

Journeying under Matariki and the Southern Cross: What are our guiding stars? A Comment and Reflection on Evans (2008)

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This response to and reflection on Ian Evan's 2006 Hunter Award address aims to generalise some of the issues and themes he identifies from a specific focus on the development of a distinctive clinical psychology to consider psychology in general in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I identify three sets of issues, namely local and international influences; ethics and knowledge; and science and practice; and reflect on how, within these areas, we might better navigate towards a distinctive psychology that is effective in meeting local challenges and improving human welfare.

*Simply by sailing in a new direction
You could enlarge the world....
Who navigates us towards what
unknown
But not improbable provinces? Who
reaches
A future down for us from the high
shelf
Of spiritual daring?
Alan Curnow.
Landfall in Unknown Seas.*

In Aotearoa/New Zealand we are all the descendants of voyagers. Whether our tupuna (ancestors) came by waka (sailing canoe) about 1350, sailing ship in 1850, steam ship in 1950, or we arrived by jet plane yesterday, all journeys here required an ocean crossing. In contrast to the continental expansion that dispersed our restless species over and out of Africa and throughout most of the earth, where navigation skill may have assisted but was not generally essential, ocean voyages of migration need navigation, if one is to be confident of arrival or return. So navigation - that conscious use of reliable information to know where one has started from, where one is now, and whence one is going and how to get there and back - should be a potent metaphor for islanders such as

we are. We recognise that, in both our Polynesian and our European heritages, navigation was developed to a high art. Hence the metaphor of navigation makes a stimulating frame for the questions Evans (2008) poses: *Can we develop a clinical psychology that is specific to New Zealand and Australia? And why should we bother?* (p 5). Or, to put it in the language of the poet, should we emulate our ancestors, sail in a new direction, and thereby enlarge our discipline?

These questions were posed in Ian Evan's 2006 Hunter Award address, so named (as he notes) to honour the founding Professor of Psychology in New Zealand (at Victoria University of Wellington; Taylor, 1979). The year 2006, was the 99th year from the founding of clinical psychology as a distinct sub-discipline within psychology, by Lightner Witmer, Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania (McReynolds, 1997). There is a direct connection between Witmer and New Zealand, mediated, as it happens, by Hunter, who visited Witmer in 1907. That visit probably was influential in Hunter's setting up of the first New Zealand psychology clinic (in Wellington) in 1926 (Taylor, 1979).

Furthermore, it has been claimed that Witmer's style of clinical psychology was not unlike cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT; McReynolds 1997), so it is possible that the earliest practice of clinical psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand was a forerunner of CBT, now the dominant, empirically validated form of psychotherapy (Blampied, 1999). Of course, this little bit of our history, with its national and international interplay, serves as a nice illustration and counterpoint to the very questions Evans poses!

In 2007, the centenary year of Witmer's innovation, the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPSS) announced a new award, to join its suite of awards among which the Hunter Award is the most prestigious. The new award is the Ann Ballin Award for Clinical Psychology. Dame Ann Ballin, clinical psychologist, ardent and lifelong advocate for the disabled, first woman President of NZPSS, and influential social policy analyst, achieved higher national distinctions than those ever disposed on any other New Zealand psychologist. Awards such as the Hunter and the Ballin award serve multiple functions: they honour the memory of those who made significant contributions to our science and profession; they recognise the mana of these professional and intellectual tupuna; they express our esteem for the achievements of those upon whom they are bestowed; through mechanisms such as the award address they permit us all to benefit from the wisdom of the recipients; and - relevant to Evan's theme - in small

but significant ways they mark unique bits of our history.

In reflecting and commenting on Evans (2008), I want to say first, that I agree in essence with what he said and with the challenges he presents. All of us, not just clinical psychologists, need to take stock of where we are going, and of the direction and purpose of our voyage, and to be challenged to do so is salutary and timely. Further, I admire the scholarly and research ingenuity displayed in the selection of Evans own and his students' research that illustrates his themes. He has clearly "walked the walk" and is a model we can fruitfully emulate. My comments and reflections will dwell on three issues explicitly or implicitly (in my view) contained within the address but applying to psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand in general. Each of these can be presented as something of a dichotomy – different stars we may sometimes follow. These three issues are: local versus international influences; ethics versus knowledge; science versus practice.

Local versus international influences on psychology

The question of how and why we might strive to develop a distinctive local kind of (clinical) psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the central theme of the address. As to why we should do this, Evans places the bicultural nature of Aotearoa/New Zealand in the centre of the frame. This is a defining fact, and in a sense, the address is a demonstration of how that fact might be woven into many aspects of a psychologist's life and work. He also suggests that in undertaking the difficult challenge of building a local psychology, contextually shaped by the interactions among, respective needs of, and separate world-views, of Maori and Pakeha, we would create something of international significance, while liberating ourselves from overdependence on international models of psychology.

I see this as a worthy aim. My concern is that the contingencies that operate in the daily work of psychologists, and that shape and mould the trajectories of their lives and careers, are almost universally incongruent with achieving it. Evans notes the dearth of local research and identifies some reasons for this. I think

there are additional reasons for this state of affairs.

First remember that psychologists are taught in and most psychological research is generated by universities. So long as we adhere to the scientist-practitioner model (Evans & Fitzgerald, 2007) of applied psychology (and long may we do so!) our professional graduates (clinical and otherwise) will emerge from university post-graduate programmes and will have completed a research-based dissertation or thesis. Their teachers, supervisors and mentors will (mostly) be academic staff.

Our universities are (and by the nature of their establishment always have been) strongly internationalist in orientation. Many academic staff are either non-New Zealanders, or are New Zealanders who have done post-graduate study overseas. Academic careers depend on research accomplishments, and these are judged by international standards. Publication in international journals, presentations at international conferences – these are the coin of this realm. This means that what is esteemed and attended to is, for the most part, what features in the international, not the local scene.

These internationally focussed contingencies have been exacerbated by the development of the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) as a mechanism for funding universities. While the focus on excellent performance is admirable, the actual effects of the PBRF are not uniformly benign and positive. The system is complex and I will not detail all of it here, but it is important to realise that it has major effects on university funding (contributing somewhere between 10- 20% of total public funding for each institution) and because of this, universities take it very seriously, and compete very vigorously to improve their PBRF ratings.

Every five years every staff member who contributes to the research effort of the university has their research performance over the previous five years rigorously assessed, according to strict and multi-dimensional criteria, by panels of eminent experts, including international appointees. Each person is given a rating that expresses their research performance – A, B, and C representing

excellent through to OK performance, or R (research inactive, a mark of shame). This is truly a remarkable system, and no other profession or occupation in New Zealand undergoes anything remotely like it. Indeed, as an exercise in empathy, I invite my non-academic colleagues in psychology to imagine going through such an evaluation multiple times in their careers.

Importantly, for this discussion, the aspects of each academic's performance that are assessed are (largely) the impact of their publications, as measured by the status of the journals where they were published and their impact on the field, as measured by citations by other authors, and, secondly, "peer esteem", measured by things such as invitations to deliver keynotes at international conferences and international research collaborations. Note how dominant international factors are, and while there are disciplines for which the PBRF recognises that local reputation and impact are important, Psychology is not one of these.

In short, there are, and will continue to be, powerful contingencies operating in academe that will make it extraordinarily difficult to move research in psychology towards a more local focus, or support and sustain that engagement with the unique local context that Evans is promoting. Unless we change academics, then it will be difficult if not impossible to change the kind of graduates they produce. There are of course, some individuals and groups who are pursuing the local focus, some with considerable success, and some probably at the cost of their academic careers. Sustaining this, and growing it long-term is a challenge, and I, frankly, am a pessimist about this. It is also pertinent to note that one does not escape this internationalist perspective by leaving the experimental, quantitative perspective that is dominant in local and most international psychology. Those whose work is influenced by post-modernist, qualitative ideals (e.g., Murray & Chamberlain, 1999) are also part of a strongly international conversation, albeit one that may be more accommodating of local distinctiveness.

Are things more hopeful (with respect to the development of a distinctive

local psychology) in the professional, as distinct from the academic, sphere? Evans' comments on the effects of the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act, 2003 suggest not. I am much less familiar with this area, but judging from what I hear from colleagues working for District Health Boards, or for government ministries and departments such as Education and Corrections, I suspect that there are contingencies operating there that are also inimical to constructive development of a unique local psychology. Government and quasi-government bureaucracies in New Zealand have, at least since the 1980's, increasingly embraced various ideologies about management, all sourced internationally. The funder-provider split that lies at the heart of our health system, much of our welfare system, and in many other services, is one such example. These management ideologies have had many effects, not least the growth of low trust, high compliance regimes which prescribe and constrain how psychologists employed by these agencies can perform their work. At the same time, to save costs, roles and tasks that once were seen as exclusive to psychologists are dispersed to other employees. This loss of professional autonomy, combined with the threat that one's professional work will be done by others, hardly constitutes an ideal environment for the creative development of new ways of thinking and working as a professional psychologist uniquely located in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Again, I am not saying that this is impossible or has not been achieved by some, but I am pessimistic about how it can be sustained and generalised, unless there are rather revolutionary changes in the circumstances of many professional colleagues, and I see little likelihood of that.

So, where does this leave the prospect of sailing our own course under Matariki and the Southern Cross? "In a not very positive state" is my answer. As I have noted, there are powerful institutional and occupational contingencies that will sustain the current paradigm, with its pallid imitation of American ideas (Evans, 2008, p?). Nevertheless, the situation is not hopeless. There are possibilities to subvert the dominant

paradigm. We need to be vigilant, individually and collectively, to support those who pioneer new initiatives, to showcase their achievements, and to support them when the system strikes back. How we do this needs urgent and constructive thought.

Evan's rhetoric at this point may also have overstated the issues at hand. When New Zealand geologists draw on the theory of plate tectonics to explain the origins of the Southern Alps and the Taupo volcanic zone, or medical researchers use the latest techniques in molecular biology to identify family lineages susceptible to bowel cancer are they merely "pallid imitators"? I think not. Perhaps what Evans was shaking his rhetorical taiaha (speaking staff) at may be the topics selected by New Zealand psychologists for investigation rather than the scientific methods they use. After all, it is unlikely that here in New Zealand we will develop a unique suite of scientific research methods and theories, but we do face particular local challenges to which our science can usefully be applied. Is there really a failure by research and other psychologists to tackle the big issues facing us in Aotearoa/New Zealand? If there is such a failure, what are the reasons for it? These are questions that deserve closer examination and fuller debate as part of wider concerns as to what constitutes "New Zealand Science" found more generally among local scientists from many disciplines (e.g., see Barton, 2008).

Ethics versus knowledge

Evans places ethics, and particularly ethics in the context of biculturalism, at the heart of his address. He quotes the Preamble to the *Code of Ethics*, which has the effect of placing concern for cultural diversity and attention to *ti Tiriti* (the Treaty of Waitangi) at the forefront of the *Code*. To this statement we might add the NZPsS Constitution Rule 3, to which all psychologists who join the Society subscribe. Rule 3 states

3 Implementation of Objects

In giving effect to the objects for which the Society is established the Society shall encourage policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and shall, in particular, have due

regard to the provisions of, and to the spirit and intent of, the Treaty of Waitangi. (NZPsS, 2008).

The parallel wording between these two ethical statements is hardly a coincidence, and reflects a consensus among psychologists in Aotearoa/New Zealand that, via the endorsement of the Code by the Psychologists Board, gives the consensus legal force. Placing this professional ethical concern with cultural diversity in the explicit context of a treaty relationship between the constitutional government and an indigenous people may be unique and, as Evans notes, it gives force to the ambition to develop something that is local and truly distinctive in our psychology. It is something in which we can take pride. Nevertheless, Evans is moved to ask ... *how thoroughly have we discussed the implications of this declaration for clinical psychology in this country? What does it actually mean for daily professional practice?* (Evans, 2008, p 5) – a question that applies as directly to Rule 3 as it does to the *Code of Ethics*.

Significantly, Evans immediately goes on to say that he is using *stellar navigation as symbols of different sources of knowledge*, and his address goes on, at several places, and in my view courageously, to deal with issues round the nature of knowledge as said to be understood by Maori and Pakeha, differences in cultural world-views, disagreements about the nature of science and/or clinical practice resulting from these differences, and the tensions that may arise both within and between people as a result of these differences. It is worth noting here that a naturalistic view of ethics (e.g., Racine, 2007) leads inevitably and reflexively back to a concern for knowledge, since what it is right to do ethically must ultimately be what it is right and possible to do in terms of human nature.¹

I agree with Evans that we need to ask these questions and discuss these issues in a way that is respectful of each other, sympathetic to each participant's personal views and distinctive cultural history, but also mindful of the objective – ensuring that our psychology moves forward and enhances its capacity to benefit all those who call Aotearoa home. Personally, I have thought long

and hard about these issues, both in the context of being an academic, and therefore responsible for teaching the next generation of psychologists, but also more specifically with regard to Rule 3, as a member of the Executive of the NZPsS. What follows draws on a memorandum I prepared for discussion by the Executive in 2008. I am also strongly influenced by O'Donohue and Henderson (1999) and I commend their article to any readers of this one.

My key thought is that it is unhelpful to frame this discussion just in terms of ethical imperatives, as I think much of the discussion of what it means to be bicultural or to have a bicultural psychology has tended to do. Instead, I suggest that the right concern for ethics needs to be balanced by an equally right concern for knowledge. I argue that as psychologists (of whatever kind) we have both *ethical* and *epistemic* responsibilities (O'Donohue & Henderson, 1999). Epistemic responsibilities are responsibilities towards and about knowledge, the term "epistemic" being derived from Greek *episteme* (= knowledge). Epistemic and ethical responsibilities go hand in hand, one concerned with the acquisition and maintenance of knowledge, the other concerned with the deployment and application of knowledge. *Epistemic duties are obligations to obtain and have knowledge, while ethical duties are obligations to apply this knowledge accurately* (O'Donohue & Henderson, 1999, p 10).

Why do we, individually and collectively, as psychologists, have these epistemic responsibilities? Do all individuals and collectivities have such a responsibility? The answer to the second question is "No". For instance, consider a share club. The individual members and the club collectively would be required legally and ethically to deal honestly with members' money, but they would not necessarily have epistemic responsibilities. They might, for instance, agree that they will base share purchase decisions on horoscopes, even though there is no evidence that horoscopes are a proper basis for profiting in the share market. In contrast, the ethical and epistemic responsibilities of individual psychologists and collectives of psychologists both arise

from their socially recognised status as a distinct, learned profession possessing specialised knowledge and competencies and having certain legal, social, and financial privileges in consequence (O'Donohue & Henderson, 1999).

What is the knowledge these epistemic responsibilities are concerned with? Put directly (but not necessarily simply) the knowledge of concern to us is disciplinary knowledge - knowledge contained within the discipline of psychology. Note, that I use the term "disciplinary knowledge" in this context, not "scientific knowledge" because, as the great philosopher of science, Sir Karl Popper, once said *I regard scientific knowledge as the best and most important kind of knowledge we have – though of course it is not, by any means, the only kind of knowledge we possess*. (Popper, 1991, p 56). The separate identification of "disciplinary knowledge" from "scientific knowledge" permits (among other things) the development of "Maori-focussed psychology" or "Kaupapa Maori psychology" (e.g., Herbert & Morrison, 2007; Levy, 2002) and thus permits the emergence of a unique local psychology that Evans (2008) wishes to see.

Without being too prescriptive, I believe that there are at least four domains of such psychology disciplinary knowledge:

1. Historical knowledge – knowledge of the events and social contexts which have shaped psychologists and psychology, and more generally our national and social history, and how these events are influencing the present;
2. Those forms of knowledge sometimes called "praxis" – pragmatic knowledge about ways of working as psychologists in particular contexts and with particular problems (sometimes knowledge that is more implicit than explicit), and found in both research and applied contexts;
3. Contextual knowledge – knowledge of the contemporary laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and ethical codes applying in general to psychologists, or to psychologists specifically in some situation (e.g., as an employee of a particular organization). In

Aotearoa/New Zealand this would include understanding *ti Tiriti*.

4. Scientific knowledge – this is the largest domain of knowledge in the discipline, and the most unique to it. It is knowledge gathered and evaluated by the scientific methodologies developed and deployed by psychologists working as scientists, and endowed with authority because of its provenance in science.

O'Donohue and Henderson (1999) provide an alternative (but not contradictory) list more focussed on clinical psychology. Of course, in none of these domains is the boundary between "psychological" knowledge and knowledge possessed by other disciplines or groups anything other than indistinct and porous; yet there must be some core knowledge that is "psychological", otherwise there would be no valid reason for our professional status.

Note that while all these forms of knowledge are important, scientific knowledge is the critical element. Take that out of the equation, and disciplinary knowledge largely ceases to be describable as "psychology", and what remains becomes mostly impotent at least so far as psychology contributing to human welfare is concerned. One might still be usefully humanitarian, but *Commitment alone is never enough ... you have to have something valuable to offer*. (Evans, 2008, p 10), and what we have of value to offer is disciplinary psychology knowledge founded on science, otherwise *what our clients are receiving ... is intuition and performance art* (O'Donohue & Henderson, 1999, p 10).

Equally, of course, scientific knowledge cannot be put to use effectively and appropriately without the other forms of knowledge – they are all interdependent. These forms of knowledge, therefore, may be separately identifiable, but they all interact with each other. For instance, historical analysis often provides part of the context of justification for the development of new theories, which are then tested empirically; and empirical, scientific knowledge both influences and is influenced by context and praxis in the scientist-practitioner model of applied

psychology, and in models of bicultural practice. Historical knowledge of the experience and impact of colonization (as one example) is also profoundly important, and incorporating that within our disciplinary knowledge in Aotearoa/New Zealand is part of what leads to something emergently distinctive.

It also is important to note that while these forms of knowledge are different, they all are subject to critical, reflective, evaluation. Psychologists working as academics actually have a responsibility under the Education Act, 1989 to be a “critic and conscience of society”, and so have a particular responsibility to critically evaluate all knowledge. There is no place in psychological knowledge for “revealed truth” or for knowledge claims based essentially on “authority” rather than evidence, except for contextual knowledge, where authority may be derived from law or other official source, though that does not place it beyond critical evaluation. Clearly also, none of these forms of knowledge are fixed and immutable. Our understandings of all aspects of the discipline grow with time as a result of research, evaluation, reflection, dialogue, criticism, etc. Furthermore, speaking as a pragmatic realist (a somewhat hybrid philosophic perspective) I believe that science provides a pathway to reliable, cumulative knowledge about real phenomena (Marie & Haig, 2006; Popper, 1991). While I completely accept that science is situated in specific social, cultural and historical contexts, I do not believe that the knowledge it produces is just something conjured through language by social processes for the benefit or gratification of particular groups within any particular society.

Returning to the metaphor of navigation, I am clearly suggesting (in agreement, I believe with Evans) that we do, as psychologists, have more than one star to steer by, and that while our course (individually or collectively) may be set at one time more in one direction than another (particularly as individuals, at certain times one particular form of knowledge may overshadow others, or ethical concerns may be paramount), nevertheless, we need to affirm a holistic view of our discipline and our goals that embraces, and balances, ethical and knowledge-informed conduct.

What are the implications for biculturalism? This is a large question, and I do not pretend to have a full answer to it. But a tentative answer, again put directly (but not necessarily simply) is: Psychologists in Aotearoa/New Zealand best express their responsibilities towards cultural diversity and *ti Tiriti* by striving to be the best psychologists that they can be, ethically and epistemically, and to practice the best psychology that they can practice in the particular contexts they work in. Note that to achieve this requires “scientific mindedness” as the first ingredient of culturally competent psychotherapy (Sue, 1998). Therapists with this characteristic are those who *form hypotheses rather than make premature conclusions about the status of culturally different clients, who develop creative ways to test hypotheses, and who act on the basis of acquired data.* (Sue, 1998, p 445; see Sue, Zane, Nagayama Hall, & Berger, 2009 for a fuller discussion; see also Gavala & Taitimu, 2007, p240 – 241, for a discussion of “the pursuit of bicultural excellence”).

Different strands of disciplinary knowledge can be woven together in many ways, so this is not a prescription for some rigid uniformity (everybody using the same manual endorsed by some authority on evidence-based practice!) but it is an affirmation of the need for conscious navigation at all times. Ethically and epistemically we should always be ready to give a coherent account of our judgement, decisions, and actions, in terms of psychological disciplinary knowledge, remembering that it is not protocols but principles (Evans, 2008) embodied in psychological knowledge that may make us *better able to use psychological knowledge to forge practices more suited to all our local needs* (Evans, 2008, p 13).

Science or Practice

In this final section of commentary I want to touch on two further issues, one of them explicitly infused throughout the Hunter Address (Evans, 2008) and also evident in earlier writings (Evans & Paewai, 1999), and the second a derivative issue that concerns me. In ways, these are further considerations of the epistemic responsibilities of

psychologists, particularly to scientific knowledge.

Evans (2008) is concerned throughout with the relationship between mainstream (often internationally derived) psychological knowledge (often termed “Western”) and Maori knowledge. He notes that ethically (under Article 2 of the Treaty) we are obliged to preserve, respect, foster, and encourage Maori knowledge. Although Evans (2008) does not explicitly address this, one approach to honouring *ti Tiriti* has been to assert the existence of a separate but equal Maori epistemology/science (e.g., Harris & Mercier, 2006; Smith, 1999; see Marie & Haig, 2006 for a discussion of this), specifically in the domain of psychology. This discourse is framed generally by way of contrasts between “Western science” and other “indigenous sciences”. Much of it is highly, indeed perniciously, stereotyping (I doubt if European psychologists writing in French or German view themselves as cookie-cutter replications of psychologists from the USA; see Mead, 2007) and fails dismally to respect the complex history of ideas and discoveries constituting science (Marie & Haig, 2006).

My reading of Evans (2008) is that he is not endorsing the “separate sciences” position, and neither do I. I do recognise that I am, therefore, contesting an idea that is supported by many scholars and intellectuals, both international and indigenous, all of them of great esteem and *mana*. Furthermore, this is not the place to outline in detail why I do not believe that there are separate “Western” and indigenous sciences. Sufficient to say that I am especially influenced by *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (Diamond, 1998), a book that comprehensively explains why some human groups acquired levels of material and intellectual culture that are different from others, without attributing any intrinsic merit to any particular group for their attainments (see also Mead, 2007).

Asserting this may seem to leave hanging the issue of how Maori knowledge is to be incorporated in a truly bicultural psychology of the kind aspired to (Evans, 2008; see also Evans & Fitzgerald, 2007). In part, my answer lies in the distinction

drawn above between disciplinary knowledge (in its several forms) and scientific knowledge (as a specific part of disciplinary knowledge). An additional answer lies, with respect to scientific knowledge, in acknowledging that Māori ideas and knowledge may be incorporated in hypotheses, experiments, and interventions, as Evans (2008, Evans & Paewai, 1999) and his students and colleagues demonstrate. For instance, to assert that there is a Māori view of the “self” that is distinct from the “Western” view is to concede the possibility of sharing a notion of “self” as a psychological phenomenon about which different views are possible. Equally, to contrast a Māori IQ test with a “Western” IQ test is to concede some commonality round the phenomenon of intelligence. Research about how different theoretical and conceptual schemes may address psychological phenomena, in whatever culture or context they are found, can do nothing but strengthen disciplinary knowledge (see Heine & Buchtel, 2009 for informative examples from personality research).

A further clarification comes from looking carefully at what much of the discourse about Kaupapa Maori psychology is actually saying, which seems to me, when deconstructed, to be often about knowledge as praxis (as defined above), not knowledge as science, i.e., it is about ways of doing things, not the scientific principles that underpin the scientific part of the doing (and there is more to the doing than the scientific part). There is a world of difference between adapting one’s praxis as a researcher - for instance, to engage differently with potential participants from different ethnic groups and to adopt different views about ownership of the data (Blampied, 1996) - and compromising basic precepts of research design, e.g., by allowing some individual within a particular group to decide on the allocation of participants to conditions, thereby invalidating the research because of potential selection biases. The careful analysis by Love and Waitoki (2007) of the cultural (in)competencies of a psychologist at a family group conference also illustrates the praxis/science distinction: the psychologist does not reveal stark psychological science errors (although

such could easily be imagined), but mistakes based on misunderstanding and ignorance of history, culture and context. In fact, the professional depicted as a psychologist could equally well have been a lawyer or a social worker making the same mistakes.

A number of excellent examples (in addition to those given by Evans) of transferring psychological science into bicultural practice exist, notably Macfarlane (2007) who shows how core behavioural principles may be used appropriately and effectively with Māori school students; Glynn and his associates, who have shown how a programme to teach reading can be implemented biculturally (Glynn & McNaughton, 1985; Glynn, Berryman, Bidios, Atvars, Duffull & Horne, 1997); the work done in Kia Marama and Ti Piriti to adapt a therapy programme for child sex offenders to meet the needs of Māori clients (Hudson, Marshall, Ward, Johnston, & Jones, 1995; Larsen, Robertson, Hillman, & Hudson, 1998); and Evans and Paiwai (1999) and Pitama, Robertson, Cram, Gilles, Huria, and Dallas-Katoa (2007), who present alternative assessment models incorporating bicultural practices,

I have not been able to think of a navigational metaphor to illustrate my ideas, so here is a culinary one. Take kumara (sweet potato). Kumara is good food. It is nutritious. That is true for all human beings with normally functioning digestion. For me, the nutrition of kumara is analogous to science – it applies to everyone; it can benefit everyone. We do not claim that there is “special nutrition” in kumara for Māori, any more than there is “special nutrition” in potatoes for the Irish. But to release the nutrition in kumara, to make it digestible, tasty and acceptable, it has to be cooked. Cooking is like applying science, and how we cook involves culture. Cultures have their own forms of cookery and some forms of cooking are more acceptable to particular cultures than others. And even though in the contemporary world we delight in the range of ethnic restaurants in our cities, and we cook at home with woks and roasting dishes, pizza stones and rice cookers, the more that culture matters in a particular context the more care we take to match the cookery to the culture.

If I am cooking a “typical” Pakeha meal for foreign visitors, I do roast lamb and kumara; if my Ngapuhi whanau have a special occasion, they cook kumara in the hangi. So, by analogy, the challenge, as I see it, for applied psychologists in Aotearoa/New Zealand is to find ways of applying science that embodies beneficial knowledge in forms and styles of practice that maximize the benefit that those who are seeking, needing and asking for our help receive. To do that, of course we must “Listen to culture!” (McFarlane, 2008), but that is not all we must attend to.

Many challenges arise as we implement any particular set of scientific principles in a particular intervention and in a cultural context. One issue that causes me great concern is the seeming indifference I perceive for what scientists call “the integrity of the independent variable” and clinicians call “treatment fidelity”. Given that psychology, as Evans (2008) laments, is dominated by overseas work, we often find ourselves drawing on interventions developed elsewhere. But we also feel the need to adapt this to the local context, often by making some bicultural adaptations (see Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004 for a general discussion of this process).

Although there are honorable exceptions (see above) all too often it is simply assumed that the locally modified version will work as well as the original, but no further evaluation is done, often because of budget pressure, and the demand to get something working to meet a need or problem. Enthusiasm for an innovation supplants evidence of its local effectiveness, and careful evaluation and further development of local adaptations of imported interventions is too often skipped. Yet there is growing evidence that such modifications, especially those done to accommodate cultural requirements, may come at a cost to effectiveness. For example, in a review of research on cultural adaptations of family interventions, Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith, and Bellamy (2002) noted a fairly consistent trade-off: adaptations enhanced acceptability for and attendance by the target cultural group, but efficacy tended to go down. This appeared to be because, in order to keep the intervention at

acceptable length (otherwise there was participant attrition), cultural material was substituted for the original content, and so the dose of the effective treatment elements was reduced. As Castro et al (2004) and Kumpfer et al (2002) note, this poses a major challenge when we adapt one intervention to another cultural context. It is encouraging to note in the local context, that when the Early Start intervention for at-risk families was evaluated (Fergusson, Grant, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005), Māori families did as well as, or even slightly better than, Pakeha families receiving the same, principles-based, intervention (Fergusson, 2007).

We must remember that acceptability, efficacy, and effectiveness of treatments are separate but interdependent aspects of interventions, and not confuse one with the other. This is an epistemic duty. Aotearoa/New Zealand provides a “laboratory” in which we might pursue research seeking solutions to such problems, and any solutions we found would be of benefit internationally.

Conclusion

Ian Evans’ Hunter Address considered large themes and important issues. I have resonated with and responded to only some of these. All deserve our thoughtful attention. I presented three issues as dichotomies (perhaps I am culturally disposed to think in parts not wholes, and to do analysis not synthesis?), but we must recognize them as wholes – local and international; ethics and knowledge; science and practice.

To return again to the metaphor of navigation, we might ask “did Kupe and Cook, our two navigator heroes, know where they were going and what they were discovering?” The answer is both “Yes” and “No”. They knew where they had started from, they knew where they were (more or less), and they knew that the world held places worth searching for and navigating towards. Likewise, as Evans eloquently argues, a distinctive future psychology in Aotearoa/New Zealand is ours to discover and possess if we navigate well, but we do not know exactly what it will be. I have suggested that in the constellation “Disciplinary Knowledge” there are some useful starts to pilot by. Perhaps we could call

them “Respect”, “Caring”, “Integrity”, “Responsibility”, and, brightest of all, “Science”?

After all reordering of old elements

Time trips up all but the humblest of heart ...

And whatever islands may be

Under or over the sea,

It is something different, something

Nobody counted on.

Alan Curnow.

The Unhistoric Story

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Footnotes

I am grateful to Dr Tony Ward for drawing my attention to this point.

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