

**Lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide,
South Australia: From dilemmas to strategies**

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis critically examines the concept of lateral violence in the Aboriginal community in Adelaide, South Australia. Lateral violence describes how members of oppressed groups direct their dissatisfaction inward, toward themselves and those less powerful within their community. Lateral violence is believed to be an issue within Indigenous communities in Australia; however there is limited research to verify this as lateral violence is a relatively under researched area. Moreover, this term has been applied to Indigenous communities in Australia with little consultation. This research draws on theories of oppression, racism, stigma, social representation, coping, and identity to critically analyse and evaluate the concept of lateral violence (see chapter 1). In order to understand lateral violence in the local South Australian context and listen to Aboriginal people's voices on the topic, two studies were conducted for this research utilising an Indigenous methodology as a guiding framework with a mixed methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods (see chapter 2).

Study 1 draws primarily on interviews with 30 local Aboriginal participants examining their understandings and ideas about lateral violence. Prior to the interviews most participants (n=21) completed two wellbeing scales. These were the Kessler-5 (K-5) which measured levels of psychological distress over the preceding four weeks, and the Negative Life Events scales (NLES) which measured the levels of negative stressors for a person over the previous 12 months. These scales were utilised to gain insight into participants' wellbeing and association with experiences of lateral violence. A thematic analysis was utilised to draw out participants' themes on lateral violence.

The results from the wellbeing scales indicated that overall participants were moderately distressed with just under a third (29%) scoring in the high to very high category of psychological distress. Those who scored high on psychological distress corresponded with a high number of life stressors. Further, many participants with high distress levels relayed traumatic and distressing extracts of lateral violence and were exposed to a number of negative life events. Interviews with participants identified 16 overall themes that were drawn upon when talking about lateral violence. This can be grouped into three broad recurring themes that included: perceptions and labelling of lateral violence; detrimental effects of lateral violence; and coping strategies and prevention of lateral violence. These broad themes correspond to chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

Study 2 was an evaluation of six *preventing lateral violence* workshops conducted in five organisations, predominantly in Adelaide from March to June 2014. The evaluation incorporated two phases with phase 1 utilising a quantitative pre, post and three-months post survey with 72 participants attending the workshops. The quantitative questionnaires were analysed utilising SPSS with descriptive and non-parametric statistics. The results for the survey demonstrated a significant increase and/ or maintenance of participants' knowledge, understanding, and prevention strategies for lateral violence. In phase 2 of the study, follow-up qualitative interviews were conducted with seven participants three months after the workshop. Thematic analysis identified five recurring themes in the interviews in relation to improvements to workshops and strategies to prevent lateral violence. Study 2 incorporates chapters 6 and 7.

It is hoped that by increasing awareness of lateral violence and its effects, this research will contribute to the prevention and reduction of the incidence of lateral violence within

Indigenous communities in Adelaide and elsewhere in Australia. Given that many participants drew on a number of coping strategies to deal with lateral violence, it is anticipated that such information will benefit individuals, community, governments and funding agencies to support future research, education and community services in order for Aboriginal people to heal and to prevent lateral violence.

Acknowledgements

Undertaking this thesis was by far one of the biggest challenges in my life. It was a process that seemed endless, but I am glad there were many patient and supportive people urging me past the finish line.

First I want to acknowledge that this research was supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in receiving a grant *Building capacity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research* as a stipend for the first two and half years of my PhD. For this I would like to thank the lead investigator, Professor Robyn McDermott for enabling the beginnings of my PhD process.

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and literature is amazing and I feel privileged that you were able to spend time helping me get started.

To the many participants that engaged in this research, I wish I could name you all in this thesis, as you own it as much as I do. However, I ensured you that the process was confidential. When I see you I will let you know in person of my appreciation.

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I would like to thank Dr Diane Brown who edited earlier versions of journal articles for publication and the final draft of my thesis in accordance with the *Australian Standards for Editing Practice* (2013, 2nd edition.) and national guidelines for editing/proofreading higher degree research theses.

Thesis structure

This thesis is formatted as a *thesis by publication* which is permitted under the guidelines of the University of Adelaide Graduate Centre.

There are five analytical chapters written in manuscript format. Two of the articles have been published in journals and one is currently under review. The manuscripts differ slightly to the published articles (see appendices 10 and 11).

Each analytical chapter has its own detailed methodology and research approach. Therefore there is not an overall methodology section in this thesis. The methodology discussed in chapter 2 relates to the principles of an Indigenous methodology.

For improved flow of the overall thesis, the references (in-text citations and footnotes) will be accumulative rather than specific to each chapter. A final reference chapter is included towards the end of the document.

I have chosen this format because I wished to share my work in relevant journals with peers and the Aboriginal community as soon as practical. I was encouraged to pursue this topic by many in the Aboriginal community who assisted in providing feedback and support.

Publications

Work contained in this thesis has been published elsewhere, as follows:

Clark, Y., & Augoustinos, M. (2015). What's in a name? Lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide, South Australia. *The Australian Community Psychologist*, 27(2), 19-34.

Clark, Y., Augoustinos, M., & Malin, M. (2016). Lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide: It affects our identity and wellbeing. *Journal of Indigenous Wellbeing: Te Mauri-Pimatisiwin*, 1(1), 43-52.

Clark, Y., Augoustinos, M., & Malin, M. (in press). Coping and prevention of lateral violence in the Aboriginal community in Adelaide.

A statement of authorship will precede each of the five chapters which indicate the publication status of these chapters.

Conference presentations

Clark, Y. (2014, July). *Exploring lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide, SA*. Electronic poster presentation, International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP), Paris.

Clark, Y. (2015, October 01). *Lateral violence in the Aboriginal community in Adelaide, SA: From dilemmas to strategies*. Symposia, Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) conference, The Gold Coast, Queensland.

Clark, Y. (2015, November) *A journey towards preventing lateral violence with the Aboriginal community in SA*. Healing Our Spirit Worldwide (HOSW) conference, Hamilton, New Zealand.

Terminology

Cultural descriptors: Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous are typically used interchangeably within Australia.

How this terminology is used in this thesis is described below.

The term Aboriginal is predominately used in this research about Aboriginal people in Adelaide, South Australia. From experience, many people use this term rather than Indigenous to describe themselves in South Australia.

Furthermore, the term Aboriginal is used in many documents as either a stand-alone term which implies that the information relates to Aboriginal people only, or it is used generically to encompass both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is used to describe both Australian groups and this thesis will use these categories when referenced by another source. More recently, the term Indigenous has replaced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as identity categories.

Indigenous is the international word used by the United Nations to describe collective groups. Hence this term will be used to describe both groups in the thesis.

Regional names are often used to collectively identify Indigenous people. For example: Koori (NSW); Murri (Southern QLD); Noongar (WA, South-West); Nunga (SA); and Anangu (central regions – SA/NT). These terms are mainly used by Indigenous people and not generally by non-Indigenous people. These terms will be used in this thesis when referenced.

Aboriginal people will also use their or other local language group names such as Kokatha, Kaurna, etc. These names will be used in this thesis when referenced.

In this thesis, terminology for those other than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is non-Aboriginal or non-Indigenous, Anglo-Celtic or “white” people depending on the context of use.

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