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Decolonial Pathways in Social Work Education

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ABSTRACT

Concerns about white dominance in social work have led to various scholarly works exploring potential avenues for the decolonisation of the profession. As a contribution to this work, this article presents the various processes that the authors have engaged with to create a space for diverse theories and perspectives to be integrated within the social work curriculum. This work can enable a holistic and decolonising learning experience for social work students. The authors' journeys in engaging with the praxis of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing are presented as a critical pathway of learning and growing as educators committed to decolonial work. In this article the authors describe the application of this praxis by challenging the cultural hierarchy of knowledge (ways of knowing), employing a self-discovery and self-transformation approach (ways of being), and adopting pedagogical strategies that facilitate these goals, such as storytelling (ways of doing). Through the sharing of experiences, the authors aimed to provide educators with examples, guidance, and insights into the possibilities of decolonising social work education.

IMPLICATIONS

- Decolonising social work education is the gateway for decolonising social work practice.
- The Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing can offer a pathway for decolonising the social work teaching and learning experience.
- Sharing experiences and learning is central to decolonial work that helps promote critical thinking and reflection, fostering new possibilities for education and engagement in social work.

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There have been ongoing debates about the importance and the necessity of decolonising social work education and practice in Australia and globally. While the social work profession is guided by core values of human rights and social justice, it has been continually criticised for its colonial tendencies with its “West to the Rest” approaches (Ibrahima & Mattaini, 2019, p. 799). These concerns have translated into various scholarly works, exploring ways and possibilities for what could be known as the decolonisation of

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social work (Ibrahima & Mattaini, 2019; Muller, 2023; Neden, 2023). The Australian Association of Social Work (AASW), as the peak body for the profession in Australia, extended this call under the *AASW Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (ASWEAS)*. All Australian universities with accredited social work programs need to include content relevant to the histories and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as a core curriculum component (ASWEAS 2024, pp. 15–16). While the principles that underpin these requirements are clearly stipulated in the document, the application of these principles lacks clarity and guidance.

It has been noted that the absence of clear direction and objectives in engaging with Aboriginal content in higher education has led to deficit models of engagement. Generally, there is greater focus on the issues and difficulties faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and very little engagement with cultural strength and capacity (Sinclair, 2019). Walter and Baltra-Ulloa (2019) argued that there is a one-directional engagement with Aboriginal knowledges where they are only accepted to the extent that the white social work profession allows.

Concerns about the whiteness of social work education have brought to the forefront the critical question “How should the decolonisation of the social work discipline manifest itself?” In this article we discussed our engagement with this question, particularly in relation to the framework of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). We present this article, not as an answer to the question, but as a progressive step in exploring possibilities and avenues in the decolonisation of the social work curriculum. We acknowledge the diverse and reformist conversations and efforts that are already taking place on this topic (Bennett et al., 2023; Bennett & Gates, 2022; Fleming et al., 2023; Ryan & Ivelja, 2023; Sinclair, 2019), and we hope to add a meaningful contribution to this body of knowledge and practice by sharing our experiences in attentively implementing some of these reformist visions. While the focus of the article is on general social work curricula, specific examples from child and family social work are provided throughout, reflecting the first author’s teaching specialisation. These examples offer a practical demonstration of how decolonial strategies can be integrated into course development in subjects where cultural analysis typically is not emphasised.

The praxis of knowing, being, and doing has been extensively explored and applied in higher education across multiple disciplines. Social work education and the field of humanities have been particularly proactive in exploring the relevance of this paradigm to social work values and ethics (Bennett et al., 2018; White, 2007). Social work scholars have called for the significance of the paradigm of knowing, being, and doing as a decolonial framework applied to social work education (Bennett & Gates, 2022; Fleming et al., 2023; Ryan & Ivelja, 2023). In their yarn about “knowing, being, and doing social work learning, expertise, and practice,” Fleming et al. (2023) engaged in some powerful discussion about the importance of creating a respectful place for listening and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories, cultural expertise, and lived experiences as formally recognised knowledge. As First Nations authors with years of social work experience, Fleming, Young, and Else share their experiences in the field, reflecting on how Eurocentric social work practice offers very limited opportunities for engaging with holistic approaches of practice that respond to the needs of its diverse client groups, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

In addition to these scholarly discussions, the significance of engaging with Aboriginal knowledges is strongly emphasised in the *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan January 2023–December 2024* from the Australian Association of Social workers (AASW). However, other than the AASW *Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP), there is no descriptive content on how to present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching within the higher educational space in social work within the *Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards* (ASWEAS). The ASWEAS outlines the AASW practice standards and the required curriculum content but without reference to how educators teach Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander content, and what culturally safe considerations are needed (ASWEAS, 2024).

As colleagues from the same university, teaching within the same program, the authors had the opportunity to engage in ongoing reflections and dialogue about exploring ways to decolonise our teaching practices, drawing on our diverse and multifaceted experiences and identities. In the next section, we share more about our own journeys that have informed our work and nurtured the connections that we have developed throughout this process.

It is important to note that the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples will be used throughout the article to refer to First Nations Australians unless there is a specific mention of an Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander Country.

Self-Reflection and Positionality

Acknowledging one's standpoint and locating the self within the broader context of the work is an important practice of ethics that communicates transparency and accountability within academia. Positionality, whether in research or teaching, is not a mere description of identity, but rather it represents a dynamic relationship between lived histories and structural relations of power that informs one's connection to knowledge. Accordingly, acknowledging one's positionality involves recognising the interplay of context, place, and identity (Bayeck, 2022). We would like to acknowledge that authorship order has been followed in this section, which is a reflection of the authors' scholarly contribution and involvement in the work presented in this article. The article originally started as an exploration into the journey of the first author as a non-Aboriginal/non-white academic embracing the framework of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing as an ongoing decolonial pedagogical endeavour within child and family social work. However, the ongoing collaboration and reciprocal sharing of knowledge between the two authors in their teaching roles have highlighted important synergies that led to expanding the focus of the manuscript.

Fatin Shabbar

As a female academic from a racialised minority background, my personal identity shapes my role within academia. While I am seen through the light of my skin colour, my headscarf, and my accent, I am in a “constant battle of validation,” to borrow Maseti's (2018) words in describing her journey as a Black academic in a white academic institution. As I have argued elsewhere (Zufferey et al., 2023), my identity is very often seen as unfitting for the position of “credible knower,” where intellectual processes are

naturally associated with whiteness (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). As an educator with teaching and research interest in decolonisation and child and family social work, I have deep concerns about the implications of white-washed curricula on child protection policies and practices. I believe that the universalisation of white knowledges and experiences in childhood-related studies works to obscure potentials for innovative and meaningful reforms in the child protection system. The long-held tradition of applying white knowledges to non-white communities needs to be challenged and disrupted as a foundational ground for decolonising practice in the child welfare sector (Menzies & Grace, 2022). The disruption to these systems will need to be addressed within child welfare education; as Menzies and Grace (2022) argued, “at the heart of appropriate practice is the quality of training for welfare practitioners.” Speaking from a Kenyan perspective, Nyamu and Wamahiu (2022) emphasised that challenging conventional approaches to child welfare education and exploring innovative epistemological possibilities is intrinsically linked to the larger mission of decolonising the child protection system from persistent colonial practices.

My foundations in postcolonial theory and my commitment to the work of decolonising the social work curriculum has informed the work presented in this article whereby I have been continuously growing and developing through this rich and diverse journey.

Jamie Sorby

As a Kamilaroi person teaching on Kurna Country, and as an early academic teaching social work, I find myself in some challenging spaces at times. As academics teaching university students, we are mostly coming from a place of expert and teacher, or knowledge holder in a western sense if you will. However, being an Aboriginal person teaching about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ experiences, histories, and understandings within contemporary society presents challenges and conflicting cultural expectations of protocols to uphold. A protocol explained by Yunkaporta (2009, p. 1) includes asking myself “Who am I?” and “What do I know?” as an ethical consideration of my cultural knowledge and status within the community. This approach deconstructs the expert position and becomes an authentic reflection of self from a cultural perspective. I am a Kamilaroi person living on Kurna Country; therefore, in delivering a university course pertaining to Aboriginal experiences, and the courses being delivered from Kurna Country, I need to reflect on my position culturally and what allows me to speak about Kurna people’s experiences and knowledge, or any other Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ knowledges and experiences. In taking this culturally ethical consideration into my practice as an early academic, I have brought voices and experiences of Kurna people and other Aboriginal people from different nations into the courses. Additionally, the need for diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ voices within curricula is due to historical and continuing changes in society that impact Indigenous people, not just on the Australian continent, but worldwide, and are unique among Indigenous groups and nations (Nakata, 2023). Since colonisation, ways of being have changed: Aboriginal people now have to extend engagements with many other Aboriginal Peoples and nations throughout the Australian continent, rather than within Country and with neighbouring nations (Martin & Mirraboo, 2003). Therefore, knowledges, experiences, and understandings of

contemporary Aboriginal societies need to be delivered through diverse voices and communities.

This perspective is further reiterated in the *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan January 2023–December 2024* from the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) where it is stated: “there is not one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice or that one person or any particular group who can speak on behalf of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples” (AASW, 2023, p. 5).

Ways of Knowing: Problematising the Cultural Hierarchy of Knowledge

In an effort to bring our experiences together and work towards a decolonial possibility within the teaching and learning space, we began our journey with deconstructing the practices of knowledge production. In light of this vision, we began with an important aim, in our curriculum development work we wanted to strive for authentic engagement with culturally informed content to offer a culturally immersive learning experience for students. Before exploring this point in more depth, however, we would like to shed light on the use of the term “culture” in this context. Labelling non-white knowledges in academia as “cultural” can be a problematic practice that reinforces racial hierarchy and white normativity (Shabbar, 2024). As Hafen (2024, p. 4) argued, “dismantling white supremacy requires deconstructing the normative ways in which whiteness continuously reaffirms white supremacy.” We use the culture reference while acknowledging that all knowledges are culturally situated and directly influenced by their geopolitical location. However, we also acknowledge that the current educational landscape does not recognise the influence of other cultures on western knowledges, and, ultimately, they remain excluded from cultural discourse.

In the context of the above analysis, an important objective of our work was to reconstruct the epistemological orientation of our courses with a commitment to a decolonial approach that values diverse knowledges and ways of knowing as equally important. Diversifying thought and engaging with multiple knowledge structures, with a particular focus on engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and epistemologies, marked a significant starting point in our curriculum design. This was particularly important when teaching a topic that had no clear Aboriginal focus—for the first author, this work involved reorienting the topics taught in the course to create a space for Aboriginal knowledge systems to be naturally embedded in the teaching.

However, as Cleland and Masocha (2020) argued in their work on centring Aboriginal epistemologies within social work education, there is no one “all-encompassing” Aboriginal world view. Neither is there one theory or knowledge system that represents Aboriginal epistemologies. Hence, engaging with Aboriginal knowledges should not become an exercise of mainstreaming cross-cultural knowledges into a unified epistemic space grounded in the assumption that the non-white “Other” can be homogenised into one “cultural” group. Such an exercise is evident in the way that non-western knowledges within curriculum development often are consolidated into unified learning objectives aimed at enhancing students’ cross-cultural learning (Shabbar, 2024). In exploring this issue from an Aboriginal perspective, Nakata (2007) argued that western education is embedded in colonial traditions concentrated on studying the Other, rather than learning from it.

Speaking from a Native American perspective, Arvin et al. (2013, p. 21) stressed that a meaningful engagement with Indigenous epistemologies needs to be more than a mere inclusion in a critical recognition that Indigenous Peoples are “authors of important theories about the world we all live in.” This understanding moves away from the tokenistic inclusion of culture, often depicted through “adding on” certain topics of cultural interest to a white curriculum. Instead, it encourages an immersive approach to cultural engagement where diverse theories and perspectives are equally recognised and represented throughout the curriculum (Shabbar, 2024).

Our curriculum development work started, therefore, with unpacking and analysing the epistemic landscape of the topics covered in the courses we teach, examining the extent to which diverse knowledge systems are recognised, with a particular focus on the representation of Aboriginal perspectives. Multiple meetings and conversations with knowledge holders, including practitioners, industry representatives, and community leaders have taken place to engage with the diverse knowledges and world views represented within our courses. The process involved different practices for the two authors because, while the second author’s area of teaching is specific to Aboriginal topics and content, the first author’s area of teaching does not naturally lend itself to a cultural lens, being a broad topic of child and family social work. Within such a focus, there was a specific effort in deconstructing the course content to create a space for diverse theories and knowledges to be integrated on a weekly basis within the curriculum. This approach shifts from the traditional method of how to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients (and other cultural groups) to an embedded area of enquiry interwoven with every learning objective.

The consultative processes we both engaged with in the planning and development of our curricula was not intended to answer a research question or engage in an empirical enquiry. Our aim was to apply pre-existing knowledge to practice, which we both viewed as a necessary and intrinsic part of any curriculum development work. We separately consulted with local university advisory groups and utilised both internal and external networks to support engagement with knowledge holders relevant to our teaching fields, including local Aboriginal Elders, cultural consultants, and community leaders on Kurna Country. Guided by codesign principles, consultations continued across all stages—precourse, during, and postcourse development. Consultations involved a combination of formal and informal conversations and meetings to ensure a consistent feedback loop. These engagement processes facilitated a rich exchange of knowledge, as well as practical codevelopment of resources within the separate courses we teach. Since we specialise in different areas of teaching within the social work program, we each pursued our own cultural consultations and processes to ensure relevance to our specific teaching focus and objectives. However, we both engaged in continuous reflection and dialogue to further enrich the process through shared insights and experiences.

A central aim that underpinned this effort was deconstructing the “expert” voice through building partnerships with local knowledge holders on Kurna Country, where we teach. As advocated by Aboriginal scholar Bindi Bennet (in Green et al., 2016), questioning western expertise to achieve “epistemological equality” is an essential first step in developing culturally responsive curricula. Academics need to be ready to share power and let go of their “expert” position, embracing the opportunity to learn

and challenge the boundaries of scientific knowledge within western educational institutions (Bennett et al., 2018).

To achieve this within our teaching, the “expert” voice was intentionally decentralised through presenting multiple voices and knowledge systems to students. In some areas, the traditional lecture was replaced with multiple information checkpoints that represented multiple knowledge holders. Using this approach, each topic was delivered through different information media that represented diverse voices, including the perspectives of Aboriginal Kurna Elders, Aboriginal community practitioners, and lived-experience advocates. However, it is important to note that engaging with multiple perspectives requires flexibility in the teaching process, shifting the educator’s role from being a knowledge owner to a learning facilitator. Through this work, we support our colleague Sinclair’s (2019) perspective in her analysis of the ways of knowing, being, and doing cultural competence. Reductive constructions of knowledge that assume the possibility of achieving knowledge and practice competence in culture needs to be dismantled and challenged (Sinclair, 2019). Through embracing this understanding in the design and delivery of our courses, we have engaged with cultural consultants and practitioners to enable a holistic and integrative learning experience for students.

Ways of Being: Transformational Learning Journey and the Development of the Self

In reflecting on students’ ways of being, we draw upon Nakata’s earlier discussion of Aboriginal ways of being that centralises relationality and reciprocity as core to one’s connection to the world (Nakata, 2007). In the context of teaching and learning, the ways that education is conducted impacts the way that students embrace and enact learning. Speaking previously from an Indigenous Canadian perspective, Regan (2010, p. 23) argued in her book *Unsettling the Settler Within* that “education is not simply about the transfer of knowledge”; instead, it needs to be embraced as a transformative journey that empowers students to be agents of change within their diverse contexts.

This is highly relevant in the context of social work education, as the profession is inherently centred on fostering change and developing practitioners’ critical reflections. As White (2007, p. 238) discussed in their previous work on child and family care, teaching students about “how to be” is critical in developing their self-awareness and ethical practice. This perspective was emphasised in Barnett’s (2009) earlier reflections on knowing and becoming in higher education, highlighting that teaching knowledge and skills are not sufficient in preparing students for the demands and the complexity of the real world of practice. Education needs to offer students the opportunity to develop and transform as people living in, connecting with, and surviving a complex and ever-changing world. This perspective is particularly important in the interface of culturally informed curricula, where racial hierarchy and colonial histories dominate relationships and connections. We apply this perspective to our understanding of students’ ways of being through reorienting education into a personal journey of growth and cultural self-actualisation. Ways of being and proper forms of conduct can be learnt through teachings from Elders and family members, and are unique to each community. As Indigenous authors

have long stated, these learnings establish ways of being through knowing identity, connections, and interests (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003).

Social justice values grounded in aspects of activism and consciousness raising should be essential aspects of social work teaching. Students need to be offered a safe space to question the knowledge presented within the classroom and negotiate multiple knowledge structures within and across cultures. Creating spaces for authentic critical reflections where the topic of race can be discussed in a respectful and meaningful way is one of the important aspects of inclusive teaching that we aspire to achieve. Accordingly, our teaching has focused on engaging students with ongoing reflections, drawing on the importance of observation and reflection (Muller, 2023).

Within the scope of being, our focus is to create safe learning environments for students where “uncomfortable” academic conversations about race and racial dominance can take place without hesitance. By doing so, our aim is to create culturally safe classrooms that enable learners to engage in self-discovery and self-transformation. Cultural safety is a relatively recent concept developed by the renowned Māori scholar Irihapeti Ramsden in the nursing discipline (Ramsden, 2002). One of the main principles of this concept is the recognition of diversity of world views and experiences in one classroom. It is important to create a space for these diverse perspectives to intersect in a respectful way, encouraging a meaningful and transformational learning experience that challenges deep-seated biases and assumptions (Newton, 2021).

Ways of Doing: Experiential Learning Through Storytelling

In navigating the domain of “doing” in this praxis pedagogy, we have reflected on the importance of doing teaching and learning differently to challenge conventional boundaries of knowledge and practice. Our challenge was to move away from the dichotomies rooted in western education that create boundaries between the objective and the personal. In our classes, we each have striven to connect to the value of the personal element of teaching and learning by engaging with the powerful practice of storytelling. We echo Fleming et al.’s (2023) argument that culturally informed social work practice that values the real stories of people is a critical aspect of decolonising social work.

In privileging storytelling as a decolonising pedagogy, an acknowledgement must be made to the invaluable learnings and the cultural foundations of Indigenous stories that have allowed the development of such an approach to be possible (Archibald, 2008, cited in Louie et al., 2017). Indigenous storytelling connects the past with the future (Smith, 2012) and honours the balance of relationship between land, living creatures, and the universe. Indigenous knowledges are passed on through storytelling from one generation to the next, and, laterally, not only through person to person, but also through all entities of the universe. The sharing of knowledge through storytelling includes connecting land with people and people with story (Smith, 2012). Storytelling is about representing both personal and shared views, and it is about understanding and connecting. Stories can be powerful in bringing people together and strengthening communities by creating a collective narrative and a shared history in which everyone belongs (Louie et al., 2017; Smith, 2012). It also creates a space for “restorying,” where Indigenous and marginalised communities can tell their own stories and control their own representations (Baines & Clark, 2022).

Louie et al. (2017, p. 27) explained their integrations with storytelling pedagogy as a “simple kind of storytelling,” where both teaching and learning occurs through the sharing of stories, creating a learning environment where an individual’s standpoints are respected, and collective understandings are created together. In this teaching method, creativity and imagination are encouraged from students and often result in the emergence of more complex understandings of concepts (Louie et al., 2017, p. 26). This occurs through the discovery of new and different meanings, as discussed in Aveling’s (2001) early work on this pedagogical approach.

In embracing this creative pedagogy, we each designed our curricula with the aim to induce learning and reflection through the means of storytelling. We were conscious of bringing diverse ways of teaching and learning to our classes and of engaging with the diversity of voices that speak to the richness of communities. As part of engaging with diverse voices, we foregrounded the value of stories as a powerful pedagogy. For example, the first author used storytelling as a way to develop students’ emotional skills and metacompetencies, including resilience, self-awareness, and cultural respect (Shabbar et al., 2024). This was mainly achieved through engaging students with an ongoing narrative about a client throughout the course. The client’s story is revealed progressively to create ongoing opportunities for self-reflection and critical thinking, while encouraging students to challenge their biases and understand the complexity of the client’s experience as the story unfolds (Shabbar et al., 2024).

Following similar principles, the second author engaged in storytelling pedagogies to encourage the development of students’ critical self-reflection. As storytelling pedagogies are diverse and flexible in their application, the second author engaged with a different approach pertaining to the purposeful integration of cultural stories in the teaching of self-reflection. Some of the stories used included works from Dr Paul Callaghan, a Worimi man, and Uncle Paul Gordon, a Ngemba Elder, with permission sought from the authors out of cultural respect and out of following cultural protocols to use parts of their texts as teaching resources. The specific text shared with university students was a Dreaming story of Grandfather Eagle, Magpie, and Crow (Callaghan & Gordon, 2022), where students were asked to reflect on this way of learning and the understandings and interpretations gained from the Dreaming story. As Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) discussed in their earlier work, Dreaming stories demonstrate many things, one of which is the ontology of knowledge development from an Aboriginal perspective. This involves using listening, reading, waiting, observing, exchanging, conceptualising, engaging, sharing, and modelling in the process of reproducing and presenting knowledges and learnings as ways of knowing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003, p. 209).

Whether it is a case study used for educational purposes or a resource developed to disperse knowledge and encourage critical thinking, storytelling can be an important pedagogy for fostering self-determination. This is particularly due to its capacity to transform lived experiences into sites of knowledge production.

Discussion and Considerations for Social Work Educators

In light of the above discussion, our work focused on engaging with innovative pedagogical approaches in curriculum design informed by the praxis of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). Developing culturally safe

social work practitioners is a multidimensional project that involves complex interconnected and multifaceted teaching and learning processes (Green et al., 2016). Drawing on earlier discussions, we believe that a praxis-oriented approach can offer an effective platform in the development of social work curricula. By encouraging critical reflection and accountability, this approach provides a greater space for addressing the complexity of social work practice as shaped by an ever-evolving sociocultural and political context (White, 2007). In order to develop work-ready graduates in today's complex and intrinsically diverse world, Eurocentric ways of knowing, being, and doing need to be deconstructed and reimaged. However, we have argued in this article that decolonial pedagogies should not be an exercise of "adding on" new strategies to an outdated curriculum. The development of new pedagogical approaches would naturally call for a redevelopment of the epistemic spaces that embrace these strategies. Reorienting epistemologies through genuine engagement with diverse knowledges, voices, and ways of knowing is foundational to this work.

Deconstructing the expert voice and embracing the diversity of ways of knowing cannot happen without working in real partnership with First Nations Peoples and minoritised communities, following an authentic codesign approach to education. However, it is important to emphasise that creating genuine partnership requires investment in trust and relationship-building to create sustainable work (Cleland & Masocha, 2020).

Accordingly, by embracing and normalising Indigenous and other non-Eurocentric methods of teaching and learning, such as storytelling, the dismantling of the default status quo that uses western perspectives and methods of education can begin (Louie et al., 2017). Critical storytelling pedagogy creates opportunities for diverse and marginalised voices to be expressed and legitimised as valuable contributors to knowledge. We have discussed the use of storytelling as a critical platform of knowledge production where a particular understanding of reality that speaks to certain social and political dimensions in society can be reconfigured (Shabbar et al., 2024).

Sharing stories as a pedagogical and a knowledge-building approach can be very challenging. Academics will need to develop their skills in sitting with feelings of vulnerability and discomfort, with limited control and power (Aveling, 2001; Newton, 2021). The process also can be challenging as it requires prioritising relationships, reciprocity, and power sharing. However, as argued by Kennedy et al. (2019), engaging with Aboriginal cultural ethics and principles of reciprocity, responsibility, and respect is important in maintaining the authenticity and integrity of knowledge produced within academic spaces that bridge the gap between formal and informal relations.

These considerations are critical in this pedagogical approach, as this transformation of praxis may present concerns for Indigenous storytelling degenerating into a White perspective of "me-too-ism." This concern is more evident when stories are shared through the perspectives of colonisers, rather than through the perspectives of the people who have lived through the stories themselves (Aveling, 2001, p. 43). Educators need to be comfortable with listening and creating platforms that foreground the importance of the lived experience of Indigenous and culturally diverse communities. Through our work, we aim to contribute towards the advancement of an antiracist pedagogy that emphasises engagement with these diverse communities and prioritises their voices within the teaching and learning process.

Conclusion

In this article we have discussed the pedagogical framework that we have adopted in our teaching to encourage the development of a culturally immersive learning experience that supports students' engagement in lifelong learning. The authors offer critical reflection on how the praxis of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing can be integrated into the design of curricula and teaching of social work. The article highlights the importance of engaging with diverse pedagogical strategies that support the development of a decolonial and culturally informed education.

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