Balancing cultural and workplace values: Perceptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee wellbeing and best practice in the workplace.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the Honours degree of Bachelor of Psychological Science.

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2018

Word count: 8,869

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Abstract

Significant disparities exist between Indigenous people's wellbeing and employment rates, and that of non-Indigenous people. Indigenous people are 2.6 times more likely to experience severe psychological distress and have an unemployment rate 4.2 times that of non-Indigenous people. Despite significant effort in the last decade, employment statistics have only improved minimally, and the wellbeing of Indigenous populations is of continued concern. Cultural competency training is considered a useful tool to improve employee wellbeing and retention rates, and is a common practice in many workplaces. Literature that explores Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of wellbeing in the workplace and cultural competency training in the same context is limited. The aim of this study is to explore remote and urban, Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of wellbeing, employment related issues, and cultural competency, and how these three concepts interact. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with Indigenous and non-Indigenous professionals; the data was analysed using thematic analysis. The main themes identified were: 'implications of family, community, and culture'; 'support'; 'appropriate work'; 'discrimination'; 'confidence in the system; 'competency versus awareness; and 'practical barriers'. The findings of this study provide insight into the types of environments perceived to be most conducive to positive wellbeing and retention outcomes in the workplace, and how cultural competency training is perceived.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published except where due reference is made. I give permission for the digital version of this thesis to be made available on the web, via the University of Adelaide's digital thesis repository, the Library Search, and through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the School to restrict access for a period of time.

October 2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Professor Deborah Turnbull for her time, guidance, support, enthusiasm, and wealth of knowledge. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from you this year.

I would like to thank my parents for inspiring me to take this direction with my thesis and their constant support, patience, and engagement with my work. Thank you to my sister for sending encouragement from the other side of the world, and thank you to Henry, for making me want to match your work ethic.

Finally, I'd like to thank the participants who chose to be a part of this research, I am very grateful for your time and willingness to share your invaluable knowledge and experience.

Chapter 1: Introduction

For the purpose of this thesis, the term Aboriginal is used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australia. This is not intended to exclude Torres Strait Islander people, or people who identify as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent.

It must also be stressed that the following comments on Aboriginal culture can only be broad generalisations. This is because it is impossible to briefly convey the subtleties of a highly complex and evolving society and also, each person is an individual with different values and needs, regardless of their belonging to a group.

1.1 The impact of colonisation on wellbeing, health, and social functioning

The enduring effects of colonisation directly impact the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people today. Traditional lands, language, culture, and social practices are a source of resilience and strength for Aboriginal people and the loss of culture through colonisation has diminished their ability to cope with negative life events.

For Aboriginal people, culture encompasses kinship, family, country, and spirituality, and describes a person's capacity to create and maintain connections to their heritage. Most initiatives in the mental health field aim to support Aboriginal people to maintain or restore their sense of cultural identity and values by participating in cultural practices (Dudgeon, Milroy, Walker, Calma & Green, 2014).

Kinship, family, and wellbeing

Kinship is based on the notion that a group of people, regardless of blood relation, can be considered family. The result is a complex network with rules for interaction and obligations. The reciprocal nature of these relationships fosters secure attachments, provides individuals with strong and reliable support networks, and gives individuals within the group a sense of certainty and stability (Broome, 1982). Family and kinship systems provide interpersonal interaction that is vital to wellbeing, however, when this is disrupted by the absence of one or more family members, perhaps due to incarceration, death, removal of children, or moving away for employment, a significant burden can be felt by others and may cause distress for the individual (Milroy, 2008).

A significant consequence of colonisation was the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families, including the stolen generation, and the ensuing years of government and welfare removals. Despite half of the Aboriginal population being affected by forcible removal, including those removed and those whose family members were removed, there is no comprehensive research detailing the psychological impacts of this on families, communities and over generations (Zubrick et al., 2010). In the case of the individual, Kelly, Dudgeon, Gee, and Glaskin (2009) found an association between forcible removals and serious psychological distress. In 2015 the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (AIHW) reported that high psychological distress was significantly more common among Aboriginal adults who had been removed from their family (35%, compared with 29% for those who had not been removed), and among those who had relatives removed (34%, compared with 26% of those who had not had relatives removed) (AIHW, 2015).

Country and wellbeing

Aboriginal people refer to land as Country and this encompasses everything from the land and air, to water, and stories of "Dreaming". The concept of Country is dynamic and forms the rules, norms and beliefs about the existence between land, animals, plants, and humans through connecting Aboriginal peoples' to ancestral beings (Kingsley, Townsend, Phillip, & Aldous, 2013). Dockery (2010), and Schultz & Cairney (2017) identified the reciprocal relationship with Country as an important element of wellbeing for Aboriginal people. Connection to Country has been disrupted for many Aboriginal people by colonisation and the resulting government policies around land rights. This is highlighted by the 2004-2005 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey findings which indicated that 38% of Aboriginal people living in urban areas did not know where their traditional lands were (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2006). Multiple studies have found that disconnection from land disrupts cultural connections and this can cause major distress for Aboriginal people (McNamara & Westoby, 2011.; Burgess, Berry, Gunthorpe, & Bailie 2008; and King & Furgal, 2014).

There is extensive evidence, including work by Burgess et al. (2008), illustrating the health and wellbeing benefits of Aboriginal land management programs in which Aboriginal people can work and live on Country. This is further supported by Kingsley et al. (2009) who identified caring for Country as both a protective factor against outside pressures, and a positive factor that improves self-esteem and pride, self-identity and belonging, and cultural and spiritual connection. Grieves (2009) also found that engaging with special places, creatures, and caring for the land built resilience in a person's spirituality and feeling of connectedness.

Spirituality and wellbeing

Spiritualty in the Aboriginal context is usually referred to as The Dreamtime or The Dreaming and is based on the philosophy that the animate and inanimate elements of the earth and universe, people, plants and animals, landforms and celestial bodies are interconnected (Grieves, 2009). Spirituality includes the belief that ancestors laid down the foundations of life and ensure that individuals know their responsibilities and connectedness to their kin, Country, and to the ancestors spirits (Grieves, 2009). This knowledge is passed down from the Elders through ceremony, stories, song, dance, and art. Spirituality forms the basis of the values held by Aboriginal people, as well as their ethics, behaviours, and all social, political and economic endeavors (Grieves, 2009).

The colonisation of Australia has resulted in widespread disconnect from spirituality and its manifestations in traditional customs and values, causing distress and leaving a cultural void in individuals and communities (Dudgeon et al., 2014). A loss of spirituality, or even confusion around a contemporary equivalent, is a loss of an important protective factor against negative life events or stressors (Kelly, et al., 2009).

Given the effects of colonisation that Aboriginal people have endured, the loss of protective factors against external stressors, which will be discussed below, and the introduction of new stressors, it is not surprising that Aboriginal populations experience high rates of psychological distress. The Close the Gap report (2017) indicates that 33% of Aboriginal adults report high levels of psychological distress while 67% report low to moderate levels. Compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts, Aboriginal people are 2.6 times as likely to experience severe

psychological distress (Health Performance Framework Report, 2017 and AIHW, 2015), ranging from mood affective disorders to psychosis.

Further, data collected between 2001 and 2012 by the Department of Health (2013) indicate that the rate of suicide for Aboriginal people is twice that of non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people also tend to take their own lives at a younger age compared to non-Aboriginal people, with the majority of suicide deaths occurring before the age of 35 years (Department of Health, 2013).

The same report stated Aboriginal people are twice as likely as their non-Aboriginal counterparts to self-harm and that between 2008 and 2009, the rate of hospitalisations for non-fatal intentional self-harm was higher for Aboriginal people (3.5 per 1000) compared to non-Aboriginal people (1.4 per 1000). The report also noted that these figures are likely severe underestimates and rates of self-harm are probably much higher (Department of Health, 2013).

Colonisation has also caused significant physical health problems for Aboriginal people and health outcomes are consistently worse than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. The latest report by the AIHW found that between 2010 and 2012, the estimated life expectancy at birth was 69.1 years for Aboriginal males (10.6 years lower than non-Aboriginal males) and 73.7 years for Aboriginal females (9.5 years lower than non-Aboriginal females). It was also reported that 65% of deaths among Aboriginal people occurred before the age of 65, compared with 19% of deaths among non-Aboriginal people. During the same period, the mortality rate for Aboriginal people was 1.6 times that of non-Aboriginal people. The causes of these deaths were cardiovascular disease (25% of deaths), cancer (20%), endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders, including

diabetes (9.1%), respiratory diseases (7.6%) and digestive diseases (5.6%) (AIHW, 2015). These statistics highlight the prevalence of preventable diseases and illness in Aboriginal communities.

Lack of access to healthcare and culturally appropriate services is a compounding factor for poor health and wellbeing in Aboriginal communities. Difficulty accessing appropriate services is due to a shortage of general practitioners, specifically female, and Aboriginal health workers. There is also a lack of affordable health care services or awareness of existing services, and health services are often ill equipped to deal with the complexity of the health, social and emotional wellbeing and cultural needs Aboriginal people, especially Aboriginal women. Distance to health care services and lack of affordable transport, particularly in rural and remote areas is problematic, as is staying away from home to receive treatment without family support. The high financial costs of receiving treatment away from home also negatively impact an Aboriginal person's ability to access health care services (Department of Health, 2009).

The process of colonisation and forced assimilation into Western society has posed new stressors for Aboriginal people that have serious effects on their physical and mental state. There are significant disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in housing, violence, removal of children and incarceration, and the prevalence of grief, loss and racism are troubling. These stressors are outlined below.

Violence and incarceration

Records of assault among Aboriginal people are 14 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal people (AIHW, 2015) and that figure is likely higher as there would be circumstances in which people were not hospitalised and incidents not reported to police.

In 2008 the incarceration to population rate for Aboriginal people was 2,223 prisoners per 100,000 people, with Aboriginal people being 17.2 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Aboriginal people (ABS, 2008). Repeated short-term incarceration can have a number of negative health effects for Aboriginal individuals and communities, while achieving little in increasing community safety. These negative effects can include, housing and tenancy problems, poor mental and physical health, family disruption, substance misuse, and diminishing employment opportunities (Krieg, 2006).

Grief and loss

Intergenerational trauma, where trauma is passed down from one generation to the next, is prevalent in Aboriginal communities and is a product of colonisation, the associated violence, loss of culture and land, and subsequent discriminatory policies (Raphael, Swan, Martinek, 1998).

Widespread loss and grief is felt by Aboriginal communities due to comparably higher rates of infant mortality, suicide and early or traumatic death. Additionally, Aboriginal children are significantly over-represented within the child protection system with Aboriginal children being 7 times as likely as non-Aboriginal children to have received some form of child protection service. This may be due to neglect, poverty, housing situations, or violence in the home (AIHW, 2015). On the issue of housing, the Aboriginal homelessness rate is nearly 14 times that of non-Aboriginal people and they account for 49% of those living in severely crowded housing, 26% of the people living in tents or sleeping on the street, and 19% of people staying in supported accommodation for the homeless (AIHW, 2015).

Racism

The prevalence of racism in Australia is another direct result of colonisation and the discriminatory policies put in place thereafter. Aboriginal people have identified racism as a risk factor impinging on wellbeing in routinely collected national data (SHRG, 2004) and in this case, personal and systemic racism are both prevalent. Findings of self-reported racism among Aboriginal participants ranged from 58–79 per cent (Forrest, Dunn & Pe-Pua 2007 in Paradies, Harris & Anderson, 2008) and 18 per cent of the 9,400 respondents in the 2002–2003 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey reported discrimination or racism as a stressor in the previous year (ABS, 2004).

Racism has a cumulative effect on both the individual and community. Dudgeon et al. (2010) stated that repeated experiences of racism affect a person's behaviour, their understanding and expectation of life, and their beliefs about their own group as well as the dominant group. This may cause low self-esteem, mistrust of the dominant culture, and lateral violence, which occurs when a colonised group internalises the values and behaviours of the coloniser, creating an undesirable view of themselves and their culture, and may lead to physical or emotional abuse within the group (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011). Further, these feelings and beliefs can lead to broader health and wellbeing issues like substance misuse and smoking, stress and mood affective disorders, self-harm and suicide ideation, disengaging from healthy activities like sleep and exercise, antisocial behaviour and incarceration, and injury as a result of racially motivated assaults (Dudgeon et al. 2010).

Systematic racism was found to inhibit ones access to health, employment and educational resources, and had a negative impact on dealings with government agencies and police

department (Paradies, 2006., Paradies et al., 2009., Priest et al., 2011., Priest et al., 2012., and Williams & Mohammed, 2009) .

It is evident that racism contributes to the psychological state of people belonging to marginalised groups, and those people who find themselves succeeding in the dominant society will likely still encounter racism and discrimination in different forms.

Colonisation, the resulting discriminatory policies, and the extreme stressors that Aboriginal people experience make it difficult for some Aboriginal people to function happily and successfully in Western society. Disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal employment and education rates are significant indicators of this and will be discussed below.

Employment

Aboriginal populations have high levels of unemployment due to several compounding factors such as low levels of education, lack of relevant skills, lack of employment opportunities, conflicting familial obligations, and geographic location (Gray et al. 2012). The employment to population rate for Aboriginal people aged 15–64 years old was around 48% in 2014 and 2015, compared to 75% for non-Aboriginal Australians (ABS, 2016). The AIHW reported that the unemployment rate for Aboriginal people aged 15 to 64 was 21%, which is 4.2 times higher than the unemployment rate for non-Aboriginal people. Interestingly, there was little difference in employment rates between those living in remote areas and those living in the city (AIHW, 2015).

Education

Recent data indicates that Aboriginal students generally have lower attendance rates than non-Aboriginal students, with Aboriginal students in year 5 attending 72% of the time while their non-Aboriginal counterparts attend 94% of the time (AIHW, 2015).

Students who meet or exceed the minimum standards for literacy and numeracy are more likely to succeed and go on to further education however, data from NAPLAN suggests that less Aboriginal students met or exceeded the national minimum standards than non-Aboriginal students. Also, the number of students meeting the minimum standard declines with remoteness (AIHW, 2015).

Retention rates of Aboriginal students in high school decrease with each additional year of schooling, from 81% in Year 11, to 55% in Year 12. These rates are lower than those for non-Aboriginal students at each year level (AIHW, 2015). 46% of Aboriginal adults had completed Year 12 or a Certificate III according to the 2012–2013 Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, a significantly lower percentage than their non-Aboriginal peers (ABS, 2013).

According to the ABS, in 2006, Aboriginal people aged 18-24 were less likely to be attending university or a technical educational institution (6%) than non-Aboriginal people (25%). Between the ages of 25 and 34 years, 3% of Aboriginal people attended university or further education compared with 7% of non-Aboriginal people (ABS, 2010).

1.2 Aboriginal wellbeing and the Biopsychosocial approach

Wellbeing in the Aboriginal context is holistic and encompasses the mental, physical, spiritual and cultural health of both the individual and the community. A whole-of-life view

forms the basis for 'social and emotional wellbeing' in this context, and this term is preferred when referring to mental health in Aboriginal communities as it reflects the social and historical nature of mental health, as well as the holistic philosophy Aboriginal people have towards their health (Grieves, 2009).

It is important to note that each of the hundreds of Aboriginal communities have differences in culture and therefore different concepts of wellbeing. These concepts are also evolving, influenced by both past and present factors.

The biopsychosocial (BPS) approach to health was proposed in 1977 by George Engel as an alternative to the Western biomedical model. According to the BPS approach, determinants for mental health problems are the result of an interaction between biological, psychological, and social factors (Babalola, Noel & White, 2017). Figure 1 summarises the approach.
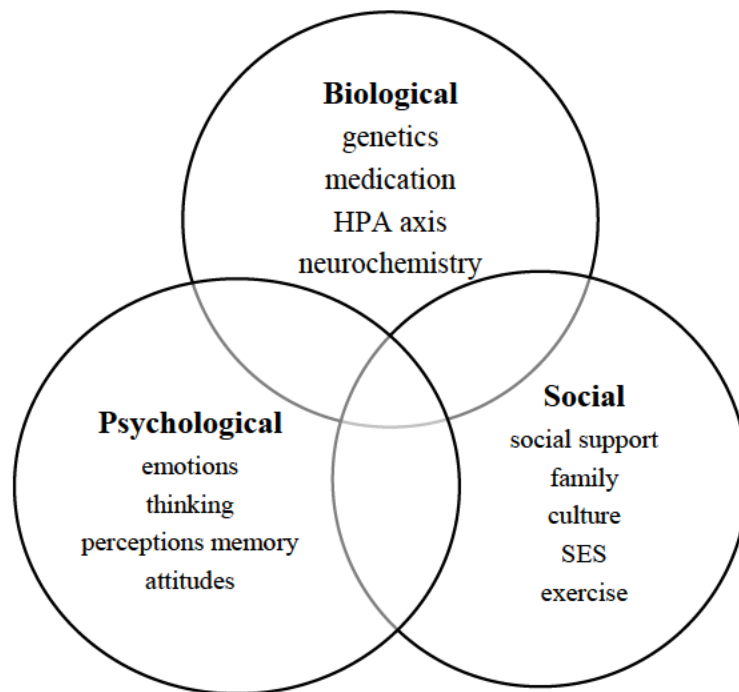

Figure 1. The Biopsychosocial approach and potential components.

This view is consistent with holistic models of health and wellbeing generally adopted by Eastern or collectivist cultures, and in the Australian context, by Aboriginal people. Given this alignment, the BPS approach broadly informed this thesis and guided the initial research approach, question conception, and the interpretation of results.

1.3 The psychological benefits of employment

The World Health Organisation has recognised that employment provides five types of psychological experience that can promote wellbeing. These include, purpose, social contact, social identity, regular activity, and time structure (Harnois and Gabriel, 2002).

Unemployment and underemployment can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing, including stress and mood affective disorders, and maladaptive coping mechanisms such as smoking, substance misuse or over-eating (Rosenthal, Carroll-Scott, Earnshaw, Santilli & Ickovics, 2012). A survey of members of six low socio-economic status communities found that people employed full time reported the lowest levels of stress and depression and were the most physically healthy. Those who were unemployed usually had the least healthy lifestyles and experienced the most psychological distress (Rosenthal et al., 2012).

A longitudinal study of the effects of unemployment and unsatisfactory employment on young adults found that those who were satisfied with their employment situation showed higher self-esteem and less depressive symptoms than those who were not satisfied. The study indicated a causal connection between employment status and wellbeing (Winefield, Delfabbro, Winefield, Duong & Malvaso, 2017).

1.4 Aboriginal people in the Western workplace

Several barriers have been identified that affect Aboriginal employment and retention. The Minerals Industry Indigenous Employment Research Project, conducted by The Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM), found that the greatest barriers to Aboriginal people gaining employment were; a lack of education, lack of exposure to the Western workplace, geographical isolation, poor health, and difficulty in knowing about, or applying for, jobs (Tiplady & Barclay, 2005).

The report also outlines the main reasons Aboriginal people quit or are let go from jobs, stating that the nature of the job, such as repetitive work, limited opportunities for promotion, and work overload all led to employee dissatisfaction and poor retention rates. Additionally, when employees felt isolated or unsupported by their family, and had no time to participate in community or cultural activities, retention rates were generally poorer. Conflict with managers, failure to pass drug and alcohol testing, absenteeism and racism were also identified as barriers to retention.

Several recommendations for organisations and employers are made in the CSRM report, including the introduction of cultural competency training to improve recruitment and retention rates for Aboriginal employees (Tiplady & Barclay, 2005). The foundations of cultural competency training and its efficacy will be discussed in the following section.

1.5 Cultural competency

Cultural competency programs are becoming increasingly common because of an identified need to improve relations between cultural groups in the workplace. Cross et al. (1989) define cultural competence as having the capacity to function, as an individual or as an organisation,

effectively within the context of the cultural beliefs, values and needs of individual or community. In this context, effective communication means interacting in a respectful, positive, informed, and efficient way. Being culturally competent involves an awareness of oneself and others, being open to other beliefs and ideas, to be knowledgeable about other cultures and to be genuinely interested and willing to learn (Jirwe, Gerrish & Emami, 2006). Cultural competence can be pursued at an individual, professional, and institutional level and is a dynamic process in which a person may move back and forth between the stages depending on situation or context.

| Incompetence | Knowledge | Awareness | Sensitivity | Competence | Proficiency |

Figure 2. Wells (2010) summary of the cultural competency model

Wells (2010) describes the cultural competency journey as moving from incompetence to proficiency, see Figure 2. Cultural incompetence is characterised by a lack of knowledge about the culture and the consequences of these beliefs. Cultural knowledge is considered the learning stage and a person is considered culturally aware when they can recognise and understand the cultural implications of both their own behaviour and that of the other culture. Being culturally sensitive means you are able and willing to integrate cultural knowledge into your interactions. To be culturally competent, a person must be consistently integrating cultural knowledge and awareness into interactions and do so with acceptance and respect. Finally, cultural proficiency means that a person is competent and confident in the way they interact with another culture and possess a profound knowledge base of that culture.

A current systematic review of literature on the nature and efficacy of cultural competency programs found that most training programs followed the structure of a questionnaire, lecture, discussion, role-play, and a focus on increased contact with culturally diverse individuals. Despite similarities in content and delivery, the session lengths varied greatly, with some lasting no more than two hours, and others running for 145 hours over a specified amount of time. This indicates a marked difference in resource availability and organisation commitment. The majority of studies included in the review reported positive changes in participant's knowledge but that outcomes were mixed regarding attitudes, awareness, and objective skills, with some studies reporting positive changes and others reporting no change at all. Only one study measured outcomes for minority individuals and found no difference in how they felt they were perceived or treated (Benuto, Casas & O'Donohue, 2018). The authors also noted that this might be because cultural competency training focuses on learning about the other culture, rather than developing the specific skills needed to work with a culturally diverse group of people. An older systematic review by Lie et al., (2011) found that very few high quality studies measuring the efficacy of cultural competency training from the clients perspective existed, and the ones that did found training programs directed at staff to be minimally effective for the client.

1.6 Justification for the present study

The rationale for this research stems from national reports on Aboriginal people's wellbeing and employment situations. Despite significant effort in the last decade by the Australian government and individual organisations, employment statistics have only improved minimally, and mental health and wellbeing in Aboriginal populations are of continued concern. There is a clear need for better insight into why these disparities are occurring, and what factors could

improve the situation. Additionally, there is limited literature on the role of Aboriginal people's employment situation and its interaction with wellbeing outcomes. There is also limited research on the efficacy of cultural competency training, especially in the Australian Aboriginal context.

1.7 Aims of the present study

The present study aims to explore Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perceptions around employment related issues. Specifically, this study aims to explore perceptions of cultural competency training and its efficacy, and provide a better understanding of the perceived facilitators and barriers to gaining and retaining employment for Aboriginal people. This study also aims to explore the types of jobs and working environments that are most conducive to positive wellbeing outcomes.

Chapter 2: Method

2.1 Participants

Participants were invited to participate in the study if they were Aboriginal, worked with Aboriginal people, or worked in the area of Aboriginal affairs. The sample comprised of eight individuals of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal origin, three identified as Aboriginal while five did not. Of the eight, three were male and two were female, with three declining to say. Participant's ages ranged from 28 to 62 years, with the average being 48. All participants were considered professionals, working for organisations in Australia. The majority worked in Adelaide and South Australia, while one participant worked nationally. Table 1 summarises the participants and their organisations.

Table 1

Description of participants (dashes indicate no response)

Participant	Indigenous status	Gender	Age range (years)	Organisation	Location	Length of employment
P1	Yes	-	-	Independent state body	Adelaide	-
P2	Yes	Male	49-54	Private employment agency	Regional SA and Adelaide	21 years
P3	No	Female	43-48	Non-for-profit employment service	ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC, WA	15 years
P4	No	-	-	State government body	Regional and remote SA and Adelaide	8 years
P5	No	-	-	Private law firm specialising in Aboriginal defence	Adelaide and regional SA	-
P6	No	Female	49-54	State government department	Remote SA and Adelaide	25+ years
P7	Yes	Male	25-30	Elite national sporting club	Regional and remote SA and Adelaide	6 months
P8	No	Male	61-66	Resource management agency	Regional and remote SA	11+ years

2.2 Procedure

Participants were sourced through snowball sampling, where contacts of the supervisor, research colleagues, and friends and family of the researcher were informed about the project and asked if they, or anyone they knew who was eligible to participate, would like to participate.

Participation in this study was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point or decline to answer any questions. Consent was initially obtained through a principle agreement to participate and formal consent to be audio recorded was obtained when participants signed a consent form.

Data were collected by administrating semi-structured interviews and optional completion of a survey to collect demographic information. Examples of these can be found in Appendix B. The interview process followed recommendations made by Grbich (1999). Participant involvement and rights were explained and their wishes noted, and copies of transcripts were offered to participants, although none accepted.

Face to face interviews were conducted for participants working in the Adelaide area. These were set up at a time convenient to the interviewee. Interviews were held at the participants place of work, the University of Adelaide North Terrace campus, or at a neutral meeting area. These interviews lasted between 23 to 45 minutes in total, with the average being 36 minutes.

One interview was conducted over the phone as the participant worked inter-state and a time was agreed upon via email. Consent forms were sent and returned via email before the interview commenced. This interview took 23 minutes to complete.

A recursive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was taken throughout the interview process, allowing for question and question structure to be edited for subsequent interviews in cases where concepts needed clarification or where participants raised ideas worth pursuing in future

interviews. In addition, an audit trail was kept for the duration of the project, describing the development of the project, any modifications made to the interview questions, and the development of themes and the final analysis. The development of interview questions was also documented in the audit trail, which recorded the process of piloting questions on fellow researchers (independent to this study) and their notes and suggestions. Maintaining an audit trail and piloting interview questions is important in ensuring quality research as it provides evidence of the researchers thought process and allows for comparison during analysis (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003).

Data saturation refers to the point at which collecting new data will not result in the identification of new themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Data saturation was reached and no new themes were identified by the final interview.

The researcher has assumptions and biases about the concepts and people involved in this study. To account for this, as recommended by Spencer, Lewis, Ritchie, and Dillon (2003), reflexivity was practiced for the duration of the study by openly discussing research findings with the supervisor, keeping a research journal detailing thoughts and feelings that arose during the process, and keeping an audit trail. Reflexivity is critical in qualitative research as researcher assumptions and biases lead to the development of different understandings of a particular situation in the data (Lazard & McAvoy, 2017). Although the researcher does not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, they and their family have been involved in various aspects of Aboriginal Affairs and these experiences have inevitably influenced the nature of interview questions, decisions made in regards to tangents followed during interviews, and the analysis of the data. At the conclusion of the thesis, a summary will be sent to participants in the interest of reciprocity.

2.3 Data Analysis

The analytic approach of this study was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis process. Thematic analysis is used by researchers to examine the ways people make meaning of their experience and recognise the ways that broader social context impacts on these meanings. As this is an exploratory study, this is the most appropriate means of analysis. Thematic analysis allows for flexible data analysis when there are no well-established theories or relationships already available in the literature.

The researcher familiarised themselves with the data by listening in the initial interviews, the transcription process, and repeated reading of each transcript.

Significant and recurring features in the data were then coded and organised into meaningful groups. As many potential themes or patterns as possible were coded, as advised by Braun and Clarke (2006) and relevant surrounding data was retained to illustrate context. Care was taken not to exclude potential themes on the basis of them not fitting the rest of the data. Coding the data was an ongoing process that overlapped different phases. Based on recommendations made by the (UK) National Centre for Social Research Quality Framework (2003), another qualitative researcher independent to this study, coded one transcript and these codes were cross checked with those developed by the researcher to ensure codes accurately identified the themes. It is expected that this reduced moderator bias.

At this point codes were sorted into potential themes which were then evaluated and distinguished into main themes and sub-themes.

The essence of each theme was identified and named by determining what aspect of the data each theme captured, identifying the story that each theme told, and identifying how these stories

fit into the wider framework of the data as a whole. At this point, sub-themes were identified and named as well.

2.4 Ethics

Conducting research about vulnerable populations can be complex when considering the impact of research questioning on the mental health of participants. In this case, participants were asked to participate in the study based not only their knowledge of the topic, but also their apparent capacity (i.e. their professional position) to deal with any emotions that may arise out of questioning. This inclusion criteria was set in an attempt to gain the best possible information whilst avoiding causing distress or discomfort to those who may find themselves in an unfavourable employment situation. The results of this criteria was that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were interviewed and all were professionals in their area.

Data were presented in a non-identifiable form; participant names and company/organisation names were not used, however age, gender and Indigenous status were included to provide context, if the participant volunteered that information. No financial or other rewards were given as a result of participation. The research aims were fully disclosed to participants as it pertained to the collection of accurate data and relevant interview topics.

Ethics approval was given by the relevant committee at the University of Adelaide (code number 18/23).

Chapter 3: Analysis and Discussion

3.1 Overview

This chapter will present the results of this study and findings will be discussed in relation to the existing literature. A summary of the seven themes, two sub-themes, and findings can be found in Figure 3.
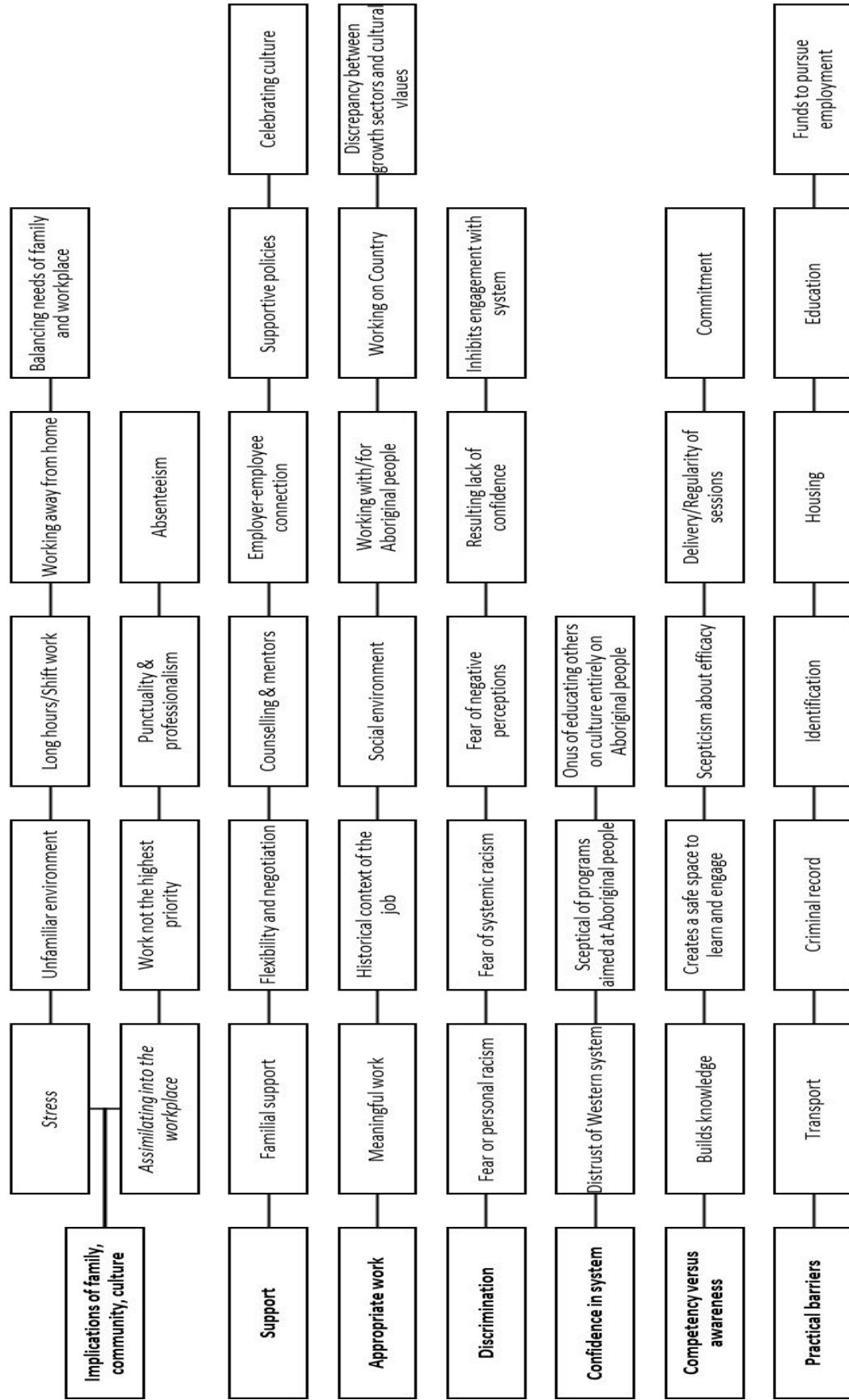
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Figure 3. Themes (bold), sub-themes (italicised), and findings

3.2 Implications of family, community, and culture

The implications that family, community and culture have on employment, and employee wellbeing, are numerous. Consistent with a number of studies on the nature of Aboriginal people's wellbeing (Broome, 1982., Dudgeon et al., 2014, Kelly et al., 2009, and Milroy, 2008), responses to questions about employee wellbeing were generally framed in the community context, and it was evident from the nature and quantity of responses like this that familial, community and cultural connections are critical to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people and employment outcomes.

3.2.1 Stress

Participants highlighted the strenuous circumstances that many Aboriginal job seekers and employees find themselves in, and mentioned that family, community, and culture played a large role in either mitigating external stress, which will be discussed in the 'support' section, or conversely, causing stress. Participants stated that moving into an unfamiliar environment with different expectations is a common cause of stress. This stress was said to be considerably worse when Aboriginal people had to move away from home for work and/or worked long hours or shift work. Also, those moving from remote areas to cities usually experienced significant stress. Stress caused by distance or disconnection from ones family was a prevalent point and is consistent with literature by Broome (1982) who highlighted the strong and reliable support networks provided by family, and Milroy (2008) who found that absence of family resulted in psychological distress.

The pull of family and social responsibilities is very strong and in my experience it will

always win out over a job that they really like doing. (P8)

When asked if participants felt cultural values were fostered in the workplace, one participant responded:

No. And I think it's not fostered because there is such a great divide in how a workplace

is run and the values behind… yeah there's a disparity between the values of the

workplace and the values of the people. Not having the balance between their values,

their cultural values, and then their workplace values would definitely impact on their

individual wellbeing. (P6)

3.2.2 Assimilating into the workplace

Participants stated that due to obligations to family, community and culture, some Aboriginal job seekers or employees might find meeting the expectations of a Western workplace challenging. Firstly, those looking for a job may find themselves unable to fully engage and commit the time needed to make interviews and gain employment.

There are Aboriginal people I know who are looking for work but they are absolutely

fully occupied responding to crises in community and families, so they don't have time to

look for work because they're trying to keep kids from being taken away, trying to get

stable accommodation, it's the last priority. (P1)

Secondly, how people communicate and interact within the community may impede one's ability to meet time and behavioral expectations at the job and retain employment.

> *What worries me about the kids is the way they talk in a workplace, learning that when you go to work, as bad as it sounds, you live in the Western world and you have to be able to adapt to the way businesses act and the way they perform at work and when you go home that's when you can live your Aboriginal life and talk like you do with your family. (P7)*

Thirdly, the transitory nature of Aboriginal people and their cultural expectations presents challenges for retention.

> *I think for us, what we see is there is usually some family issue, a disruption in the family, there can be movement of adults or kids or both, and there are cultural requirements for going to funerals when they need to so I think they're issues that affect retention. And having to go off and not knowing exactly how long they're going to be away. (P8)*

3.3 Support

The need for holistic support was expressed by all participants in relation to wellbeing, gaining employment and retention, and this is reflective of how Aboriginal people view health and wellbeing (Babalola, Noel & White, 2017). Participants stated that individuals who were supported by their family, community, and elders were motivated to gain and retain employment, with one participant saying:

They have people who are role models so we've got people who are able to make choices about where they want to go and work because they're influenced by peers or family members who work in that industry or they know people who've found work and they want to follow and be successful. (P2)

Flexibility was considered crucial to supporting employees and improving retention outcomes. Participants highlighted flexibility in determining time off for cultural obligations, flexibility in working hours, and negotiations about expectations as imperative to maintaining wellbeing at work and improving retention, highlighted in the extract below. Allowing flexibility and negotiating working situations appropriate for both parties seemed to be helpful in mitigating any misunderstandings around absenteeism, as well as reduce the stress felt by employees working unsuitable hours.

I'd say flexibility and I think it's the flexibility… understanding different cultural, or having cultural awareness and understanding that people live differently and their needs aren't the same or… What I'm trying to say is equality isn't about the same, it's about doing things that are different to support people and differentiating for Aboriginal people. So that flexibility around work times. So when I worked on the APY lands, it was around supporting families, broader then the person you were just employing and understanding the impact that it had and understanding the impact that their cultural needs around Business as it's called, that could be men's/women's/family ceremonial stuff came before their… their priorities were different so they'd go off and do these

things and having the flexibility to do that and acknowledge who they are and have their

connection to culture and place and having all of those things is incredibly important.

(P6)

This need for flexibility reflects how Aboriginal people approach work, where making money is not the highest priority, instead, family and community come first.

Interestingly, the extract above introduced the idea that equality in the workplace does not mean having the same opportunity. Instead, equality in this context was providing the required level of support for each person to succeed. In practice, this may mean differentiating training programs for trainees aiming for a position, demonstrated in the following extract.

You might have to do the recruitment a little bit differently, advertise differently, work

with different stakeholders to attract people, it's just doing something a little bit different,

it can't be one size fits all… we had to have a situation where we ran dual processes and

did a lot of training and then fed people into the process. If you bring them in to early

you'll just find they don't meet the requirements. (P2)

Participants stressed that internal supports are fundamental to employee wellbeing and retention outcomes. The availability of counselling and mentors to support Aboriginal employees was a consistent pattern within the data. The extract below is an example of one successful initiative by a participant. It was noted by another participant that an Aboriginal mentor within the organisation would likely be beneficial.

[Aboriginal employees] were able to support each other and we had a peer support program called Ozmate and we designed it around having buddies so they were getting some mentoring support from myself and a couple of other staff but also some peer support as well. So you know, we call it Ozmate, or in Pitjantjatjara they call it malpa (friend), you have someone to work with you... (P2)

Participants also expressed that organisations who create and support opportunities for social networking significantly benefit employee wellbeing, which is supported by Broome (1982) who observed the importance of social interactions, sharing, and reciprocity for many Aboriginal people's wellbeing.

Open communication between the manager and employee was perceived to be important to the wellbeing of employees, and all participants expressed that help with advocacy and negotiating was useful in supporting employees' wellbeing and improving retention, illustrated here:

People hadn't had any skills in advocating so we used to go in and positively advocate for people. That's why we were able to achieve strong retention outcomes because we probably saved a whole lot of people's jobs by being able to negotiate and advocate for them. (P2)

Employees knowing they are valued and heard within the organisation was considered to be key in building a supportive workplace, and the following extract demonstrates how adopting a business ethos based on employee wellbeing improves retention.

> *I think when people know that whoever is their employer really and actually cares about them, you're more likely to have them stick around and the real test of that is when things go bad. Its fine as an employer when everything's running smoothly, but the real test of your commitment to an employee is when something goes wrong. So I think you have to be able to do more than you're legislatively required to do. I think that's the core of what we do and we have a very good record of longevity of people in employment. (P8)*

Many participants expressed that the existence of, and adherence to, policies that appropriately addressed racism were important to employee wellbeing and retention outcomes as they demonstrated to employees that they are valued and protected by their employer, and that grievances will be listened to and addressed appropriately. This likely improves employee wellbeing by alleviating some of the stress felt when interacting with unfamiliar staff.

> *You have to work with other people, and then having really good policies and procedures around protecting those people to ensure there isn't any racism, inferred racism around that. So that's probably the most important thing. (P2)*

Consistent with findings in the 2005 CSRM report which highlighted the need for professional development opportunities (Tiplady & Barclay, 2005), many participants stated that

opportunities for personal and professional development, and support to advance in the organisation or improve skills, is fundamental to employee wellbeing and significantly affected retention, evident in the extract below.

> *We looked after people doing their career development. One of the most important things is for people to have career development strategies around their training needs. We found that if we didn't have a plan around their training needs, they're more likely to leave. (P2)*

Workplaces that consistently celebrated culture and supported employees to acknowledge their cultural identity were perceived to benefit employee wellbeing and improve retention. This approach is consistent with a number of wellbeing programs aiming to support Aboriginal people to maintain or restore their sense of cultural identity by participating in cultural practices and encouraging them to exercise their cultural rights and responsibilities (Dudgeon et al., 2014). The following extract highlights what factors make a workplace attractive to potential employees.

> *Someone that celebrates Reconciliation Week or NAIDOC week, someone that celebrates milestones for Aboriginal history. I think that's an environment that appeals and that [Aboriginal people] feel more welcomed into. (P7)*

3.4 Appropriate work

All participants stressed that the type of work available to Aboriginal people needs to be historically, practically, and culturally appropriate for the wellbeing of employees, and to

encourage job seekers to find and retain work. There also seemed to be a significant lack of meaningful job opportunities, especially for those living in regional and remote areas.

> *If you can't find meaning in what you're doing then there's absolutely minimal connection to what you do and it was one of the biggest struggles on the APY lands, the government at the time, and still, continues to find jobs that people would be able to do but the people aren't connected to the jobs so they don't fit with the values and those things. It's a really, the purpose, finding the purpose of the work, can't just be monetary because it only fills one bucket, it doesn't fill your happiness. (P6)*

All three of the participants who identified as Aboriginal commented on the historical contexts of jobs that are frequently offered to Aboriginal people, such as cleaning, as these jobs were often given to Aboriginal people for little to no pay, and where the power dynamic was not equal. Participants said that these type of jobs may not be attractive to job seekers, and that working in a job like this would likely lead to poor retention and negative wellbeing outcomes. The following extract explains why particular jobs lack appeal to many Aboriginal people.

> *It's not just like, we've got a million cleaning jobs. If you balance that, and then look at the history of Aboriginal people, like my mum was a domestic servant, she went to school for a year and was a domestic servant from the age of 11 so she was there to cook and clean and to do the things that non-Aboriginal people probably could afford not to do themselves, could afford to pay someone else to do, but in some cases thought was beneath them… there are some jobs Aboriginal people just don't want to do. I mentioned*

about domestic servants, they've got laundry, which is very closely aligned with what

Aboriginal people used to have to do for absolutely no pay where the power dynamic was

very poor, so there are echoes of history that make jobs not attractive to Aboriginal

people. (P1)

Participants stated that a culturally appropriate work environment might include working in a social environment, working on Country, working with other Aboriginal people, and working on Aboriginal issues, or for Aboriginal communities. These types of environments were said to be most attractive to job seekers and favorable for wellbeing and higher retention. This is unsurprising as these type of jobs align with the social values and cultural priorities commonly held by Aboriginal people, such as connection with family, caring for Country, and sharing knowledge (McNamara & Westoby, 2011., King & Furgal, 2014., Burgess et al., 2008., Kingsley et al., 2009, and Broome, 1982). The following extracts express ideal employment situations and are reflective of the values discussed above.

Jobs associated with the land rather than being stuck in an office all day, high degree of

flexibility, other like people around them so they don't feel isolated because I think from

what I've observed, Anangu have a strong family connection. (P4)

We want to build an Aboriginal center for excellence and within that we want to have

Aboriginal employees because we know they're going to be passionate about it. We want

mentors within job active networks to be Aboriginal, dealing with Aboriginal students

because we know that's meaningful to them. (P7)

Participants said that agriculture and tourism sectors could provide meaningful work to Aboriginal people, expressed below, as these types of jobs would provide the cultural and social environments most attractive to Aboriginal people.

> *It seems to me that the type of jobs that would be suitable are jobs around land management or maybe tourism, things to do with the land and telling stories about culture, also jobs around interpreting and translating, and whilst there are some jobs in those areas, there's not nearly enough and so the result is very high unemployment in the communities and a heavy reliance on welfare payments. (P4)*

It was also noted that the mining sector is a large employer of Aboriginal people, but unfortunately, the nature of the work does not align itself with cultural values, nor does it mitigate the implications of family and community discussed earlier as it involves long hours and shift work, and is usually located a significant distance away from family. This discrepancy between the type of work available, and what participants described as being 'ideal work environments' was a concern raised by all participants. In the following extract, a participant questions why Aboriginal people are in these situations and expresses the pros and cons of this type of employment.

> *Why are we giving Aboriginal people these mining jobs? Great money, sets them up, but on the flip side they're digging up their own country, ruining their own country because these big mining companies want to get money out of the land. (P7)*

3.5 Discrimination

All participants identified fear of racism or negative perceptions as a barrier to gaining employment, saying that this caused stress that was sometimes too much for an individual to cope with and may lead to them avoiding situations in which they might experience discrimination.

> *Some people might be more confident, some will be less worried than others but for others it'll be all consuming "what sort of assumptions will they make about me", "because assumptions will be made about me, I'm going to have to be better at my job than my non-Aboriginal peers are at theirs" which is exhausting and more anxiety inducing. Non-Aboriginal people would be completely oblivious to the fact that every fiber of your being is coiled waiting for some sort of assault. Not physical necessarily, in some cases physical, but judgement, dismissal, contempt, in some cases disgust, it's awful. And we know from studies, there were many Aboriginal people who said "there is something that happens to me every day, in my mind it's undeniable, that racism is at its core". (P1)*

The majority of participants stated that the resulting lack of confidence would likely have a negative effect on employee wellbeing. Dudgeon et al. (2010) also found this to be the case, stating that experiences of racism commonly led to low self-esteem, highlighted by the following extract.

The racism side of it goes back to a cultural perspective so people, A<u>n</u>angu, would've been thinking not just about "am I good enough" but "can I do this?" "Do I fit into this system? And will I be accepted? And if I fit into that system what do I lose of myself and how do I accommodate that?" (P6)

The following extract shows how experiences of racism might inhibit some people's engagement with the system and discourage people from seeking employment.

And there's cynicism or fear about the reception that Aboriginal people receive in workplaces, confidence, self-esteem and the expectation that they'll be treated with respect, which kind of comes from all the messages Aboriginal people get just from functioning in society, I mentioned about trolling on social media and the ugly things that can be said, it's no wonder some people say "I just can't expose myself to any more" by going into what might be an alien environment. (P1)

The existence, or fear, of systematic racism was highlighted by all participants as a stressor for Aboriginal employees, highlighted in the extract below. They also stated that systematic racism was a likely cause of poor retention, regardless of whether that was borne out of fear or experiencing systematic racism.

I think that most Aboriginal people understand that their rise or involvement in employment is going to be impinged on by their ethnicity. And that can be a thing where

they realise that they're probably not going to get promoted or if the business isn't going

so well, they'll be the first people that get put off. (P8)

The majority of participants acknowledged systematic racism as a factor that Aboriginal people have to deal with, especially when entering a Western workplace. However, one non-Aboriginal participant stated that they had not observed any occurrences of systematic racism but that the jobs seekers they work with, who are Aboriginal, see it as a prevalent issue.

I really haven't come across [systematic racism], I feel like participants definitely feel

like that's there. But, I find the organisations we are involved in are extremely supportive,

if anything they want to go the opposite way. (P3)

This may be because the companies this participant works with are culturally competent workplaces, and therefore not representative of the population. Despite this, the above extract does highlight a difference between how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people view Western systems of employment, government, and education.

3.6 Confidence in the system

Most of the participants articulated that Aboriginal job seekers and employees tend to distrust Western systems. Although participants didn't say why this is the case, Dudgeon et al. (2010) attributes this to experiences of racism, discriminatory policies, and other enduring effects of colonisation. Also, the 2005 CSRM report suggests that this may be due to inexperience in engaging with Western systems, particularly workplaces (Tiplady & Barclay, 2005).

Some Aboriginal people might act the way they do because of a lack of trust with

government policies, lack of trust with police… (P7)

When asked how people feel towards Western systems, one participant responded:

There's still a huge resentment for what happened to their country. They still understand

that their country was stolen from them. In terms of the Flinders, the people who were on

the pastoral properties who are non-Indigenous, they didn't buy that land, they didn't pay

for it, they inherited it from the scheme that happened after World War 2, they were given

blocks of land. So there's no reconciliation on that front. So fortunately, native title has

given back a whole lot of land to Aboriginal people in the Flinders but that land is

covered by caveats, they can't use it as capital, they can't sell it or do things on it unlike

the pastoralists who can buy and sell their property and make money and use it to

develop other things. There is still a two-system going on with land and the ability to

generate income. (P8)

One participant noted that even when a person does want to engage with the system, it may be challenging for them to do so, illustrated in the following extract.

They [Aboriginal youth] don't want to engage with the system. Centrelink is really hard

to engage with, the checks and balances, the robustness of it and we are finding that

younger people are opting out of it and putting pressure on other family members by

bludging off them because they can do that and they don't want to go to Centrelink. (P2)

Some participants also expressed that Aboriginal people were sceptical of programs aimed at employment and cultural training within workplaces, with one participant commenting:

Again, they're very sceptical, rightly so, of these types of programs because generally

they're instituted as part of a requirement for non-Indigenous employees in an

organisation that deals with Indigenous people. So it doesn't mean they wanted to go or

thought it was a good idea, they probably had to go. Some people might take it on board

but a lot of others are thinking "it's just a thing I had to do". So for Aboriginal people

it's not so much what you say it's more what you do and Aboriginal people are quick to

pick up on body language. (P8)

Not only did some feel that Aboriginal people were sceptical about programs aimed at helping improve employment or wellbeing outcomes, two of the three Aboriginal participants also expressed that Aboriginal people sometimes felt the responsibility of educating others about their culture was dependent on them, with one participant saying:

I will also say it can be quite exhausting because being in that space can be quite loaded

as well, there's a lot of expectations around it and I find that Aboriginal people are

expected to be quite generous and like I said its meant to be a gentle safe space but

sometimes the experiences that Aboriginal people have had can leave us feeling bruised

and tired and over things… it also means that you then have got the onus of responsibility

that you mightn't have at any other time. (P1)

In contrast, the other participant took a proactive and positive approach, stating:

It's up to us, and as much as it sucks for the younger generation coming through, we've

got no choice but it to be up to us because our parents, my dad grew up with it and he

gets pretty angry by it, but I think you can turn that anger into a positive thing just to

inform [non-Aboriginal people]. (P7)

3.7 Competency versus awareness

Participants felt that cultural competency training was useful for building knowledge about Aboriginal history and to give non-Aboriginal people an insight into the Aboriginal perspective. One participant's experience of cultural competency training was:

Generally they'll run through everything about culture, and give the employer a thorough

understanding of the backgrounds of participants, and their beliefs, ways, values, what's

important and why they might do some of the behaviours they do that aren't necessarily

non-Indigenous. (P7)

The next extract notes this emphasis on information sharing but elaborates on the environment of cultural competency training programs and how it fosters engagement within a

diverse group of people by allowing non-Aboriginal people a safe space to ask questions whilst demonstrating to Aboriginal employee's that they are seen and heard.

> *For non-Aboriginal people…it's receiving information that they weren't previously aware of and it's the first time they might meaningfully engage with Aboriginal people about Aboriginal issues and life experiences and having an opportunity to ask questions in an environment that's less loaded. You're there to learn and ask questions. There's an expectation everyone will be treated gently and ask the questions you might not feel are okay to ask in the real world… And it also is quite helpful in that it demonstrates to Aboriginal people in the workplace that they're seen and known and valued. (P1)*

The effectiveness of cultural competency training to create a safe space for all employees was also celebrated by participants who said that it opened up respectful communication channels and provided a welcoming environment in which to learn and share. These benefits were also found in the 2005 CSRM report (Tiplady & Barclay, 2005). Interestingly, one participant raised the notion of creating a third space, within both the Western or Aboriginal worlds, where everyone can exist equally together. They found this to be particularly effective when delivering cultural competency training. The participant explained this approach, saying:

> *And then we talk about creating that third space, within the Western world, the dominant world, and the Aboriginal world. So we talk about everyone coming in that third space to make it bigger and talk about how we can all work in that environment, that third space. (P7)*

Based on responses to how participants thought cultural competency training was perceived by employees, and how they perceived these programs themselves, there was scepticism around how effective it is at achieving competency. Participants expressed that cultural competency training builds knowledge but fails to impart necessary skills and genuine competency. The following extract demonstrates this perception.

> *It doesn't mean they're becoming skilled, that's where awareness versus competence comes in, but it opens the door. (P1)*

Participants also strongly suggested that cultural competency training cannot be in the form of a once-off course or short program, and that it needs to be a long term commitment made by both the organisation and its employees. A systematic review of cultural competency training indicated that there is no consistent approach to delivering programs (Benuto, Casas & O'Donohue, 2018). The same review reported improved participant knowledge but no change in attitudes or objective skills, consistent with how participants in this study described the efficacy and perceptions of cultural competency training. This ineffectiveness may be due to a lack of allocated time and commitment on the behalf of the organisation or employees, or the content of the training, which the authors found was mostly focused on imparting knowledge about the other culture, not developing specific skills.

> *It would be those businesses who maybe "set and forget", maybe have more of an issue than companies with active RAPs [Reconciliation Action Plans]. (P2)*

Two participants, like the one above, made comparisons between short cultural competency courses and organisations who developed Reconciliation Action Plans, saying that the latter is more effective at embedding the values of cultural competency. This is not surprising as cultural competency is a journey that involves lifelong commitment (Wells, 2010), and this does not seem to be the case in many situations where cultural competency training is employed, expressed in the following extract.

> *But it's like any training, if you don't put it into practice it just becomes a thing that you've been told about. To say that you've had cultural training, I don't think gives you any indication of whether those people are taking it on board or if it's just a thing they had to do. (P8)*

A number of participants also highlighted the need for non-Aboriginal people implementing programs with Aboriginal people to listen to the concerns of the community. The following extract illustrates how one participants experience has changed over the years, and how beneficial shifting from "doing" to "listening and then doing" is for the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

> *I think perhaps for too long well-meaning people have been going up there and going through the motions of listening but end up more doing, like we are going to go up there and deliver this program, sitting down and saying we've got an idea, tell us what you think of it, would it work for you. But I think we are starting to shift towards those conversations, instead of doing with the best intent, to sitting down and having a*

conversation and doing more listening. So I've seen a shift in that and I see that as big

improvement and I hope that continues. (P4)

3.8 Practical barriers

The practical barriers to gaining and retaining employment are based on one's professional

capacity to take up a job opportunity, which was a prevalent theme within this study and current

literature, and is expressed in the following extract. These barriers are usually personal and

unrelated to the workplace. Participants stressed the importance of helping Aboriginal people

address these issues in order for them to be 'job ready'.

We do a lot of pre-employment assistance, so one of the common things in, with people

who identified already, even those who don't know who their mob are at all, a lot of them

are missing documents such as certificates, passports and that sort of thing. Generally

generations of unemployment within the family, whether they have access to cars or

travel, whether there are drug and alcohol issues, whether there are criminal convictions

behind them as well. (P3)

Consistent with the work of Krieg (2006), half of the participants said that having a criminal

record is a significant barrier to gaining employment and although this is true for all people,

regardless of ethnicity, the incarceration rates for Aboriginal people are much higher than the rest

of the population (ABS, 2008), making it a more prevalent barrier for Aboriginal communities.

Transport was identified by several participants as a practical barrier to gaining and sustaining employment away from home. Participants said that in their experience, many people in remote areas do not have their license or access to a reliable vehicle on a consistent basis, making it challenging to pursue employment opportunities that require this.

> *The one I'm finding the most at the moment is that they don't have their license and there's no programs out there that, well there probably is but they don't know how to access the programs to help them get their license. (P7)*

One participant noted that some people born in remote areas may lack sufficient forms of personal identification needed to take up a job. They highlighted the severe impact of not having access to things like personal identification and that there is insufficient support for people in remote areas to get access to these documents by saying:

> *Even something as simple as a lack of ID, so sometimes going into a job you need to provide a 100 point check of identification and for someone like me it's easy I've got a license, a passport stuff like that but for people on the lands, sometimes they've got none of those things. So that can be a simple but brutal obstacle to getting into a job. (P4)*

A couple of participants expressed the difficulty of having the time to find employment, and then retain it, when an individual is living in unstable housing conditions. The extract below illustrates the reality for some Aboriginal job seekers.

Do you know that sometimes we talk about for instance, housing, did you know the

average 3 bedroom house for an Aboriginal person might house 10 people. Do you know

sometimes they might be earning their money to cater for their families? (P7)

Consistent with current education statistics, in which attendance rates, SACE completion, and university attendance are all lower in Aboriginal populations (ABS, 2010., ABS, 2013, and AIHW, 2015), insufficient education or vocational skills was raised by all participants as being a significant barrier to gaining employment. This finding also supports the work done by CSRM in 2005 (Tiplady & Barclay, 2005).

It is fact that Aboriginal peoples education, formal education or Western education

levels, are frequently lower than non-Aboriginal people so really basic stuff like literacy

and numeracy levels. (P1)

One participant also felt that even though education and training is available even in remote areas, it does not necessarily help people find employment saying:

I think [TAFE] do a very good job at providing relevant training, not training that would

only be suitable in a large regional center or city, but what they really try to do is provide

training that is tailored to the opportunities on the lands, however, despite that I don't

think that really translates into job opportunities and employment. (P4)

Having the funds to pursue employment, such as completing training courses, buying specific clothing, and paying for transport, was flagged as a concern for some Aboriginal job seekers. When one participant was asked what they thought the most significant barrier to gaining employment is they responded:

> *Education. Economic. So them having the funds to pursue [employment], it costs a lot of money going to university even when they have support programs. (P6)*

As well as a lack of funds to pursue employment, multiple participants expressed that people in remote areas can have difficulty accessing technology which is critical for job seeking.

> *And the new economy we see in Adelaide with technology jobs or new jobs of the 21st century probably haven't filtered through to regional remote areas which in some cases, our communities don't have mobile phone access or limited access to the internet. (P2)*

In summary, these findings highlight the difficulty of aligning cultural and workplace values and the stress this causes an employee who is trying to reconcile the two. When support is needed, a holistic approach was considered beneficial, reflective of the beliefs Aboriginal people hold about wellbeing. Findings relevant to the nature of jobs conducive to employee wellbeing are consistent with literature on Aboriginal values, but highlighted a concerning lack of culturally appropriate and meaningful work available to Aboriginal people. One point that adds to literature on this topic is the historical context of certain jobs, such as cleaning, and how this impacts on attracting Aboriginal employees, their wellbeing at work, and retention.

Another interesting point that wasn't found in the literature was that Aboriginal people felt a responsibility to educate, gently and generously, non-Aboriginal people about their culture. This raised questions about who the onus should be on given Australia's history of oppressing Aboriginal people and culture.

Lack of education was a prevalent theme regarding gaining employment and this is consistent with current education and employment statistics, but the finding that education does not always equal a job adds to this body of literature and indicates a need for transitional support from school or TAFE to the workforce. Also, the finding that lacking personal identification is a barrier to gaining employment, especially in remote areas, adds to literature on the barriers to employment and highlights a need for support in gaining these documents. Interestingly, substance misuse was a common barrier in the literature but wasn't mentioned by any participants in this study.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

4.1 Summary

Although this research was broadly informed by the Biopsychosocial and Cultural Competence models, the analysis was data driven and responsive to new findings that added to the literature. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse responses to the eight semi-structured interviews and the results formed several complex and interrelated themes related to Aboriginal employment, wellbeing, and cultural competency training. These themes were 'implications of family, community, and culture', 'support', 'appropriate work', 'discrimination', 'confidence in the system', 'competency versus awareness', and 'practical barriers'. It is evident that the impact of family, community and culture is wide-reaching and that balancing the needs of the family and cultural values is a challenging task that causes some individuals a great deal of stress. The need for holistic support and flexibility in the workplace is clear and its benefits could improve wellbeing and retention rates. The availability of appropriate jobs and meaningful work for Aboriginal people is fundamental, as is building the capacity of Aboriginal people to take up these opportunities. There is an apparent lack of confidence in Western systems and this, as well as concerns about discrimination, is problematic for encouraging job seekers, employee wellbeing and retention rates. Finally, cultural competency was seen to be effective at creating a safe space for learning, opening positive communication channels, and demonstrating an organisations commitment to its Aboriginal employees. However, it was perceived to be ineffective at building skills for competent interactions. Lack of consistency, irregularity of sessions, and a primary focus on information sharing were perceived to be the cause of unsuccessful programs.

4.2 Strengths

The sample of participants for this study was highly heterogeneous as it included both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants with experience working in rural, remote, and urban areas. Participants also worked for a wide range of organisations. The heterogeneity of the sample can be considered a strength in the context of this research as the nature of the responses were consistent despite the vast differences in personal background and organisational focus, triangulating the data and increasing credibility and validity.

Reflexivity in the design, research and analysis process meant that biases were acknowledged and insight was given into decisions made in regards to formulating questions, which threads were followed during interviewing, and what aspects of the data are emphasised in the final report.

The interviews were able to collect data and produce results that are meaningful, rich and personalised. Further, this study builds upon, and contributes to, the literature on Aboriginal wellbeing in the workplace, gaining and retaining employment as an Aboriginal person, and cultural competency training in workplaces with Aboriginal employees.

4.3 Limitations

As this study explored topics that may be considered politically or socially sensitive, there is a possibility that some participants, particularly those who did not identify as Aboriginal, may have provided responses based on what they perceived to be socially acceptable.

4.4 Implications

The findings of this study highlight the need for businesses and organisations to consider how they can best support their Aboriginal employees. Firstly, organisations should consider committing to Reconciliation Actions Plans to guide their interactions with Aboriginal staff, and put in place policies to protect and empower Aboriginal employees. Secondly, organisations should consider developing strategies for emotional support, practical support around issues like transport, and support to achieve personal and professional development.

It is evident that reconciliation and building trust between Aboriginal people and Western systems still requires a lot of work and organisations, the government, and the general population should consider increasing effort and focus on this issue.

In terms of politics, governments should assess the potential growth sectors for Aboriginal employment such as agriculture, tourism and the arts, and consider funding these sectors as well as supporting Aboriginal owned businesses, as these types of jobs can provide Aboriginal people with both income and a meaningful work environment. Further, education levels and SACE completion rates of Aboriginal youth need to become a focus, as education was quoted as being the most significant barrier to gaining employment by current literature and this study.

This study presents important implications for the content and delivery of cultural competency training and other workplace diversity programs. Specifically, organisations that participate in cultural competency training should commit to running the program for a significant period of time and conduct sessions at regular intervals, or after mass turnover of staff. Further, service providers should consider revising the focus and content of cultural competency programs in order to balance 'knowledge building' with 'skill building' to better

equip participants with culturally competent skills to interact with other cultures and improve wellbeing and retention outcomes.

4.5 Future research

Further research is needed into the nature and efficacy of cultural competency training in order to explain the negative perceptions surrounding its effectiveness found in this study, as well as the underwhelming outcomes found in systematic reviews (Benuto, Casas & O'Donohue, 2018 and Lie et al., 2010).

Explorations of employee wellbeing, employment, and cultural competency training from the perspective of Aboriginal job seekers and workers employed in non-professional jobs is necessary to gain insight into the reality for the majority of the Aboriginal population. This could include a focus on urban or regional and remote areas to better understand the impacts of location on wellbeing and employment. Further, researching wellbeing, employment and cultural competency specifically from a non-Aboriginal managerial perspective would provide a useful adjunct to the results presented here.

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Appendix A: Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Best practice for the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's wellbeing in the workplace.
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL NUMBER: ███████
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: XXXXX
STUDENT RESEARCHER: XXXXX
STUDENT'S DEGREE: Psychological Science [Honours]

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?
This research project is about the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and how best practices in the workplace can support and improve this. The aim of this project is to explore the characteristics of best practice employment strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially as they relate to psychological wellbeing.

Who is undertaking the project?
This project is being conducted by XXXXX. This research will form the basis for the degree of Psychological Science [Honours] at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of XXXXX.

Why am I being invited to participate?
You are being invited as you are a professional working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a professional environment.

What am I being invited to do?
You are being invited to participate in a single interview up to 40 minutes that will be recorded using an audio tape. These interviews will be held at a time suitable to you either at your place of work, the University of Adelaide North Terrace campus or another public venue. Phone interviews may be utilised if this is better suited due to distance or difficulty arranging a time to meet.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?
This study involves participating in either a once-off interview, of approximately 40 minutes, that will take place face to face or over the phone depending on your availability and preference. There is also the possibility of participating in a focus group if there are more than one participants involved from your organisation or workplace. These will take up to 60 minutes.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?
There are no foreseeable risks involved in this project however it will require small inconveniences such as making time to participate in an interview up to 40 minutes in time, either face to face or over the phone, and filling out a consent form. If the content of the interview is at all concerning, or if you'd like to know more about the topic, the Australian Psychology Education Project has some useful resources available via:
http://www.indigenouspsyched.org.au/.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?
This research may result in the development of more efficient, appropriate and beneficial best practice requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace and subsequently improve their wellbeing and mental health outcomes.

Can I withdraw from the project?
Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time. However data cannot be withdrawn after the submission of the thesis.

What will happen to my information?
Participant or organisation names will not be used however data will be re-identifiable via a code. This code will only be known to the researcher and supervisor.
Data and project records will be electronically stored on a secure, password protected server at the University of Adelaide as well as the researchers password protected computer. Data will be stored for 5 years after the publication of the thesis. Only the researcher will have access to the data and project records.
Data and information will be used in a university honours thesis and this may be published. Participants will not be identified in any publications.
Participants will have access to their own transcripts to double check their responses are accurately recorded. Summaries of the results of the thematic analyses will also be made available to participant. If you wish to have a copy of your transcripts please contact the student researcher via the email address before.
Data will not be used in future research and will not be shared in any way, including on online repositories.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?
Any questions about the project can be directed to XXXXX via email:
XXXXX@adelaide.edu.au or phone: XXXXX
Questions may also be directed to student researcher XXXXX via email:
XXXXX@student.adelaide.edu.au.

What if I have a complaint or any concerns?
The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Adelaide (approval number H-2018-18/23). This research project will be conducted according to the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). If you have questions or problems associated with the practical aspects of your participation in the project, or

wish to raise a concern or complaint about the project, then you should consult the Principal Investigator. If you wish to speak with an independent person regarding concerns or a complaint, the University's policy on research involving human participants, or your rights as a participant, please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee's Secretariat on:
Phone: +61 8 8313 6028

Email: hrec@adelaide.edu.au

Post: Level 4, Rundle Mall Plaza, 50 Rundle Mall, ADELAIDE, SA 5000

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

If I want to participate, what do I do?
In order to participate in this study, participants will need to complete and return a signed consent form via the student researcher's email above, along with your availability to meet for an interview or preferred time to conduct an interview over the phone.

Yours sincerely,
XXXXX

Appendix B: Example interview questions

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Age:

Female ☐

Male ☐

Prefer not to say ☐

Prefer to self-describe:

Organisation/Company you are employed by?

Your role in the organisation/company?

Length of time employed by organisation/company?

Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?

Are you aware of any strategies your organisation/company uses to employ and retain Aboriginal people?

If yes: What characteristics of these policies/strategies do you think are successful in doing so?

If no: What could your organisation/company do to improve on this?

Do you think your organisation/company promotes the wellbeing of Aboriginal people?

If yes: How does your organisation/company do this? Are there any specific strategies employed or policies in place?

If no: Why not? How do you think your organisation/company could improve the experience for Aboriginal employees?

How effective do you think cultural competency training aimed to enhance Aboriginal experiences in the workplace and wellbeing are? Why/why not?

What has helped form a positive workplace culture in your experience? What hasn't helped?

In your opinion, what positive factors lead to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people in the workplace?

What are the barriers you most commonly see as inhibiting Aboriginal wellbeing in the context of employment?