### Victim-blaming and Tensions with the “System”

Some of us give voice to tensions in relationships with police, corrections, and the courts. Prevailing discourses of discrimination and marginalisation of the poor and the mentally unwell, and how dominant cultural and social representations of domestic violence all too often privilege the masculine viewpoints and the ‘old-boy networks’, stifle the voices of victims:

> Our police don’t understand the DVA [Domestic Violence Act]. They don’t understand how domestic violence works and they don’t train effectively (Marion).

> Quite a lot of people, I think, are really suspicious of the police, you know, have had really bad experiences with them, if not in their own lifetimes, then intergenerationally . . . one of the advocates was telling me her own family stories about pretty awful police discrimination . . . you can sort of understand why people wouldn’t necessarily want to go to the police (Tara).

There is also talk of strategies that fail to respond respectfully to the victims’ experiences of and resistance to intimate violence. For instance, when women complain of feelings of intimidation and harassment, police may mitigate the perpetrator’s responsibilities by misinterpreting breaches of protection orders:

> A cop didn’t believe that the protection order had been breached because the address wasn’t the address on the protection order so totally missed the fact that actually it’s a protected person not a protected address (Marion).

When we acquiesce to our partner’s intimidation and demands because resistance is more emotionally and physically damaging, institutionalised systems responses too often mutualise domestic violence, misunderstanding subtle resistances by assuming that both parties are somehow ‘at fault’ for their part in a ‘dysfunctional’ relationship:

> A cop said it’s not a breach of a protection order because she had invited him to the house (Marion).

Some participants identified that the majority of judges are white, middle-class men, with little personal experience of the issues that they encounter in court. We also perceive a difficulty in speaking of psychological abuse, with an accompanying sense of intangible issues, which are difficult to evidence in compelling ways within the context of the current judicial environment:

> How do you evidence someone who has been controlling and manipulating and terrifying and intimidating (Marion).

> If the violence had been physical then my ex-partner would have been arrested years before (Shelley).
Rather than seeing these intangible abuses clearly represented during court hearings, several of us experience the frustrations of victim-blaming processes at play, while perpetrators deflect attention away from their actions:

- Or men can’t control their violence or the violator can’t control it and she somehow, or the victim somehow asked for it; so that if she dares disclose it to anybody then somehow she’s done something wrong by pressuring charges (Mātai)
- I’ve talked about mana, that kind of mana and that strength that sits around women who’ve experience violence because they’ve had to be strong to survive. But it’s not acknowledged socially, that strength; we’re seen as victims. Or if we’re seen as survivors there’s still a stigma and a stereotype that sits around how victims sometimes get blamed for being victims – because obviously there’s some sort of deficit that’s enabled you to be a victim (Shelley).

Tara reprises the theme of failure to respond respectfully to victims’ experiences of intimate violence and the casual institutionalisation of victim-blaming in her description of the police response to a woman reporting her rape:

- She was a pain in the arse . . . picked her up heaps of times . . . she’s mentally ill . . . she’s, you know, a prostitute . . . she was definitely considered a second class citizen and not worthy of decent respectful treatment and decent inquiry (Tara).

Need for Transformational Interventions

While ameliorative interventions aim to promote well-being, transformative interventions also address imbalances in power relationships and seek to eliminate systemic causes of oppression and marginalisation. Members of Tu Mai Awa share recognition of a need for transformational interventions that orchestrate social change:

- Systems currently kind of make it just difficult you know. They actually make it make it more difficult than easier (Peter).
- When we have stories in New Zealand about people’s resistance being honoured . . . men’s dignity being upheld because we believe that they are capable of being respectful and loving and caring and all those things and that language or those stories are starting to permeate through affidavits, and media reports . . . that would mean that we’re on the right track (Peter).
- Unless attitudes change and actually change across a really really broad social framework it’s [domestic violence] not going to change (Marion).

I see Tu Mai Awa as an opportunity to decol[onise] a whole lot of Pākehā . . . I see Tu Mai Awa as being a way to āwhi [help] our Māori colleagues in so they don’t have to be judged for their tohu [mark or qualification] (Gwen).

Foregrounding Diversity

Resistance to violence is often unspoken, marginalised, or homogenised so that representations of violence re-produce static images of those who are subjected to intimate violence. One of the goals of including research within Tu Mai Awa is to gather and disseminate multiple stories, in many voices, to thicken resistances to violence. As with our desire to affect transformational interventions, members of Tu Mai Awa also share commitment to valuing diversity in the stories of those who are closest to violent relationships, for in diversity is strength. Our different pathways, standpoints, life-stages, understandings, and experiences come together to contest totalising stereotypes of domestic violence, to help highlight the pervasiveness of
domestic violence, and to honour acts of resistance in all their many forms and contexts:

Each client and family is going to be different and they’re going to be moving at different speeds around. Some are going to be entering into violence or they’re still in violent relationships. You can have others who are trying to get out of violent relationships. You can have others that are wanting to stay in those violent relationships but make things better. And then you’ve got others that are wanting to maybe just break off altogether. So you’ve got different families working in different spaces, different paths of the awa (Reiko).

[We have] an incredibly diverse bunch of women all with very strong perspectives of what they wanted to do themselves, all with their own understandings of what their experience of violence had been to them (Shelley).

Re-Languaging

Dominant discourses that are used to describe domestic violence often conceal violence, mitigate perpetrator responsibility, conceal the resistance and responses of the victim, and sediment insidious practices of victim-blaming. Tu Mai Awa seeks to re-language those descriptions to reveal violence, to clarify and illuminate perpetrator responsibility, and to give voice to, and honour, the resistance and responses of victims.

As might be expected of discussions on Tu Mai Awa, many of us raise concerns regarding dominant representations of domestic violence in discourse. Tara describes working at a rape crisis centre, which the women involved renamed so as to reclaim and repurpose their place as a healing space (Tara, 96-98). Reiko and Shelley reflect on the power of language to mitigate the act of the perpetrator by relocating the problem of violence within individuals, moving responsibility from perpetrator to victim, and objectifying victims:

We get caught up in the language of victim, we get caught up in the language of all of the words around family violence and label them (Reiko).

It frustrates me so much watching news reports with the way language is used to describe victims of violence and to implicate them. Even well-meaning people. I’ve come across a few when I’ve approached people to want to do things for group and they’re like, “Oh, those poor women.” I feel like saying, “Well, actually you’re talking to one of them and I don’t feel like a poor woman, so hold fire on the pity” (Shelley).

Marion reflects on how responsibility for abuse is dispersed through the relationship, and the re-languaging approach that Tu Mai Awa takes in terms of change agency:

You cannot talk about an abusive relationship. A relationship cannot be abusive, you know, it’s impossible, it’s ridiculous (...).

If we change language then we start to make shifts. Some things become ridiculous to say, and their very ridiculousness . . . creates change (Marion).

We have told and heard many stories of domestic violence, each different, each specific to its storyteller. In these stories are multiple accounts of resistance, survival, struggle, and commitment to change. Through narrative analysis we have identified six themes that braid together to provide us with understandings of the experiences that have brought us together. When organised temporally, we have located storylines within our narratives that speak to our diverse experiences of involvement with, and exposure to, domestic violence and that come together in an emerging and shared awareness of political change. In the following section, we present three distinct
storylines of transformation.

**Storylines Analysis**

As socially active identity performances (Mishler, 2004), storylines were identified in the second phase of our analysis so that we could share both the themes and the plots that enable diversity to be represented among Tu Mai Awa practitioners. From our analysis, we acknowledge two distinct types of storylines: those which tell of first-hand experience of domestic violence, and those which tell of learning about domestic violence from political environments, whether through socio-political initiatives, family, or formal education. Within storylines of first-hand experience, there are two trajectories in stories of experience of domestic violence from an early age and stories of growing up in 'safe' environments only to experience domestic violence as an adult. There is a convergence in all three storylines around an emerging commitment to developing a community of change. We have observed this convergence after a process of politicisation that gives the protagonist a sense of social justice in relation to domestic violence. The three exemplars we have chosen illustrate these distinctive ways in which domestic violence is braided through the lived experiences of participants in Tu Mai Awa.

**Gwen: Keep Reaching Out**

Gwen talked of a sense of pervasiveness in the violence that she recalls from her childhood: violence towards farm animals, violence between Gwen and her brothers and their mother, violence that followed her with every relocation to a new community:

> Physical and emotional and psychological abuse are huge with my entire childhood. There was just loads of it. Loads and loads and loads of it. We moved around a lot so I would see it all the time.

Testimony in her accounts of patterns of sexualised violence in her childhood is re-enacted later in her life. As reported in relation to the theme ‘intimacy with violence’, Gwen was 22 years old, when a man broke into her house to burgle the property, and attempted to rape her at knifepoint. When the case came to court, and the offender pleaded guilty, Gwen was denied access to the courtroom:

> I was just mortified. I thought there’s no way one has to go through this . . . I just remember being so dumbfounded by that I was treated again as an outsider.

Tensions in being ‘othered’ through systemic failures reverberated through Gwen’s accounts of her treatment as a child and are exemplified in her treatment at the hands of the courts during her attacker’s trial.

Gwen’s narrative is saturated with a long-standing determination to effect change in her own situation and in her communities. As a child she pushed back, stood up for abused others, located herself in peer support leader roles, and became the one that other kids would seek out for support. Her sense of outrage at abuse around her was strong:

> I did speeches and that stuff. I was always into debating, always challenging authority.... Always standing up to teachers if I felt something was unfair. I remember I got strapped when I was 11 or 12 [for speaking out] .... Well, the only way I kind of knew how to stand up some of the time was to hit back. But yeah I was always doing that kind of stuff.

A sense of outrage at the plight of people who have had a ‘rough deal’ continued into Gwen’s adult life:

> [Victims are] on the back foot with the justice system right from the go. This innocent until proven guilty is really one sided; there is no innocence given to the victim . . . there’s no āwhi, there’s no support around them.

Her interests in helping victims of domestic violence are interwoven throughout her narrative. Gwen’s contact with social services supporting victims of violence and sexual violence has motivated her to
undertake study and work with counselling services to enhance wellbeing and outcomes for women and young people.

Shelley: Making Things Beautiful

In contrast to Gwen’s childhood experiences of intimate violence, Shelley’s narrative located her own experiences of domestic violence in her 13 year relationship with an abusive partner, living in a remote rural area. She recalled a relationship spiralling through the complexities of abusive behaviours from an intimate partner. The acts of violence and abuse against her took many insidious forms:

- A lot of the violence that I experienced wasn’t physical, that was emotional, psychological, spiritual, financial, everything except, and it was only at the very end it became physical. If the violence had been physical then my ex-partner would have been arrested years before.

Non-physical forms of abuse were devastating for Shelley, and she constantly questioned her sanity:

- For me the violence was hard to understand. You do feel like you’re mad. No one else thinks there’s anything wrong and so for 13 years you’re kind of questioning yourself the whole time.

Resistance wasn’t something that she understood or acknowledged until she left the relationship. In retrospect, it seemed impossible to recognise resistance when it felt so futile, and its outcomes ineffective:

- When I suddenly realised that I’d resisted consistently throughout that relationship. I guess personal resistance isn’t acknowledged often especially if it’s not seen to be changing the violence.

Nevertheless, she found an inner resolve. In Shelley’s recognition of her resistance, she discovered beauty, inspiration and creative freedom:

- My way of resisting was to make things beautiful; so I stencilled roses on the walls, I planted them in the garden, I bought plates for them. I just had this thing and I couldn’t understand at the time why I needed to have them around me but I think it came to represent something that couldn’t be touched - the power of the mind and the spirit to kind of still remain untouched when your body and yourself is constantly being berated and put down and made to feel less.

Unable to verbalise her experiences, Shelley exposed the complexity of her stories of abuse through art. She described a sense of ‘responsibility’ to explain her art in ways that challenged and confronted the essentialised deficits of ‘vulnerable victim/survivor’ stereotypes. Through these activities she was empowered to privilege her own standpoint and her self-constructed knowledge, rather than the standpoint of her abuser, an essential dimension in her healing process.

Finding inspiration and an emerging sense of commitment to social justice in the therapeutic effects of her own artistic endeavours, Shelley established a women’s collective where other women who had experienced violence could engage in artistic activities to acknowledge their own dignity and resistances to violence:

- What I got was an incredibly diverse bunch of women all with very strong perspectives of what they wanted to do themselves, all with their own understandings of what their experience of violence had been to them. We’re able to see outside of ourselves to understand other people’s pity, other people’s pain. Not with pity but with the desire to actually empower them and make them feel strong.

Tara: Transforming my Thinking

Unlike the first-hand experiences of Gwen and Shelley, Tara’s story is an exemplar of the stories of those of us who have learned about domestic violence from political environments. Tara described a
childhood ‘surrounded by love’, in a large family, with four generations under the same roof. Her parents were active supporters of social justice, and one of Tara’s earliest memories was of marching with her parents in 1981 in protest at the Springbok tour of Aotearoa New Zealand. Those were deeply divisive times: while rugby fans packed the football grounds, anti-tour protestors clashed with police in the surrounding streets. Tara’s experience of that protest with her parents in a small South Island township left a lasting impression on her. She described tour supporters:

> Seething rage, and yelling abuse, and throwing eggs and one landed on dad’s foot, it was really scary for me, on his boot and he looked down at me and he just said ‘don’t worry, they’re just really afraid’ and I looked up at him and it just really transformed my way of thinking about how people relate to one other.

Even so, Tara was not completely cocooned from domestic violence. She told us stories of other family members who had experienced violence and forms of abuse that she did not directly experience:

> Varying levels of violence from . . . extreme physical violence to just perhaps more of a situation. Not so much physical violence but just ongoing, sort of having to function in a very sort of patriarchal sort of social environment.

Her work in domestic violence services was also facilitated through relatives:

> Quite a lot of my aunties were involved in this little organisation . . . I really learnt so much more about the area of violence against women and how it kind of operates on so many different social levels from you know really interpersonal right out to societal level.

Tara took over coordination of the collective, and extended her skills in support and advocacy, and in liaison work with police and rural health services in communities throughout the province she lived in. Her commitment to social justice developed further during her tertiary studies, and her postgraduate studies explored experiences of intimate partner violence. She has continued her education while working. There is a thread of consistency in Tara’s orientation to working with her clients that can be traced back to her childhood:

> Upholding dignity is just so crucial . . . that for me would be the number one central guiding principle in not just the way that you work with clients but the way that you try and interact with everybody that you come into contact with and the way you think about your interactions with people and just questioning all the time is this upholding that person’s dignity.

**Convergence on Commitment**

Our storyline analysis identifies three kinds of narrative plots that participants engaged to organise their identity stories in the context of their diverse situations. Each of these storylines follows a trajectory from different encounters with domestic violence towards shared commitment to developing a community of change. Amongst those with first-hand experience of domestic violence, some have grown up in ‘at risk’ environments, whilst others have grown up in ‘safe’ environments only to experience domestic violence as an adult. Others have had no intimate experience of domestic violence in their closest relationships, even though violence in some forms has touched our lives. Despite these differences, all three storylines converge as the protagonists politicise a sense of social justice in relation to addressing domestic violence:

> Gwen: I work with family violence every day because the sexualised violence is happening within it. And again rangatahi or teenagers are actually more hurt by the responses of the whānau even than they are by the sexualised violence a lot of the
time.
Shelley: I kind of tried to set up a bit of a programme of things, experiences that I wanted them to have which would allow them to make work which would give them a voice. . . . It also acknowledged the positives, things like we are beautiful people, we are strong people, we’re here, we’re doing this.
Tara: It’s like a shared understanding of [bicultural Response Based Practice] really makes sense, this way of working with people and for people, families and whanau, individuals and communities and we really need it urgently. It’s a way of working with families and people who have experienced violence and oppression and abuse and control.

Critically important to the endpoint of each storyline within the community of Tu Mai Awa participants is their sense of the harm perpetrated by socially unjust responses to domestic violence and their dedication to responses that respect the strengths, resistances and dignity of those whose lives are affected by violence in their homes.

**Conclusion**

Whilst social problems of domestic violence have long been a focus of community and Government attention in Aotearoa New Zealand, our women continue to experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence of any women in all OECD countries. The Tu Mai Awa project team is committed to addressing this issue, by honouring the diversity of resistances to violence that are already in practice within our communities. We share an understanding that psychologising attributions and other linguistic devices are commonly used in institutional discourses to realise and maintain social power relations that sustain intimate violence in our homes. Such dominant re-presentations of violence re-produce static pathologising images of those who are subjected to intimate violence, and act to conceal violence, mitigate perpetrator responsibility, and conceal diverse strategies used to resist violence.

An interweaving of protocols, principles, and values, from Māori and Pākehā worlds, provides a framework for a sensitive and consistent approach to praxis with victims and perpetrators of violence, and to systems advocacy across the sector. This bicultural approach has helped us to maintain and honour the dignity of the diverse experiences and multiple representations of participants and provides us with a mechanism that thickens resistances to violence by promoting understandings of collaborations and experiences.

In the next phase of our research collaboration, we will extend our analysis of Tu Mai Awa members’ stories to study the specific ways in which discourse can be taken up to challenge the operations of language that support harmful social responses to intimate violence. Discourse analysis will also help identify any of the resources we are using that could be inhibiting shared commitment to re-languaging intimate violence, so as to produce more positive social responses that support safety and dignity in our homes and communities.

Much remains to be done to address social problems of domestic violence in Aotearoa New Zealand. The issue is fraught with complexities along multiple intersections of race, gender, and many other cultural and historical dimensions within our society. Addressing linkages between problems of violence and discursive practices of representation is one of many initiatives, but it is an important strategy in our efforts to construct a safer future for the most vulnerable members of our society.
References


Notes
1 Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) was signed in 1840 as an agreement between the British Crown and various Māori hapū and iwi (sub-tribal and tribal) leaders on the governance of Aotearoa. The text of Te Tiriti originally signed at Waitangi was written in te reo (Māori language). There are different English translations of the text and differences between English and Māori versions of the text. Most significantly, Māori sovereignty and authority is retained in the Māori text but ceded to the British Crown in the English versions (Network Waitangi, 2015).
2 Whānau is the core social unit for te Ao Māori (the Māori world) (Smith, 1999) and although often translated as ‘extended family’ it is more complex and dynamic than any western equivalent. In the context of Tu Mai Awa, whānau is used in a kaupapa (shared principles, purpose, agenda) sense and whanaungatanga means constituting a group “as if they are a whānau… to identify a series of rights and responsibilities, commitments and obligations, and supports that are fundamental to the collectivity. These are the tikanga (customs) of the whānau; warm interpersonal interactions, group solidarity, shared responsibility for one another, cheerful cooperation for group ends, corporate responsibility for group property, material or nonmaterial (e.g. knowledge), items and issues. These attributes can be summed up in the words aroha (love in the broadest sense, including mutuality), awhi (helpfulness), manaaki (hospitality), and tiaki (guidance) (Bishop, Ladwig & Berryman, 2014, p.189).
3 We acknowledge work done by Leland Ruwhiu and Moana Eruera to develop these principles for practice. For further discussion, see Ruwhiu (2009).

Acknowledgements
We thank the Tu Mai Awa practitioners for participating in this project and especially the kaitiaki group who have so openly included research in the ongoing work of their collaboration. We would also like to acknowledge the support of other members of the research team, particularly Maria Benschop and Jess Reedy for their input into earlier phases this study. The generous feedback of two anonymous reviewers has also helped us to strengthen our paper.

Author Biographies
Mandy Morgan is a Professor of Feminist Psychology in the School of Psychology at Massey University, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Over the last two decades she has been
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Tony Mattson is a doctoral researcher and recipient of the Vice Chancellor’s Doctoral Scholarship at Massey University. He is using feminist and postmodernist theory and Deleuzean ontological theory to critically read experiences and intervention outcomes for migrant men who have perpetrated intimate partner violence. His research interests focus on interfaces in intimate partner violence; historical, social, and cultural conditions of masculinities; and the use of ethical activism in social research to challenge assumptions and discourses that nourish unjust social, political, and economic structures.
Residential mobility, or the movement of people within and between communities and larger geographic regions, is an important consideration for organizing, maintaining, and running communities and services. Residential mobility is often identified through population-based measures of mobility, such as “place of residence five years earlier” taken from the Census and other databases. While such population measures of residential mobility are useful for some aspects of planning, they need to be contextualized with community and individual evidence if we are to make sense of why people move and the effects of this. Bridging these two levels (i.e., the population level and the community and individual level) has been problematic. Community psychologists need to be aware of when, how and where people move and the complexities in understanding population movement for their research and community and individual intervention.

The aim of this paper is to examine one area of residential mobility for which the community and individual contexts are vital—Indigenous communities in remote Australia—and illustrate how misinterpretations have occurred. In this paper, we refer to mobility, or residential mobility, in terms of movement of people between current communities, cities, or regions of Australia for periods that are longer than, for example, a holiday. In our consideration of mobility, we do not include ‘permanent’ residential movement such as when completely moving out of one house or community to move to another.

In the remote regions of Australia, this kind of mobility is important for several reasons in the organizing, maintaining, and running of communities and services, both traditionally and in the present (Guerin & Guerin, 2008). Providing services in remote locations is difficult without knowing the mobility patterns of residents. Developing wealth and a remote economy also relies on knowing where people are in remote locations and what resources they need.

Efforts to move people from remote regions into towns or cities for education and employment assumes that this is a solution to a range of issues, but the success is at least partially dependent on where people move
and why they might want to move, so education and employment are available in the right places. Finally, residential mobility will always be a vital part of adapting to life in remote regions because both people and resources are scarce, dispersed, and unique (Stafford Smith, 2008). In remote communities, almost all forms of obtaining resources and sharing social relationships require this kind of residential mobility, unlike living in urban areas.

Dominant non-Indigenous discourse about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is that they are, in general, a highly mobile group. Take, for example, the popular image and discourse of Aboriginal Australians having an “essential” need to go “walkabout”. Interestingly, this same essentialised discourse is not attributed to those service providers and government officials in remote Australia who “have a high rate of turnover” (Haslam McKenzie, 2007; Lea, 2008). Two different groups and two forms of high mobility: one moving often and returning to regular spaces, and the other moving in for a year or two and then moving out, usually permanently. In the dominant non-Indigenous discourses, one is

![Figure 1. Four “seeming” contradictions in Indigenous mobility discourses: they are not really contradictions but appear so when contextual detail has been lost or ignored through generalization.](image-url)
seen as problematic and one as essential and helpful.

In this paper we first review briefly the literature on the issues of mobility in remote regions, and then present some observations of our own from field work in different locations. Overall, the details of mobility are not yet well understood by service providers and policy makers, and a lack of attention to the contexts for mobility has led both to contradictions in public discourse and to simplistic policy development. For example, while the two events in the previous paragraph are both forms of “mobility”, the contexts and discourses around each are very different. We suggest research directions and how to incorporate context in descriptions and policies surrounding mobility in remote Australia.

To do this, we review the literature around four “seeming” contradictions in the discourses (shown in Figure 1). We review evidence for these and show why they only arise because contexts are ignored, and show how they have led to simplistic policies.

The final introductory note about mobility is to point out that in a broader sense, large numbers of Indigenous Australians were forcibly removed from their Country, communities and families as part of Government policies. Many live away from their Country but have reconnected with it, bringing about more mobility due to poor policy. We address later in this paper that these peoples, and those who live away for reasons of employment and education, still need to be considered when making policies based on the ‘size’ of any community. This history of forced mobility needs to be remembered in any contextual analyses.

**Mobility Findings from the Literature**

While the topic of mobility in remote regions has always been important, there is only a small amount of literature directly related to the topic. Our main aim is to review this material but along the way we will show how the four contradictions of Figure 1 arise, and show that they only seem contradictions because the contexts have been left out and simplified generalisations substituted.

Warchivker, Tjapangati and Wakerman (2000) examined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enumeration from censuses and other data collection. To represent the results appropriately, they considered at least four groups—community residents, dual community residents, visitors, and absent residents—rather than a static “number of residents”. Presenting both the community population and the “potential population” was important since 35% of the community at any time was moving or travelling between communities, illustrating the extent of mobility.

Biddle and Hunter (2005) explored demographic data for mobility emphasizing that high mobility was family- rather than labour- driven (also see Kinfu, 2005; Taylor & Bell, 2004; Taylor & Biddle, 2008). That is, people were mainly moving for family reasons such as social visits, illness, births or deaths, and not for short- or long-term employment. These authors also pointed out the first of our contradictions shown in Figure 1. Some policy analysts say that to reduce disparities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians the former must reduce their mobility so that services can be provided at fixed and stable locations, while others say that they must increase mobility and move to where services are provided.

Long and Memmott (2007) asked Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about their travel and trips over a period in one of the only studies of this kind (cf. Musharbash, 2008; Young & Doohan, 1989). They found that there were many short-term social visits, some of which they could classify as “temporary visitations” (Prout, 2008a). Apart from the social visits, travel was used mainly for school and school holidays, ceremonies, sporting events, seasonal bush products, seasonal work, and avoidance of weather. These authors also point out the second of four contradictions in Figure 1. Despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ strong and stable attachment to their land and Country, they also move away from it frequently (aside
from complications around displacement and whether people are living on ‘their’ country).

This “contradiction” also relates to difficulties that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have when moving away to a city for education and employment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been described as being highly resistant to moving away from their families and land (Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Muspratt, 2004; Downs, 2002; Sommerlad, 1976; Storry, 2007). At the same time, however, these same people have always been mobile and spent much time away from their families and land.

Regarding services related to mobility, Long and Memmott (2007) point out that discussions of “service provision” usually only include medical services, Centre Link services, and banking. But, they argue, if we include social and emotional support and caring associated with health, then the homelands are a rich source of service provision. They found that those services most travelled to were, in order of importance: recreation and sport, shopping and stores, employment and training, traditional country, health services, educational services, police and court, housing and accommodation services, aged care and funerals, and transport and road services. Likewise, the visits made, in order of importance for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants were: social, recreation and sport, hunting and bush resources, shopping and store, employment and training, looking after traditional country, and accessing health services. Clearly, these lists emphasise the importance of social visits and the reliance on mobility for accessing resources. Put in terms of the second “contradiction”, people do move away from Country frequently but mostly to other related Country for community events.

Peterson (2000, 2004) presented some different aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ mobility. First, he reviewed the story of the “walkabout” and showed that, far from being an inner urge to move about, there were strong social origins. In particular, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working on pastoral properties were not given leave or time off. Ceremonies, and events such as funerals and Family Business, required leaving the properties and failure to attend would adversely affect family relationships. Therefore, when workplaces do not provide the opportunities to attend to essential family commitments, people may leave work and take whatever punishment ensued, since Family Business is essential.

The main point we can learn from this is that once again, Family Business often takes precedence over employment issues (cf. Beckett, 1988). This shows the third contradiction of Figure 1, that many are distressed if they are away from Country but that they often travel away. The solution is to include the context. In some contexts, especially vital community events, people wish to be with family and community and may get distressed if they cannot. However, moving to other Country for Family Business is common and requires spending time away. When contextual details are considered, which requires different research methods (Guerin, Leugi & Thain, 2018), there is no contradiction; only different circumstances.

The second point Peterson (2000, 2004) made was to suggest that some ceremonies have now been revitalized or enlarged through the role of the 4WD (also see Fogarty, 2005). He documented some ceremonies in which those participating travelled further than probably ever before by using 4WD vehicles. His broad point was that not all modernization destroys traditional rituals and there were cases in which modernization could improve traditional ways and allow them to be more socially inclusive.

There has been some criticism and discussion about the “trucking” and 4WD issues, mainly about the lack of contextual detail (Lea, 2006; Redmond, 2006). For example, some authors have pointed out that it is not just the presence of 4WDs that have increased the scope of some ceremonies, but also the road and other infrastructures (cf. Helps et al., 2008). These came about through other means, however, related to
A review of Australian Indigenous mobility

Lea (2006) added several other important points about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility. Her work in Darwin showed that those who were mobile were often labelled as “itinerants” by police and others, and that there were strategic Council plans about how to keep these people moving or how to send them back to their communities. Lea suggests the term “voluntary outdoor” as more accurate and less judgemental than “itinerants”. She also raised the point we mentioned earlier about professionals and service providers moving frequently, with about 25% listed in the Census reporting not having been resident five years ago.

According to Lea (2006; and Prout, 2008b), the real issue with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility is that those who are highly mobile are difficult for government service providers to code: “Modern day officials now worry about how to keep track of people who have scant regard for fixed addresses” (p. 44). The ‘problems’ of mobility are really about the problems services and organisations have of managing people and helping the rapidly changing professionals who are trying to find them:

_The nomad is not necessarily one who moves: some voyages take place in situ, are trips in intensity. Even historically, nomads are not necessarily those who move about like migrants. On the contrary, they do not move; nomads, they nevertheless stay in the same place and continually evade the codes of settled people (Deleuze, 1985, p. 149)_

This reflects a common view, therefore, that understanding mobility is mostly about providing better services in remote regions. This relates to our fourth contradiction in Figure 1: that (1) service delivery in remote areas is complex because people are entrenched in their communities and difficult to reach, but (2) that at the same time the people are rapidly moving around and cannot be reached and service providers complain that they are not there. We will show further examples of this later.

**Mobility and Context**

Through this brief review of literature one key point to arise is that just talking about “mobility” does not tell us very much, since the context and detail is all important in understanding what to do about mobility, if anything. Lea (2006) illustrates this well by outlining a paper by Brady (1999) in which one representation or generalization of mobility was replaced by another when more context was added. In the original case, the movements of people in the Ooldea/Yalata communities were tracked and interpretations made of the patterns in terms of traditional movements for Family Business. Brady (1999), however, re-examined the context and found that the patterns of movement were originally instigated through the “Aboriginal Protector” by strategically placing ration areas in specific locations. This was done in order to prevent the community moving northwards through radioactive wastelands around Maralinga. The circular pattern of movement was therefore not traditional in any sense but in fact was created. This only applies to this example, however, and we have already seen...
lots of evidence that movements for Family Business are very traditional and long-standing practices.

In what we have reviewed already, therefore, the point is that “mobility”, as a raw measurement of the numbers of people moving from X to Y, does not provide us with any real understanding. It is no use talking about “mobility” in the absence of the context for particular cases. Indeed, mobility can be framed as a ‘good thing’ or a ‘bad thing’ depending upon how it is presented in context and the four “seeming” contradictions result from over-simplifications. Awareness of how this framing can be used to suit the needs and purposes of non-Indigenous institutions and services is critical, as is how over-simplifications can creep into policy when it suits the policy makers.

Three other considerations have been found to be important for the contextualisation of mobility. First, while some authors classify visits into a single form of “social” visitation or “family” visitation, the purposes and contexts of family visits for Indigenous Australians are highly varied and not usually singular. They are frequent and important but also diverse. Categorising them together without any context of this diversity leads to further problems in discourses about mobility. We can see this if we note that the discourses about an Indigenous “need to go walkabout” has in some ways been simply replaced in current academic writing and common discourses by an Indigenous “need to visit family”, which is too often now taken as an ‘essential’ given and therefore used simultaneously both as a descriptive category and as an explanation. Family visits are certainly important but this is not from an in-built drive or need but is dependent upon a lot of subtle community contexts which are essential. Understanding these complex contexts of social visits is therefore crucial to understanding mobility and building policies around mobility (e.g., the examples in Musharbash, 2008).

Second, it is also important that while short-term “visits” are frequently discussed, there is less in the literature about mobility as a longer-term “drift” to urban areas. For example, in South Australia in 1957 one in 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in Adelaide; in 1966 this was 1 in 4; in 1996 it was 1 in 3; and in 2001 it was about 1 in 2. While it is not clear how much the more recent figures reflect different population growth rates between urban and non-urban areas, the overall shift is dramatic regardless of social visits (Taylor & Bell, 2004). Overall, most literature relates to short-term visits in remote regions and much less on remote community visits to urban regions and longer-term “urban drift”. There is also little known about social visits to remote communities by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are primarily resident in urban areas; an area of Indigenous mobility that desperately needs more research. Finally, as mentioned earlier, much of this urban-remote mobility has arisen because of divisive government policies in the past of forcibly removing people from their families and communities and placing them in institutions or in non-Indigenous homes.

The last summary point about context and mobility is that the four “seeming” contradictions of Figure 1 arise at least partly because the word ‘mobility’ is used without specifying contextual details. In each case of a seeming contradiction raised in this paper, the use of the same word “mobility” has very different contexts, details, and associated stories, and there are essentially no contradictions. For example, what is sometimes called the “homesickness” of those boarding away from family and Country (English & Guerin, 2017), contradicts the high mobility of these groups who voluntarily spend a lot of time away from family and Country. However, the contexts for trips that lead to “homesickness” (such as to board in the city) are very different to those for other trips. The problem is that none of this is identified when generalizations are made (see more contextual details of this issue in Guerin, 2018; Pertl & Guerin, 2018).
The important point we wish to make from this is that much of our understanding of mobility has been poorly based on generalizations that have lost all their context and these have resulted in inappropriate strategies and policies. Greater focus and attention on the complex details of the contexts of mobility will advance our efforts to reduce disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, at least as these disparities relate to mobility.

**Mobility and Context in Remote Australia**

We have suggested that the specific contexts of mobility are critically important when considering mobility in remote regions. Special ways of thinking are required in these contexts, especially when developing policy (cf. Morphy, 2007).

We wish to illustrate this next through a comparison between the use of statistics and the data collected for mobility. When dealing with large numbers in statistics, assumptions (i.e., loss of contextual detail) are made about the shape of the population distribution, for example, and then an array of techniques can be carried out to make inferences (inferential statistics) within a range of probabilities. Some of these properties are shown in Figure 2. When numbers are slightly smaller, or the distributions violate the population

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**Figure 2.** Analogy between large and small population-based evidence for research methods and for mobility policy

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**Mobility and Context in Remote Australia**

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distribution characteristics, other forms of inference can sometimes still be used (non-parametric statistics), sometimes with special weightings (again, loss of context). However, when samples are small, inferences cannot be made from quantitative measurements. In such cases of research, we use other methods for making inferences (often now referred to as ‘qualitative’ methods) in which more intensive, contextual detail is included. For example, interviewing, focus groups, case studies, or ethnographic methods can be used with different properties (Guerin et al., 2018). Our point from this analogy, then, is that because remote populations are small, low diversity, unique in many cases, and dispersed (Stafford Smith, 2008), we must research with more context-rich descriptive methods (Musharbash, 2008; Prout, 2008a, 2008b).

Additionally, this reasoning about statistical inferences can be applied to policy inferences around mobility. For example, considering gross “employment” figures for developing a service delivery policy is justified when using data for policies about annual mobility between Melbourne and Sydney or about trans-Tasman mobility. This depends, however, on assumptions of large numbers of diverse people and a large number of services and service providers in those places.

If, on the other hand, we were looking only at mobility between Oodnadatta and Coober Pedy, we would need much more specific and contextual information to plan accordingly, since there would, perhaps, only be a handful of people moving in any period, a small number of jobs, and a very small number of employment services. If five people were to move from Oodnadatta to Coober Pedy then we may not want to advocate opening a new government employment office but would need to consider more intense, localized, context-driven “policy” focusing on those five people. It is no use trying to infer from population-driven employment data a plan of how to get those five people into jobs. This would only produce policies of the form of: the country is short of skilled hairdressers so three of those five in Coober Pedy should be re-skilled in hairdressing. If we want to help these particular five people get jobs, then we need to work directly with them in a much more context-rich and dedicated way (qualitative or context-based policy). Our Australia-wide, population-driven employment policies are of limited use in sparse regions and will likely hinder any efforts, despite their usefulness in large urban settings.

Population-based policy is acceptable where there are large populations, high diversity and many services available, but where there are small populations, with low diversity and dispersion, and only one or a few services, then a contextual approach to research, policy and services is needed.

Other Points about Mobility from Our Research and Experience

Having focused mainly on the four seeming contradictions in this literature and in the policies produced, there are three further important points about mobility that have arisen from our research and experience in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand that have been missed in the literatures on mobility. These are the differences between family- and employment-driven mobility, the influences of racism and discrimination, and the spiritual elements of place and its influence.

Family- and employment-driven mobility differ in many ways. When context is considered, there are many details in which the properties of family visits differ significantly from labour-driven mobility, although all of the visits are typically lumped together as “mobility”. Treating the two as slight variations of each other, especially when employing population-based measurements, is very misleading.

Mobility for employment usually means a long stay, in terms of years (except for seasonal employment). Family relationships, on the other hand, wax and wane, and vary dramatically in complex ways depending upon the relationships (Guerin & Guerin, 2008; Long & Memmott, 2007; Musharbash, 2008). Family visits are sometimes for money or food resources,
sometimes for annual Family Business, but often for other reasons as well. Labour-driven mobility, on the other hand, is narrower and centres only on earning money, and often family are sometimes even left behind for labour mobility (Guerin & Guerin, 2009). Finally, family visits are varied. In a study of visits in Alice Springs town camps, Foster, Mitchell, Ulrik and Williams (2005) found that not all family visits were welcome, and they were sometimes avoided. For example, this was often when non-relatives were brought along with family visitors. Indigenous family relationships are very complex and idiosyncratic and it is beyond the scope of this paper to review all this material, but the complexities need to be known before engaging in policy making.

Policy based on populations often determines the demand or markets for employment, health, or other social services. However, the “demand” or “market” for family visits does not have the same characteristics of the labour market that drives employment-mobility—it is inelastic, for example, unlike the labour demand. Once again, the inference from these differences is that much more context is needed when talking about socially-driven mobility.

**Racism or social exclusion is rarely investigated in mobility discourses.** A second point is that racism is commonly involved in mobility, or lack of mobility, but is rarely considered in the literature. It is rarely suggested as a reason for moving, and studies rarely ask people for their reasons for not moving. In principle, one might think that increased mobility leads to increased opportunities to see, meet or interact with new people, whether for good or bad, but in the only data for this, Peterson (2000, 2004) wrote that the mobility enhanced by the use of 4WDs did not impinge on the wider society—the people kept within their families or groups of communities. If racism or discrimination is expected then this could be a major reason both for avoiding mainstream society during mobility, and for not moving around at all.

We have had many indications from our participatory research and informal discussions with Aboriginal people that there is a direct impact of racism, discrimination, and social exclusion on their mobility or lack of mobility (cf. Williams, Thorpe & Chapman, 2003). Some have described not wanting to visit Adelaide or larger towns because of the racist or discriminating treatment they have received in the past. It is not only that some people do not wish to travel to urban centres for jobs or education because they get “homesick” for their family, but also because they may receive racist treatment. One Aboriginal male explained to us that he would have liked to have done more training in his field but that he disliked sitting in rooms with non-Indigenous people because “after all these years I still can’t look the white man in the face and sit still”. He elaborated that he would be anxious and would avoid attending classes if he went to the city for further training. In this case, he avoided mobility not because he could not bear to leave his Country, but because he was likely to experience discrimination and social exclusion and not even finish these training opportunities.

The authors have also had many personal experiences where Aboriginal people have wanted to visit Adelaide but were not able to stay with family or in safe caravan parks and hostels. In these cases, they were unwilling to travel and stay in generic or mainstream accommodation, again for reasons of discrimination (see more in Guerin & Guerin, 2008).

These few examples do not prove a case for racism as a major determinant of Aboriginal mobility or lack of mobility. We do not know the particulars, or how widespread this is, even if we are convinced that racism and social exclusion are one determinant of mobility (or lack of) for many Aboriginal people. More future research needs to include questioning relating to the consequences for mobility and how mobility is thereby affected. Some literature refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people preferring to keep to themselves or to their own groups when outside their home areas, but we do not know the contexts in which this is actively wanting to be together or
actively avoiding interactions with the (predominantly non-Indigenous) strangers in the wider society (Guerin & Guerin, 2008). However, at least some reports of “missing family when away” may be hidden cases of avoiding discrimination (cf. Pertl & Guerin, 2018). More research needs to be done on this issue to tease out the different cases and contexts involved. **Community settlement or spiritual hub?** Finally, our research suggests that the community itself is viewed as the core of the wider group by the people in the community, at least in some remote Aboriginal communities. This means that while mobility might look to outsiders as moving away from community to visit other families, it might be viewed by participants as moving within the community. This is shown in Figure 3. The contextual distinction that is important here is between living on Country versus having strong attachment to Country but living elsewhere (Trzepacz, Guerin & Thomas, 2014).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, our studies with Māori colleagues suggested that people from their communities (Marae) accepted that people needed to move for education and employment (e.g., Butterworth, 1991) and the people therefore spent time developing community and family strategies to deal with this (see examples in Guerin, Nikora & Rua, 2006; Nikora, Guerin, Rua & TeAwekotuku, 2004; Nikora, Rua, TeAwekotuku, Guerin &
McCaughey, 2008; Teddy, Nikora & Guerin, 2008). There was an accepted reality that mobility was necessary but this was accompanied by strategies to keep the community involved in the Marae—even if not residents.

In particular, for the present discussion, the Aotearoa/New Zealand studies found that the traditional lands were a *spiritual hub* for the community, even though most people lived elsewhere and were accepted to be living elsewhere (up to a point). Traditional lands were not realistically seen as a place where everyone should try and live. The real push, therefore, was to get those living away from the lands to be as involved as possible to keep the community sustainable, rather than trying to get them to live there on a permanent basis to satisfy government criteria of mobility and place. This, at the minimum, meant that everyone was expected to attend weddings, funerals, major decision-making events, sports events, and other entertainment events—whether they lived there or not. This involved a type of mobility not discussed in the Australian Indigenous mobility literature—that of community members living elsewhere who frequently travel back to their Country (spiritual hub) to attend events and Family Business.

More research is needed to explore the relationships that non-residents have with their traditional lands in Australia. In particular, as mentioned at the start of this paper, we must also recognize that many Indigenous Australians were forcibly removed from their Country, communities, and families and this means people may be living away but still connecting with their Country.

This way of thinking about mobility and remote communities and homelands (Myers & Peterson, 2016) has important implications, particularly in terms of sustainability and importance. For example, sustainability of remote homelands does not only relate to how many people live there, it also relates to the influence of all members of the community no matter where they live (Guerin & Guerin, 2010). This line of thinking opens up a range of questions that could be asked about the importance of a community and its mobility. For example, how many people participate in community events or how many people are involved in the community over longer periods, such as a year? Another important question is how many people want to be buried there or to retire there in later years?

In the Australian context, there have been calls to shut down small remote communities (Guerin & Guerin, 2010; Kennedy, 2013). Our discussion suggests that this line of thinking is problematic and potentially negatively impacts on a much larger *demonstrable* community who are not, however, normally resident. Census and other enumeration strategies therefore underestimate the importance of the wider community and the impacts that community changes can have on a much larger group of people. This is very different to how non-Indigenous Australians think typically about family, community, residence and mobility, but for Indigenous communities this is very real.

There are a number of implications of this line of thinking for future research and community action. For example: (1) what strategies can a community employ to involve all the relevant community whether they live there or not; (2) how can this larger community be measured more accurately; (3) how can these data be used for a range of purposes such as provision of resources or policy decisions? (4) how can we rethink “mobility” to include the typical contexts for Indigenous people moving around?

**Conclusions**

Overall, more context is needed in research of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility. We have suggested that the term “mobility” is essentially meaningless unless more is said about the form and the contexts of mobility. Removing the context has led to fictitious contradictions in the discourses, such as “How can they say they want to be on Country when they spend so much time moving around off Country?” These contradictions have led to contradictory solutions such as requiring that people either stay in one place for some issues (such as access to services) or
requiring them to move for others (such as education or employment).

These seeming contradictions are vacuous because they lack descriptions of any context. Enhancing the discussions with more contextual details would contribute to far better solutions and policies, and better-informed public debate and commentaries. Another consideration is that the contradictions have racist elements in and of themselves and may serve to require services and organizations to do less while the burden is placed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to do more. Different sides of the contradictions can be used to sway policies in different directions, when what is really happening is that all context has been ignored.

Another issue we have raised relates to the overly simplified perception that much Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility relates solely to visiting family rather than being mobile for employment. This oversimplification also suffers from lack of context; the reality of people’s lives are much more complex and intricate than this. The “demand” for labour is nothing like the “demand” for family; family visits have multiple purposes; and family relationships are fluid and complex. This complexity needs more research and consideration when developing policies.

The two most important points for future research, however, relate to the concerns around conceptualizing mobility for policy and mobility and racism. Lea (2006) discussed how much of the concern surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility relates to difficulties that high mobility can make in terms of service provision. However, the scope of “services” is usually limited in such discussions to Western bureaucratic interventions (Long & Memmott, 2007). We have added to the discussions by Lea (2006) the importance of providing more context when discussing mobility. We suggest that with small populations, highly varied populations, and highly dispersed populations, new qualitative forms of policy evidence will be needed that obtain and retain the special contextual details of mobility, rather than basing policy on simplified patterns usually found with large populations. Such conditions are perfectly characterised in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations and remote Australia more generally, especially when high mobility is considered. If policies for these populations are to be evidence-based, then the form of evidence cannot just be population statistics—methods incorporating more local context are required.

To govern in situations that have the properties of being small, varied, and dispersed, a detailed and case-by-case approach will be needed, and policy will be more tailored because it will not be abstracted or generalisable to other groups. Innovative solutions will be required from innovative policy groups. If not, policy will continue to be developed on the basis of simplifications and generalizations based on population-level “evidence” devoid of contextual descriptions. In social science research this would not be acceptable, and qualitative methods would now be required to provide the evidence-base. This should also apply to policy development.

The second main new issue we have raised here is that future research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mobility needs to look more closely at the role of social exclusion in decisions to move or not move. We raised this issue from personal and research experience with several examples when it seemed that travel was carried out or was avoided on the basis of treatment typically given when in “wider society”. This factor is often overlooked in research.

Finally, while we have not explicitly addressed the point in this paper because of the need for more research, there are implications for how services might be managed (rather than “delivered”) to remote communities. Certainly, it will be obvious that treating service delivery within a population-based policy framework will not work, and contextual details are needed for individual cases. Depending upon the circumstances, there are contexts in which mobility can hinder service delivery and contexts in which mobility can facilitate service delivery. We now need to know more
about those various conditions in order to develop context-based policies.

References


Acknowledgements
We wish to acknowledge the University of South Australia, Flinders University of South Australia, and the Core Project 4 team from Desert Knowledge CRC for their different forms of support. Thanks to Kurt Seemann for talks and encouragement, and to Linda Waimarie Nikora and Mohi Rua for discussions when living in New Zealand. We also thank various community members for discussions although they are not named for reasons of confidentiality. This work was partly funded through grants from the Australian Research Council (ARC DP0877901) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS G07/7290).

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Efficacy as a predictor of bystander anti-racism in support of Indigenous Australians

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Racial discrimination detrimentally affects the mental and physical health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. Bystander anti-racism is positive action undertaken by a witness of a racist event in support of the victim of such discrimination. The present study investigated the predictive utility of dispositional efficacy compared with situational efficacy in anticipating the likelihood of bystander anti-racist action. Participants were 156 non-Indigenous Australians (50% female) aged from 18-89 recruited to complete an anonymous survey using Qualtrics. The dependent measure was a hypothetical bystander anti-racism scenario. There were three independent variables: a dispositional efficacy scale and two situational efficacy scales - bystander intervention opportunity (measuring perceived ability to act in a situation of racism) and bystander proactive opportunity (measuring proactive engagement with Indigenous Australians or issues). Results indicated that dispositional efficacy did not correlate with bystander action nor did it predict bystander anti-racism in a multiple regression. Bystander proactive opportunity correlated with bystander anti-racism but did not predict it. Bystander intervention opportunity was the strongest predictor in the correlation analysis and the regression analysis. This novel research highlights the need to include efficacy in bystander education and training programs within the community to reduce the prevalence of racism in Australian society.

Since colonisation, Indigenous Australians have been subject to considerable cultural dislocation, unjust government policies, and displacement resulting in historical trauma (Paradies, 2016a). One consequence of colonisation is racism towards Indigenous Australians by non-Indigenous Australians (Augoustinos, Tuffin & Rapley, 1999). Among other reasons, this has perpetuated a contentious relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Augoustinos et al., 1999). As a minority group, they continue to face considerable inequality. Government initiatives like the “Closing the Gap” program (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2013) aim to equalise Indigenous Australians with their non-Indigenous counterparts with respect to health, education, and employment. However, there are still significant discrepancies with Indigenous Australians more likely to suffer from high psychological stress (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2010a) and experience long-term health issues (ABS, 2013) as well as greater educational disadvantage (ABS, 2016) compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Racism can be defined in a variety of different ways. However, for the purposes of this article, we define racist attitudes as being beliefs and prejudices that act to maintain social stratification and an unequal division of social power (Russell, Pennay, Webster, & Paradies, 2013). We define racial discrimination as being unjust behavioural actions, both overt and subtle, towards
individuals who identify as part of a minority racial group (Butrus & Witenburg, 2013). Research suggests that systemic issues exist due to the racially-based treatment of Indigenous Australians by non-Indigenous Australians. This embedded racism (both attitudinal and behavioural) is a major factor that continues to contribute to the inequality and related inequity of Indigenous Australians (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2016; Tilbury, 2009).

Since 1975, when unjust treatment of an individual based on race became unlawful after the introduction of the Racial Discrimination Act (Commonwealth, 1975), racial discrimination has been more commonly expressed in a covert manner (Lentin, 2017). Casual racism is one form of covert racism. Casual racism refers to utterances such as jokes and comments based on negative stereotypes or beliefs about a particular race (Essed, 1991; also see Soutphommasane, 2015). Identifying and addressing casual racism can be difficult due to the desire to abide by social norms and ignore or dismiss the act as humorous or not worthy of intervention (Soutphommasane, 2015). An example of casual racism in Australia that became nationwide news was when a sporting fan called Adam Goodes, an Indigenous football player, an “ape” (Sheehan, 2015); many Australians did not recognise that this was racism. Modern racism relates to the belief that Indigenous Australians no longer experience racism as well as feelings of resentment towards Indigenous Australians who are perceived to receive special treatment (Pedersen, Dudgeon, Watt, & Griffiths, 2006).

Racism is prevalent in Australia with 25-27% of Indigenous Australians regularly experiencing instances of racial discrimination (ABS, 2010a; also see, Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2011; Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan, & Taouk, 2009). Although these figures do not distinguish between overt and covert racism, they highlight the substantial existence of racial discrimination towards Indigenous Australians in society. The effects of this discrimination can be seen in a variety of domains. Experiences of racism can result in poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Ferdinand, Paradies, & Kelaher, 2015; Paradies et al., 2009). From a community perspective, racial discrimination towards Indigenous Australians is associated with greater anxiety, stress, substance use, and binge drinking (ABS, 2010a; Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008; Paradies et al., 2015). The Elder’s Report (Gooda et al., 2014) highlights first-hand accounts of difficulties with self-harm and suicide in communities with female and male Indigenous youth suicide rates four and five times higher than non-Indigenous Australians. Strikingly, across all ages, the suicide rates of both male and female Indigenous Australians are twice that of non-Indigenous Australians (ABS, 2010b). Considering these rates, the severity of the impact of racism on Indigenous Australians’ mental and physical health requires attention. Indeed, research indicates that racism can make the victim, the perpetrator, and the community sick (Paradies, 2016b).

Whilst there is a movement towards constitutional reform to address race-based discrimination (Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, 2017), and there are private campaigns working towards highlighting the effects of racism (see Beyond Blue, 2014), a movement towards a less racially discriminative society is needed to improve the physical, social, and psychological well-being of Indigenous Australians. Helping others during an instance of racism is beneficial for both the helper and the recipient (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). In terms of creating a less racist society, bystanders who challenge racist perpetrators may alter the prejudicial beliefs of the perpetrator (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). Considering the benefits of participating in bystander action, further research into this area may promote a more equitable and less racially discriminative society.

Bystander Anti-Racism

One potential way to help alleviate the problems experienced by Indigenous
Australians is by taking action as a bystander when witnessing racial discrimination. With respect to bystander anti-racism, a bystander is defined as an individual present when a case of racial discrimination against another member of the public occurs (Nelson, Dunn, & Paradies, 2011). Bystander anti-racism is the action undertaken by the witness of a racist event to speak out, intervene, or engage others in order to minimise the impact of the event on the victim (Nelson et al., 2010). Czopp and Monteith (2003) found that acts of confrontation were successful in eliciting negative feelings of guilt and self-criticism in the racist perpetrator. Additionally, Monteith (1993) found that these negative feelings can act to suppress additional future prejudicial responses. With these positive effects in mind, efforts aimed at predicting bystander action and ultimately empowering bystanders to take anti-racist action are central to advancing the bystander intervention literature (Nelson et al., 2010).

However, not everybody will take bystander action when they witness racism. As found by Stewart, Pedersen, and Paradies (2014), one reason people may not intervene is because they feel that any action on their part would be ineffective. This could well be linked to feelings of efficacy (Nelson et al., 2011); something that has not been investigated quantitatively in the bystander anti-racism literature to date.

**Efficacy as a Predictor of Bystander Anti-Racism**

Both dispositional efficacy and bystander efficacy have been highlighted in the prevention of sexual violence literature to predict bystander intervention and to measure the success of bystander training programs. However, these programs are yet to be directly compared. Dispositional efficacy is a personality trait-like dimension that is measured by one’s self-belief in the ability to perform and succeed at a range of tasks (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). High dispositional efficacy relates to an individual’s increased ability to attempt new and difficult tasks (Burke & Stets, 2009). Although not studied in relation to anti-racism, high levels of dispositional efficacy have been previously linked with prosocial bystander helping behaviours related to high school bullying (Tsang, Hui, & Law, 2011) and sexual violence (Banyard, 2008). The investigation of dispositional efficacy relating to bystander anti-racist intention to act in Australia is yet to be explored.

Situational bystander efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in his or her ability to intervene as a bystander and induce positive change from the perspective of the target (Banyard, Moynihan, Cares, & Warner, 2014). As stated by Bandura (2006), generalised self-efficacy must be conceptualised as distinct to the functioning of an individual in a specific situation. Bystander efficacy has been studied in relation to the effectiveness of college anti-sexual assault bystander training programs (McMahon, Postmus, & Koenick, 2011). Individuals who attended such programs reported higher levels of bystander efficacy and consequently increased bystander action (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007). To date, this construct has not been studied in an Australian racial context; thus, it may provide insight to inform the development of future bystander anti-racist intervention programs.

There are two aspects of situational bystander efficacy as found by McMahon et al. (2014). The first is bystander intervention opportunity; this refers to one’s perceived ability to act in a situation of racism (e.g., confronting a friend who is being derogatory towards Indigenous Australians). The second is bystander proactive opportunity which refers to one’s engagement in gaining knowledge and understanding about the target groups. For example, to learn more about Indigenous Australians and their culture, people may attend a protest in support of Indigenous rights or visit their local Aboriginal cultural centre. Together, both constructs aim to provide insight into an individual’s ability to engage in an act of bystander anti-racism whilst also acknowledging the person’s level of engagement with Indigenous Australian culture and awareness of the unique issues Indigenous Australians face.
The Present Study

Bystander anti-racism is a small but growing area of study. To our knowledge, no research compares dispositional efficacy to specific forms of efficacy as a predictor of bystander anti-racism behaviours. Modelled on previous bystander research conducted by Pedersen, Paradies, Hartley, and Dunn (2011), the present study will contribute to the literature by investigating whether efficacy is a predictor of bystander anti-racist intention to act. Due to ethical reasons associated with placing individuals as bystanders in experimental racist situations, most bystander research measures bystander intention to act rather than action itself (Banyard et al., 2007; Neto & Pedersen, 2013). The present study adopts this approach to measure the relationship between the independent variables - dispositional efficacy and the two types of situational bystander efficacy (proactive opportunity and intervention opportunity) - and the dependent variable - the likelihood of bystander action using a “modern” example of everyday racism.

With the aim of promoting social change and situating the research in context, the present study was cross-sectional in design and based on the research conventions of community psychology (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). As the research was primarily interested in assessing participant attitudes, self-report measures using Likert-type scale item responses were used. From a theoretical perspective, the present research has the potential to advance the bystander anti-racism literature. From a pragmatic perspective, this research may potentially inform and guide the creation and implementation of anti-racist bystander action intervention programs that work towards reducing racial discrimination towards Indigenous Australians in society (Russell et al., 2013). The potential practical implications of the present study are in line with community psychology; this highlights the need for social action rather than simply talk (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996).

Similar to the Pedersen et al. (2011) research, participants in the present study responded to a hypothetical low-risk scenario of racism (everyday racism) involving a group of colleagues and a group of Indigenous Australians from an Indigenous rights organisation. Using this scenario as a catalyst to measure potential bystander action, the study was an exploratory investigation into the relative predictive power of dispositional and situational efficacy in predicting the likelihood of bystander anti-racism.

We used a post-positivist approach. We acknowledge, as argued by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), that “what we notice and observe is affected by our background knowledge, theories, and experiences; in short, observation is not a perfect and direct window into ‘reality’” (p. 16). These authors further point out that researchers’ values affect what they investigate, how they perceive the situation, and how they interpret their results. Thus, we state our political position up front. That is, we oppose prejudice and discrimination in any form and argue that steps need to be taken to eliminate them.

We had two research aims. First, a minor aim was to investigate the differences between participants who supported the perpetrator of the racist abuse compared with those who supported the victim. To our knowledge, no published research exists that investigates bystander action by the perpetrator. Our second major aim involved the predicting of bystander action. Because the present study is novel, specific hypotheses about the efficacy items were not made. Instead, we investigated which of the three types of efficacy (dispositional, bystander intervention opportunity, or bystander proactive opportunity) correlated with bystander anti-racism. We also investigated which of the three independent variables was the strongest predictor of bystander anti-racism utilising multiple regression. Having said that, given the research findings suggesting that bystander training in the sexual assault literature predicts intervention (Banyard et al., 2007), and Bandura (2006) arguing that efficacy is situation specific, it was hypothesised that...
the two forms of bystander efficacy would be more likely to relate to greater bystander anti-racist action compared with dispositional efficacy.

**Method**

**Participants**

Ethical approval for the conduct of the research was sought and approved by Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia. The sample was comprised of 156 Australian adult participants recruited using the online Qualtrics software platform. The Qualtrics database contacts participants Australia-wide by email, providing them with opportunities to engage with research via online questionnaires. Abiding by ethical conventions to do no harm (Australian Psychological Society, 2007), as the scenario might have been distressing for Indigenous Australians, individuals identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander were asked not to participate in the present research. Furthermore, we focused on bystanders who were not Indigenous because Indigenous people already shoulder the burden of racism and should not be the ones solely responsible to tackle the perpetrators of racism. We acknowledge that within the non-Indigenous participant group, there will be people who are discriminated against because of their cultural group (e.g., race; religion; gender; disability; sexuality) and research also needs to be carried – and in some cases has been carried out – with these groups.

The sample contained 50% females and ranged in age between 18 and 89 years with an average of 46 years (SD = 15.67). This is slightly younger than the average age of 51 years represented in the census (ABS, 2011). Of the sample, 37% indicated a centred political preference, followed by 18% indicating they were somewhat left, 17% indicating they were somewhat right, 6% indicating that they were strongly left, and the remaining 6% indicating that they were strongly right. A total of 17% participants indicated no political preference by selecting the Don’t Care option. Of the sample, 7% did not complete secondary school, 28% completed secondary school, 22% had completed or were completing vocational training, 15% had completed or were completing an undergraduate diploma, 17% had completed or were completing a bachelor degree, and 10% indicated that they were completing or had completed a higher postgraduate degree. The present sample was less educated than the wider Australian population. The majority of participants (88%) indicated that they were of Caucasian/European background, with the next largest group (8%) indicating that they were of Asian descent. Of the remaining participants, five indicated their nationality to be Indian, two indicated Middle Eastern, one indicated African, and one indicated Māori. In terms of ethnic participant background, the sample is relatively representative of the wider Australian population (ABS, 2011). A total of 48% of the study sample identified as Christian, followed by 42% indicating no religious affiliation. Of the remaining participants, five reported being Muslim, three reported being Hindu, two reported being Buddhist, and three reported being Jewish, Sikh and Asatru respectively. In comparison to the wider Australian population, this sample represents lower Christian religious beliefs and higher levels of no religious affiliation.

**Measures**

**Demographics.** Participants entered their age in numerals, and indicated their sex (1 = male, 2 = female), ethnic background (1 = Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 2 = African, 3 = Asian, 4 = Caucasian/European, 5 = Indian, 6 = Middle Eastern, 7 = Pacific Islander), religious affiliation (1 = Buddhist, 2 = Christian, 3 = Hindu, 4 = Jewish, 5 = Muslim, 6 = No religion), level of education (1 = did not complete secondary school, 6 = part or completed higher degree – Masters or PhD) and political preference (1 = strongly left, 5 = strongly right, 6 = don’t care). Participants were also provided with the option of selecting Other to enter text in the ethnic background and religious affiliation questions.

**Dispositional Efficacy.** The New Generalised Self-Efficacy scale (Chen et al., 2001) is an 8-item self-report measure used...
to quantify dispositional efficacy. This refers to one’s perceived capability of achieving in a variety of situations. On a 5-point Likert scale, participants indicated from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree their views on items such as “I believe I can succeed at most any endeavour to which I set my mind.” The scale has previously been used in Australia and found to have a reliability of $\alpha = .77$ (Ng & Earl, 2008). A higher score indicates a higher level of dispositional efficacy.

**Situational Bystander Efficacy.** The Bystander Efficacy scale is an 8-item measure in total, consisting of two 4-item subscales. This was appropriated for an Australian racism context from the original 10-item Bystander Behaviour Scale – Revised (BBS-R), initially published to measure bystander efficacy with respect to sexual assault (McMahon et al., 2014). The scale used in the present study discarded the following two items due to irrelevancy in a situation of racism: “Confront a male friend who is hooking up with someone who was passed out” and “Call for help (ie, call 000) if I saw a group of guys bothering a girl in the parking lot”. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The Bystander Intervention Opportunity subscale measures individuals’ belief in their ability to intervene in an immediate situation of racism. An example of this sub-scale is “I would feel comfortable confronting a friend who is being derogatory towards Indigenous Australians”. The Bystander Proactive Opportunity subscale measures proactive behaviours of individuals promoting bystander action. An example of this sub-scale is “I have taken a class to learn more about Indigenous Australians”. As our scale was amended for an Australian racism context, there have been no previously established reliability coefficients. However, the original Bystander Intervention Opportunity subscale was found to have a reliability of $\alpha = .77$ and the original Bystander Proactive Opportunity Subscale was found to have a reliability of $\alpha = .82$ (McMahon et al., 2014). A higher score indicates higher levels of bystander efficacy.

**Scenario.** The intergroup bystander scenario created for the purpose of this study was based on a similar scenario previously used by Pedersen et al. (2011). The scenario takes place in a restaurant and involves a hypothetical colleague reacting to a group of Indigenous Australians entering the restaurant. The colleague makes loud comments audible to the Indigenous Australians pertaining to acts of modern racism; in particular, that racism does not exist anymore and that Indigenous Australians are guaranteed government benefits.

Participants were asked to clarify their view on the situation by answering if they supported the perpetrator by selecting 1 = your acquaintance’s view or the victim by selecting 2 = an alternative viewpoint. Participants were asked to quantify their likelihood of intervening as the bystander by answering the question: “Which value on the scale below best represents how likely you are to speak up in this scenario, either in support of your colleague’s view or an alternative view” using a 7-point Likert scale with the points 1 = extremely unlikely and 7 = extremely likely, with the midpoint coded as 4 = unsure. A higher score indicated a greater likelihood of action. Only data gathered from individuals who indicated that they supported the victim were utilised in predicting bystander intention to action.

**Procedure**

Pilot testing revealed errors in question sequence, as well as the need to alter some items to reflect Australian English conventions and gender neutrality. The final survey was emailed to participants by the Qualtrics software platform in June 2014. The email included the title of the study and a secure link to the survey website. The questionnaire was closed after a sample of 156 wholly completed surveys was achieved. This took approximately 2 weeks to occur.

**Results**

The descriptive statistics are presented to contextualise the data, and independent samples $t$-tests were utilised to compare perpetrator support to victim support (Aim
Only participants who supported the victim were included in the main analyses. Relatedness between variables was measured using Pearson’s $r$ correlation. A hierarchical regression was utilised to establish the most influential variable/s responsible for predicting bystander anti-racist action intention. All tests of significance were evaluated according to a $p$-value of $p < 0.05$. Bootstrapping was used throughout the analysis in an attempt to minimise bias and normalise the distribution (Field, 2007).

### Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 1. As shown, the reliability was satisfactory for all scales as $\alpha > .80$ (Field, 2007). All of the scales remained as initially formulated, as scale reliabilities did not increase substantially with any item removal. The perpetrator support group consisted of 36 participants and the victim support group consisted of 120 participants. As shown in Table 1, the victim support group scored consistently higher than the perpetrator support group on all variables except for Dispositional Efficacy, where both groups obtained a similar mean score.

### Assumptions

Prior to conducting the $t$-tests, a comparison between the perpetrator support group and the victim support group in terms of likelihood of action was required. Normality of the sample was tested and the Shapiro-Wilk statistic revealed the perpetrator support group was normally distributed ($S-W = .95$, $df = 36$, $p = .084$), while the victim support group was not ($S-W = .91$, $df = 120$, $p < .001$). Due to this violation, nonparametric tests were carried out to compare the groups.

An independent-samples median test was used to compare the victim support group with the perpetrator support group on the median value of likelihood of bystander action. The independent-samples median test revealed likelihood of action was significantly higher for participants supporting the victim compared with those supporting the perpetrator ($test statistic = 9.85$, $df = 1$, $p = .003$). An independent-samples Mann-Whitney $U$ test was used to compare the distribution of both groups. This test also confirmed that the group distributions were significantly different, with the likelihood of action in the victim support group ($mean rank = 86.79$) significantly higher compared to the perpetrator support group ($mean rank = 50.86$), $U = 1165.00$, $z = -4.271$, $p < .001$, $r = -.34$). Although this is a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988), both the independent-samples median test and independent samples Mann-Whitney $U$ test indicate that participants who supported the victim were more likely to speak up compared to those who supported the perpetrator.

### Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dispositional Self-Efficacy</th>
<th>3.77 (.65)</th>
<th>3.78 (.62)</th>
<th>1 - 5</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>.92</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Situational Bystander Efficacy</td>
<td>3.99 (.68)</td>
<td>3.43 (.81)</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention Opportunity</td>
<td>3.43 (.81)</td>
<td>3.99 (.68)</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Opportunity</td>
<td>2.47 (.81)</td>
<td>1.95 (.84)</td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of Action</td>
<td>5.10 (1.39)</td>
<td>3.86 (1.57)</td>
<td>1 - 7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics including Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), Range of Scores, Number of Items and Cronbach’s Alpha ($\alpha$)
Prior to the correlation analysis, the appropriate assumptions were checked. Results indicated no violations of such assumptions.

As shown above, Table 2 reflects the calculated bootstrapped bivariate Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient (r) indicating the size and direction between all continuous linear predictor variables. As per Cohen’s effect size conventions, r = .1 indicates a small effect size, r = .3 indicates a medium effect size, and r = .5 indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

With respect to the Indigenous support group, significant positive correlations indicated that the likelihood of bystander action was weakly correlated with bystander proactive opportunity and strongly correlated with bystander intervention opportunity. There was no significant correlation between bystander anti-racism and dispositional efficacy. Although it was not our primary intention to investigate participants who supported the perpetrator, given the lack of research on this topic, we briefly note that the relevant correlations showed the same pattern as the participants who did not support the perpetrator.

Regression

A linear regression was utilised to determine the most significant predictors of bystander action intention in the hypothetical scenario. The likelihood of bystander action was entered into the regression model at Step 1, followed by dispositional efficacy, bystander intervention opportunity, and bystander proactive opportunity at Step 2. Because of the small sample size of the group who supported the perpetrators, no regression analysis was performed with this group.

A number of assumptions were assessed before the results were interpreted. There were no major violations for almost all assumptions. However, visual inspection of the normal P-P plot of standardised regression indicated a slight pattern in the data and bootstrapping was used to address this violation.

As shown by Table 3, dispositional efficacy, bystander intervention opportunity, and bystander proactive opportunity accounted for a significant 27% of the variance in the likelihood of bystander action (F (3, 116) = 14.10, p < .001, R² = .27). By Cohen’s (1988) conventions, a combined effect of this size can be considered large ($f^2$ = .36). A post-hoc power analysis was conducted utilising the G*Power software package (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) with N = 120, $p = .05$ and the previously established effect size of $f^2$ = .36. This analysis indicates the statistical power for the study was large, with the power exceeding .99. Considering convention indicates that power should exceed .80

Table 2: Pearson r intercorrelations of all predictor variables with 95% confidence intervals noted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Likelihood of Action</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.59**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-.35, .48]</td>
<td>[-.10, .67]</td>
<td>[.29, .78]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dispositional Self- Efficacy</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[-.03, .38]</td>
<td>[-.16, .64]</td>
<td>[.04, .63]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bystander Intervention Opportunity</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.38, .63]</td>
<td>[-.08, .38]</td>
<td>[-.20, .69]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bystander Proactive Opportunity</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.12, .46]</td>
<td>[-.05, .30]</td>
<td>[.31, .59]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Intercorrelations for Perpetrator Support data are presented above the diagonal, and intercorrelations for the Indigenous Support data are presented below the diagonal. Confidence intervals are presented in square brackets.

* p < .05. **p < .01
(Field, 2007), it is safe to assume that this study adequately detected the existing effect. As highlighted below, taking into account shared variance, the most influential predictor of bystander anti-racist action intention in the final regression model was Bystander Intervention Opportunity.

**Discussion**

The central aim of the present research was to investigate the relationship between types of efficacy as correlates of bystander anti-racist intention to act. It was hypothesised that situational bystander efficacy (bystander intervention opportunity and bystander proactive opportunity) would be more related to bystander action intention compared with dispositional efficacy. This hypothesis was supported.

**Dispositional Efficacy and Bystander Efficacy.**

To the authors’ knowledge, bystander efficacy as related to bystander anti-racism is currently non-existent in the Australian anti-racist bystander action literature. Surprisingly, dispositional efficacy was not significantly related to bystander anti-racist intention to act. Previous research regarding the construct of dispositional efficacy suggests that people with perceived high dispositional efficacy believe that they are capable of meeting the demands of any environment of which they are a part (Chen et al., 2001). This relationship is found in the anti-bullying literature, with the central finding being that children with high perceived dispositional efficacy are more likely to intervene and support the victim (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). However, Bandura (2006) posits an alternative view, arguing that dispositional efficacy should always be considered specifically to the domain in question, which aligns with our findings.

Both forms of situational bystander efficacy were anticipated to be more related to bystander action than dispositional efficacy. Based on the findings of Banyard et al. (2007), that increased bystander efficacy predicted bystander action in cases of sexual assault, the present research investigated this relationship in an Australian Indigenous anti-racist context. It was found that bystander intervention opportunity was largely correlated and bystander proactive opportunity was moderately correlated with the likelihood of bystander action. Although this finding is novel in that it involves another target group, and is in another country, it replicates the initial relationship found by Banyard et al. (2007).

No research currently compares the predictive utility of dispositional efficacy and either form of situational bystander efficacy. The regression analysis suggested that bystander intervention opportunity was the most influential predictor of bystander anti-racism in a hypothetical low-risk scenario of everyday racism (Essed 1991). Whilst our research is novel, the measure has been previously utilised as an indicator of self-perceived ability to positively intervene as a bystander in an instance of sexual assault.

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**Table 3**: Linear regression analyses predicting bystander anti-racist action from dispositional and situational factors of empathy and efficacy (N = 120)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional Efficacy</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bystander Intervention Opportunity</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.46***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bystander Proactive Opportunity</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \( R^2 = .27 \) for Step 1 (** \( p < .001 \) )
(McMahon et al., 2014). This situational efficacy measure (bystander intervention opportunity and bystander proactive opportunity) indicates participants’ perceived ability as a bystander to intervene in an immediate situation of racism. The current finding is consistent with the sexual assault literature which reports that higher levels of perceived bystander efficacy is predictive of bystander action (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard et al., 2007; Banyard et al., 2014; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Foubert, Brasfield, Hill, & Shelley-Temblay, 2011).

While being significantly correlated to bystander action, the situational bystander proactive opportunity construct did not predict the likelihood of action in the regression. This subscale measures engagement of the individual in proactive learning activities about Indigenous Australians. An item such as “I have taken a class to learn more about Indigenous Australians” indicates previous exposure to Indigenous Australian culture. Engaging in such activities may advance one’s knowledge about Indigenous Australians and potentially prompt advocacy for equal rights. However, as bystander intervention requires behavioural action, it is possible that gaining information is not enough; bystander action skills (as highlighted by bystander intervention opportunities) are required. It may also be the case that this is a reflection of the type and manner in which non-Indigenous Australians learn about Indigenous Australia throughout their formal education in both school and tertiary institutions. Although our sample is comparatively representative of most socio-demographic determinants, it is possible that this finding is related to the lack of exposure of the current relatively undereducated sample to such learning opportunities.

As we have identified previously, Indigenous Australians were not included in the present study for ethical reasons. However, it is worth noting that Indigenous people would be likely to be very active bystanders if they saw other Indigenous people being targeted.

**Practical Implications**

The present research has significant theoretical implications for the bystander anti-racist action literature but also has practical implications for Indigenous Australians who regularly experience racism. It has been found that everyday racism has a significant negative emotional effect on victims; for example, increasing their feelings of threat (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). The present research is novel in Australia and is therefore important in advancing this literature.

The finding that situational bystander efficacy was a significant predictor of bystander anti-racist action is a primary indicator establishing a need for bystander action training and education programs in Australia for non-Indigenous Australians. There are a number of programs that currently focus on creating positive intergroup contact situations. In particular, they teach education, awareness raising, media literacy, and peace and conflict resolution skills (Paradies et al., 2009). However, there is little published research on programs that teach bystander action skills specific to instances of discrimination and inequality. Having said that, there are a handful of studies that are beginning to incorporate the teaching of bystander skills (e.g., Dunn, Nelson, & Pedersen, 2013; Pedersen et al., 2011). Our findings stress the importance of programs such as these. Many bystander action training programs are successfully teaching bystander intervention strategies to prevent sexual assault in American universities (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2011). These programs could be adapted for use in an Australian anti-racism context and implemented in educational institutions to increase general levels of bystander efficacy in society. Considering these programs act to increase bystander action, it is possible that the skills learned would be generalised across many domains.

As both bystander intervention opportunities and bystander proactive opportunities are predictors of anti-racist bystander behaviour, it is essential for both
to be incorporated into future bystander intervention programs (Banyard et al., 2007; McMahon et al., 2011). As indicated by the strength of the relationship between bystander action and both components of bystander situational efficacy, bystander action programs should primarily focus on the development of practical skills that provide opportunities for individuals to practise engaging in situations that require bystander intervention. An education component addressing individual attitudes and beliefs would be important as a method of providing knowledge and promoting understanding to support why an individual should engage in anti-racist action. These program components are consistent with the findings of the literature review of Storer, Casey and Herrenkohl (2016) regarding bystander intervention programs designed to reduce dating and sexual assault. Although not specific to bystander anti-racism, the review of Storer et al. highlights the importance of increasing individuals’ confidence in their ability to intervene, as well as expanding their knowledge and adapting their attitudes to promote intervention. When adapting the education components to an anti-racism context, sessions that highlight the unjust treatment of Indigenous Australians since white occupation, the current inequalities that continue to exist, and a focus on eliciting empathy towards Indigenous Australians facing racism should be included. A program comprising these core components is key to providing a theoretical and practical platform to promote bystander anti-racist action.

Increases in general levels of bystander efficacy were found to positively increase instances of bystander anti-racist action in our study. Previous research suggests that confronting the individual committing a racist act in a safe environment positively affects the bystander, victim and perpetrator (Levine & Crowther, 2008). Specifically, spontaneous helping has been shown to increase psychological well-being in both the bystander and victim (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Furthermore, bystander confrontation has been shown to elicit guilt in the perpetrator, which has been found to reduce future discriminatory behaviours (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006).

As an aside, we note the correlations between bystander action and efficacy with respect to the perpetrator group. At first glance, providing individuals with the efficacy skills to act as a racist bystander may appear counterproductive when the central aim is to reduce the occurrence of racist actions in society. However, if they are also provided with knowledge and understanding of colonisation from an Indigenous perspective, the impact of inhumane government acts such as the forcible removal of children from their families, and the negative impact of casual racism, their attitudes might change. Indeed, there is some research finding this to be the case. The implementation of cultural awareness training incorporated into an undergraduate medicine curriculum revealed increases in self-perceived awareness of Indigenous health issues, increased skills to work with Indigenous patients, and a shift in attitudes towards working with Indigenous people (Paul, Carr, & Milroy, 2006). Similarly, Pedersen et al. (2011) implementation of a cross-cultural education program revealed post-intervention increases in positivity towards the social ‘out-groups’ Indigenous Australians, Muslim Australians and asylum seekers. Additionally, increases in perceived intention to speak up were also found (Pedersen et al., 2011). These findings suggest that increasing the knowledge of all Australians (regardless of racist attitudes) will be beneficial in increasing the likelihood of anti-racist bystander action.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are a number of potential methodological limitations of the present study. The implications of these limitations are now individually addressed with consequential future research directions. Firstly, identified as the intention-behaviour gap (Sniehotta, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005), there is a known discrepancy between bystander action as indicated in research scenarios and bystander action in real life.
instances of racism (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2012). As found by Mansouri et al. (2009), immediate effects associated with racism can include emotional responses such as feelings of anxiety, anger, and sadness. It could be argued, however, that if people are taught the skills to address racism, feelings of anxiety might be decreased. Whilst research into this area is needed, there are extensive ethical and moral implications of exposing participants to such negative emotional effects in the name of research. Although this limitation may be difficult to address, future research designs may consider utilising a virtual diary study in which an individual’s intention to act is determined by an initial questionnaire, which is in turn compared to reported bystander action behaviours.

Another line of future research could be to incorporate other measures of racism; more explicit ones to investigate the relationship between teaching efficacy skills to participants. Since Essed’s (1991) conceptualisation of ‘everyday racism’, research into everyday anti-racism from a linguistic perspective has begun to emerge. Research conducted by Mitchell, Every and Ranzijn (2011) highlighted the difficulties associated with intervening in acts of everyday racism which included the desire to fit in in social situations, the uncertainty of potential conflict or aggression, and the relationship between the people in the situation. Their study also noted facilitators of everyday anti-racism included whether participants were armed with knowledge and information regarding facts about Indigenous Australians. It would be useful to establish whether the teaching of skills would relate to bystander action in a more explicit setting. It would also be useful to use different target groups and other bystander scenarios.

Taking into consideration these limitations and future research directions, there is the potential to extend this study to include an aspect of qualitative data collection. From the perspective of a community psychologist, qualitative data is advantageous as it allows the research to be situated in the social context (Sullivan, 2010). In this area, qualitative data may provide insight into the experience of racism as a bystander. In combination with quantitative findings, this would allow the researcher to triangulate the quantitative data and gain greater insight into participant perceptions of when they might engage in the situation as an anti-racist bystander.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between situational and dispositional efficacy as predictors of bystander anti-racist action. Bystander intervention opportunity was the most influential predictor of bystander anti-racist action in the present study’s low-risk scenario; however, the correlations showed the importance of bystander proactive opportunity as well. The inclusion of the bystander efficacy variable is novel in the bystander anti-racist action on behalf of Indigenous Australian literature. This study provides insight into the importance of individuals identifying with the self-perceived ability as a bystander to positively impact on a situation in an instance of racism. Considering the relationship between the two situational measures and the intention to engage in bystander action, this research highlights the overarching need to increase individual bystander efficacy in society. We are not arguing that bystander training holds all the answers. Indeed, previous research finds that a strong correlate of taking bystander action is individuals’ levels of prejudice or racism (Redmond, Pedersen, Paradies, 2014) and ethnocentrism (McWhae, Paradies, & Pedersen, 2015).

There are also racist structural issues to be addressed. As Kagan and Burton (2015) note, community psychology should not restrict itself to the individual but also take into account relational and societal issues: these also need to be addressed.

The negative impact associated with racial discrimination toward Indigenous Australians is considerable. Increased rates of mental illness, suicide, and substance abuse have all been found to be related to race-based discrimination (ABS, 2010a; ABS, 2010b Australian Institute of Health &
Efficacy as a predictor of bystander anti-racism

Acknowledging that bystander action can reduce future instances of prejudice (Czopp & Monteith, 2003), the present research finding that situational bystander efficacy relates to action is important. The present study has the potential to inform bystander anti-racist action training programs in an effort to address the prevalence of racism towards Indigenous Australians in society.

References


Acknowledgements
We note that the data were collected at the School of Psychology and Exercise Science, Murdoch University, Western Australia. Funding for this research was provided through an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant (LP110200495).

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Challenges, facilitators and enablers of conducting research with youth from refugee backgrounds

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Methodological and ethical challenges encountered when conducting research with refugee populations can pertain to gaining access to the population concerned, dispelling confusion about the research process, fostering trust among participants and their communities, addressing language and cultural barriers, and managing tensions in academic-industry partnerships. This article describes the challenges, facilitators and enablers we encountered when planning and designing a research project to investigate education and employment outcomes among newly arrived young people from refugee backgrounds. Notwithstanding careful planning, we encountered a number of challenges that could only be effectively managed by developing strong relationships with Industry Partners, Bilingual Youth Workers, and research participants. Our experiences may be useful to cross-cultural and other researchers seeking to undertake cross-cultural research.

The successful settlement of newly arrived young people from refugee and refugee-like backgrounds is desirable both for society and for the individuals concerned. While the academic and psychosocial resilience of young people with refugee backgrounds and their ability to adapt to their new environments is quite remarkable and well documented (Graham, Minhas, & Paxton, 2016; Ziaian, de Anstiss, Antoniou, Baghurst, & Sawyer, 2013; Ziaian, de Anstiss, Antoniou, Sawyer, & Baghurst, 2012), they nevertheless face a unique set of challenges and barriers to engagement that can negatively impact on their education and employment as well as their mental health and wellbeing.

In order to explore some of the ways in which such barriers are overcome, and to understand the ways in which wellbeing manifests for young people with refugee backgrounds as they engage with education and employment, we worked in collaboration with our Industry Partner (Multicultural Youth South Australia MYSA), a Research Partner (Australian Migrant Resource Centre AMRC), schools, and communities, to conduct an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage funded study. The aim of this research was to investigate education and employment outcomes and pathways among youth with refugee backgrounds to inform education, training and employment policy and practice. More specifically, the study aimed to identify facilitators and barriers to successful transition from school into further education and employment. We expect our research to lead to a sustainable improvement in employment outcomes by providing policy analysts and decision makers with critical information about this high profile yet under researched population group. Here we will not report on findings, rather we reflect on the relationships and collaboration within this project, and the importance of the research process when
working with our participant group.

Community psychology provides opportunity for collaborative and empowering cross-disciplinary work, between academics and practitioners and with communities, to develop evidence and effective action focusing on strengths rather than deficits (Tebes, Thai, & Matlin, 2014). Collaboration can bring a range of perspectives to research as well as tensions and differing understanding of disciplinary and practical perspectives; community psychology embraces these tensions as they increase understanding of the ecological framework within which diverse groups and individuals operate (Birman, 2016). Our project values multilevel respect for a highly diverse group of researchers, participants and stakeholders that comprise the project discussed here, as well as respect for the relationships between these groups and individuals. Community Psychology principles strongly align with our approach, and we intend for the account offered here to add to the literature, which explicitly addresses some ethical challenges arising when conducting research (Campbell, 2016; Campbell & Morris, 2017).

Research with communities and individuals with refugee backgrounds requires acknowledgement of the heterogeneous positioning of participant experiences; labels such as ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’ are insufficient indicators of individual lives and stories (Zetter, 1991). The term ‘refugee’, however, may transmit some understanding of the possible experiences of an individual or group, and carries defined meaning for those who resettle in Australia via humanitarian visas. The refugee experience, and subsequent experiences in resettlement contexts, can have some commonalities which we hoped to capture in this research. The research also aimed to present some of the idiosyncrasies of individual experiences. Ultimately, policy and practice may be made more effective through understanding of these commonalities and differences.

Theorising on the use of labels is explored elsewhere (see, for example Cole, 2018), and is beyond the scope of this paper except to say that the authors acknowledge the problematic nature of essentialising a highly diverse participant group into one word. The researchers further acknowledge that this label may or may not be an accurate representation of individuals’ self-identity. The term ‘people from refugee backgrounds’ is used here to indicate that the research focus includes participants who have been granted resettlement in Australia due to gaining refugee status prior to participation in the research. Youth participants and their families have a great variety of backgrounds, experiences, and heritage representing a wide range of countries within Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. These three key migration regions were selected in response to the top 20 arrival groups to Australia over the 10 years prior to project commencement.

This discussion provides an overview of the ways in which our team worked to minimise barriers to participation in a research project. In the next section we outline some of the potential barriers to effective participation as described in the literature. We then proceed to discuss the ways in which we addressed these barriers during the project.

**Reported Barriers in the Literature to Effective Participation in Research**

When planning our research project, we considered many of the methodological and ethical challenges encountered in our earlier research (Warland et al., 2007) and in other cross-cultural studies (e.g. Block, Riggs, & Haslam, 2013; Block, Warr, Gibbs, & Riggs, 2013; Mackenzie, McDowell, & Pittaway, 2007; Obijiofor, Colic-Peisker, & Hebbani, 2016). Researchers working with culturally diverse populations must recognise the potential for power differentials associated with cultural and linguistic differences between researchers and participants. Barriers to effective research that acknowledges, includes and responds to people from culturally diverse populations may encompass: non-availability of culturally validated research tools, wariness or mistrust among participants towards researchers and their studies, difficulties
obtaining a representative sample, and challenges gaining access to the population concerned (Obijiofor et al., 2016; Thomas & Lau, 2002; Warland et al., 2007).

Respect and recognition of cultural diversity. According to Mackenzie et al. (2007), ethical dilemmas in refugee research arise mainly because of cultural differences between researchers and participants that remain untended or unacknowledged. Failure to address such differences may be considered disrespectful and affect the development of rapport with participants (Lawrence, Kaplan, & McFarlane, 2013). Researchers have addressed these challenges by involving intermediaries such as cultural insiders/brokers and interpreters in the research process (e.g. Vara & Patel, 2012). This is not without its problems, however, as participants may be concerned about breaches of confidentiality because cultural and language mediators often come from the same community or are known to their community (Obijiofor et al., 2016). Additionally, having more than one person present during data collection can affect the trust needed between the researcher and participant and may affect willingness to openly share information.

Agency and vulnerability. In the Australian context, resettlement reflects the agency and social capital of individuals and families who have successfully navigated a complex system after a refugee journey. However, in the literature, populations of people with refugee backgrounds are often considered “vulnerable” when the research context is within Western countries mainly because of the asymmetry in the power relationship between researchers and participants (Block, Riggs, et al., 2013; Ellis, Kia-Keating, Yusuf, Lincoln, & Nur, 2007; Kirmayer, 2013; Marmo, 2013). Settling in a new country with unfamiliar cultural and/or linguistic practices can provide a challenge. This challenge can affect participation in research: the dominant role of the researcher may be reinforced by his or her cultural background, social status, and language when the research is conducted in the researcher’s first language (Marmo, 2013). If the participants perceive researchers as dominant or in-control, they may provide information that they believe the researchers would like to hear. When participants with refugee backgrounds are regarded as “vulnerable,” they are likely to be perceived as a group that lacks power and autonomy during and after migration, thereby impacting their participation in research as well as research insights (Gifford, 2013).

Participants’ “vulnerability” has also been differentiated between “consent-based vulnerability,” “risk-based vulnerability,” and “justice-based vulnerability” (Block, Riggs, et al., 2013, p.6). While “consent-based vulnerability” is when difficulties arise in obtaining meaningfully informed and voluntary consent, “risk-based vulnerability” is when research related risk of harm is elevated. The third type of vulnerability is when neither the research participant nor his or her community directly benefit from the research outcomes (see also, Mackenzie et al., 2007). While participatory research can minimise the power differential between researchers and participants, it fails in its objective of empowering participants if it does not advocate to change disempowering social and political conditions (Donà, 2007).

Culturally validated research tools. Many tools used in cross-cultural research have not been culturally validated for use with people from refugee backgrounds and may be heavily aligned with Western conceptions. People from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds may have conceptual understanding that differ from the understanding embedded in measures that have been predominantly validated in Western, developed settings (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Hollifield et al., 2002).

Mistrust. Populations of people with refugee backgrounds in the resettlement context, particularly those with limited knowledge of and experience with the research process, may have particular concerns about how research findings will be used. They may fear they will be used to highlight community deficiencies in order to defend controversial political decisions, for example. These fears may be especially
pronounced in communities which have been at the centre of government and media attention for their supposed failure to settle effectively (Andrews, 2007).

**Sampling and population access.** As with most research with people from refugee backgrounds, we did not have a sampling frame from which to draw a representative sample of youth residing in South Australia. Australian census data do not include the visa status of people born overseas (Hugo, McDougall, Tan, & Feist, 2014). Gaining access to the population because of language and cultural barriers, or lack of familiarity with the research process are examples of other difficulties envisaged during the study planning and designing stage.

**Issues with research collaborations.** Another challenge common to all social science research, including research with people from refugee backgrounds, pertains to engaging in research collaborations with non-academic Industry Partners (Obijiofor et al., 2016). Because our project was funded by the ARC Linkage scheme, an Industry Partner co-funded the research and was involved in research design and implementation. According to Obijiofor et al. (2016) academic-industry collaborations can present challenges. First, they can blur the academic focus by the interests and agendas of the Industry Partner. Second, a change of leadership and associated priorities on the part of the Industry Partner can delay the research progress by requiring re-negotiation and modification of original research goals. In addition, large numbers of collaborators or intermediaries not directly involved in the project (Bilingual Youth Workers, interpreters, agency staff) may make managing the overall project difficult, potentially compromising the quality of the data collected (Obijiofor et al., 2016).

When planning and designing our research project with multiple cultural groups, we considered the above issues highlighted in the literature. Notwithstanding careful planning, we encountered several challenges that required negotiation, compromise and flexibility to ensure successful project implementation. The invaluable assistance and commitment of all those involved in the project—research team members, Industry Partners, Bilingual Youth Workers (BYWs) as well as research participants in the piloting stage—enabled us to transform challenges into opportunities and successfully engage in data collection.

Although methodological and ethical challenges are distinct to individual research projects, they are often interlinked (Obijiofor et al., 2016). Hence, we believe that the challenges we encountered could be common to other researchers conducting cross-cultural research with similar participant populations and that they may benefit from our experiences managing such challenges.

The purpose of this article is to share our experiences with those currently considering similar research endeavours as well as to encourage future researchers—notwithstanding the challenges—to embark on such projects. We begin by describing the context of our study, including participant groups and research design. We then discuss some of the ways in which we designed and implemented a research process to: gain informed consent and invite a range of participants to the study; negotiate ways to collect data that suited our participants (including using a bilingual approach); and, build relationships and collaborate with researchers, industry, and community partners with flexibility and positivity.

**Research Design**

Literature on migration and educational outcomes in Australia has been, until recently, focused on the broader experiences of people with migrant backgrounds rather than more focused on young people with refugee experience (Matthews, 2008). Therefore, the primary aim of the “Pathways to Active Citizenship” research project was to:

- Investigate education and employment outcomes among refugee background youth aged 15-24 years, in South Australia with a view to influencing education, training and employment policy and practice.

The secondary aims of the project were to:

- Identify facilitators and barriers to successful transition from school into further education and employment;
- Map out the support systems accessed by youth who are experiencing education and employment-related difficulties; and
- Investigate the extent of youth and family awareness of available education, training and employment pathways.

The research engaged a mixed methods investigation utilising both quantitative (survey questionnaire) and qualitative measures (semi-structured interviews). Mixed methods is often recommended for studies with immigrant populations (Garcini et al., 2016) as this research design enables quantitative data findings to be complemented by qualitative data. The selection of mixed methods for this study was rooted in the research team’s desire to maximise our understanding of participants’ highly diverse experiences and perspectives through a combination of different data collection and analysis methods (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011).

Inclusion of quantitative data supported our understanding of the prevalence of experiences, whilst qualitative data provided opportunity to include culturally diverse conceptual details (Garcini et al., 2016). Research design and implementation that considered the potential for unequal power dynamics, the heterogeneity of experience, and the difficulty of accessing our target population in a sensitive way was of critical importance. Project design was informed by examination of the literature together with previous work of the researchers, and was adapted throughout project implementation through careful and ongoing reflexive discussion (Berger, 2015).

Research has been undertaken on the educational experiences of youths from refugee backgrounds in Australia and elsewhere (Cassity, 2013; Minza, 2012; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Research with young people, and particularly those with refugee experiences, can be prone to unequal power dynamics which present barriers to effective participation (Mertens, 2011). The research process presented here provides some insight into the ways in which barriers to participation might be reduced through recognition of power differentials, and inclusion of a range of research partners to facilitate participation. Researchers worked together with industry, with a reference group of experts, with communities, and with young people, to negotiate a meaningful methodology and conduct it ethically and effectively.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

As we had envisaged, obtaining a representative sample of youth residing in South Australia and accessing that population for research purposes were difficulties encountered during the study planning and designing stage, particularly as there is no comprehensive record of the target population/s in Australia. Australian census data do not include the visa status of people born overseas therefore, although not ideal, we considered whole population groups most likely to have refugee status similar to Hugo et al. (2014). This was the best available method to ascertain the number of people from refugee backgrounds in Australia (e.g. if a person is recorded as being born in South Sudan within a certain timeframe then it is likely that they travelled to Australia on a humanitarian visa).

We considered three key migration regions – Africa, the Middle East and South Asia – that encompassed the dominant countries of origin for humanitarian entrants to Australia in the ten years prior to project initiation. Global events meant that there were some changes to refugee movement over the course of our project. An example of this was the conflict in Syria and subsequent Australian intake of a large humanitarian cohort of people from Syria. Our approach of focusing on key migration regions, rather than key countries, meant that we were able to include a comprehensive and relevant group of participants in the project.

Following this protocol, we assumed 60,000-70,000 refugee youth aged 15-24 years reside in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2011), and we used a sample of 600 refugee youth participants to provide the following accuracy with a 95% confidence level for any question with an
expected frequency response of 50%: overall
(± 4%), for each gender (± 5.5%), migration
region (±7%) and for gender within
migration region (±10%) (Krejcie & Morgan,
1970). We also aimed to purposively target
60 refugee youth from the larger sample for
in-depth interviews (20 youth for each target
migration region) allowing 10% of the entire
survey group to be represented in the
qualitative stage of the study.

The survey was designed to be
completed by youth from refugee
backgrounds, aged 15-24 years, to capture
information relating to areas such as
acculturation and adaptation, school and
workplace experiences, help-seeking for
education and employment needs, emotional
health and well-being and family
functioning. We designed the survey through
consultation with Industry Partners and our
reference group, and piloted it twice before
full implementation of the data collection
phase. Details of the questions and measures
can be found below. We aimed to include a
lot of measures in the survey in order to find
out about a wide range of participant
perceptions and experiences. However, we
balanced this with prioritising participants’
time and ensured that the final survey took
no longer than one hour to complete. In most
cases the survey took around 30-40 minutes
to complete.

We also aimed to conduct 180
qualitative interviews with young people
(60), their parent or caregiver (60) and
teacher (60). The qualitative interviews
aimed to capture in-depth information on
topics covered in the survey instrument, with
interview questions formulated based on the
responses received on the surveys.

Other inclusion criteria were that the
youth or their parents / caregivers had
resided in Australia between 12 months and
10 years, and arrived from one of three key
migration regions: Africa (e.g. Congo,
Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan)
South Asia (e.g. Bhutan, Burma / Myanmar,
Nepal, Pakistan) or the Middle East (e.g.
Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq).

The age range of 15-24 years was
selected because those aged 15 years and
over are eligible to seek full time
employment in Australia, and ‘youth’ is
defined in the country as ending at 24 years
(Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS),
2017).

The inclusion criterion of 1 to 10 years
of Australian residence was decided to
ensure that almost all young people belonged
to Generation 1 or Generation 1.5; that is,
they were born overseas and arrived in
Australia as adolescents or children. This
population may for a number of reasons be at
greater risk of stress and distress. They may
have unique experiences and circumstances
compared to that of their parents and
Australian born siblings, the latter of whom
are likely to be more proficient in English
and less likely to have experienced gaps in
their education. They may be more likely to
encounter difficulties navigating the
education system as well as transitioning
from school to further education, training and
employment (Hugo et al., 2014). They may
be less likely to have a strong foundation in
the cultural norms of the home country,
unlike their parents who arrived in Australia
as adults. Hence, their identities may be split
between the home and host country, resulting
in considerable identity confusion (Berry,
1997). We excluded those arriving in the past
12 months as this period is marked by
learning English, settlement issues and
heightened resettlement distress
(e.g.Obijiofor et al., 2016), which we did not
want to exacerbate.

**Developing Suitable Instruments**

The Research Management Team,
including the five Chief Investigators (CIs)
who are experts in their respective fields
(Psychology, Social Work, Demography,
Biostatistics) extensively discussed the
information required to best answer the
research questions. The areas of investigation
decided on were: acculturation and
adaptation, emotional health and well-being,
family functioning, school and workplace
experiences, help-seeking for education and
employment needs, emotional health and
well-being and family functioning. We then
carefully considered the instruments that
would best capture information in each
investigation area. We envisaged problems relating to locating survey instruments that had been cross-culturally validated. There are well known limitations to using measures which have been largely validated in developed Western countries (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Hollifield et al., 2002). Thus, we consulted local and international experts to ensure that we used instruments with the best levels of validity and reliability. The search for appropriate instruments was complex and time consuming. The criteria used for selecting instruments were as follows: simple, clear and succinct language, previous use in a cross cultural setting, availability of the instrument, and relevant to the study purpose (Warland et al., 2007).

**Instruments.** Taking these criteria into consideration we selected the following instruments to investigate the selected areas of investigation.

We measured acculturation and adaptation within Australian society by selected scales from the Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies (MIRIPS) study: a large scale study focusing on intercultural relations within complex, multicultural societies. The selected scales (37 items in total) had already been adapted to and validated in an Australian context (Dandy et al., 2017).

Measures of emotional health and well-being focused on resilience and depressive mood. Resilience was measured using the 10 item abridged version of the Conner-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003). Mood was measured using the K-10 (Kessler et al., 2002). These instruments have excellent psychometric properties, have been widely utilised in cross-cultural research, and have also been translated into numerous languages.

Family functioning was assessed using one scale—the 12 item General Functioning Scale from the Family Assessment Device (FAD). This Scale has been recommended as a standalone brief measure of overall family functioning with excellent psychometric properties (Byles, Byrne, Boyle, & Offord, 1988; Miller, Ryan, Keitner, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000). The 10 item Intergenerational Family Congruence Child Scale assessed the degree of parent-child agreement on values and behaviours from the perspective of migrant children (IFC-CS; Ying & Han, 2007) and the 3 item Family Identity Scale assessed the importance of family as part of children’s identity (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006).

Youth participants’ schooling experiences were assessed utilising the National Schools Opinion Survey (NSOS), Australia (Department of Education, 2017), as well as relevant sections from two internationally used surveys: (1) Trends in International Maths and Science Study (the TIMSS II) and (2) OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (a total of 35 items).

Formal (public services) and informal (community, social and religious) help-seeking among youth for employment and educational related issues or problems were measured by an adapted version of the help-seeking tool developed by the Research and Evaluation Unit at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Adelaide (19 items in total).

Employment experiences of young people engaged in paid work was ascertained using relevant sections of the Australian Workplace Barometer (33 items total) (AWB; Dollard et al., 2012). Sections included in the survey pertained to: the nature of employment, physical and emotional job demands and organisation bullying and harassment.

We included information about participants’ demographic characteristics (age, sex, parent occupation, single/two-parent status, etc.). The demographic section was an adaptation of a questionnaire developed by the Research and Evaluation Unit at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital, Adelaide and used extensively in previous ARC funded studies.

**Facilitators, Enablers and Challenges: Research with Youth from Refugee Backgrounds**

Relationships were key to our research process in this project. Table 1 provides an
overview of some of these vital relationships, and the ways in which they helped to reduce barriers to effective participation. We then discuss each of the three relationships in detail below.

**Relationship 1: Industry Partners**

We partnered with the largest refugee youth settlement agency in South Australia (MYSA) because it was best placed to facilitate access to the study populations. This agency provided services to 4000 young people with refugee backgrounds per year and had extensive multicultural networks at the local, state and national levels. The agency also had experience in cross-cultural research and had partnered with various universities on a number of research projects over the past 15 years. However, because the agency works with ‘high-risk’ refugee youth (i.e. disengaged from family, school and community), and we desired a more representative sample, we partnered with another lead agency in South Australia (AMRC) which works with more diverse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship 1: With Industry Partners</th>
<th>Facilitators/Enablers</th>
<th>Challenges/Barriers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Successful previous research collaboration with partner agencies.</td>
<td>▪ Structural changes (incl. funding) within partner agencies.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Partner agencies’ long term links with target populations.</td>
<td>▪ Partner agencies working primarily with vulnerable or ‘high-risk’ cohorts within target populations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Extensive experience of staff and BYWs re: ○ Working with target populations ○ Collaborating on research projects.</td>
<td>▪ Possible tensions between academic and Industry Partners, inability to arrive at a consensus.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Ability and willingness to adapt to changes within partner agencies and working methods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Awareness and respect for the expertise and experience of partner agencies.</td>
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<td>▪ Willingness to seek consensus through consultation and collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship 2: With Bilingual Youth Workers (BYWs) and others involved in data collection</th>
<th>Facilitators/Enablers</th>
<th>Challenges/Barriers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Ability to recruit participants via BYWs within and outside partner agencies; benefiting from BYWs’ links to target communities.</td>
<td>▪ Need for numerous training sessions as and when BYWs are recruited;</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Willingness to use the ‘bilingual approach’.</td>
<td>▪ Differing training requirements between agencies, schools, and communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Adapting training of agency staff and BYWs to suit partner agencies’ needs.</td>
<td>▪ Unavailability of BYWs in all the languages spoken by participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Spending time and effort to develop respect, rapport and strong relationships with agency staff and BYWs.</td>
<td>▪ Possible tensions between partner agency staff and researchers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Continuous communication with agency staff and BYWs: problem solving, offering and seeking feedback, making clarifications.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship 3: With research participants</th>
<th>Facilitators/Enablers</th>
<th>Challenges/Barriers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Established trusting relationships between partner agencies and BYWs with target populations.</td>
<td>▪ Power differentials with target populations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Youth participants engaged in education more likely to be fluent in English.</td>
<td>▪ Survey conducted in English.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Adhering to the ‘bilingual approach’.</td>
<td>▪ Length of survey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Affording comprehensive information to participants, answering questions and providing clarification.</td>
<td>▪ Participants’ mistrust towards researchers and research studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ Protocol to address possible distress caused to participants.</td>
<td>▪ Possibility of distressing participants.</td>
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refugee populations including youth. We had collaborated on previous cross-cultural research studies with both agencies and had a good working relationship with them.

To increase our sample representativeness, we used a multidimensional approach to participant recruitment by establishing research links with smaller agencies providing settlement and other services to refugee youth. We also worked with schools/colleges that ran special programs for new arrival students or had large numbers of refugee students, TAFE and universities, as well as formal and informal groups, and health services utilised by various ethnic communities (e.g. Obijiofor et al., 2016).

We strived to maintain a respectful, collegial and equitable relationship with both of our Industry Partners using a ‘bottom-up’ approach to project management involving consultation, collaboration, and consensus. Our Industry Partners had different ways of working and used varied strategies to recruit study participants. Hence, it was important that we acknowledged these differences from the outset and adapted our methods without compromising research objectives or ethical standards. Accordingly, we took slightly different approaches to participant recruitment, the training of workers and data collection.

Our main Industry Partner was included in our research management team. We conducted quarterly management meetings to discuss matters pertaining to the study and ensure a continuous dialogue with the staff member who was responsible for overseeing data collection.

A Reference Group was also established to provide advice on project matters and included experts from the university as well as the community services sector. We developed best practices for participant recruitment and data collection based on feedback from our main Industry Partner. Several amendments were made to early versions of the survey in consultation with the CEO. The instrument was piloted twice with 16 participants, with feedback incorporated before full implementation. We also conducted training for relevant agency staff and BYWs (described in the next section).

Our second Research Partner’s requirements were somewhat different, possibly because they had many outreach offices across South Australia and were planning to involve staff and participants affiliated with these offices. After explaining the project aims, the CEO requested that two training sessions be delivered to managers on project procedures and survey completion so that they could conduct the surveys themselves or train their staff to do so using the ‘train the trainer’ approach. We contacted a designated manager on a weekly basis to collect completed surveys, monitor progress, discuss difficulties and resolve issues. We entered the data, requesting more information and making clarifications as the need arose. We requested and received feedback continuously.

We thus adapted our methodology to suit different ways of working and maintained constant dialogue with our two main partner agencies, as well as schools and other groups targeted to assist in participant recruitment and data collection (details in next section). We believe such collaboration and consultation has been vital to the progress of our study.

**Relationship 2: Bilingual Youth Workers (BYWs) and Others Involved in Data Collection**

When conducting research with participants from refugee backgrounds, acknowledging and respecting cultural and other differences and engaging cultural intermediaries to facilitate cultural connection, is recommended despite the limitations (Ehntholt & Yule, 2006; Marmo, 2013; Obijiofor et al., 2016). In the present study, BYWs affiliated to different language and cultural groups were employed by both of our Industry Partners to make contact with potential participants and collect data because they had already developed rapport and trust with the communities. They also assisted with language and/or cultural issues encountered during the first stage of data collection. However, one potential problem
we encountered was the inability to find BYWs in all of the languages spoken by participants in our selected countries and migration regions.

As noted previously, we selected participants from 13 countries in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Although people from countries such as Iran, Iraq and Nepal were mostly conversant in one language (i.e. Persian, Arabic and Nepali respectively), there are about 83 languages and 200 dialects spoken in a country like Ethiopia (Teklehaimanot, 2017), with participants from Ethiopia likely to speak any of these languages. Additionally, we had also decided to extend our inclusion criteria to all other countries within the three selected migration regions in order to improve the representativeness of our sample. We consulted with Industry Partner staff to resolve this issue. Through our past research experience (e.g. Ziaian, de Anstiss, Puvimanasinghe, & Miller, 2017), we found that refugee young people currently engaged in the education system were likely to be more skilled in English than adults. They were also more likely to opt for the English version of the survey regardless of their level of English. Hence, utilising the services of the BYWs, we decided to adopt a ‘bilingual approach’ (described below) to data collection, at least during the initial stages. When participants were conversant in the languages in which BYWs were available (usually from the main language groups in each country), they received language assistance to complete the survey. Translation of the surveys into other languages was postponed.

**Bilingual approach.** Our Industry Partners made a valiant attempt to employ BYWs who spoke at least one of the main languages of each targeted country. Preference was given to those who spoke several languages and had previous experience in data collection with the targeted language and cultural groups. Participants were still given the option of completing the survey in English or another language. If they selected another language, we maintained a list of all requests for translations. These participants were asked to complete the survey at a later date to be advised. Most importantly we ensured that all participants had access to language assistance—either via a BYW skilled in their language or through the Translation and Interpreting Service (TIS) which partner agencies had access to.

**Bilingual worker training.** One important consideration when using BYWs in cross-cultural research is the need to adequately brief them on their role and responsibilities (Raval, 2005). We conducted training for both BYWs and our main Industry Partner at the agency’s premises prior to commencing data collection. We conducted an initial one-day training to familiarise BYWs and staff with the research to enable them to carry out data collection in a rigorous and ethical manner. The training included background project information, aims and objectives, expected role and responsibilities of the BYWs, survey sections and items, answering questions and queries, and troubleshooting for difficult situations. We emphasised the importance of adhering to the bilingual approach described above. We conducted a separate discussion with the Research Project Coordinator about coding, checking consent forms and ensuring surveys were all completed before they were returned to the research team.

Each BYW was also given a worker’s manual to take away and use as a guide if needed. The manual included information about the research study, ethical issues, methods of recruitment, interview process and research instruments. At the completion of their formal training session, BYWs were also required to sign a statutory declaration to ensure they respected the confidentiality of the research participants and conducted the data collection in keeping with ethical codes of research.

Two pilots of the survey were conducted before use with the target populations. Initially, we asked the BYWs to pilot the survey with 10 participants and offer us feedback via the Project Coordinator. We were particularly interested in ascertaining the practicality of using the...
bilingual approach. We collated the feedback and discussed issues raised with the Industry Partner’s management and staff. A second pilot was conducted with six participants before the survey was finalised and data collection commenced. If the surveys completed during the second pilot were completed without error, they were included as data. Otherwise they were discarded.

Our second Research Partner agency’s training differed due to different needs. We conducted initial research training with management including: explaining the project background, aims and objectives, roles and responsibilities of BYWs, and introduction to the survey questionnaire. The second training was based on the ‘train the trainer’ approach and was conducted with three senior managers responsible for overseeing data collection. These managers trained the BYWs to collect data and also collected the data themselves. We kept in close contact with them to monitor progress, seek feedback and resolve problems.

The researchers, agency management and staff, and BYWs worked closely together to ensure the smooth progress of data collection. Regular meetings were organised by the researchers to provide support, foster trust, problem solve and collect completed questionnaires. On occasion, the researchers, including those with bilingual expertise, collected data alongside the BYWs and agency staff. This provided the research team with firsthand knowledge and appreciation of the challenges they were encountering during data collection, which in turn contributed to positive relationships.

**Relationship 3: Research Participants**

Forming a trusting relationship with participants is a prerequisite for the success of any research project and this is especially important when conducting research with youth from refugee backgrounds who are typically wary of researchers’ motives (Éhntholt & Yule, 2006; Obijiofor et al., 2016). In the present study, most BYWs had already established a trusting relationship with many of the participants through their work at the Industry Partner agencies. Some participants only agreed to take part in the research because of their prior relationship with the BYWs (e.g. Warland et al., 2007), and in other instances their willingness to complete a relatively lengthy survey despite tiredness or boredom was due to their rapport with the BYWs.

**Guided data collection.** BYWs had the option of collecting survey data with individual participants or small groups with similar language needs. When conducting group sessions, it was essential that an adequate number of BYWs were present to provide guidance and assistance to participants. We had to decide whether BYWs would allow participants to complete the survey alone until assistance was requested, or read every item and provide instruction to them. Experiences in the two pilots of the survey indicated that most participants required an intermediate level of assistance. That is, BYWs did not read each question but rather offered to ‘guide’ participants through the survey, ensuring responses were given for all items, observing any difficulties, and offering language assistance and encouragement when language or other issues arose.

This approach gave participants a degree of privacy to respond to survey items requiring sensitive information while ensuring that assistance was available if and when required. This approach also enhanced efficiency in data collection. We managed potential mistrust among parents and caregivers of minors by explaining the aims and objectives of the study and providing assurances about privacy and confidentiality.

We also offered them an opportunity to ask for further information, ask questions or, if need be, raise concerns with the University Ethics Officer. There was also an option to opt out of the study with no adverse impact on the services they were receiving from the Industry Partners.

One potential concern raised by our second Industry Partner and school staff was the possibility of causing distress or triggering traumatic stress reactions in participants when answering some survey items. School staff in particular were
concerned with a question which asked participants whether they had experienced any traumatic events before arriving in Australia. In response to such feedback, we included the options: ‘don’t know’ and ‘don’t wish to answer’ in this question. Upon request by a secondary school, we removed this question from the survey altogether. During the BYW training, we emphasised the need to closely monitor participants’ reactions, to inform them of the possibility of becoming distressed, and to bring to their attention the option of providing a ‘don’t know’ or ‘don’t wish to answer’ response. In the event that a participant indicated any sign of distress, BYWs were instructed to refer the young person to a specialist counselling agency, a list of which was included in the Information Sheet participants received.

The power differential between researchers and participants also needed to be considered (Block, Riggs, et al., 2013; Doná, 2007). We were methodologically guided by the Advocacy or Transformative conceptual framework which encourages researchers to ensure that methods are adjusted to accommodate cultural complexity, power issues, and the potential for discrimination and oppression (Mertens, 2003, p.3). Consistent with this framework, we designed the project to benefit youth from refugee backgrounds both during and after the research process when the findings will be disseminated to policy makers, service planners, refugee communities, multicultural agencies, peak organisations, and youth advocacy bodies.

Translations. We previously discussed the practical challenges of attempting to translate the survey questionnaire into all the languages spoken in the three selected migration regions. Our decision to use the ‘bilingual approach’ through BYWs to manage these challenges, was also discussed. We also maintained a ‘translations record sheet’ to document participants’ requests for translated versions of the survey. To date, there have been no requests.

Study promotion. The research team used a combination of strategies in multiple settings such as service agencies, educational institutions, community groups and with key persons with extensive contact with refugee populations, to promote the research study. Participants were also asked to refer siblings, friends and acquaintances who meet the inclusion criteria. The research team spent considerable time over the course of the project building relationships with service providers, communities and participants in order to build rapport and trust. These processes were an integral part of our data collection, and particularly important when working with communities who may not have had experiences of participating in research in Australia. Our promotion of the study led to positive outcomes when we took a personal and personalised approach to meeting with service providers, community members and young people. We offered our time to partner organisations, BYWs, community members and participants. This helped us to build relationships and work towards project goals.

Conclusion

This article has described the challenges, facilitators and enablers we encountered when planning and designing an ARC Linkage project to explore the experiences of youth with refugee backgrounds as they transition from school to further education, training and employment.

During the project, we were flexible to the needs of individual participants and this helped us to include participants from a range of backgrounds. We used flexible modes of communication and relationship building to invite participants who had a range of levels of previous exposure to research. We gave our time when appropriate, participating in a range of practices such as: visiting people at home and outside of working hours; joining in community events; using a bilingual approach; and building on previous relationships between BYWs, Industry Partners and researchers.

A key element of the success of our data collection was having each participant connect with a BYW who could provide culturally and linguistically relevant support.
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and could link participants with the research team. BYWs provided culturally relevant feedback to the research team, as well as providing contextual explanation to participants and their communities. The researchers implemented a multidimensional approach to working with BYWs. Training sessions were held in several settings, both as small groups and with individuals. Communication with BYWs was frequent and multimodal, responding to preferences of each individual person involved.

Lastly, the relationships within the project team and with Industry Partners were of critical importance to the project. We maintained a respectful, collegial and equitable relationship with both of our Industry Partners using a ‘bottom-up’ approach to project management involving consultation, collaboration, and consensus. We adapted our methodology to suit different ways of working and maintained constant dialogue with our two main partner agencies, as well as schools and other groups targeted to assist in participant recruitment and data collection. We worked hard to develop and nourish networks between researchers, Industry Partners, community members, BYWs, and youth participants and their families. The successful collection of a large data set from a hard to reach population is testament to the strength of these networks.

Our experience highlights the importance of building rapport and trust, recognising, respecting and accommodating diversity, using open communication, seeking feedback, recognising contributions and using problem solving and conflict management skills. This outline of our experiences may add to the growing literature on guiding principles for community psychologists seeking to undertake ethical cross-cultural research.

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Acknowledgement
This research was part of a project entitled ‘Pathways to Active Citizenship: Refugee Youth and their Transition from School to Further Education, Training and Employment’, funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Grant (LP0562492) and the Industry Partner Multicultural Youth South Australia (MYSA) with support from Research Partner Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC).

Notes
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2 University of South Australia, School of Nursing and Midwifery, and the UniSA Cancer Research Institute

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Attempting to overcome problems shared by both qualitative and quantitative methodologies: Two hybrid procedures to encourage diverse research

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The starting point in this paper is to argue that there is less difference between the common ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ methods than is often thought: they both are short-term methods usually without intensive engagement of people and their contexts; they both commonly assume in different ways that what people say can replace direct observations; they often assume that with sufficient numbers of people or sufficient thematic saturation, doubts about validity can be assuaged; and they frequently make an implicit assumption that specific aspects of people’s lives can be studied separately from other aspects of their lives. We argue that while these issues have usually been raised in Indigenous and Feminist research critiques because standard methods do not work well, they apply to all research. We present two hybrid procedures which combine the less frequently used research methods and which overcome some of the issues we raise against both qualitative and quantitative methods. While not new or final methods, we hope that they might encourage community researchers to use intensive research methods more.

Research is about observing events systematically and making sense of what we observe in different ways. There are many ways to do this in community psychology, and this paper aims to raise some discussion points about how well we are doing research. As a thought piece, rather than a review paper or a data paper, we will first discuss some problematic issues shared by the common forms of both quantitative and qualitative research, and then suggest how the wider range of methods available can be used more easily by presenting two ‘hybrid’ procedures which we use. Because our main aim is to discuss these new ways to combine best practices so they get used more often, rather than a full review of research issues, we have kept referencing to a minimum. But we acknowledge that we are not the first to make all these discussion points and that they do not apply to all qualitative or community researchers.

Some General Issues with Verbal Report Methods in Psychology

In all fields of research, it is frequently difficult to observe the subject matter directly so use is made of indirect methods. In the social sciences, when researching people, this has most frequently meant talking to people about events in lieu of actually observing those events directly. Recent methods, such as those coming from discourse analysis, postmodern and poststructuralist approaches, and other ‘post-internal’ or contextual perspectives (Guerin, 2016a, 2016b), are a little different because it is the talking itself (or writing) that we directly observe, along with the contexts for that talking. But in most social science research, talking to people is very frequently a substitute for directly observing. This includes interviewing, surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups.

A big change occurred a few decades ago in psychology (following the other social sciences) with an increase in the use of ‘qualitative methods’ as a way of avoiding the earlier experimental approaches which only allowed direct observation in quantitative forms, or allowed verbal reports in questionnaires if they were turned into numeric data. These changes in psychology opened up new methodologies and ways of learning about people, and much good has come from it — we are hearing and sometimes observing things
and events we did not before. There are numerous and varied approaches under this heading of qualitative research (e. g., Wertz et al., 2011; Willig, 2008; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008), but, as we will see, much qualitative research now involves only talking to people rather than any direct observation of the events by researchers — typically interviews and focus groups. There are other issues still, which are not resolved (e. g., Brink, 1987; Golafshani, 2003; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011), and this paper is aimed at discussing some of these issues and suggesting practical ways in which community psychologists might consider including a wider range of the ‘qualitative’ research methods in their practice.

To demonstrate this and set the scene for what follows, we did a quick and informal tally from the last few years of The Australian Community Psychologist. There were three papers with no data (theoretical or conceptual rather than archival), eight using interviews (one combined this with focus groups), five using questionnaires (all online), and none with direct researcher observations. So, for what follows, note that all these involved the participants writing or talking. Note also that the questionnaires all took between 15 and 20 minutes with no personal contact. The interviews ranged from 15 to 180 minutes with most consisting of between 30-60 minutes of personal contact. When we did the same informally for international community psychology journals, the results were very close to these. (Note, finally, that two of these ACP papers were by one of the authors of this paper; we are not claiming sainthood here).

Our point here is not about the numbers of studies per se but about the high use of talking or writing as a substitute for observing participants or participating with them in their lives more closely. The problem for us is also that talking to people can be interpreted in different ways. For example, researching events such as ‘talking about one’s feelings’ can currently be seen in diverse and somewhat contradictory ways:

(Type 1) as indirect observations by the researcher but in which the participants are assumed to be directly observing their own ‘feelings’ and then reporting these to the researcher;

(Type 2) as indirect observations by the researcher in which the participants report their observations of some sort of ‘real’ events (usually still talked about as ‘internal’, ‘experienced’ or ‘perceived’) but which get labelled as ‘feelings’ by them when talking or writing;

(Type 3) as direct observations by the researcher of participants’ discourses about feelings and some of the surrounding social contexts for producing those discourses, but not worrying about the actual status of the ‘feelings’ which are talked about.

These three ways of treating the very same interview or questionnaire about ‘feelings’ are different in many ways (cf. Mills, 1940; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). The first version makes assumptions that there are indeed things or events called ‘feelings’ which the persons themselves can directly observe and then report but which no one else can observe more directly than this (standard interviewing and questionnaire methods, phenomenological interpretations). The second makes assumptions that the person can report some sort of things or events which they label as ‘feelings’ but about which we cannot say or observe more (more critically based interviewing and questionnaire methods, socially constructed interpretations). The third version is the only one that can clearly be called direct observation, but it is directly observing what is said and the contexts in which things are said rather than observing what are referred to as the ‘feelings’ themselves at all (discourse and conversational analysis, contextual analysis, social strategic interpretations, ‘what is this talk being used for in its context?’).

Overwhelmingly in psychology, there has been a history of treating what people say as being either reporting a ‘direct observation’ but allowing this to be of something hidden ‘inside’ them (Type 1), or else as indirect observations of things and event around them in their world (Type 2; Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007). Your strength of trust in these might change depending upon whether you ask people to report on ‘feelings’ (“How did you feel?”),
events that have occurred (“Were you scared at the time?”), or more concrete reports (“Did you run away?”). Trust in the latter is higher although discursive and contextual analyses (Type 3) would still question whether the verbal answer was a social strategy just to impress the researcher or something else rather than a report from direct observation. That is, it would still be contextualized and not taken for granted.

A frequent use of verbal reports from questionnaires and surveys is to turn them into a form of numbers afterwards: a series of questions is asked and then the responses coded into numbers. But there are problems with these numbers, such as often treating them in retrospect as if they were direct observations, since they appear now to be ‘hard’ numeric data. These numbers look even more like ‘hard’ data through the later use of statistical tests, but such tests bring with them even more a priori assumptions and theorization or modelling. This methodological use of verbal reports has been increasing again in the past decade, with internet surveys now being a very common research strategy even within community psychology.

A Critical Look at Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

We have purposely avoided going into questions of traditional epistemology and ontology here, of whether there really are such things or events called ‘feelings’ and how we would know this, because diverse theories still exist in psychology about such questions and we do not think an ‘answer’ is relevant here for our purposes. Our concern is about the over-use of verbal reports of all sorts (whatever the interpretation) and the under-utilization of other methods in community psychology which might clarify the issues with verbal reports. One can believe that reporting ‘feelings’ in a questionnaire or interview is a report of ‘direct, lived experience’ or phenomenological awareness (Type 1), is a social construction of other events (Type 2), or is a strategy to impress people (Type 3), but in the end the methods give us the same verbal reports with little other observed context (because any ‘context’ is also verbally reported by the participants).

Within the present perspective as so far framed, there are three other questions which need more discussion: one is about the still lingering question of whether or not people should be conferred the status of observers when talking about their experiences and lives; a second is about the time we spend as researchers with our participants before declaring we understand something about them; and the third is about what happens after the verbal reports are documented. We will discuss these three questions and then propose some other methodologies that answer most of the problems raised. Of special interest in the arguments below is that there is little or no difference between the qualitative and quantitative methods most commonly used—questionnaires, survey, interviews or focus groups.

The status of people talking about their experiences and lives

The first issue, deriving from what has been said earlier, is the unanswered question of the observational status of people reporting on things and events rather than the researcher observing (which to be sure has other issues of observational accuracy). The recent history of psychology shows that self-reporting of ‘internal processes’ is the main data collection strategy (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007), but there have long been critics of the ability of participants to report on their ‘mental processes’ (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) and critics of the actual existence of ‘internal’ or ‘mental’ processes (Guerin, 2016a). For example, many have suggested that social and cultural contexts have a substantial influence on how experiences are thought and talked about (Guerin, 2016b; Luhrmann, Padmavati, Tharoor, & Osei, 2015; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). So, reports purported to be about ‘inner’ or ‘private’ events are likely to be based on ways of talking about thinking influenced by social knowledge present in the particular context but which are not recorded (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Mills, 1940; Potter & Hepburn, 2005).

One point to note is that a demarcation is sometimes erected in these debates between the qualitative and the quantitative methods, with the assumption usually being that verbal reports given for ‘in-depth interviews’ qualify as more
credible reports than what is given by participants in questionnaires or surveys (Koven, 2011; Potter & Hepburn, 2012), whereas we argue below that the lack of context and the research social relationships are not very different between the two types of reports. It is worth pointing out, then, as others have done (e.g. Crowe & Sheppard, 2010), that there might not be such a big difference between ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ methods, and much depends upon how you conceive the causes or contexts for human behaviour and thought (Guerin, 2016b). Two assumptions commonly made and which are bound to be wrong at least some of the time will be mentioned.

The first assumption to be questioned is that the qualitative verbal reports from interviews and focus groups have more credibility or authority than questionnaire verbal reports. If we go back to the introductory remarks and the three interpretations of talking about ‘feelings’, then interviews and focus groups are still asking people to report on events and treating those answers as observational reports (not as discourses in context). In general, people are engaged for 30-60 minutes and asked to talk about a series of open or closed topics, alone or in (focus) groups. These can be specific questions, similar to questionnaires, or they can be open-ended leaving a broader range of what might be reported. But all this still relies on the basic assumption that what is told to the interviewer is either a direct or an indirect report of some thing or event, and still usually an ‘inner’ or ‘lived experience’ event not available to the researcher.

The challenge here is that if the ‘qualitative’ reports are treated the same as the quantitative data, as direct or indirect observations of events and not as discourse in context (Type 3), then there can be little difference between the two. Qualitative verbal reports have no intrinsically greater credibility or authority than quantitative verbal data. Hence, qualitative verbal reports should only be considered more credible if more detailed information or context is collected compared to quantitative verbal reports, but this requires more time and effort on part of the researcher.

The methodological procedures we will propose later are aimed at increasing this and thus improving the common styles of qualitative research.

The second common assumption we will discuss as being essentially the same in both ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ methods is that while the validity of individual verbal reports might be doubted, it is often thought that you can overcome this problem by getting more. Both the qualitative and the quantitative methods try to do this in what turns out ironically to be very similar ways. For quantitative methods, the strategy is to get the average, mean or modal scores across larger numbers of people to gain assurance in their verbal reports; for qualitative methods it means doing more until we get ‘thematic saturation’ or ‘interpretive agreement’ from focus groups or interviews. Both of these are meant to give us extra trust in the results found, but the core issue of the ‘source’ of these reports given earlier is still untouched.

There are serious issues, therefore, with both the ‘quantitative’ and the ‘qualitative’ approaches of getting ‘more of the same’ in order to validate information, primarily the assumption that ‘repetition’, ‘saturation’ and ‘agreement’ mean that something must be true, even though it does not follow logically and depends on knowing more of the context. Neither finding a strong central tendency in the numbers nor finding that themes are being repeated by most participants mean that they are signalling ‘correct’ answers about the world even for those individuals who were verbally reporting. At the most, it could mean that the researcher has either stumbled upon a fairly homogenous sample or else has produced a repeatedly homogenous context for their interviews or questionnaires so the answers are similar. Homogeneity does not equate to truth. A stable mean value or consistent participant interview reports can also mean that everyone just has the same verbal story about the world — and the world might have nothing to do with that story (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). This is true of both larger sample sizes in quantitative data and thematic saturation in qualitative methods. Once again, we will advocate, as others do, that getting more of the context and
observing diverse situations with participants is more important than finding homogeneity. **The time spent engaged with people in research**

The second similar issue for both ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ methods which was mentioned earlier, concerns the time spent engaged with people while observing them or getting them to talk. Whether questionnaires, surveys, focus groups or interviews, and whether analysed quantitatively or qualitatively, another similarity is that a maximum period of 30-60 minutes is usually deemed sufficient time for a person to give sufficient direct or indirect (depending upon your theoretical stance) reports on their life. So again, this similarity covers the most commonly used ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ methods—it is not unique to one or the other. It appears that we believe we can understand people and their worlds through 30-60 minutes of their time, although we probably would not say the same if we were the participant.

One response to this problem, mainly in psychology, is to conduct ‘longitudinal’ research instead of cross-sectional research. However, our reading of these methods in practice, even in some community research, is that these cases almost always consist of using the quick cross-sectional methods, but merely repeated after a break of a few days, a week, or a few months. You might do a 30-minute interview or a questionnaire and then another (or even the same) interview or questionnaire six months later and call this longitudinal research. In the terms we will develop below, this is a repeated, cross-sectional method but it is not an ‘intensive’ or ‘engaged’ method — in the sense of intensively engaging with the people and documenting their contexts over a long time. It still consists of the collection of verbal reports in one of the two senses given earlier (Type 1 or 2).

There are other methods which are included in ‘qualitative methods’ packages and textbooks which are certainly intensive research and engage people and contexts fully, such as participatory research, ‘ethnography’, and some forms of discourse analysis or conversational analysis. From our loose sampling of *ACP* earlier, however, these seem to be rarely used outside of some sociology and much of social or cultural anthropology. We will refer to these later and describe them in more detail, but here we would like to suggest a few reasons why the longer methods might not be used more often in psychology. Why do we mainly conduct research of 30-60 minutes?

The first reason that longer, intensive methods such as participatory research and ethnography might not be commonly used is because such methods are obviously time and resource intensive. It is often the case that the length of either interviews or questionnaires is restrained by conditions extraneous to the research method itself, such as the researcher’s time, research money, goals of the research, pressure for publications, or simply effort. This should not be an excuse in research but it seems that unless an argument can be made that the research questions specifically deserve increased time, need researcher involvement, or must engage intensively with the people and contexts, the quicker methods have been assumed to be satisfactory. Such arguments, however, once again depend upon the implicit theories and ideas of the researcher, and we will see examples below of this with ‘compartmentalization’ and ‘context’. For example, in most of the history of psychology there has been no ‘need’ for these methods because psychological theories were about self-contained ‘individuals’ who could be understood outside of their contexts, and so everything needed for research lay ‘within them’ (Rose, 1996).

For us, however, these resource decisions seem a matter of professional acquiescence rather than methodological rigour — many psychologists, and in turn many community psychologists, have implicitly agreed that we can get away with the quicker methods of questionnaires or interviews without discussion. Social anthropologists, however, would argue that there is no point in using quicker methods because you will not find answers that way no matter what you do and, moreover, you will have no way even of checking any answers either with the participant nor with the context, because the data collection and the social relationships is over after its generation (a point to which we will return). So as professionals,
they would not acquiesce to this.

There is another subtle reason we wish to offer, however, as to why longer methods are rarely used in psychology and even community psychology and this will become important for discussing Indigenous and Feminist research later on. This reason is because the research questions are commonly very specific, especially if they are theory-driven questions, and there is an assumption that such specific questions can be answered more easily with a specific (and rapid) methodological focus. If you wish to find out whether school children who eat vegetables for school lunch have more energy for sports after school, you surely do not need to know everything about those children — their home life, their study habits, or their religious practices. You can do far more specific research to answer that question without having to intensively engage with the people involved. Having a 30-60 minute interview or questionnaire should be enough.

However, this kind of research (very common in psychology) which ‘taps’ into the answers of a very limited number of participants to check whether or not a very specific theory is correct, creates a complicated self-reproducing bias. This is because the assumption that a 30-60 minute interview or questionnaire should be enough, again depends on further hidden assumptions. The main assumption we wish to draw attention to is one that suggests life activities are mostly separated and unrelated on the whole. In western modernity there is indeed clearly more ‘compartmentalization’ of life between the different activities and social relationships in which we engage (Bailey, 1971; Guerin, 2016b, 2017); what goes on in the gym does not usually appear to impact much on home life, school or work life. So, in a patently othering endeavour, time-intensive research methods can be deemed necessary only for investigating people who live in kin-based communities in which everything is done with family and community and is less compartmentalized, so we need to collect more contextual information (the typical social anthropological situation), but not in most families in western societies who live in modern societies. We will come back to this when considering Indigenous research methods.

This idea of ‘compartmentalization in life means quick research is acceptable’ also seems justified when it is assumed that what brings about behaviour in one part of a person’s life is unrelated to what goes on in the rest of their life. That is, minimal time engagement also presupposes that we can break people’s actions and behaviours into situational units and explain them without needing to reference the many other parts of their lives — for example, what brings about a child eating vegetables at school has little relevance to their life or social relationships outside of school. But from many viewpoints, including system theories, ecological theories, and contextual theories, this is a very risky assumption at best, and, moreover, has the problem that if we do not do more intensive research over time we will never find out whether this is even justified or not.

**What happens post-verbal reports or post-interviews?**

The final issue to raise as common to both the qualitative and quantitative methods is that both groups of methods have a finishing point and there is no more data or information after that. Whether a long or short questionnaire, a long or short interview (‘in-depth’ often seems to just mean longer rather than a more systematic collection of contextual observations), the methods at that point finish and the results are written on whatever is then in front of the researcher—you cannot go back to the participants again to clarify anything.

This issue, however, is again based on assumptions about the nature of people’s lives and their abilities to report on their lives. For example, it assumes that there is a certain stability in the lives of participants, or that a type of totalizing is possible by putting together many cross-sectional reports. But the worst aspect, however, is that some researchers take the lack of full story (because they stopped recording after 30 minutes) as an opportunity to theorize or interpret the rest. We argue that this post-interview or post-questionnaire interpreting, extrapolating, informing, or modelling, usually found in the Discussion sections of published papers, is actually a response to the researcher not continuing to talk to the people or engage with them, rather than a
reflection of the limits to what people can actually report. Theorizing can be seen in this way as a limit of the researcher’s engagement and observations, not of the participants’ abilities.

Theorising, modelling or analysing should not be about explaining what was not observed because the research was short. Theorising, rather, should be about mapping the common connections between many diverse observations of context, and the connections should be clearly present in the documented data (which takes more time). Essentially, the observations should directly inform the theory. The theories should not arise due to a lack of observations.

To summarize, we have argued that there is less difference between the commonly used qualitative and quantitative methods than is often thought. Put into the dimensions of research methods we have used here, they both: are typically short-term methods collecting verbal reports in different ways; do not give intensive engagement of people and their contexts; assume in different ways that what people tell us can substitute for direct observations, which only works if you assume people can authentically report on “inner” states; assume that with sufficient numbers of people or thematic saturation, any doubts about validity can be assuaged; and assume that the different aspects of people’s lives can be usefully studied separate from other aspects of their lives and then reconstituted later with a sort of totalization.

Other Ways of Doing Research

Before making some suggestions for two ways to help overcome at least some of the problems and issues given above, we will briefly discuss some of the ‘other’ methods available but which do not seem (to us) to be used often. Our two ‘hybrid’ procedures are combinations of these methods rather than anything we have invented, but packaged in ways that we hope might be more palatable for uptake by community researchers. It also shows the ways in which we can learn from Indigenous and Feminist research methods while researching with any group of participants, and how time-intensive research can be used fruitfully with western participants who might not be in kin-based communities (Guerin, 2016b).

Participatory research

What we describe below as ‘embedded research’ most clearly draws on participatory research, but our main problem with the latter term is that it is used differently by researchers. We have read papers where it is used to refer to living on a 24/7 basis for some years with a group of people (e.g., Desmond, 2012), all the way to conducting interviews twice with the same people and calling that ‘participatory’. Participation can also mean participating in either just the issue under investigation or else in all facets of life, and in the latter becomes close to ethnography but without the overall picture being sought. It can range from living with the people to meeting up with them once a month for a chat.

There is another use of this term, often called ‘participant observation’, which can be very different to what we are describing. These methods typically refer to making observations of participants but without getting involved or very engaged with them in what they are doing. That is, participant observation is often more ‘hands off’, observing your participants at a distance (or even hidden sometimes). Our use of ‘participatory research’, is very much ‘hands on’ and involved, which encourages us to learn more about the contexts during any research, and the contexts across the ‘compartments of people’s lives.

Participation for this paper, like most sociological uses of the word, means time spent in two main endeavours: developing a relationship with the participant and learning about the broader context of the participants’ lives (but perhaps not everything about them, à la ethnography below). Embedded research, described later, is a shorter form of participatory research in the traditional sense.

There are many advantages to such intensive methods over both current qualitative and quantitative verbal methods—such as being able to gauge during the research whether, in fact, you should be doing a different methodology such as fuller participatory research or ethnography. For example, you can discover during your research that you and everyone needs to have a better contextual
picture of the whole community or groups, even when trying to understand some little events (cf. Malinowski, 1922; Schieffelin, 1976), and so you can begin a wider ethnography (e. g., Guerin, Elmi, & Guerin, 2006). We believe that this reflexivity of working with the data and turning to participants when aspects become unclear, needs to be part of the methodology, analysis, and theorising for further research. It cannot be done with research methods that are brief and the contact then ceases.

So, whether compartmentalisation is important or not for your participants should be discovered during participatory research rather than assumed, which was the problem discussed earlier. Likewise, full contextual observations can be made both by the researcher and from verbal reports of participants and, even more importantly, any questions can be discussed with participants and others during the research to clarify any complexities. Each of these points means that much of the later interpretation and theorising disappears.

**Ethnography**

It is not always clear what is meant by ethnography, and research papers describe ethnography in different ways (Blackman, 2007; Hillyard, 2010; Ingold, 2008; Maton, 1993; Perlmutter, 2015; White, Drew, & Hay, 2009). Some argue that ethnography is not actually a research method; it is a way of analysing and presenting contextual data about a particular group of people into a whole, meaningful picture or presentation (a bit like we use ‘procedure’ below). Ethnography, therefore, usually includes some form of participatory research approach to get the wider contextual data (for example, Luhrmann, Nusbaum, & Thisted, 2010), but with additional research methods to fill out whatever context needs reporting. We have, however, read one study which conducted very formal interviews but described the research as ethnography merely because the participants were from a community; and sometimes the term is just plain misused (Millen, 2000).

For us, the key distinguishing feature of ethnography is that it aims to present a whole and complete picture, context or understanding of a group of people, and is not just focused on one or two issues (whether or not it should even be called a research method). So, an ethnography of a refugee community would present a complete picture of the community and how it was functioning in all or many aspects. This goes back to the term itself, as a picture (graph) of a specific group (ethnos).

In much of the first part of this paper we were suggesting that more of the context is needed to understand even specific issues, so methods of participatory research and ethnography are useful for this, but perhaps not as much as traditional ethnographies have attempted. Rather than spending two or three years working with and living in a community, such research would be for a shorter period, albeit with the same researchers hopefully carrying out a series of embedded research projects and therefore building up experience with the community (Desmond, 2012; B. Guerin & Guerin, 2007; P. Guerin & Guerin, 2007). Moreover, many of the overall descriptions of communities will have already been done and embedded researchers would learn from those even before commencing. For example, if you were to work with a Sudanese community in an urban setting, you would be wise to read ethnographies (in the traditional sense) of Sudanese communities in the Sudan from both early reports and recent reports, and also read ethnographies of urban or refugee Sudanese where such research exists. All that you read would need to be checked during your research with your participants, of course.

**Case-studies**

Many of the methods for getting better contextual descriptions and for checking whether compartmentalisation is present, are also found in case-study approaches (Flyvbjerg, 2006). A bit like ethnography for a whole community, a case-study of one or two people requires much contextual detail and therefore needs to utilize time-intensive methods, such as repeated interviewing or participatory research methods. The only real differences are that fewer participants are engaged in case-studies than in most participatory research, and that case-studies have often been conducted without a strong social relationship with the ‘case’ and without participation in many facets of their lives. We can certainly learn from case-study approaches and from oral historians, and in
their methods of write-up (Lee, 2009) to overcome the issues raised in the first part of this paper.

**Indigenous and Feminist research**

Through all the historical developments and arguments in psychology around qualitative and quantitative methods there were two very different ruptures which came with Indigenous research methods and Feminist research methods. These ruptures were not just about qualitative versus quantitative methods even though many researchers saw them in that way. These two perspectives really brought into the debate some whole new dimensions which have still not properly been addressed (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Geia, Hayes, & Usher, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Kowalsky, Verhoeof, Thurston, & Rutherford, 1996; Kusow, 2003; Letherby, 2003; Martin & Mirrabooka, 2003; Mihesuah, 1998; Mutua & Swadener, 2004; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008; Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005). While these were not so much new research techniques or practices as much as they were new ways of conducting the research practices, they are still important and affect what is found by the research; Indigenous and Feminist research methods are more than just trying to conduct nicer research with some specific groups. We identify here at least three features of both Indigenous and Feminist research methods which address some of the issues we raised earlier.

First, the changes proposed by these research methods had a moral imperative propelling them. They were not about finding new methods of research to get better objectivity or validity — though, from our perspective they produce greater levels of both. Rather, they were happening because there were serious life issues with Indigenous communities and with women that needed addressing with research guidance, and the contemporary research methods were failing to do this (for brevity, we have left out researchers from other minority groups who had the same problem, Leugi & Guerin, 2016). People proposing these methods could plainly see what was happening but the methods, both qualitative and quantitative, could not deliver observations in a way that would convince anyone in or out of the communities. Issues could be directly seen by the people on the ground but the current methodologies were not able to document them in systematic ways.

Second, and directly related to the present paper, Indigenous and Feminist research methods were some of the first to seriously make explicit that social science research methods were not tools, instruments, or precision methods, like a clock or a micrometer, but fundamentally **social relationships** in which one person watched or talked to another person and tried to learn from this (and they wanted a new type of research social relationship). It was understood that the heart of social research was about the social relationships between researchers and the participants, and that using traditional research roles stemming from physics (researcher studies objective matter maps onto researcher studies objective, socially-distanced participants) were not suited for working with Indigenous communities or women. Such inadequacy of research methodologies towards Indigenous peoples and women was obvious from the fact that academia did not establish any long-lasting dialogue with either population, just a 30-60 minute questionnaire or interview as we saw earlier.

”Wahwayle opiic’iya is a valued behavior among traditional Lakota… It means that one doesn’t splash onto the scene, but observes quietly and then integrates one’s behavior to fit the situation without compromising their own character. When compared with the Euro-American need to always be right, to control, and to have everything validated by their own science, one can begin to see why there are such differences between tradition-oriented indigenous peoples and white people.” (Little Thunder, 2004, p. 72)

The questioning of traditional research social roles is not new, and much has been said about it, though little has been done about it. But it became apparent that the qualitative methodological ‘revolution’ only seemed to substitute 30-minute verbal interviews for questionnaires, and in doing this still only gave about five minutes for ‘establishing rapport’
before the interview.

For us, research as social relationship has been true of all research, but usually hidden. For both interviews and questionnaires, the social relationships were actually already built into the design itself, in that the only social relationships were western contractual relationships between strangers (Guerin, 2016b). Questionnaires and surveys seemed to have no social relationships involved and this was even taken to be good for ‘objectivity’. However, these methods did have social relationships at the core but the methods — whether interviews, focus groups or questionnaires — tacitly presupposed only western and modernistic forms of ‘stranger’ or contractual social relationships. The researcher gives you promises and you give information, and we have no other obligations beyond that (therefore excluding the moral imperatives of Indigenous and Feminist research mentioned above).

It was no accident, then, in our view, that the frustration with the actual social relationships built into both interview and questionnaire methods were made most explicit by those promulgating Indigenous and Feminist research methods. The forms of social relationships in Indigenous communities (kin-based, Guerin, 2016b) are usually very different to those in standard western societies, and the power differences are large between the researchers and female participants. So, it was no wonder that this was where the ruptures first appeared: the less intensive methods became unstuck and were seen to be lacking, both qualitative or quantitative. The point here, however, is not that all Indigenous communities and women require a long, intensive form of research whereas ‘other’ western people do not; the point for us is that these two areas of methodology were where the issues were first questioned but they apply to everyone. The contractual or ‘stranger’ relationships of ‘westerners’ are just as complex, and affect behaviours and what is said in interviews and on questionnaires, but they are bound up in capitalism, bureaucracies, western forms of hidden patriarchies, and other facets of modern life.

One final feature of the social relationship basis to research is important. Any social relationships, whether stranger-based or kin-based, require some form of reciprocity; you must give something back to maintain real relationships (Guerin, 2016b). This is a point strongly marked in Indigenous and Feminist research: if you are an academic researcher, what are you giving to the community or what are you doing through your research in order to improve the lives of participants? Contractual relationships are built typically on money or words (promises), which is exactly what we find in the common quantitative and qualitative methods — money, a lottery or gift cards (Guerin, 2016b). With Indigenous and Feminist research, the researchers need to put more thought and discussion into what benefits the research will bring to the people getting involved; this is part of any social relationship but it is made explicit in such research.

The third feature of Indigenous and Feminist research methods to highlight is that they seriously questioned the (western) compartmentalization of people’s lives and relationships mentioned earlier (Guerin, 2016b). Once again, this first happened in Indigenous and Feminist research probably because there is less compartmentalization for many in those populations due to different factors: diverse kinship systems and kin-based communities for many Indigenous peoples; and western women having most parts of their lives governed by large societal forces out of their control (such as the effects of patriarchy and unequal opportunities). Neither of these could be properly documented as context by any of the usual, short-term methods such as interviews or questionnaires (even if theorized afterwards in the Discussion). Where can these links get an airing in questionnaires or interviews about specific topics? But again, this does not mean that those advances should be limited to Indigenous community research and Feminist research only. Again, we believe the advances should be more widespread, or that any contra case must not be assumed — as it has been — but proven.

These three points are not meant to detract from Indigenous and Feminist research methods — #allparticipantsmatter — it is merely that the issues arose there first. Clearly there are
Feminist research is that we need to find out from the ruptures created by Indigenous and to be dealing with. what sorts of social relationships we are likely one part of their lives affects the other parts, or assumptions as to whether and how much of research, we must find out (research) the research begins, or indeed as part of any experience within the research to make sense of such economic contexts which need to be known those experiences arose in social, cultural and someone will not affect each other. Whatever reports of someone would not do what we find they do if they were not compartmentalized. It therefore still needs to be documented in the research, rather than assumed a priori to be irrelevant, as has been happening all along.

The point then, for this paper, is that Indigenous and Feminist research methods are not new types of methods mainly applicable to Indigenous communities and women (so most researchers can ignore them), but that scholars in these areas have made important original methodological advances which enhance any research, requiring more description of the social, political and cultural contexts for any peoples and without assuming this is known already. The points made by these research methods apply to everyone in different ways, and the issues affect the use of all research methods with all people. At the least, we have to observe and document to contexts for behaviour before assuming specific parts of someone’s life can be researched separately and will not affect each other. Whatever reports of someone’s phenomenal ‘lived experiences’, those experiences arose in social, cultural and economic contexts which need to be known within the research to make sense of such ‘lived experience’ reports.

What this really means is that before any research begins, or indeed as part of any research, we must find out (research) the contexts of the people before making assumptions as to whether and how much of one part of their lives affects the other parts, or what sorts of social relationships we are likely to be dealing with.

For us, the methodological advance from the ruptures created by Indigenous and Feminist research is that we need to find out these contextual details with any research before the research begins or as the first step of the research, and stop making assumptions based on stereotypes or ignorance, which are then fed into theories after we have made limited short-term observations. This is most obvious when working with Indigenous peoples or with women, but should apply to all research. Going back now to the first part of this paper, the problem is that such engaged or intensive research methods are rarely used nowadays.

Two Hybrid Procedures to Overcome Many of the Issues Raised

This paper has suggested that research methods need to: incorporate more intensive and lengthy observations of people and their contexts within established social relationships; use more direct observation; either study people’s talking as events in themselves (discourse analysis or contextual analysis) or find ways to get more observations or assurances about people’s verbal reporting of the events in their lives; and should document more about a person’s life contexts across all ‘compartments’ regardless of the research question since to not do this is already to make assumptions. Finally, research methods need to better develop the framework in which research is seen primarily as a social relationship, whether: totally contractual relationships between strangers (surveys, return-mail questionnaires); brief acquaintanceships forged by short ‘rapport building’ (most interviews); long and intensive research relationships; or people researching their own communities with whom they have spent all their lives.

While long-term participatory research overcomes most of these problems, especially if done within an Indigenous or Feminist framework, with strong consultation, and with more contextual descriptions, most researchers would consider that this takes too long. Whether this is ‘too long’ for grants, careers, publications, or whatever, our view is that there is actually no way around this and we have to face up to the possibility that if we actually wish to understand people and what they do, then we will need to use more intensive and participatory methods. Anything less will have the issues outlined above, and for most of those issues we have noted that it has probably only
been professional acquiescence which has allowed ‘research as usual’ — that is, we have all agreed tacitly to ignore the issues when we write and when we review publications.

In the meanwhile, in trying to encompass some of these points and avoid ‘research as usual’ we have been using two hybrid — as it were — ‘packages’ of research methods that give us more assurance of the results while not taking too much longer than current methods. These are not new methods we have invented, just two bundles, so to speak, of current methods that encompass and answer many of the issues raised throughout this paper for both quantitative and qualitative research. They encourage and utilize most of the methods proposed for Indigenous and Feminist research, which, as we have argued, are important for researching any groups of people. So instead of a 30-60 minute interview, they conduct several interviews (or conversations) with the same person and thoroughly explore all those areas of contention mentioned earlier which are based on your implicit assumptions about verbal reports, compartmentalization or context.

Perhaps the most important feature is that these methods, unlike questionnaires, surveys, interviews and focus groups, allow researchers to do further checking during the research itself with the same participants if any doubts are raised, either by themselves or by the participants. Whatever potential issues with the validity or assurance in either your findings or your analyses, you can talk this through with the participants themselves, as occurs already for good Indigenous and Feminist research.

For the research we do, these two procedures have become like minimum standards for confidence in what is documented. One is longer and more intensive than the other, although neither can fully replace real long-term participatory research where this is feasible.

As a final but important note, all the research processes outlined below will depend on getting ethical approval and approval by the participants and their communities. Where appropriate, this needs to be obtained first, and not just assumed, by involving your participants in the planning of research and the ethics involved. If people do not want these sorts of intensive research contact, then they should not be used: we are not advocating that these are better methods and that they must always be used from now on. Research methods always involve social relationships (even questionnaires, as we have argued earlier) and these need to be ethically approved and voluntary in all senses.

**Conversational Research**

The first hybrid combines what we have learned from Indigenous and Feminist research methods and from social anthropologists, after considering all the issues in this paper. These are not new techniques we have invented. What we have done is to place the best methods for over-coming the problems raised in this paper into two forms which can be easily followed and will therefore hopefully encourage more community and other researchers to do something similar to these. The main procedures to follow of this first hybrid are that:

- participants are engaged in a stronger social relationship than for interviews or focus groups, and some personal involvement (helping, supporting, other social contact) is not to be frowned upon as ‘tainting the data’ and can even be analysed as an aspect of the research;
- there should always be repeat talks or interviews with the same people (with their prior approval of course);
- the talking is informal, non-interrogative, conversational, chatty, and ‘talking around’ the topics (Pe-Pua, 1989), or what we sometimes refer to in Australian Indigenous contexts as ‘yarning’ (e.g., Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Geia, Hayes & Usher, 2014; Trzepacz, Guerin, & Thomas, 2014);
- the participants can take control of the talking if they wish without interruption or re-focusing back onto the ‘themes’ (and it is likely that they know something you do not);
- if the participants go off-topic this is continued and the original thread can be picked up in the next meeting (but usually any off-topic contextual material will turn out to be useful in ways the researcher does not appreciate at first);
- some direct observations of events should
be done where feasible and ethical (agreed to by all parties) but such research can revolve around conversation mostly;
• the questioning is iterative, meaning that it is based on the prior conversations and new things the participant introduces;
• later conversations can therefore check the earlier material, ask for elaborations and clarifications, and ask for any new ideas which have occurred to the participant since;
• the social relationship should develop beyond ‘getting rapport’ but not usually like a close friendship since there will still have to be an end point unless the researcher is part of that community or will otherwise have an on-going research relationship and commitment to those people.

**Embedded Research**

We use the term ‘embedded research’ to refer to research in which the researcher ‘embeds’ themselves into the lives of the participants for a substantial but not onerous period. The aim is not to record everything about those participants’ lives or cultural practices, but to focus on one or more issues while still documenting as much of the general life context as possible which might be even remotely relevant to understanding those issues. The context is vital to make sense of any situation and the issues being researched (and to avoid theorizing), therefore more contextual information needs to be gathered than occurs with current research methods which assume a strong compartmentalization of our lives. The main points are:

- participants are engaged in a stronger social relationship than for the previous conversational research, and more personal involvement to the point of an acquaintance or friendship (with explicit and mutual approval as always);
- there should be longer times spent together over perhaps a month or more, and the time together is not just for the ‘interviews’ but also some other participation in the person’s life environments (to observe with explicit knowledge and approval);
- you, as a researcher, become ‘embedded’ in their life for a short period (weeks or months) to build (together) a broad contextual view of their life as well as the specific issues being researched, and to make iterative checks with them about what you are documenting and how you are thinking about it;
- you do not live with the people (like some anthropology; see Ingold, 2008) but you spend serious amounts of time with them compared to current research methods;
- the talking is informal, non-interrogative, conversational, chatty, and ‘talking around’ the topics (Pe-Pua, 1989): just like a normal conversation with a friend in fact;
- as many direct observations of events in the person’s life should be done as is feasible and ethical;
- the talking is iterative, meaning that it is based on the prior conversations and events together and new things the participant might introduce, and you can even check or experiment by going together to new places or events to see what happens;
- what you are observing, concluding, seeing, and thinking about, should all be talked through with the participant as they happen and afterwards, and any issues with ‘verbal reports’ can be talked through and more observations made;
- the participants become partners in the research as proposed by many Indigenous and Feminist research methods (i.e., not just a contractual social relationship for a voucher);
- the social relationships should develop beyond ‘getting rapport’ or regular informal talks and perhaps be more like a close friendship (without being fake), but that this is research always still needs to be explicit for ethical reasons.

**A Brief Example**

We will draw on an example to give the idea of these forms of research. This is loosely based on real research but has been made more general for ease of presentation (Rowe, 2015).

First, imagine we wish to find out about the lives of young people who are metalheads...
and have based their lives around metal music at least since high school, perhaps with some specific research questions as well (‘How do they get on with employment after high school?’). We could send them a questionnaire or invite them to meet and do a single 30-minute interview (or one hour for an ‘in-depth’ interview).

The two approaches here, however, would go beyond this. The Conversational Research approach would invite people (young metalheads we will assume) to meet with you two or more times (no need to commit them ahead too much) just to talk about metal in their lives. Each meeting would be somewhere they or you choose (probably not the commonly used ‘coffee shop’ in this case, notice) and you would have topics to discuss but would let them lead whenever possible. You might end up meeting 4-5 times or more and each time check earlier material and find out more, and pick up on themes you had no idea were important when you drew up your research proposal. As reciprocity for the research social relationship you might be able to depart from the usual money or gift cards, and engage in more intensive collaboration to do other things which help or benefit your participants.

With the Embedded Research approach, you would do similar things but also extend the time to participating in events with them (always with permission). You might wander together through the city and get their comments on what they like and dislike; you might go to concerts, or meet them at concerts even if you do not go with them explicitly; you might go to their recording studio and see how that all works for them; or band rehearsal; and you would ask them to alert you to events they are not attending but where you might learn the most about their life as a metalhead. This cannot be mapped out in advance within the research proposal, however. It has to be real and not faked, appeal to and be approved of by the participants, and each person in the ‘sample’ will usually be very different for you. This also means that as reciprocity for the research social relationship you have many other ways of doing other things which help or benefit your participants.

**Conclusions**

We have argued that despite their positive features, there are problematic issues with the current methods commonly used in psychology and community psychology. We have argued in agreement with others that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods might not be useful, and that both sorts of information are important to collect when we are trying to understand how people and communities work.

While very intensive methods such as ethnography and longer participatory methods are perhaps the only way to really understand people and communities fully and with good certainty, we suggested two hybrids which combine features of both but are less time consuming. We hope that this might encourage community researchers to use such methods more rather than the standard practices which have emerged from combining qualitative and quantitative methods over the last decades.

One interesting feature we have found when actually using such methods, even the hybrids, is that it gives you a better appreciation for why the current methods miss out on real contextual understandings, and what can be usefully gained by increasing your commitment to the people and the research process.

Learning so much, and so much background context, when using these methods shapes you (humbles you) into a better appreciation of the people than you will get by reading something like this very paper with all its very logical arguments. You can see in action, as you carry out the research over time, that you are learning more, you are learning with more certainty, and you are learning broader features of the contexts in which people live their lives. It therefore gives one a stronger sense of commitment to the ‘participants’ and their communities, so that shorter forms of quick research no longer seem adequate. There is no going back.
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Men and women’s psychological outcomes in communities affected by bushfires

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This paper aimed to identify men and women’s prevalence and predictors of psychological outcomes, as well as their coping strategies, in communities affected by the October 2013 bushfires in the Blue Mountains region of Australia. 189 participants took part in a paper-and-pencil or online survey that included closed and open-ended questions about their fire- and community-related experiences, psychological outcomes and coping strategies. Almost half of participants reported probable PTSD (45%), while 23% reported psychological distress and 16% reported heavy drinking, with men drinking significantly more than women (OR: 0.41, 95% CI: 0.18-0.91, p = .03). Psychological distress was predicted by higher level of risk during fires, property damage and lower perceived community cohesion, whereas PTSD was predicted by property damage and female gender. Participants named various coping strategies including seeking social and community support, sharing information and resources, and seeking help from professional and volunteer organisations. A few participants also observed gender differences in coping, i.e. some men were perceived to engage more in problem-solving coping, whereas women in accessing emotional-focused strategies. Findings indicate the need to further assess community resilience and how to draw on men and women’s strengths in order to rebuild and promote mental health and wellbeing post-fires.

In the last four decades, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, such as floods and bushfires, has increased worldwide. This trend is predicted to continue due to climate change and global rise in temperatures that is slowly approaching the 2°C limit above pre-industrial levels (Confalonieri et al., 2007; Steffen & Hughes, 2013). Australia is particularly affected by these weather-related changes due to its extreme weather conditions. During the summer of 2012/2013, Australia experienced a series of extreme weather events, including record-breaking heatwaves of 7 consecutive days over 39°C (Steffen & Hughes, 2013). These extreme weather events contributed to the outbreak of a string of bushfires in the Blue Mountains Region, New South Wales, Australia, in October 2013. The October 2013 Blue Mountains bushfires led to the destruction of a total of approximately 200 properties and to the damage of a further 132 properties, affecting areas of Springwood, Winmalee, Mount Victoria, Mount Wilson and Bell (Bushfire Bulletin, 2013). It was one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the Blue Mountains region with an estimated revenue of over 100 million dollars lost as result of a decline in the local tourism industry (Donegan, 2014).

It has been well documented that the psychological costs of bushfires, resulting from the loss of human lives, injuries and destruction of properties, for the affected communities are significant. Psychological distress, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and increased alcohol consumption are most commonly reported by people who have been exposed to bushfires (Bryant et al., 2018; Forbes et al., 2015; Laugharne, Van de Watt, & Janca, 2011; Marshall, Schell, Elliott, Rayburn, & Jaycox, 2007; Raphael & Meldrum, 1993). In some
cases, these mental health impacts can be long-lasting. A study on the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires in Australia found that 1 year after the event, 42% of participants, and 20 months after the event 23% of participants, classified for depression, anxiety or PTSD (McFarlane, Clayer, & Bookless, 1997). In addition to assessing mental health prevalence, a growing body of research has explored factors that may impact the onset of mental health problems in the disaster context. Some of these include the extent of property damage, fear for loved ones or level of risk experienced during fires (Bryant et al., 2014; Forbes et al., 2015; Parslow, Jorm, & Christensen, 2006; Paveglio, Kooistra, Hall, & Pickering, 2016).

Although the psychological outcomes for people who witness destructive bushfires can be significant, and in some cases effects may be long-lasting, it has been recognised that most people are resilient against developing mental health problems (Bonanno, 2004; Parslow et al., 2006). Despite this recognition, there is limited research on the factors that potentially influence people’s resilience and their recovery following bushfires. Some of the factors that have been identified include social and community support but it remains unclear whether these factors may differ for different members of the community (Pooley, Cohen, & O’Connor, 2010).

Recently, some studies have found that men and women may experience and respond differently to the exposure of bushfires (Eriksen, Gill, & Head, 2010; Griffiths, 2010). A review on bushfires in Australia indicated that men may be more likely to stay and fight the fires as leaving and evacuating may be regarded as ‘weak’ or ‘cowardly’, whereas women may be more prone to evacuate early with their children (Griffiths, 2010). These potential gender differences in responding to bushfires may also have an impact on how men and women cope in the aftermath of fires. Research on the psychological outcomes of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Australia found, for instance, that whilst women were more likely to experience elevated rates of PTSD and general anxiety, men were more likely to report an increase in alcohol abuse and risk taking behaviours post-fires (Weiss, Zara, & Parkinson, 2013; Zara & Parkinson, 2013). This may also relate to findings on men and women’s coping strategies for stress in general as it has been well established that women are more likely to use emotion-focused and social strategies, whereas men tend to use more behavioural, problem-focused techniques to manage their stressful experiences (Kelly, Tyrka, Prince, & Carpenter, 2008; Matud, 2004; Ptacek, Smith, & Dodge, 1994). While there is acknowledgement that bushfires in the Australian context may not be gender-neutral occurrences but rather events that could influence gender and identity roles, further research is required to identify men and women’s mental health and recovery needs.

In order to further optimise communities’ resilience post-fires, we need to know more about people’s coping strategies and sources of support and whether these differ for different members of the community. Consequently, this study aimed to estimate the prevalence and predictors of psychological outcomes for men and women in communities affected by the October 2013 bushfires in the Blue Mountains region in Australia, nine months post-fires. It specifically sought to test the following hypotheses: (1) Higher level of risk experienced during the fires, larger extent of property damage, lower perceived community cohesion and not seeking support from anyone predict higher levels of psychological distress, PTSD and alcohol use and (2) Men are more likely to report higher alcohol use, whereas women are more likely to report higher levels of psychological distress and PTSD. The paper also explores the community’s perceived sources of distress and support, as well as whether potential gender differences exist in managing the aftermath of the October 2013 bushfires.

**Method**

*Participants and Procedure*

Institutional ethical approval was granted for this study by the Human
Research Ethics Committee, University of Wollongong (HE14/253). All participants provided informed consent to undertake this research. Participants (aged > 18 years) were recruited from communities in the Blue Mountains nine months after experiencing the bushfires in October 2013. Those bushfires included: (1) The Linksview Road Fire affecting the areas of Springwood and Winmalee, (2) the Mount York Road Fires affecting the areas of Mount Victoria and (3) the State Mine Fire affecting the areas of Mount Wilson and Bell. Each area was rated as high impact (houses lost > 6), medium impact (houses lost: 1-6) and low impact (some damage, no houses lost). People from the affected areas were invited to either complete an online or a paper-and-pencil survey that took approximately 20 minutes to complete. They were informed about the study through multiple newspaper advertisements and recruitment flyers that were distributed across the communities and relevant organisations.

After providing informed consent, participants began the survey. A total of 216 participants, (male = 65, female = 151), started the survey and 189 (male = 56, female = 133; 87%) completed it. Considering the number of items, a 13% dropout was expected (Hoerger, 2010). The majority of participants were born in Australia (male = 49, female = 120) with a minority born in a different country (male = 7, female = 13) including other Anglo-Saxon, European, Asian and African countries. After completing the survey, participants were provided with debriefing information together with online links to relevant websites and local support contacts.

Survey

Data for this study were collected via Survey Monkey software and by paper-and-pencil survey (Survey Monkey, 2015). As part of the survey, participants were asked to complete items on socio-demographic characteristics, experiences of the October 2013 bushfires, community support and attachment, and psychological outcomes. The survey included items sourced from the ‘Beyond Bushfires’ project that assessed psychological outcomes following the Australian Black Saturday bushfires (Gibbs et al., 2013), to facilitate comparison with previous research.

Fire-related experiences and community cohesion

Participants were asked to rate their level of risk for their own safety or family/friends during the October 2013 bushfires on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (‘no risk’) to 5 (‘extreme risk’). Participants were also asked whether their property was damaged or destroyed as a result of the October 2013 bushfires. Answers were scored as ‘no’, ‘yes, there was minor damage’, ‘yes, there was major damage’, or ‘yes, the property was destroyed’.

Participants were also asked about sources of support using an adapted version of the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) (Wilson, Dean, Ciarrochi, & Rickwood, 2005). The GHSQ assesses participants’ likelihood of seeking help from personal or professional sources including family, friends or mental health professionals or whether they did not seek any support, using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (“extremely unlikely”) to 7 (“extremely likely”) for different problem situations. For this paper, the GHSQ was adapted to enquire whether participants sought help following the problem situation of experiencing the October 2013 bushfires.

In addition, participants were asked about their perceptions of community cohesion using an adapted version of the Neighbourhood Cohesion Scale (NCS) (Buckner, 1988). The NCS includes 18 items that assess the concepts of attraction-to-neighbourhood and psychological sense of community on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘strongly agree’). For the purpose of this study, only statements relating to psychological sense of community such as “I feel like I belong to this community” were included in the survey as these were found to be most relevant for assessing community attachment and resilience following the disaster of bushfires (Gibbs et al., 2013). A previous study has found the NCS subscale of psychological
sense of community has achieved good internal consistency with Cronbach’s α of 0.82 and 0.83 (McCulloch, 2003). In the current study, the scale achieved sufficient internal consistency (α = .73).

**Psychological outcomes**

The psychological outcomes assessed for this study included psychological distress, PTSD and alcohol use. In addition to the subsequent measures, the survey asked whether participants had experienced any mental health problems prior to the October 2013 bushfires with answers scored as ‘yes’ or ‘no’. This question was included as a control variable to account for pre-existing mental health issues in the sample.

**Psychological distress.** The 21-item Depression Anxiety and Stress Scales (DASS-21) was used to assess levels of psychological distress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The DASS-21 is a self-report measure that comprises 21 items scored from 0 (‘did not apply to me at all over the last week’) to 3 (‘applied to me most of the time’). Rather than a diagnostic tool, the DASS-21 assesses depression, anxiety and stress on a continuum of severity. Moderate to extreme severity is indicated by a sum $\geq 7$ on the 7-item Depression subscale, a sum $\geq 6$ on the 7-item Anxiety subscale, or a sum $\geq 10$ on the 7-item Stress subscale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). In the remainder of this paper, depression, anxiety and stress are indicated by moderate to extreme levels of severity on the DASS-21 for the assessment of prevalence and the overall DASS-21 sum score is used in the assessment of predictors of psychological distress. The DASS-21 has achieved good to high internal consistency for each subscale in several different community samples with Cronbach’s α ranging from 0.80 to 0.95 (Antony, Bieling, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998). Within this study, each subscale achieved high internal consistency (α = .87-.93).

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.** Probable PTSD was assessed using an abbreviated version of the PTSD Checklist (PCL) (Bliese et al., 2008). The PCL consists of four items that are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (‘not at all’) to 5 (‘extremely’). A score $\geq 7$ on the abbreviated PCL indicates probable PTSD (Bliese et al., 2008; Bryant et al., 2014; Gibbs et al., 2013). The abbreviated PCL has been found to have similar diagnostic utility in comparison to the full-length PCL and has achieved high internal consistency (Price, Szafranski, Van Stolk-Cooke, & Gros, 2016). Similarly to other studies, within this study the PCL achieved high internal consistency (α = .88).

**Alcohol use.** Alcohol use was assessed using the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT-C) (Bush, Kivlahan, McDonell, Fihn, & Bradley, 1998). The AUDIT-C is an abbreviated version of the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test that includes its first three items relating to alcohol consumption, scored from 0-4. The AUDIT-C has been validated to detect heavy drinking in the general population with high internal consistency and sum scores $\geq 6$ for men and $\geq 5$ for women (Aalto, Alho, Halme, & Seppä, 2009; Bryant et al., 2014). Internal consistency for the AUDIT-C was sufficient within the current study (α = .71).

**Open-ended Questions**

Participants were asked about their perceptions of what has been most useful to them in terms of support and coping strategies following the October 2013 bushfires, as well as what has been most distressing to them. They were asked about their perceptions of whether they had noticed any differences between men and women in the way they coped with the aftermath of the October 2013 bushfires: if they answered ‘yes’ they were asked to described these differences. These open-ended questions were used in addition to the closed questions in order to gather more in-depth information on the community’s perceived distress and coping strategies and potential differences between genders.

**Data Analyses**

Statistical analyses were conducted using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 software (IBM Corp, 2013). Prevalence rates for psychological outcomes were calculated...
based on recommended cut-off levels for the individual measures. Chi-square and odds ratio analyses were performed to test for differences between men and women in psychological outcomes. Significant p values, as well as effect sizes Phi $\phi$, were used to interpret findings. Based on Cohen (1992), the following guidelines were used to interpret Phi $\phi$ effect sizes: 0.1 referred to a small effect, 0.3 to a moderate effect and 0.5 or more to a large effect.

To test for predictors of psychological outcomes, separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted. The predictor variables that were tested for each outcome variable included gender, level of risk experienced, extent of damage to property, whether support was sought and community cohesion. The sum scores of the psychological outcome variables psychological distress, PTSD and alcohol use were used for the regression analyses. For each regression analysis, the predictor variable pre-existing mental health problems was entered at step 1 to assess and control for their contribution to psychological outcomes, before entering the predictor variables gender, damage to property, level of risk experienced, whether support was sought afterwards and perceived community cohesion at step 2. Linear multiple regression analysis requires approximately 2 to 10 cases per predictor for an adequate estimation of regression coefficients, standard errors and confidence intervals (Austin & Steyerberg, 2015; Green, 1991).

Open-ended questions were analysed using the text analysis function in the survey software and questionnaire tool SurveyMonkey (Survey Monkey, 2015). The text analysis function automatically highlights distinguishing and frequently used words and phrases by participants. These distinguishing and frequently used words and phrases were then categorised by the authors according to themes relating to participants’ perceived distress and coping strategies for the October 2013 bushfires. After categorising the words and phrases, the text analysis function calculated the percentages of responses for each category (Survey Monkey, 2015).

Results

Participants’ socio-demographic and fire-related characteristics

A majority of participants taking part in the study were born in Australia, had post-school qualifications and employment, lived in couple households and resided in the areas of Springwood and Winmalee at the time of the October 2013 bushfires (see Table 1). Overall men and women had similar socio-demographic characteristics including age, country of origin, employment, education level or household arrangements (all ps > .05, see Table 1).

Almost half of the participants experienced high to extreme risk for their own or their family or friends’ safety during the bushfires and about 20% of participants experienced major property damage as a result of the bushfires. In comparison to men, women reported a significantly higher level of safety risk during the bushfires ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.34, p < .05$) and were more likely to seek support from a family member or mental health professional after the bushfires had taken place ($\chi^2 (1) = 16.71, p < .001$).

Prevalence of psychological outcomes in communities affected by bushfires

About 20% of men and women reported elevated levels of psychological distress including depression, anxiety or stress (see Table 2). In comparison to men, women were significantly more likely to report probable PTSD (OR: 0.51, 95% CI: 0.26-0.97, $p = .04$), with a medium effect size ($\phi = 0.35$). In contrast, men were significantly more likely than women to report incidences of heavy drinking with a small effect size (OR: 0.41, 95% CI: 0.18-0.91, $p = .03$, $\phi = 0.16$). About 30% of participants experienced mental health problems prior to the bushfires.

Predictors of psychological outcomes

To estimate the impact of gender and fire-related experiences on psychological outcomes while controlling for the confounding variable of pre-existing mental health problems, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed. Prior to performing multiple regression analyses, assumptions of normality for criterion
Table 1
Participants’ socio-demographic and fire-related characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Survey total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 189</td>
<td>n = 56</td>
<td>n = 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-demographic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34 years</td>
<td>41 (22)</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
<td>35 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 years</td>
<td>40 (22)</td>
<td>11 (20)</td>
<td>29 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>41 (22)</td>
<td>13 (23)</td>
<td>28 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 years</td>
<td>44 (23)</td>
<td>18 (32)</td>
<td>26 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and older</td>
<td>23 (12)</td>
<td>8 (14)</td>
<td>15 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia-born</td>
<td>169 (89)</td>
<td>49 (88)</td>
<td>120 (90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20 (11)</td>
<td>7 (12)</td>
<td>13 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School qualification only</td>
<td>40 (21)</td>
<td>10 (18)</td>
<td>30 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-school qualification</td>
<td>149 (79)</td>
<td>46 (82)</td>
<td>103 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed/Student</td>
<td>140 (74)</td>
<td>43 (77)</td>
<td>97 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed/Not in the labour force</td>
<td>49 (26)</td>
<td>13 (23)</td>
<td>36 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e.g. retired)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person living alone or with children</td>
<td>35 (19)</td>
<td>11 (20)</td>
<td>24 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couples with or without children</td>
<td>140 (74)</td>
<td>41 (73)</td>
<td>99 (74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14 (7)</td>
<td>4 (7)</td>
<td>10 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Springwood and Winmalee area\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>138 (73)</td>
<td>36 (64)</td>
<td>102 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Victoria area\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>24 (13)</td>
<td>5 (9)</td>
<td>19 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Wilson and Bell area\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>4 (2)</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13 (23)</td>
<td>10 (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fire-related</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member support organisation (e.g.</td>
<td>43 (23)</td>
<td>26 (46)</td>
<td>17 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Fire Service)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of risk during bushfires</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low or considerable risk</td>
<td>111 (59)</td>
<td>38 (67)</td>
<td>73 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High or extreme risk</td>
<td>78 (41)</td>
<td>18 (32)</td>
<td>60 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property damage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/minor damage</td>
<td>156 (82)</td>
<td>47 (84)</td>
<td>109 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major property damage/destruction</td>
<td>33 (18)</td>
<td>9 (16)</td>
<td>24 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought support after the fires</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not seek any</td>
<td>53 (28)</td>
<td>25 (45)</td>
<td>28 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought support (incl. family, mental</td>
<td>136 (72)</td>
<td>31 (55)</td>
<td>112 (79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>health and helpline)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.
\textsuperscript{a} High-impact (houses lost > 6).
\textsuperscript{b} Medium-impact (houses lost: 1-6).
\textsuperscript{c} Low-impact (some damage, no houses lost).
variables and absence of multicollinearity were checked. Results of assumption testing indicated that the criterion variables were skewed and not normally distributed. Multicollinearity testing showed that predictor variables did not correlate highly (all variance inflation factors < 1 and Mahalanobis Distance values < 16) (Field, 2005).

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses, including unstandardized (B) and standardised (β) beta coefficients, as well as squared semi-partial correlations (sr2) for variables associated with psychological distress, PTSD and alcohol use. For psychological distress, results show that after controlling for the impact of pre-existing mental health problems at step 1, the final model at step 2 explained 25% of the variance and was a significant predictor of psychological distress, adjusted R² = 0.254, F (6, 180) = 11.58, p = .000, indicating a moderate effect (Cohen, 1988). When mental health problems were controlled for, the model with the remaining predictor variables accounted for an additional 19% of variance of psychological distress, (R² change = 0.192).

As can be seen in Table 3, the variables that significantly predicted psychological distress included level of risk during the fires, property damage and perceived community cohesion. Note that the beta coefficients for the predictor variable community cohesion were minus, indicating that the higher the levels of perceived community cohesion, the lower the levels of psychological distress.

For PTSD, results indicate that while controlling for pre-existing mental health problems, the final model at step 2 was a significant predictor of PTSD, F (6, 180) = 15.51, p = .000, accounting for 34% of the variance, adjusted R² = 0.341, indicating a moderate effect (Cohen, 1988). When mental health problems were controlled for, the model with the remaining predictor variables accounted for an additional 30% of variance of PTSD (R² change = 0.295). As shown in Table 3, the variables female gender and property damage significantly predicted whether participants experienced PTSD symptoms (see Table 3). After controlling for the effect of pre-existing mental health problems, the final model for alcohol use was not significant, F (6, 180) = 2.18, p = 0.47. The only significant predictor was male gender.
gender, explaining 47% of variability in alcohol use, adjusted $R^2 = 0.037$ (see Table 3). When mental health problems were controlled for, the model with the remaining predictor variables accounted for an additional 7% of variance of alcohol use, ($R^2$ change = 0.067).

Open-ended questions about community’s perceived distress and coping strategies

Several themes emerged from participants’ responses regarding perceptions of their most distressing experiences as a result of the October 2013 bushfires (see Table 4). The most prominent theme related to participants’ direct fire and evacuation experiences (33%). Participants reported that it was highly distressing to witness the actual fire and its damage, as well as being fearful and concerned for loved ones. Damage to property and loss of material and sentimental possessions was also reported as highly distressing (26%). This included, for instance, the loss of childhood memories and dearly loved pets, as well as dealing with the rebuilding process. Another frequent theme included emotions and reflections after the bushfires took place (14%). Participants mentioned worries about experiencing future fires, concerns about their children’s mental health and feeling anxious when being reminded of the fires, e.g. when seeing or smelling smoke. Witnessing other people in the community losing their homes (12%), as well as mismanagement by services (9%) and negative media reporting (6%) were also described as sources of distress for some participants.

Despite the distressing experiences resulting from the October 2013 bushfires, participants named multiple sources of support and strategies of coping. These included most predominantly the perceived strength of the community members to come together and support each other (48%). Participants detailed the many efforts of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Psychological distress$^a$</th>
<th>PTSD$^b$</th>
<th>Alcohol use$^c$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$sr^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems prior to fires</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>0.29***</td>
<td>0.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-2.43</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of risk experienced</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property damage</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether support was sought after the fires</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community cohesion</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.

$^a$ Relates to DASS-21 sum score.

$^b$ Relates to PCL sum score.

$^c$ Relates to AUDIT-C sum score.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$. 

Table 3

Impact of gender, pre-existing mental health problems and fire-related characteristics on psychological outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Psychological distress$^a$</th>
<th>PTSD$^b$</th>
<th>Alcohol use$^c$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$sr^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems prior to fires</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>0.29***</td>
<td>0.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-2.43</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of risk experienced</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property damage</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whether support was sought after the fires</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community cohesion</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
<td>-0.23**</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.

$^a$ Relates to DASS-21 sum score.

$^b$ Relates to PCL sum score.

$^c$ Relates to AUDIT-C sum score.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$. 
family, friends and neighbours to listen to each other in times of distress, to organise community events and to rebuild and repair damaged houses together. In addition, some participants praised the work of local and professional organisations, such as the work of the fire brigades, Salvation Army, Red Cross and numerous evacuation and mental health workers and other services (22%). Although not all participants made use of offered services, many stated “just knowing they were there” was sufficient. Another source of support that participants perceived as helpful included donations and the offering of temporary accommodation to people who had lost their homes (15%). A few participants also appreciated information sessions and materials on how to manage stress and mental health issues and how to best prepare for future fires (9%).

Several themes about perceived potential differences between men and women’s coping strategies emerged from the data. The most frequent theme was perceived gender differences in verbal and emotional
expression (40%), see Table 5. Some participants suggested that men were generally less likely to talk about their feelings and experiences than women. Another theme related to help seeking and accessing support (19%). Some participants were of the opinion that men were less likely to seek professional or personal support in comparison to women. A few participants also perceived differences between men and women in problem solving and behavioural activation (17%). Some participants felt that men responded in more active and practical ways in response to the October 2013 bushfires, while other participants saw women as more assertive in rebuilding. Several participants noted that some men had struggled with the loss of their traditional role in protecting and providing for the family after the bushfires took place. However, others reported that there were no differences between men and women in coping with the October 2013 bushfires, or that differences were due to individual circumstances rather than gender (13%). Discussion

This study aimed to identify men and women’s prevalence and predictors of psychological outcomes and their coping strategies in communities affected by the October 2013 bushfires in the Blue Mountains region. About 20% of participants experienced elevated rates of psychological distress and 16% reported heavy alcohol use following the exposure of the bushfires. These rates correspond to other studies that found increased alcohol consumption and psychological problems 1 year post-disaster (Boscarino, Adams, & Galea, 2006). Almost half of the participants in the current study classified for probable PTSD. Although direct comparisons are difficult to achieve because of differences in sampling methods and assessment tools, the prevalence of PTSD in the current study appears to be comparable or higher to PTSD rates reported in other Australian studies on bushfires (Bryant et al., 2014; McFarlane et al., 1997). PTSD might have been particularly prevalent in the sample of this study as most participants who took part were from areas that suffered a high impact of

### Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Representative Quotes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and emotional expression</td>
<td>“Women got on with organising family normality, men spoke about what happened during the fires in loss of material items.” “Men just withdrew, women wanted to talk about it and debrief.” “Men were a lot less obviously emotional.”</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help seeking and support</td>
<td>“Men were less likely to seek help than women” “Women tended to have more support from friends.”</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving and behavioural activation</td>
<td>“Men were more active and practical.” “Men felt the need to fix everything for their family.”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>“I don’t really know.”</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience and recovery</td>
<td>“I feel the men found it much harder to cope, particularly as they are the ones who are traditionally supposed to provide a home, look after the family, fix any problems, etc, and yet there was a total sense of unempowerment in these things.” “Men wanted to get on with things again.”</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No or individual differences</td>
<td>“Too varied and individual to list.” “Everyone is coping in their own ways depending on circumstance.”</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
destruction. It may also be possible that the prevalence of PTSD was high as participants were assessed only nine months after the bushfires had taken place. The prevalence of PTSD and other mental health symptoms is likely to further reduce as time progresses. Previous research has found that psychological problems significantly improve by 2 years and 5 years post-disaster (Bryant et al., 2018; Norris, Friedman, & Watson, 2002). When examining the prevalence of psychological outcomes, it needs to be taken into account that about 30% of participants in the current study experienced mental health problems prior to the bushfires. Prevalence rates in this sample may therefore not be entirely due to the exposure of bushfires but likely due to an array of other factors, some of them not fire-related.

After controlling for the impact of pre-existing mental health problems, results of the regression analyses showed that people’s level of psychological distress was predicted by their level of risk experienced during the fires, the extent of property damage and their perception of community cohesion. This was partly to be expected as previous research has shown that factors that reflect the degree of the impact of bushfires, such as severity of property damage and risk to life, can significantly influence people’s mental health outcomes (Laugharne et al., 2011; Marshall et al., 2007).

However, a novel finding of this study was the effect of participants’ perceptions of community cohesion on levels of psychological distress. Specifically, results indicated that participants who scored higher on community cohesion, measured for this study as participants’ attachment and sense of belonging to their community, had lower levels of psychological distress. This indicates the possibly protective function of a strong sense of community against developing severe psychological distress post-disaster.

In contrast to psychological distress, PTSD was predicted by female gender and property damage but not by people’s level of risk during the fires, their perception of community cohesion or whether they sought support after the fires. While the exact reasons underlying this finding are unclear, it may be that people’s level of risk experienced during the fires were felt more acutely, whereas property damage may present a more chronic reminder of the bushfires, and thus might be more likely to contribute to PTSD symptoms. Surprisingly, results indicated that alcohol use was not predicted by any of the fire-related variables or by people’s perception of community cohesion or support systems but by male gender. This shows that alcohol consumption reported in the current study may not be related to the exposure to bushfires but may potentially be of an ongoing, chronic nature.

Furthermore, the gender differences in PTSD and alcohol use reported in this study correlate with data from the general population, which indicate that alcohol misuse is more commonly reported in men and PTSD is more commonly reported in women (Slade, Johnston, Oakley Browne, Andrews, & Whiteford, 2009). Although the underlying reasons for these gender differences remain unclear, it has previously been suggested that men and women use different strategies to regulate their emotions (Forbes et al., 2015; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). Men have been reported to use distracting and avoidance behaviours, such as increased alcohol use, whereas women have been found to be more prone to ruminating when feeling distressed, possibly leading to higher psychopathology (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). Differing social roles and gender norms are likely to influence these responses to psychological distress and the use of emotion regulation strategies (Addis, 2008). For instance, it may be more socially acceptable and consistent with masculine gender norms for men to express their psychological distress through externalising and avoidant behaviours, whereas women might be more prone to focus on and discuss the distressing event in order to process it, which is more consistent with feminine gender norms. These existing gender differences in the general context may have been amplified in the context of bushfires,
which encourages risk taking behaviours (Griffiths, 2010).

The inclusion of open-ended questions gave participants space to provide more detail about their lived experiences and perceptions. Consistent with the quantitative results of this study, findings of the open-ended questions indicated that participants perceived damage to property and loss of belongings as highly distressing. In particular, some participants mentioned that losing their pet was incredibly painful to them. The uncertainty and concerns for loved ones during the fires and evacuation was described by many participants as very distressing, as well as the reflections about one’s decisions on the day and strong emotions felt afterwards. Similarly to previous research, connectedness to community, termed ‘community spirit’ by some participants, and social support was defined as most helpful in coping with the aftermath of the bushfires (Pooley et al., 2010). This shows the importance of intervention programs to be community-centred and to facilitate community processes that respond to recovery needs. According to Gordon (2004), fire-affected communities undergo significant changes to their social and physical environment that may lead to fractions within different groups in the community. Dynamic interventions that acknowledge pre-disaster social support systems, in combination with introducing new communication channels that allow space for change, are therefore likely to be most effective in responding to recovery needs (Gordon, 2004). This corresponds partially to what participants reported in this study as many highlighted the invaluable support of professional and fire-specific organisations such as the work of the fire brigades, a bushfire recovery centre, numerous volunteer organisations and charities that facilitated the sharing of information, resources and stories and allowed for the formation of a community identity post-fires.

In order to facilitate adaptive recovery processes in fire-affected communities, it may also be necessary to further explore whether recovery needs may differ for different members of the community. For instance, some participants perceived differences in men and women’s use of coping strategies following bushfires. Some participants reported that in their opinion men were generally less likely than women to talk about their feelings and experiences and were more likely to use problem-solving strategies, whereas women were reported to more readily talk about their experiences and seek personal and professional support. These perceived gender differences in coping and seeking help respond to previous literature that reports some men may be less likely to seek support when distressed (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005; Möller-Leimkühler, 2002) and may be less likely to employ emotion-focused styles in comparison to women (Matud, 2004; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). Other participants noted that the impact of bushfires might influence men and women’s identity and roles in different ways. For instance, some believed that men who identify with the traditional role as protector and provider for the family may find it particularly difficult to cope with the destructive aftermath of bushfires. This shows that as much as a natural disaster is a physical event, it may also be perceived as a social and psychological phenomenon for some people that can impact and shift some community member’s identity and roles.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size is small, implying the sample may not be representative of each affected community. Recruiting from communities affected by bushfires was difficult, as some community members had relocated after the bushfires had taken place and were not easily reached. Consequently, certain members of the community might have been more likely to participate in the research than others, leading to selection bias. There might have also been research exhaustion present in the affected communities, as several different organisations had already undertaken research in the areas in the past.

Importantly, fewer men than women participated in the study. The smaller sample...
size of men implies that results may not be representative of the overall male community in the Blue Mountains region. Furthermore, unequal sample sizes of men and women may have led to either an under- or over-presentation of gender differences in psychological outcomes. Including more men in future studies will reduce the existing gender bias and lead to more accurate and representative results of men’s and women’s psychological outcomes. It is known that men are generally more difficult to engage in research participation than women (Patel, Doku, & Tennakoon, 2003). One way of overcoming this may be to specifically target men in order to increase their research participation. Also, it is important to note that almost half of the men who participated in the study (compared to only 13% women) were involved in a support organisation, such as the Rural Fire Service, which most likely influenced people’s responses to the bushfires and how they coped. Regardless of gender, members of the Rural Fire Service may generally be more inclined to use pragmatic, problem-solving coping strategies, in comparison to non-members who are less familiar with bushfires. The membership of a support organisation such as the Rural Fire Service might have therefore potentially biased results and led to an over-estimation of perceived gender differences in the sample.

In regards to the statistical analyses, there are several limitations that are noteworthy. Some of the predictor analysis of the multiple regression analyses were categorical in nature (e.g. gender and whether support was sought). Although they were re-coded as dummy variables, the use of categorical variables in multiple regression analyses is potentially problematic. The criterion variables were skewed and not normally distributed, which could have biased results of the multiple regression analyses.

Finally, it needs to be emphasised that results from the open questions are not actual observed differences but rather relate to people’s perceptions of what happened and their lived experiences. Thus, the data from the open-ended questions is limited in constituting an absolute truth and rather should be viewed as a reflection of people’s beliefs about the course of events.

Conclusions

The current study shows that although a considerable percentage of participants reported psychological distress and PTSD symptoms nine months after experiencing bushfires, participants’ sense of community belonging and cohesion helped to mitigate their psychological distress. The study also provided evidence that certain community subgroups, including community members with pre-existing mental health problems, as well as members who experienced high levels of risk during the fires and extent of property damage, were particularly vulnerable to psychological distress and PTSD. Systematic screening to identify these high risk sub-groups post-fires may be useful so that support can be offered early and psychological problems may be prevented from escalating.

The finding that women were more likely to report PTSD symptoms and men were more likely to report heavy drinking and use different more pragmatic coping strategies may also suggest that it may be useful to specifically tailor current intervention programs to meet both men’s and women’s needs post-fires. This might, for instance, include the use of gender-sensitive language and behavioural interventions to particularly engage men with support services, as well as providing safe spaces for women where they feel emotionally supported. Finally, there is a need for future research to further assess community resilience and how to draw on men’s and women’s strengths in order to rebuild and promote mental health and wellbeing in fire-affected communities.

References


Acknowledgements
The content of this review is informed by a larger PhD research program being led by the first author and supervised by the second, third and fourth author. The work for this manuscript was supported by an Australian Postgraduate Award provided by the University of Wollongong to the first author. The authors wish to thank Dr Rob Gordon for his advice and consultation in regard to this project. They would also like to thank David Jones, Tony Jarrett, Andrew Kaye and Kathleen Oakes from the Rural Fire Service and psychologist Mary Karlson for their endorsement and support with promoting the project across fire-affected communities.
Many thanks also to Anne Crestani and Eleanor Mann from Gateway Family Services for her advice and consultation regarding survey development and community recruitment.

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Australian Same-sex Attracted Women Resisting Sexism and Homophobia: A Qualitative Investigation

Natasha Smith
Janette Graetz Simmonds
Monash University

The paper reports on research which explores how Australian same-sex attracted (SSA) women use resistance strategies to cope and build resilience in the face of sexism and homophobia. Ten SSA women participated in semi-structured qualitative interviews about their history of experiencing homophobia, the resistance strategies they used, and the psychological impact of these over their lifetime. The data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four categories were identified among the range of resistance strategies participants reported using: challenging, deflection, finding community and protective strategies. SSA women reported that their resilience increased as a result of directly challenging homophobia in their daily lives, along with engaging with members of the SSA community for emotional and social support.

Same-sex attracted (SSA) women have a long history of experiencing institutional and interpersonal oppression in Australia (Altman, 2013). Although, research has explored the impacts of oppressive forces on the mental health and wellbeing of members of the SSA community, very little work has explored whether the homophobia experienced by Australian SSA women manifests in a gendered way that may be distinct from the experiences of other genders. Additionally, despite a rich body of literature on how SSA women resist oppression, research previously reported has yet to elucidate the psychological costs or benefits of SSA women's resistance within an Australian context.

In recent times, there has been a movement to reduce homophobia and sexism in Australian culture (Altman, 2013), however, both homophobia and sexism are still an everyday occurrence in Australian society (Flood & Hamilton, 2005; Hillier et al., 2010, Leonard, et al., 2012). Research on Australian SSA young people conducted in 2010 found 61% of participants had experienced verbal abuse and 18% experienced physical abuse. Additionally, 69% reported other forms of enacted stigma, including rumours, homophobic language, cyber bullying, humiliation, and social exclusion (Hillier et al., 2010). The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC, 2014) reported that six out of 10 members of the SSA community experience verbal abuse, with 23% of SSA women reporting such abuse. Additionally, two out of 10 SSA people reported physical homophobic abuse. In terms of sexism, a recent report found that 63% of women and girls surveyed believed that gender inequality was still a problem in Australia (Our Watch, 2016). In addition, research has found that one in four Australian women are subjected to physical or sexual violence (ANROWS, 2015), 33% of Australian women have experienced sexual harassment (AHRC, 2012), and a significant number of women experience sexual harassment within their workplaces (21%; AHRC, 2012) or educational institutions (63%; AHRC, 2017).

Homophobia experienced by SSA people has been empirically linked to an increased prevalence of mental illness compared to heterosexual people (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Keleher, 2009; Lea, de Wit, & Reynolds, 2014; Lewis, Derlega, Griffin, & Krowinski, 2003; Lewis, Kholodkov, & Derlega, 2012; McDermott, 2006; Meyer, 2003). This increased incidence of mental illness in the SSA community has been empirically shown to be the result of “minority stress”, that is, the psychological distress caused by the conflict between a minority person's experience and the discriminatory and stigmatising values of the dominant culture they live in (Pachankis & Lick, 2017). SSA women have been
described as a “double minority” (Mason, & Lewis, 2016) in that they experience the adverse impacts of sexism and homophobia separately, as well as the intersection of these types of discrimination manifesting in “gendered homophobia” (Denissen & Saguy, 2014; DeBlare & Bertsch, 2013; Swim et al., 2001; Szymanski & Chung, 2003; Szymanski & Henrichs-Beck, 2014; Szymanski, Carr & Moffit, 2011). When specifically examining SSA women, it has been found that they experience elevated levels of anxiety, depression and substance use compared to heterosexual women (Hughes, Johnson, Steffen, Wilsnack, & Everett, 2014; Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Lea et al., 2014; Meyer, Dietrich, & Schwartz, 2008), as well as when compared to SSA men (Leonard et al., 2012). Szymanski and Henrichs-Beck (2014) found both homophobia and sexism cause significant psychological distress in SSA women and that their effects seemed to be additive, as both stressors combined increase the extent of psychological distress experienced by the women.

Resistance as a Response to Stigmatisation

The study of resistance as a means to promote wellbeing is an emerging area of interest in psychology (Campbell, & Deacon, 2006; Campbell, Nair, Maimane, & Nicholson, 2007; Prilleltensky, 2008). To anchor the discussion of resistance, this research uses Thoits’ (2011) model of stigma resistance. This model proposes a framework of stigma resistance that explores the strategies which marginalised individuals use to oppose harmful forces and influences of stigma in their daily lives. This model of resistance was born out of research into mental illness stigma; however, Thoits argues the framework can be applied to the experiences of other marginalised groups. According to the model, resistance to stigma comes in two forms: challenging and deflection. Both are intentional, agentic responses to experiences of being stigmatised and they serve to protect the self from devaluation. Challenging requires direct confrontation of stigmatising attitudes and beliefs of others. The aim of challenging is to engage and change the biased attitudes that lead to stigmatisation (Thoits, 2011). The nature of challenging stigma is interpersonal and requires the stigmatised individual to directly engage with others as a stigmatised person (Thoits, 2011).

In addition to challenging, many stigmatised people may resort to deflection strategies (Thoits, 2011). Deflection strategies are usually cognitive in nature and may include distancing from the stereotypical representations of the stigmatised group (e.g., “they are referring to flamboyant gay men, lesbians are different”), choosing to not define oneself strongly by the stigmatised identity (e.g., “being same-sex attracted is only a small part of me”), or defining the nature of the stigmatising characteristic in themselves as being less discrediting than the social attitude would suggest (e.g., “I am attracted to women but I am not really a lesbian”; Thoits, 2010). Deflection is a relatively safe resistance strategy, as it only requires an internal, psychological shift on behalf of the stigmatised person, without the risk of externally challenging the stigmatising individual or institution.

It should be noted that this definition of resistance strategies may be seen as conceptually similar to coping strategies. Coping, although a term broadly used and historically difficult to define, also speaks to the cognitive and behaviour processes that help an individual manage the adverse impacts of external stressors (Aldwin, 2011). In this research, the term resistance is preferred because it better situates the process of managing adverse impacts of stigma within a socio-political context and, specifically, describes acts that are designed to protect against the devaluing of a person’s marginalised aspect of self.

Gaining a better understanding of how SSA women attempt to resist homophobia can provide important insights into the psychological processes of maintaining wellbeing in the face of the negative impacts of homophobia. Resistance literature has identified a number of behaviours and cognitive strategies that SSA women use.
Reed and Valenti (2012) found in their study of young black SSA women that participants used cognitive restructuring to stay true to themselves and be proud no matter what others said. SSA women have also been found to resist sexual objectification by acting in ways that diffuse the saliency of their sexuality (e.g. not revealing the gender of a partner) or by mirroring the stigmatising behaviour to highlight its inappropriateness (e.g. queer women making sexual advances on the female partner of a male colleague; Denissen & Saguy, 2014). Additionally, SSA women may engage in posing as straight or use “role flexing” behaviours to comply with the norms of the dominant group and to diminish the impact of negative biases or stereotypes (Reed & Valenti, 2012). Furthermore, SSA women have reported creating community via “gay families” or “families of choice” as a means to diffuse the impact of homophobia on their social supports and to construct safe social environments (Reed & Valenti, 2012).

The relationship between resistance strategies and psychological wellbeing is complex (Thoits & Link, 2015; Firmin et al., 2016). The limited available research suggests a positive effect of stigma resistance in buffering against the adverse impacts of stigmatisation and in the recovery of associated mental illness (DeBlaere et al., 2014, Thoits & Link, 2015; Firmin et al., 2016). DeBlaere and colleagues’ (2014) study of SSA women found that engaging in collective action moderated the impact of gender discrimination on psychological distress. Research found that some young SSA women engaged in direct confrontation, in the form of physically or verbally “fighting back”, as a way to cultivate positive attitudes towards themselves and to cope with homophobia (Reed & Valenti, 2012). Research has shown that social connection created through collective actions or “families of choice” with other SSA women and the ability to share emotions linked to discrimination, aids in protecting SSA women’s sense of self against both homophobia and sexism (DiFulvio, 2011; Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Keleher, Wei, & Liao, 2010). However, in some cases the strategy itself may be empirically linked to distress. For example, concealing sexual identity has been linked to negative consequences, including cognitive (e.g. increased vigilance and suspiciousness), emotional (e.g. mental illness, guilt and shame) and behavioural (e.g. social withdrawal; Pachankis, 2007) consequences.

Research has also found stigmatised individuals who strongly identify with stigmatised identity can have their self-esteem negatively impacted by involvement in support groups (Crabtree, Haslam, Postmes, & Haslam, 2010). Furthermore, the risk of retaliation in response to resisting stigma may leave SSA women more vulnerable to further homophobia or prevent them from safely resisting stigma in ways that enhance their wellbeing.

The research reported here explored how ten SSA women engaged in resistance to homophobia and what the psychological impacts were of using different resistance strategies. Additionally, this study investigated the factors that influence when and where these SSA women engaged in particular resistance strategies.

**Method**

In this research exploring SSA women’s lived experience of multiple stigmas (i.e. sexism and homophobia) and stigma resistance, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach was used in designing semi-structured qualitative interviews and subsequent transcript analysis. IPA was chosen because it seeks to understand the lived experiences of the participants and enables the exploration of experience without using prescriptive categories (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The use of a qualitative method of investigation allows the voices of oppressed people to be a central feature of the research (Fox, Prilleltensky, & Austin, 2009). IPA was developed initially to study psychological and health related issues, and has since been used extensively where in depth understanding of participants’ responses and experiences is required. Analysis within the IPA framework provides...
a systematic and rigorous way of identifying themes in participants’ reported experiences but also allows flexibility in the research focus (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

The study’s primary research question was:

**How do Australian SSA women resist homophobia?**

The secondary questions were:

1. How does homophobia manifest in the lives of these Australian SSA women?
2. How do SSA women resist homophobia psychologically and through their actions?
3. What factors shape how SSA women resist stigma?
4. How do SSA women perceive their resistance behaviour as fostering or diminishing their psychological resilience?

**Participants**

Strategies for recruitment included convenience sampling (recruiting through personal and professional networks), and snowball sampling (asking qualified people to recommend participants that met the inclusion criteria (Patton, 1990). After the study was approved by the University Human Research Ethics Committee, participants were recruited using advertising flyers placed in Queer and Women’s spaces at multiple local university campuses and other public spaces (i.e. library notice boards) and emailed to peers and colleagues with connections to the LGBTI community to ask them to forward to individuals who might like to participate in the study.

Once an individual expressed interest in participating, they were sent the demographic questionnaire via email and instructed to return the completed questionnaire via email before being selected for interview. The responses to the demographic questionnaire were used to ensure participants met the selection criteria. The following selection criteria were applied to recruit suitable participants who would be able to provide relevant information for this study. All participants needed to be above the age of 18, self-identify as both SSA and a woman, and be fluent in English. A pre-interview questionnaire was delivered to collect demographic information about the participant (e.g., age, gender identity) as well as to gather preliminary information about their sexual identity, the importance of that sexual identity to them, and what other minority identities participants defined themselves by. As this research aimed to explicitly explore the lives of SSA women from a multiple oppression approach, it was considered that understanding the additional minority identities each participant held would enable a richer and more intersectional analysis of their lived experiences. It would also facilitate understanding of any additional socio-political barriers faced by the participants when attempting to resist homophobia.

Although the recruitment process did not exclude transgender women from participating in the study, all the women volunteering to take part in the study identified as cisgender women. Additionally, all participants identified as white and of European cultural background.

Participants’ demographic details and responses to pre-interview questionnaire are presented below in Table 1.

**Materials**

The data were collected in two forms: questionnaire and interview. The interview was semi-structured and conducted with each participant in a single session. The interview schedule included two imaginary scenarios and nine interview questions. The scenarios presented at the beginning of the session were designed and strategically used for two reasons. First, due to the highly personal and sensitive nature of the study, the use of the structured scenarios enabled the participants to talk about instances of discrimination and develop to rapport with the primary researcher, the first author, without having to immediately self-disclose personal experiences. Additionally, having the scenarios presented in the first section allowed the participants to gauge how comfortable they felt with engaging in the subject matter before discussing their own stories. Participants could choose to revoke consent if they felt proceeding with the
interview would be too distressing. Secondly, the scenarios were strategically designed to cover a range of different discrimination experiences from overt harassment to subtler social shaming. It was hoped that these examples would help prompt the participant to think about a broad range of instances of discrimination in their own lives that they might be willing to discuss in the second half of the interview.

The scenarios are presented below:

**Scenario 1:** Imagine you are at your work’s end of year function with your colleagues and their family members. Your co-workers start talking about their relationships and you join in by talking about your relationship with your same-sex partner. Soon after you begin to talk about your partner, one of your co-workers stops you and says “We don’t care if you are gay, but don’t talk about in front of the children”.

**Scenario 2:** Imagine you are sitting with your same sex partner on a train. Suddenly, a fellow passenger starts to yell at you and say you are “disgusting” and “an abomination”. None of the other passengers respond in support or stand up for you and your partner.

### Table 1: Participant’s demographic information and self-report responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Current Sexual Identity</th>
<th>Importance of sexual identity (rated on a 1 (Not at all) - 10 (Very much so) scale)</th>
<th>Experience of discrimination (rated on a 1 (Not at all) - 10 (Very much so))</th>
<th>How distressing the discrimination was for them (rated on a 1 (Not at all) - 10 (Very much so))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marlene</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elenor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Lesbian/Queer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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The semi-structured interview asked participants to: describe situations where they experienced homophobia, how they resisted homophobia, how they would have ideally liked to respond to the homophobia, to discuss what contributed to a positive or negative experience of using resistance strategies, and what they perceived the relationship was between their chosen resistance strategies and their resilience to homophobia.

**Procedure**

Interviews lasted between 30-40 minutes and were digitally recorded using a portable audio recording device. Initially, the participants were asked to read and describe how they would respond to imaginary situations of discrimination based on being an SSA woman, the scenarios presented above. In the second half of the study, participants were invited to share their experiences of discrimination and how they resisted stigma in their own lives. For clarity, the researchers provided a definition of resistance to participants. The definition, summarised from Throits’ 2011 model is provided below; “Resistance strategies are ways people choose to consciously respond to situations of discrimination. In this context we are classifying any external behavioural response (e.g. correcting a person’s misinformation, yelling back) or conscious internal psychological response (e.g. rationalizing the behaviour of others, positive self-talk) as a form of resistance.”

**Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted according to the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee processes and procedures. As SSA women are a highly stigmatised group in Australia it was important that the study maintained the participants’ confidentiality and ensured that participation did not lead to significant distress. To maintain confidentiality, the identity of the participants was only known to the first author. All interview transcripts and audio recordings were de-identified. The paper-based consent forms and demographic questionnaires were coded and stored separately. Due to the sensitive and potentially distressing subject matter of the interview, participants were provided a detailed explanatory statement as part of the informed consent process and were informed they could revoke consent at any time during the interview. Participants were provided with a list of affordable and accessible telephone and face-to-face support services on the explanatory statement for the study and encouraged to use them should they feel any discomfort or distress subsequent to their participation.

**Data Analysis**

IPA was used to analyse the interview transcripts. Digital transcripts of the recorded interviews were prepared by the researcher to ensure confidentiality. The data collected in its raw and transcribed forms were kept anonymous. The digital recordings and the transcripts were stored on a password-protected computer only accessible by the primary researcher.

In order to successfully apply IPA to the transcripts, the researchers used the process of analysis outlined by Smith et al. (2009) using the following procedure. The responses from the imaginary scenarios and the interview questions were collapsed and analysed together. The first step involved listening to the recording of the interviews and immersion in the transcripts by reading and re-reading them. The second step of the process involved initial noting, including recording descriptive comments, linguistic comments and conceptual comments. The third step developed emergent themes, connections and patterns between exploratory notes. Finally, the fourth step determined the structure of the experience, with searches for connections across the developing themes using abstraction, subsumption, polarisation, contextualisation, numeration and identifications of functions (Smith et al., 2009). This four-step IPA procedure was repeated for each case and then patterns across all of the cases were identified.
Findings
Experience of Homophobia Reported by the SSA Women
Participants described how the majority of the homophobia they experienced was shaped by heteronormative assumptions of traditional gender roles. Many of the women reported instances of having their sexuality dismissed as not being legitimate, feeling sexually objectified, or being punished for transgressing traditional gender roles.

Denial of sexual agency. Four women reported instances of their sexuality, or that of SSA women they knew, being denied. For example, Josephine mentioned how, even after explicitly disclosing her sexuality, people still did not comprehend that she was attracted to women.

“I remember this one person. When I introduced my partner, he was clearly thinking then “well are they or aren’t they?” Like I could see it, I could see it like “is this a coming out scenario of or is this a friend?” Even though I used the word ‘partner’ or I think I did. If not partner I would have said “girlfriend”. Usually, I just say partner because it is more explicit but then, even then, he said “so how long have you known each other?” and then I said “we’ve been together for…” (Josephine)

Marilyn recounted how the sexual acts between two women was often questioned by young men she attended university with and described as “not real sex”. Billie spoke about how she had many exchanges with men who would subtly deny the legitimacy of her sexuality by implying it may change to heterosexual if she had sex with a man.

Sexual objectification. Six of the women interviewed described experiences of being sexually objectifying by heterosexual men and men fetishizing lesbian sex. Much of the reported sexualising and sexual harassment of queer SSA occurred while they were walking down public streets. Marilyn, Virginia, Vita, Florence, and Billie spoke of being harassed on the street by men when they were perceived to be with a SSA partner.

The street harassment varied from sexual taunts, to overt acts of aggression. Marilyn described an instance of being sexually objectified while walking down a busy restaurant area in Melbourne.

“…walking down Lygon street with my partner holding hands and suddenly becoming aware, feeling like my hairs were standing up on the back of my neck, hearing like male voices, deep male voices, laughing and sneering at us. You think you are being paranoid and you turn around. No you are not being paranoid, there are two dudes leering at us. Then one said something like “give us a kiss” or “give her a kiss for us” like they wanted a show ostensibly. Like my feeling I had for another human being were actually just a show for their entertainment value.” (Marilyn)

Punishment for not complying with gender roles. Many of the women interviewed described retaliation or punishment for transgressing what would be considered their traditional role as women. Both Marlene and Elenor described heterosexual men becoming offended and “escalating” their aggression when the women disclosed that they were queer and not sexually interested in the men that approached them. Virginia and Willa spoke of more subtle discrimination in the form of being overlooked for work opportunities and promotions, which they perceived, was a result of acting and dressing in a way that was outside of the prescribed heteronormative gender roles.

“There have been lots of times when I have gone out or something, and someone had approached me, usually male. I would say I not interested in them and follow up saying ‘yeah I am attracted to girls so…’ well um… a lot of the time people would sort of retaliate kind of. Made me feel bad or they would think they can change my mind or something, yeah something, like that. Which is never going to happen but basically they feel entitled that they can do that for some strange reason. So I have had that happen a lot. That is probably the most recurring one that I have noticed”. (Marlene)

Types of Resistance Strategies Employed by SSA Women
Challenging. Seven of the women interviewed said they would seek to educate others in casual conversation in the form of gently questioning other people’s homophobic assumptions, calling out slurs and other homophobic language as it arose, and being available to answer questions. Two women spoke about educating on a macro level in the form of public forums, poster campaigns, and organising discussion groups. Marie spoke about organising a straight-gay alliance at her high school to help educate staff and students about the issues faced by young SSA students as well as arranging formal poster campaigns at her school. Willa spoke about publicly speaking about queer issues during the 1970s at conferences on women’s issues as a representative for queer woman. Seven women said that they engaged in direct confrontation of homophobic actions of others. This confrontation took the form of public protests, engaging in verbal arguments, yelling abuse back at those who abused them as well as confronting people through formal channels such as escalating complaints through Human Resources within their workplace.

Marie spoke about choosing an educative response when faced with discrimination. She remarked: “I would go for education in this scenario, because it is a workplace function and they have an obligation to treat me the same as everybody else. Particularly if you knew the colleagues were not going to get violent. You can assess in this situation that they will probably not get violent, I think it is a good opportunity for education.” (Marie)

Willa spoke about publicly speaking about SSA issues during the 1970’s at conferences on women’s issues as a SSA woman. “I talked about lesbians and all that sort of stuff. And of course that attracted crap from, you know, people like the Tony Abbott’s of this world back when they were younger. Um, but it was in a context of, you know, where I was reasonably protected. I wasn’t by myself. Um, and, but, that, you know, that had an impact on me of really feeling, after having, you know, spoken publicly about being a lesbian and things like that for quite a long time, um, really at the end of it feeling like all my skin had been peeled off, that I was just raw nerves, just completely – and I felt this at home afterwards; this wasn’t while I was doing it but I’d come back and I’d realize that I just couldn’t sustain that level of activity because it really, it got to you and also because this was a very new thing, you know, this was very, very new. Um, and, I mean, there were lots of gay people around, lots of homosexuals but, you know, most of them were closeted and so it was, it was a very new thing” (Willa)

When considering whether to directly confront homophobia the women reported that they often had to weigh up the costs and benefits of confrontation. Seven women reported evaluating the risk of physical safety by either assessing the physical size, level of aggression or potential social support (i.e. presence of friends) or structural support (whether the institution would side with aggressor or queer woman) the aggressor had. Seven women explicitly mentioned weighing up the threat of male violence when deciding to confront homophobia directly. When discussing instances of street harassment, Marilyn revealed her mental process of calculating the potential cost to her safety. She said: “I wanted to give them a mouthful and wanted to let them know how utterly vile I thought they were and how they don’t get to just chase women off the footpath they are on, they don’t get to make women cross the road via their leery presence… would he have backhanded me in front of everyone, maybe he would, maybe he wouldn’t. He is much taller than me, much more muscular. So you are weighing these up in your mind. Could I take you? There are two of you, probably not. If push comes to shove, could I take you? Probably not. No. So you are left with a sort of seething anger that you have to choose to let go or not.” (Marilyn)

Vita spoke about wanting to be more confrontational in her responses to homophobia she experiences in her workplace but being limited by the potential
of having to change jobs or being forced to leave her workplace. She explained: “I mean I have had people at work say some pretty backward things and um, I just have to remember that they are my colleagues, unless I want to change jobs, unless I want it to run me out of a job I otherwise like, in an area I otherwise like, then I have got to find a way to work with them productively. So then I suppose I end up donning the cap of queer education officer.” (Vita)

Five women described instances of actively choosing to be visible as SSA attracted as a way to challenge homophobia. Marie described a process of being visible by ‘holding space’ in the face of discrimination. For her this meant actively declining to change behaviour that could be read as overt indicators of her queer identity (e.g. holding hands with another woman) even when someone was trying to publicly shame her for those actions. Marie described how she saw the power of visibility in combating stigma as well as bolstering a positive sense of self.

“I think challenging people, and making them feel uncomfortable and promoting visibility is a positive thing. As I said before, you may not have effected change, but you may chip away at it, because every time you are visible, every time you challenge somebody, you promote a program, or even on social media, you promote that this is happening and you want people to engage, you are doing something of chipping away of that position of heteronormativity or homonegativity and that can be good for your sense of self.” (Marie)

Florence described visibility as an offensive tactic against homophobia. She spoke about visibility being connected to pride and authenticity as well as limiting social spaces where she was accepted. She spoke about wearing t-shirts saying “I am a lesbian” in the 1970’s and how she chose to be visible in all circumstances possible, even if it meant not being able to get a job or being at greater risk of physical or verbal abuse. She also spoke about visibility being connected to pride and authenticity. She explained: “I basically worked on creating lesbian visibility and um lesbian pride and creating you know moving in lesbian groups, hanging up signs, slogans whatever so, okay we were persecuted by the police, um, the police were our enemies they were dangerous people, when we were attacked by men you know who made physical attacks on home on our person when we were being out we certainly didn't call the police because that would just make things worse not better, um, they were probably more dangerous in a way than, the, uh, um you know the neighbours um yeah so um I guess by being myself by choosing to be my authentic self without compromise, I relinquished a place in society- an acceptable place in society for, for most of my life.” (Florence)

Deflection. Seven of the participants referred to people who enacted homophobia as being an “idiot” or “ignorant”. For some of the women, this strategy appeared to be used to help psychologically correct the power differential between the SSA woman and the aggressor of homophobia. This was evident when Marilyn was describing instances where another woman in her university class would call Marilyn disgusting and treat her as an oddity. She related how knowing she was more intelligent than the other woman made her feel powerful and helped her deflect the impact of homophobic slurs. She described the mental dialogue she undertook when in conversation with her homophobic classmate:

“I knew intellectually I could definitely take you. I can take you down with my words, don’t even need to raise my hand. What are you going to do? Like you already know and it is really satisfying because you are like, I don’t care if you like me, I don’t need you to like me, and throw all your stupid prejudices and phobias at me and I will take them down one by one and I will deconstruct them and analyse them and tell you how stupid they are, because they are stupid and I am not threatened by you and it was really satisfying to tell you how stupid you are.” (Marilyn)

Additionally, dismissing someone who enacted homophobia as an “idiot” allowed
women to diminish the legitimacy of the insult and thus, protected their sense of self. Elenor demonstrated this when she was describing how she protected herself from doubting her self-worth after encountering homophobia by reminding herself that she knows the truth about herself, and anyone who does not like her because of her sexuality is an “utter idiot”.

Three women reported that they cognitively reframed the situation so that they felt pity for the person enacting homophobia. Virginia described feeling sorry for people who were too ignorant to understand how “wrong” their views are. Billie, a pansexual woman, described feeling pity for her friend who told her that SSA woman who sleep with men are “disgusting”, knowing that Billie was dating a man. She said “I felt a lot of pity for people that would still think that way, like, about that. I was like, what is it really like for you? I feel sad that there…is anyone that counts out a whole group of people based on their gender”. Marlene echoed this sentiment when describing how she pitied people who enact homophobia by saying “most of the time it is sad that you can be that way, it is more like pity for you, rather than a problem for me.”

Seeking Community. The SSA women interviewed drew on the SSA community for support to protect against negative feelings of homophobia. Marie, Florence, and Willa reported drawing on the strength of other SSA people and allies through formal community building and activism, and eight of the women mentioned seeking informal community solidarity and support. Multiple women discussed how solidarity with other SSA people provided an increased sense of empowerment. For example, Marilyn said, when confronting a homophobic classmate, “just that feeling of bonding, warmth and friendship… it just made [homophobic peer] less, it made her nothing, it made her less of a worry.”

Seven women said they relied on debriefing or venting about experiences of discrimination to other queer women or allies. For some women this strategy appeared to help them feel that their anger or hurt were legitimate and to discharge the painful emotions that they felt building up within them and allowed them to recharge their energy to face further discrimination. For example, Marie said, “I was involved in a queer theatre group outside of school and that was a beautiful supportive environment that allowed me to build up my kind of energy and resistance and go back into the school every day.”

In terms of formally organised community support, Willa and Florence both noted that involvement in the women’s liberation and gay rights movement of the 1970’s was an important buffer against homophobia throughout their lives. Florence also spoke about creating exclusive lesbian communities so that she could live her life as authentically as possible and not have to compromise her values to be part of a greater “straight” community. Florence also described how as she has gotten older, and many of her “solidarity sisters” are not physically present in her life as much as they used to be, she felt like she could not draw on their strengths to fight homophobia as much as she did in her younger years. She said, “I feel more on my own now, so the more isolated you feel, the less likely you are, to you know, pull people up on things, because immediately if you’re on your own you become the other, the weirdo, the you know, the person that can be excluded, and um, so you know you are not as empowered. Solidarity is very important and I think that’s one thing that a lot of young people have forgotten today, the concept, if you really want to counter discrimination you need solidarity… ‘cause they will pick you off one by one if you try to stand up for yourself on your own.” (Florence)

Protection strategies. Six women described concealing their sexual identities unless they were certain the person they were disclosing to would not harbour any harmful beliefs about SSA women. This vetting process varied in terms of complexity. For example, Marilyn describes using a “queer community police check,” whereby she will
only bother to get to know people she knows are friends with people she has previously vetted as not homophobic. Josephine spoke about “the line,” where she would not emotionally commit herself to a friendship unless she felt comfortable coming out to that person. Billie described a more elaborate process where she would connect with colleagues and peers on social media to assess their political views and feelings about queer issues. In terms of modifying behaviours to conceal sexual identity, Willa and Marilyn both spoke about speaking in gender-neutral terms about their partners (e.g., their, them, my partner). Marilyn also discussed avoiding public displays of affection to avoid being noticed as an SSA woman in public.

Psychological Impact of Resistance
The impact of choosing between confrontation and self-protection. Six women described the goal of confrontation as changing people’s minds, hoping to stop future homophobia. Providing this goal was achieved, queer women reported being able to classify these interactions as positive and beneficial experiences. Marlene described how the momentary discomfort was worth it if she knew that some of those men would not act negatively to other queer women in the future. In comparison, when this goal was not achieved, it resulted in a sense of regret or self-blame. For example, Willa detailed how she ruminates on what she ‘ought’ to have said for many days after she perceives that she had not confronted homophobia competently.

For some women who chose protecting themselves over challenging homophobia the awareness of how their actions could impact the queer community resulted in an increase in emotional distress and psychological conflict. Vita described feeling the need to always educate gently to prevent prejudiced people from extrapolating her disagreeableness as a community trait. She described feeling like she would be doing “a disservice to all future lesbians” if she did not educate and change minds. When responding to the first scenario, Billie described how she feels an obligation to challenge the disrespectful behaviour of the aggressor because she “would feel a responsibility for everyone else this person would have contact with… [she] would feel a responsibility to [her] queer community…” Five women noted that they have to choose between their personal safety and the psychological distress of compromising their authenticity as queer women. For example, Marie said: “It does chip away at your sense of self. That is not who I am as a person, I want to be the activist, I want to stand up against this stuff, but in terms of staying safe, and living to fight another battle, when you are in those situations you do things to minimise harm. It is confronting and conflicting. It makes you assess different parts of yourself and different values that you have.”

The impact of vetting on social relationships. A considerable proportion of the resistance strategies employed by SSA woman involved limiting exposure to homophobic events or attitudes. As a result, six women described themselves as being more reserved and less trusting of new people. Josephine says that her hyper-vigilance to homophobia has made her a less approachable person. Vita also describes herself as becoming more reserved socially as a result of trying to protect herself from homophobia.

Four women described wanting to withdraw into social spaces of predominantly SSA people. This was usually regarded as an affirming and energising experience, however Marilyn also describes how the process of retreating into what she called the “queer bubble” has also reduced her ability to tolerate homophobia outside of the queer community. “It is so good to remove yourself from potentially dangerous space but you can easily spiral into a pattern where you just flee from everything gross and horrible, and eventually if you let that be your modus operandi…you will never leave your house.” (Marilyn)

Relationship between resistance and resilience. All participants reported that engaging in resistance increased resilience to some degree. Billie, Willa, Josephine and
Marlene described how primarily challenging through visibility and education helped them build a psychological immunity to future instances of discrimination and how they are better able to recover and protect themselves psychologically against being stigmatised. Vita also described how her chosen resistance strategies of educating, and being an affable, visible, lesbian has helped her build resilience by making her feel more prepared to respond to homophobia. However, she says that the emotional pain experienced is still as hurtful with every encounter, regardless of how well she responded to it.

Marlene, Billie, Willa, Florence and Josephine described how resistance through challenging has increased resilience by expanding their ability to assert themselves and feel more confident in their identity as a SSA woman. Florence, Willa and Billie all spoke of resistance buffering against shame by allowing them to actively affirm what they all referred to as their “truth,” or in other words, that they are not inherently shameful as SSA women. Billie, when asked how her resistance strategies, both challenging and deflecting, have impacted her resilience, remarked “I would say the most important thing is that I am able to say that I don’t accept that as my truth. People are saying something that is born out of ignorance, that is born out of hate, born out of fear, it is a projection of them it is not of me.”

Elenor, who resisted primarily through cognitive deflection, noted that being able to dismiss the aggressor as an “idiot” or actively choose not to internalise any homophobic comments, enabled her to not “dwell” on the homophobia she experienced and psychologically recover quickly. Both Marie and Marilyn noted that their resilience has increased indirectly as the result of engaging in resistance strategies that involve developing social networks and a community of “safe” people. Marie reflected, “I think the main thing is that [engaging in collective action] links you to other people…part of the being in a community that makes you feel ok and have enough resilience and energy to keep on fighting and keep on being resistant.”

Four of the women who used challenging strategies noted that resisting in this way had the potential to momentarily reduce their resilience. For example, Willa describes how she felt like all her “skin had been peeled off” and she was “just raw nerves” after she completed a public speaking tour as the representative of SSA women in the 1970. She reflected that this impact on her wellbeing made her realise that she could not sustain the amount of activist activity she was engaged in.

Billie described how even if the initial incidents made you feel more vulnerable at the time, resisting is the better choice overtime. She said, “it is hard to do any of this resisting whether it is internal or external, but it feels better in the long-run.”

Discussion
This research identified the nature of the homophobia experienced by these Australian SSA women participants and how they resisted that homophobia. It also explored the impact of resistance on their resilience. Consistent with past research, the women interviewed reported homophobic micro-aggressions, as well as more overt verbal and physical abuse (Leonard, et al., 2012). Much of the reported homophobia was centred on sexual objectification or denial of sexual agency, as well as a retaliation for transgressing gender roles. It is worth noting that most of the homophobia reported was enacted by apparently heterosexual men and that fear of men’s violence was a defining factor in the how the women chose to respond to homophobia.

The study revealed that the SSA women used a variety of resistance strategies; some consistent with Thoits’ (2011) model (challenging, deflecting) and others that are consistent with research into how SSA community members have historically protected themselves from homophobia (e.g. building community, concealment; Difulvio, 2011; Lehavot & Simoni, 2011; Keleher, Wei, & Liao, 2010; Pachankis, 2007). The findings suggest that the employment of resistance strategies appears to be context-
dependent and determined by the type of homophobia. The likelihood of engaging in confrontation, and the perception of whether it would be beneficial, was contingent on the predicted outcome of the confrontation. If confronting the homophobia resulted in changing homophobic attitudes, six women reported that any momentary discomfort in engaging in challenging homophobia was outweighed by the perceived benefit to themselves and the SSA community as a whole. This was linked to a sense of pride and self-affirmation. However, all interviewees discussed a process of ensuring they were physically and emotionally safe before engaging in challenging. The women discussed how if they felt unsafe they might choose to engage in more passive resistance strategies, like cognitively reframing. This sometimes led to cognitive dissonance between their identity as an activist or someone who defends themselves, and their self-protective behaviours. For some women this dissonance resulted in heightened psychological distress and a compromised sense of authenticity. The most prominent concern for SSA women assessing their safety was to ensure there was a low chance of facing men’s violence as retaliation to their challenge. This may be because the majority of the homophobia cited by participants involved aggressive, disrespectful or violent behaviour perpetrated by men. The interviews revealed that the women experienced an ever-present apprehension in challenging homophobia by men because of a perceived deficit in their ability to physically defend themselves.

The final aim of this study was to explore the connection between resistance used by SSA women and resilience in the face of homophobia. Overall, engaging in resistance strategies improved the queer women’s sense of resilience to homophobia, however no clear relationship was found between a specific resistance strategy and their perceived resilience. For some, confronting homophobia appeared to be associated with building immunity to homophobia, reducing the impact of the homophobia on their wellbeing as well as creating a feedback loop, increasing their confidence and sense of efficacy to assert their beliefs and enabling them to continue to engage in challenging behaviours. Three women also considered that using resistance strategies affirmed their ‘truths’ and belief that they do not deserve to be devalued based on their same-sex attraction. For some of the women cognitive deflection enabled them to recover more quickly from any psychological wounding that homophobia may have caused. Finally, collective action and community building allowed some women to access the social resources necessary to rebuff impacts of homophobia.

Limitations and Implications

There are some limitations of this work. First, due to the small scale of the study, it is not appropriate to apply the findings to SSA women or the SSA community as a whole. However, this research does contribute to a growing body of research that examines the lived experience of members of the LGBT community within Australia (Easpaig, Fox, & Bowman, 2018). It is hoped that this research serves as a foundation for a discussion about how practitioners can incorporate models of stigma resistance into practice alongside the established models of minority stress. The research identified the potential protective and risk factors associated with resistance behaviours. Furthermore, the findings revealed the interpersonal and psychological costs associated with SSA women choosing self-protection and withdrawal as primary modes of resistance. This may act as a basis for further research in this area that can help community psychologists explore resistance interventions at individual or collective level while minimising the risk of social withdrawal and internal conflict. This research has highlighted the importance of adapting models of wellbeing and stigma resistance which best suit the unique combination of intersecting stigmas experienced by a particular client. In the context of SSA women, it is important to consider the gendered element of both the homophobia experienced as well as the
actual or perceived power SSA women have to resist that homophobia safely. This emphasises to community psychologists the importance of acknowledging the differences between SSA women's unique challenges and other members of the SSA community when applying interventions that were developed using other subsections of the queer community (e.g. gay men). It is also imperative to acknowledge the intersections of identity not present in this study. All participants were white, university educated women. The nature and morphology of resistance strategies will undoubtedly be shaped by additional marginalised identities involving race, class and ability. Additionally, no instances of sexism or stigma from within the SSA community (e.g. biphobia) was present in the participants’ responses. This may be a result of the interviewer being read as a SSA woman herself and thus, the participants may not have felt comfortable exploring stigma within the SSA community with a member from that community.

Conclusion

This research drew on the voices of ten Australian SSA women, as people who have survived stigmatisation, and also as agents who attempted to enact change. Their unique lived experiences have highlighted the importance of incorporating a multiple oppression perspective into research and practice. This study has shown the potential for resistance behaviours as protective and/or risk factors in SSA women’s resilience and wellbeing. Further research is warranted to explore these functions in more detail, but the findings of the current research can be applied immediately by community psychologists and others working with queer women. Incorporating an understanding of resistance behaviour into the development of individual, group and community interventions designed to support SSA women can assist them in increasing their resilience.

References


Acknowledgements
The authors would like to thank the 10 women who shared their lived experience with us for this research. The authors are honored to be witnesses of these women’s stories of challenge, resistance and resilience. Thank you to the participants for their frankness and honesty.

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The latest title in the Springer Briefs in Psychology, School Psychology series, *School Belonging in Adolescents. Theory, Research and Practice* (Allen & Kern, 2017), is an easy-to-read book which certainly packs a punch. Its release is particularly timely as mental health professionals, schools and politicians feverishly seek answers to the ongoing distress associated with bullying amongst students and face community fears about radicalisation of young people. It may well be the case that many of the answers they are seeking are waiting for discovery within the pages of this book.

Beginning with a Foreword titled “What is the purpose of education?” written by the well-known and highly respected social researcher, Hugh MacKay, the book takes the reader on a step-by-step journey through theory and practice to explore the role that belonging plays our lives. This is no mean feat when concepts such as belonging are often vague and hard to operationalize in real life, particularly within a complex social environment as a school. The authors don’t dodge these complexities and in fact outline the challenges of defining the term and the way it is often used interchangeably with other words and concepts, like connectedness, attachment and bonding. This is illustrated particularly well when they provide a summary of the range of tools aiming to measure the concept of school belonging, such as the Psychological Sense of School Membership, the Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness, School Connectedness Scale and Student Engagement Instrument. They add some shorter measures that have been incorporated into research studies and then conclude the section with what seems to be a rather obvious statement “[a]lthough frequently used, such scales have been criticized for being too brief to capture the complexity and multiple dimensions of school belonging …” (2017, p. 19).

Not to be deterred, the authors continue with their quest to explore the concept of school belonging, drawing upon their own research which they outline in a way that will satisfy both the reader who is interested in the details of the study, as well as the reader less interested in statistical analysis and more interested in the practical application of the research. The authors undertook a meta-analysis of the literature relating to school belonging. They explored the following ten themes: academic motivation, mental health, personal characteristics, parental support, peer support, teacher support, gender, race and ethnicity, environmental aspects and extracurricular activities. In a search over a 20-year period up to 2013, they found a total of 45 studies from Australia, United States of America and New Zealand. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the focus of schools on academics, the role of school belonging on academic motivation had been studied the most. Extracurricular activities were studied the least. The research found teacher support and personal characteristics were the strongest correlates of school belonging.

The book will therefore appeal to teachers who witness on a daily basis the social interactions of their students. Having a framework in which to understand behaviours, to value the importance of connections and friendships and to feel confident in knowing how to respond in ways that promote the benefits of belonging is likely to be welcomed by teachers who are typically at the forefront of implementing the latest approaches to student wellbeing. Further, the authors argue that “[s]tructures need to be in place that give teachers time and energy to connect with their students and teachers need to be committed to being supportive of those within their care” (Allen & Kern, 2017, p. 105).

To expand upon existing socio-ecological models and to highlight the complexity of the factors underpinning
school belonging, the authors propose a new approach – the bio-psycho-social-ecological model of school belonging. This model recognizes that:

There is no one simple determinant of school belonging but rather it is a mix of internal biological and psychological qualities of the young person combined with their dynamic social interactions with people across the ecological environments and contexts through which they experience the world. Each of these influences dynamically interacts with one another to impact upon how connected the young person feels to the school (Allen & Kern, 2017, p. 104).

This approach fits well with a Community Psychology approach to understanding individuals within the context of their environments, including family, community and schools. With a particular focus on schools, efforts are highlighted in the book that will assist schools to create a positive culture that supports a sense of belonging. The authors clearly outline how school mechanisms such as the school’s mission and vision statements, policies, staff professional development and the critical element of school leadership can drive and sustain the development of a school culture which promotes belonging.

The authors conclude with strong messages about the importance of school belonging, noting that while it is desired it does not just happen. It needs to be proactively emphasized and encouraged through multi-pronged approaches … Even then, a good sense of belonging is not inevitable. While schools can invest considerable time and effort into supporting their students, some students will still feel lost and disconnected (Allen & Kern, 2017, p. 106).

One gap in the book, acknowledged by the authors, is the difficulty of capturing the voices of students through statistical approaches such as meta-analysis. This would require a mixed methods approach to the research study in which qualitative approaches are incorporated to complement the quantitative data. Including the voices of young people would expand on understandings of gender and cultural background which are currently under-researched. Innovative researchers may be able to utilize this research as a launching pad in the future to build upon the practical suggestions offered.

As schools, and psychologists working with them, continue to explore the best ways to engage and support students, this book will provide them with up-to-date evidence to guide their review of existing approaches and reinforce the importance of messages they may have heard before. Community Psychologists are very well placed to support schools with these ongoing tasks and provide guidance in developing plans to strengthen aspects that require it. Reinforcing messages of the value and importance of relationships is likely to be affirming and empowering to school staff who will already be aware of how these play out on a daily basis in their school environment.
Preparation, Submission and Publication of Manuscripts

Manuscripts
The Australian Community Psychologist publishes work that is of relevance to community psychologists and others interested in the field. Research reports should be methodologically sound. Theoretical or area review papers are welcomed, as are letters, brief reports and papers by newer contributors to the discipline. Contributions towards the four sections of the journal are sought.

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