

What's in a name? Lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide, South Australia

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This article presents a thematic analysis of the naming and framing of lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide, South Australia. Lateral violence is a relatively under researched area within the Aboriginal community, yet this term has been applied with little consultation. Interviews with 30 Aboriginal participants examining their understandings of lateral violence identified five themes relevant to the labelling and acceptance of the term 'lateral violence'. By drawing on theories of oppression, social representations, stigma and racism many of the themes indicate the importance and relevance of an overarching label of lateral violence to describe the "infighting" behaviours that have been normalised within the Aboriginal community. Assurance of a label makes the concept of lateral violence tangible and therefore able to be addressed. Despite this labelling, awareness of the concept of lateral violence in Adelaide appears relatively low. Resistance and opposition from the Aboriginal community to lateral violence appear to be associated with the stigma and prejudice attached to 'violence'. Such a word can potentially render all Aboriginal people as intrinsically violent and therefore blameworthy, which can alleviate any responsibility for dealing with this chronic problem in broader society.

Recent understandings of lateral violence in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been influenced largely by Canadian Indigenous interpretations and experiences of lateral violence (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011b). In a Canadian context lateral violence is believed to exist within many Indigenous communities worldwide with the common causal explanation as oppression, colonisation, racism and intergenerational trauma (Bombay, 2014; Derrick, 2006; Native Women's Association Canada [NWAC] 2015). According to the Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) (2008) lateral violence is described as the way powerless people covertly and overtly direct their dissatisfaction inward, toward each other, toward themselves and toward those less powerful than themselves.

Some of the behavioural manifestations of lateral violence include gossip, jealousy, shaming others, verbal and physical attacks, sabotage and bullying (BearPaw Media, 2006; Derrick, 2006; Equay-Wuk, 2012; NWAC, 2015). Accordingly such behaviours can be

triggered by differing levels of money, social status and education within communities, one's 'blood quantum' and links to culture and physical characteristics such as skin, eye and hair colour. The effects include feelings of shame, blaming mentality, lack of trust in others, and judgments within communities (Derrick, 2006) as well as physiological signs such as sleep disorders, weight loss or gain, and depression (NWAC, 2015).

In the Australian context this inward dissatisfaction and "infighting" within Aboriginal communities in South Australia (SA) is now also referred to as lateral violence. The literature on lateral violence also signifies colonisation and oppression as contributory factors for lateral violence in the Aboriginal community (AHRC, 2011b; Gorrige, Ross, & Fforde, 2009; Langton, 2008; Wingard, 2010). Colonisation in mainland Australia has been and arguably still is a process whereby Aboriginal peoples and their cultures are fragmented and disenfranchised. Australia's history of colonisation was founded upon draconian and racist laws and policies which acted to

control Aboriginal people and render them powerless. These laws and policies have had detrimental, cumulative and intergenerational effects on Aboriginal people which continue to this day (Coffin, Larson, & Cross, 2010; Glover, Dudgeon & Huygens, 2005; Watson, 2009).

The concept of lateral violence originated from early theorists in Africa (i.e. Fanon, 1963; 1967) and from Latin America (i.e., Freire, 1972). These two theorists argue that colonial practices were oppressive and used as a power base to control the original or Indigenous people of that country. They suggest that colonised groups attempt to mimic the oppressor and take on the behaviours as well as the values of the oppressors and in turn adopt violent behaviours that can be used amongst members of their own group. Discussions on decolonisation processes often correspond with discussions on colonialism. For example, Fanon (1967) attempted to orient his writing as an instrument for liberation with the possibility of making changes for the better for black people in Africa. In Australia the decolonisation process assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to identify as members of a racial group and understand systematic oppression by a dominant culture; it enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take action towards social transformation. Thus, facilitating an understanding of oppressive processes and affirming the legitimacy of a people's ancestral culture, encourages cultural renewal (Glover, et al. 2005).

It is uncertain when the term lateral violence was actually applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. However, its introduction appears to have coincided with the attendance of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from Australia at the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide (HOSW) conference in Alberta in 2006 where lateral violence within Canadian Indigenous communities was discussed. Many Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaged in the dialogue and learning. Post conference the word about lateral violence appears to have spread

amongst some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in Australia via various forums such as articles, websites, Facebook and emails. Furthermore the current Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda has formally named lateral violence as a significant issue within Aboriginal communities (AHRC 2011a; AHRC, 2011b; AHRC 2012; Gooda, 2011). In addition there is information and awareness sessions on lateral violence in SA¹ and in other education forums presented nationally (i.e., Koorreen Enterprises, 2015).

The phrase *lateral violence* has also been used in the nursing industry over the past three decades. Other labels such as "horizontal violence" (Roberts, Marco, & Griffin, 2009; Stokes, 2010) and "eating their young" (Stanley, Dulaney, & Martin, 2007; Stokes, 2010) also apply to the nursing industry. Lateral violence is believed to be rife amongst nurses and is the name given to disruptive practices that members of an oppressed group, such as nurses within the medical and health sector, engage in towards members of their own group (Roberts, et al. 2009). Moreover nurses deal with their feelings of powerlessness and frustration by directing their dissatisfaction towards each other. Such behaviour has had implications for patient safety and health care. Consequently there has been much activity around education and strategies for prevention of lateral violence in the nursing sector, particularly in the United States of America, such as training and workshops on lateral violence and conflict resolution (Ceravolo, Schwarz, Foltz-Ramos, Castner, 2012; Delaney, Jacobs, & Zager, 2010). Training is also in some undergraduate nursing programs in America to prevent lateral violence in the sector (Blair, 2013).

Whether or not lateral violence is the most suitable or even meaningful label to be applied to infighting behaviours of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia has been uncertain. Even though there are conceptual and behavioural parallels of lateral violence between those in the nursing industry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, there appear to be

vast differences, most notably in the type of oppression. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people racism is the most common form of oppression, whereas in the nursing industry it appears to relate to professionalism and sexism. Furthermore the oppression faced by Aboriginal people has its roots in colonialism, is intergenerational and applied to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all contexts and not just in the workplace. This means that lateral violence is inescapable, intense and chronic within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The labelling of any concept, such as lateral violence, is a fundamental human cognitive process and is comprised within a social representations framework. Moscovici (1988) indicates that social representations involve the content of everyday thinking and ideas that give religious beliefs, political ideas and the connections that people create some rationality. Social representations then make it possible for people to classify, compare and explain persons, objects and behaviours and to objectify them as parts of one's social background (Moscovici, 1988). He posits a number of matters to his theory such as 'anchoring' which enables people to cope, accept a novel, 'strange' or unfamiliar idea or perception that is anchored within existing ideas or social representations (Moscovici, 1988). In other words people strive to make the unfamiliar familiar by searching for meaning in what is already known. People also classify and name the unfamiliar by comparing it with existing information/ experiences that are familiar and culturally accessible. When made familiar an abstract notion, idea and/or information is transformed into concrete and common sense realities (Augoustinos, Walker, & Donoghue, 2014).

Another point is that once the 'strange' is objectified it becomes less visible and people reach a point where there is no longer a differentiation between the objects with which the concepts aligned and they become indifferent (Moscovici, 1988). In other words people normalise objects, perceptions, events and behaviours once they have become

socially represented and accepted (Augoustinos et al., 2014). Even though there is a need to turn the strange into something familiar (to objectify) there can be tensions within the unfamiliar and it is these tensions that prevent mental conditioning from taking over completely with the existing information, allowing readjustments to the information or model to occur. Tensions or discrepancies assist in reinvigorating and bring new and different ideas to the surface (Moscovici, 1988).

Two further essential components to Moscovici's theory are that firstly, he proposes two types of realities: the reified, the world of science which is the logical and rational form; and the consensual which is the realm of common sense. These realities are about understanding the different ways of viewing the world and how it is socially represented to construct reality (Moscovici, 1988). Despite this, scientific and expert knowledge is often seen as valid and often given precedence even though the consensual reality is more accessible to people. Secondly, Moscovici's theory includes the idea of a slow germination of ideas, particularly if they are ideas or labels that have broad implications. He suggests that a longer period of gestation may be required before right or wrong inferences can be drawn (Moscovici, 1988).

Thus if we apply this process to the labelling of lateral violence; if the label is unfamiliar we may compare it to existing information about infighting, and if it fits we conventionalise it and it becomes accepted and common sense. If the label doesn't fit with existing information we may search for other labels or try and rectify the information or its meaning until it fits. Once a common sense or real label is applied to a concept it can open doors to greater awareness and learning which in turn can lead to changes, improvements and progress. On the other hand if the concept of infighting is normalised in the community without the expression of a new label it can remain oblivious with little change. Thus the importance of labelling to make changes is vital.

Even though the naming and framing of concepts is inherent and perhaps consensual, it can be an issue, particularly if a label is associated with a word that has negative connotations such as “violence”. It has been well established that as a victim, perpetrator or witness, violence is an issue within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia and occurs at an alarmingly high rate (ABS, 2008; Snowball & Weatherburn, 2008). The term violence can be confusing as it is often seen as physical violence rather than in its covert forms. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission, violence as it is referred to in lateral violence, also includes covert practices such as emotional, social, economic and spiritual violence (AHRC, 2011b). Furthermore labels with violence can attract the attention of the media. How information is framed and “problematized” by the media is of concern and can compromise inequitable health and living and enable a process of victim blaming. This can excuse societal responsibility and assistance, and may limit the linking of other risk and co-morbid factors influencing an issue. Therefore masking issues as Aboriginal problems will simply maintain the status quo (McMurray, 2011). For example, violence against women and children in Aboriginal culture attracts disproportionate media attention, situating the problem as one of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, which is not only racist but compromises future planning (McMurray, 2011).

The problematising of Aboriginal practices and people has occurred since colonisation and continues to occur through stigmatisation in various sectors of society. According to Phelan, Link, and Dovidio (2008) stigma and prejudice are shown to be the same concept and are linked to the labelling of concepts and phenomenon. Link and Phelan (2001) indicate five components of stigma: labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination within the context of power differentials. Once labelling has occurred differences are established and the social salience to those differences becomes evident (Green, Davis, Karshmer,

Marsh, & Straight, 2005). Establishing differences can also mean there are power distinctions. Link and Phelan (2014) discuss ‘stigma power’ and suggest that such power is often hidden – misrecognised processes that serve the interests of stigmatisers and part of a social system that gets them what they want.

Another related issue to labelling, stigma, prejudice and media influences is the silencing of community when sensitive issues are discussed or should be discussed. Gorringer et al. (2009) posits that silencing of particular issues occurs to avoid scrutiny and criticism from the broader community. It seems that silencing methods may be a way of self-preservation and protection because once information is made public then an individual or groups can become vulnerable to outside influences. Violence is a stigmatised topic and therefore a code of silence has also been found with family violence (HREOC, 2006). Some women’s voices, in particular, that speak out against violence have been silenced or not supported (Smallacombe, 2004) or ostracised from the Aboriginal community (Price, 2009). According to Freire (1972) maintaining a ‘culture of silence’ is common to oppressed groups and indicates that silencing is destructive as it inhibits its members to critically look at their world or to collaborate with others. Despite this, even when the silence is broken and people speak out against violence these issues may not be listened to particularly when being addressed at official and political levels (Sutton, 2001) and as such speaking out may be a deterrent.

In summary, the labelling of lateral violence is important and essential in order to understand it and challenge the infighting behaviours within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However potential stigmatisation and prejudice when using words such as “violence” could mean that the violence (i.e. physical violence) could be seen as intrinsic and exclusive to Aboriginal people and therefore different to violence in other sectors of society, sanctioning further stigmatisation, oppression and depowering by the general

population.

Thus a label, such as lateral violence, could potentially provide unwelcomed social attention, which would be in addition to the everyday racism faced by many Aboriginal people in Australia (Mellor 2003; Stolper & Hammond, 2010). To avoid such scrutiny some of the important issues which need to be discussed and addressed within Aboriginal culture could be silenced. Thus the Aboriginal community may not speak out against lateral violence as it will bring more disempowerment and oppression. Furthermore lateral violence could be reported as another 'Aboriginal problem' and therefore mask a broader societal problem and alleviate any responsibility. The focus and blame on one sector in society can take the attention away from other sectors of society.

There is a paucity of research specific to information on lateral violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the Australian context. Much of the information is via grey literature, handouts and websites. Thus the broad aims of the study is to draw on understandings of Aboriginal participants' knowledge and experience of lateral violence within Aboriginal communities in Adelaide and to add to a larger body of information on lateral violence. A specific focus in this article is to discuss the labelling process of lateral violence and whether the term has resonated with Aboriginal people.

Research Approach

Indigenous Framework

Engaging in an Indigenous framework is important and needs to embrace cultural safety and respect, have relevance and incorporate Indigenous world views (Rigney, 1999). It is also about acknowledging and embracing Indigenous people's ontology (i.e. assumptions about the nature of reality), epistemologies (i.e., ways of knowing reality), axiology (i.e., the nature of values) and diversity (i.e., of language groups and of differences in the way they see the world, organize themselves in it, the questions they ask and the solutions they seek as Indigenous people) (Smith, 2003).

It has been well recognised that there has been a tension between Western and Aboriginal approaches to knowledge (Martin & Mirraoopa, 2003). However, this congruence has primarily been with Western positivist approaches rather than other approaches/ viewpoints/ paradigms which may be deemed more open, flexible and contextual to research (Roy, 2014). It seems that the suitability of an approach is dependent on the types of questions asked (Roy, 2014) or whether the paradigm is flexible enough to accommodate Aboriginal perspectives and purposes (Weber-Pillwax, 2001).

By understanding an Indigenous framework and accommodating a flexible approach, the participants in the study are the subjects of their experience and not the objects of this research. The research will convey the importance of an Aboriginal researcher to acknowledge Indigeneity and how this might influence the research. This is more than reflexivity, which is an essential approach that makes explicit deep-seated views and judgments that can affect the research process (Carpenter, 2010). In this process an Aboriginal researcher is not simply a 'native informant'² (Baker, 2012), but reflects their positioning and status, and how the information is understood, given Aboriginal cultural, community and family connections in Adelaide. Thus this is not a process of an objective researcher grounded in positivism but one whereby an Aboriginal researcher has an "insider" approach and lived the life of many of those who are participants, and will use this knowledge and experience to inform interpretations and therefore determine meaning with participants. At the same time "outsider" input via supervisory and collegial input of the material is vital and will assist in further rigor.

Method

Procedure. Prior to commencing the research ethical approval was by both the Aboriginal Health Research Ethics Committee (AHREC) in December 2012 and from the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee in May 2013.

Once approved an invitation flyer was circulated through word of mouth, post and email with a request to pass on the information creating a snowball effect via Aboriginal work and personal networks. An information sheet was distributed to those who enquired and/or volunteered to be interviewed. The information sheet provided background information on the researchers, the supervisors, the research, rights and responsibilities of involvement, risks, incentives, etc.

Prior to interviews participants were given information about counselling services and reassured they would be assisted or encouraged to seek help, if they became distressed during or after interview. Participants were interviewed about their experiences, understanding and knowledge of lateral violence. Some typical and broad questions for interviews were: "What do you know about lateral violence?" or "What's your understanding of lateral violence?"; "Can you tell me about some of your experiences (individual, family or community) of lateral violence?"; "How has it affected you (family and community)?"; "What have you done to stop or curb lateral violence in the past?"; and "What would you like to see happen to make changes in the community?". The interview duration ranged from 15 minutes to an hour, and were tape-recorded and transcribed. On request transcripts were sent back to participants to check and/or endorse. Brief demographic information, such as gender, broad educational and age categories, were also collated on participants and utilised as part of the study.

Analysis. The transcripts were de-identified and participants given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. The material was then coded using NVivo10 qualitative software and analyzed using a thematic process, which aims to report participant's patterns and themes in the interview data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). This involves a rich description of the recurring (and unique) patterns in the data set across all interviews in this study. Thematic analysis is regarded as a useful

method for investigating an under-researched topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) such as lateral violence. The underlying manner to elicit the themes was via six phases including familiarization of the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and data analysis.

Findings

Demographic Information

There were approximately 50 enquiries and expressions of interest for the project, with 28 interviews and 30 Aboriginal participants, who resided in Adelaide, consenting to take part in the study (there were two interviews where two participants wanted to be interviewed together). The majority of participants were female (63%), and overall 47% of the participants had gained a university level education with seventy-three percent of females amongst those with the university level education. The ages of participants ranged from those in their early 20s to 60 and can be seen in Table 1 below. The most frequent age bracket was the 41-45 age category (40%) and predominately female (75%). About 13% of participants were in the younger age bracket of 30 years and under. The majority were over the age of 41 years (approximately 67%). There were three participants (10%) in an older age bracket (late 50s to middle 60s). Whilst this is not the formal age of an elder within the Aboriginal community it is substantial given that there is an early and high mortality within this community (ABS, 2009).

How the Term Lateral Violence' is Spreading

Most of the participants had heard and were aware of the term lateral violence. However, just over a third (36%) of participants were unfamiliar with or had become aware of the term only recently. For example, two participants indicated they first heard of lateral violence when they saw the project flyer and then made enquiries.

Many who were aware of lateral violence prior to interviews gained this understanding from local or national workshops, educational forums and social

Table 1
Age distribution of participants

Age bracket	Male	Female	Total	%
18-25	2	0	2	6.7%
26-30	1	1	2	6.7%
31-35	1	3	4	13%
36-40	2	0	2	6.7%
41-45	3	9	12	40%
46-50	0	2	2	6.7%
51-55	1	2	3	10%
56-60	0	2	2	6.7%
61-65	1	0	1	3.3%
Total	11	19	30	

media outlets such as websites, emails, blogs and Facebook. For example, many participants had received regular information on 'lateral love' (which is described as the flip side of lateral violence) through social media posted by Brian Butler³ and associates.

The workplace was the most common place at which participants had heard about lateral violence (approximately 47% of participants). This was done via collegial communication and with access to resources. Unfortunately the workplace was also described as a place where many participants experienced lateral violence, particularly if they worked with other Aboriginal people.

Themes from the Interviews

Overview. Although many themes emerged from the rich data gathered in interviews, this article focuses specifically on the themes and patterns of information about the labelling of lateral violence and whether the term resonated with participants' experiences of infighting: whether lateral violence is a suitable term to use. Five interrelated themes are presented and

discussed, each capturing a distinct perspective regarding labelling and acceptance or reluctance of lateral violence as a legitimate social problem.

Understanding the concept before a label. Several participants described and identified a particular set of behaviours and attitudes associated with infighting within the Aboriginal community during interviews. They reported that once the label of lateral violence (or maybe even any label, as highlighted by Rachel) was attached to infighting it became real and made sense of their experiences. Some participants described a sense of relief to finally have a label to name these experiences. The examples below demonstrate this awareness and relief once the issue was actually categorised and labelled as lateral violence.

Rachel (age category 31-35):

Yeah the term [lateral violence] but then when I did learn about it I thought 'oh my gosh this makes so much sense' and puts a name to what we already know ...so it

doesn't matter how it's labelled really as long as it's labelled and to address it and maybe people will think twice about it, yep.

Eve (age category 31-35): *So having that name of it [lateral violence] I guess has been helpful because I don't know what we sort of called it [before].*

Judy (age category 41-45): *I was fascinated by it [lateral violence]. I thought, like many, that it put a name to things we had experienced or participated in and felt a sense of relief.*

These narratives suggest that without a label the concept of lateral violence was abstract and vague. Prior to the labelling participants may have been uncertain of what lateral violence actually was or what to call it or whether it really existed. In these narratives we can see, as Moscovici's (1988) theory of social representations would suggest, how providing a name or label to a set of identified behaviours facilitates its representation and understanding in everyday common sense. The relief of having a name to identify the social problem also provided participants with the prospect that lateral violence can finally be addressed. In evidence here is how a once new and unfamiliar label (lateral violence) is anchored to a familiar and existing repertoire of knowledge and experiences (infighting) that slowly comes to represent and make concrete a social problem that needs to be addressed.

The label of lateral violence fits our experiences. Several participants alluded to the label of lateral violence resonating with their experiences. Often they indicated this by launching into discussion of their experiences of lateral violence within the communities. It appeared that many participants were comfortable with using the label and could show that it was a 'good fit' for what is happening in the community, and they have integrated the term into their everyday descriptions and experiences of infighting within their communities.

Freda (age category 41-45): *...so that's when I first came across lateral violence – it started to get me thinking about [it]. We got the same issues here but it's just a normal sort of thing for Aboriginal people. We didn't have the term, didn't know anything about lateral violence... what is this and I thought 'that is so true' about our mob.*

Kelly (age category 41-45): *I think we all have experienced lateral violence, either at home, or in our communities or at work.*

Rita (age category 56-60): *...I found when I was considered as an equal, as a non-Indigenous Australian, that lateral violence showed it's ugly self through my own communities and my own industry, particularly in competition for positions ...and it's sad, it's really sad...first of all it was hard for me to acknowledge that that is what is happening because I'd like to, I like to think that our people were you know, loving.*

Participants in these narratives actually describe how the unfamiliar term of lateral violence has now become familiar and tangible to those who use it. With such familiarisation the label was used to describe many experiences of lateral violence, and entails conversations about such experiences plus a realisation that it is destructive within family, communities and in the workplace.

A concern expressed by Freda is that lateral violence has become so normalised in Aboriginal communities that people don't even know they have committed or been involved in lateral violence. Moreover the infighting behaviours are so ingrained that communities may be oblivious to these behaviours. As described by Moscovici (1988) the labelling or naming of a social phenomenon enables people to talk about it,

and to generate new knowledge and understanding.

Bring it out in the open to start dealing with it. Participants argued that unless a social problem is named or made tangible it can't be dealt with. This argument is demonstrated in the narratives below.

Judy (age category 41-45)...*I felt really excited and hopeful that it [lateral violence] was out and that it was a problem. Talking about the elephant in the room, so to speak.*

Eve (age category 31-35): *There was actually a name albeit wherever it [lateral violence] came from, but there was actually a name that we're able to sort of start sitting down and having conversations.*

Russell (age category 36-40): ...*But it [lateral violence] needs to be familiar, the wording, so if you had a campaign with that word[s] on it, and you know...*

Rachel (age category 31-35): *If I had a wish list I would make lateral violence more of a household name cos [we are] naming it. It's like domestic violence that gets a name; it gets a name and people understand well hang on yeah these things are happening, its domestic violence, it's not on.*

In terms of a social representation process by making the unfamiliar label of lateral violence familiar and tangible, it can now be addressed. There was a sense of excitement in the interviews that seemed to be about both the label and being open to being addressed within the Aboriginal community. As discussed in the previous narrative the infighting had become normalised and accepted as everyday life. Consequently, participants may have felt trapped and labelling may have offered

freedom to progress.

Silencing methods may have also ensured that infighting behaviours were hidden from broader society. For oppressed groups silencing methods are common, and thus naming something that has been chronic and detrimental to the community may also be liberating for many. A labelling and awareness process can draw out everyday champions who want to address lateral violence and make a difference for healing and intervention.

We had our own labels before 'lateral violence'. Prior to the labelling of lateral violence some Aboriginal participants had used their own words to describe the infighting and oppressive behaviours within their local communities.

Paul (age category 41-45): *It wasn't called lateral violence back then; it was just everyone turning on each other...um 'defiance'... everyone fought each other...just 'fucking up'.*

Ben (age category 18-25):
Psychological warfare.

Leanne (age category 51-55): *They have heard of [lateral violence] but they don't know it's here. So I have given the theme 'above the line, below the line'.*

Rachel (age category 31-35): *It's similar to the tall poppy syndrome that kind of, I guess the meanings associated with that term, somebody made it sound very similar and from what I've seen around just internalised depression, that sounds a bit similar as well [as] taking it out on each other as a first point cos we're like each other, we're like ourselves, we're each other.*

Belle (age category 31-35): *I always just referred to it as fighting crabs in a bucket type thing before I heard lateral violence.*

In these narratives a number of labels were used to describe a similar concept of infighting such as “defiance”, “fucking up”, “jealousy”, “psychological warfare”, “above and below the line”, “tall poppy syndrome”, “internalised racism”, and “crabs in the bucket”. The participants represent diversity within the community in that they were from different age groups and generations, from different language groups, different locations within Adelaide and some were born in different states. Yet all were describing the same broad phenomenon with a local label. There is no doubt that many more labels would have been used. For example, in the 1980s the label of ‘black politics’ came to mind, particularly from a work environment in an Aboriginal context in Adelaide. Other labels noted are the ‘Black poppy syndrome’ (Ryan, 2015). It appears that as soon as a common label was socially represented participants could readily tie the concepts (their old label and the new label of lateral violence) together. The initiative of one overarching label, or a common name that many can relate to, may ensure a broad level of understanding, involvement and action to curb or minimise infighting and promote more agreeable relationships and interactions.

No it doesn't fit – we need a ‘proper’ name for it other than lateral violence. In contrast to participants who accepted and welcomed the label lateral violence, there was also some opposition displayed by some participants in some contexts. They indicated that the concept of lateral violence does not adequately fit community ideas and experiences of infighting. More specifically, participants who objected to the word violence held that position because of potential negative connotations for the community. This disapproval can be seen in the narratives below.

Lila (age category 56-60): *People didn't like the word violence within [government department participant worked for deleted]. I remember having the conversation and you [indicating me on a previous occasion] said ‘call it what it is’ and to me it's ‘violence’.*

Lila: *For me it didn't matter what we called it. If the majority wanted to call it this or that or lateral violence I would go along with it cos for me it's about, I am not the only one whose gonna get abuse[d]. Hey it's not just me: the whole committee decided to call it [name of alternative to lateral violence deleted] so as not to identify the participant or department]... a consensus was made.*

Rita (age category 56-60): *But for us to stop doing that [lateral violence] I think we have to reintroduce it...introduce a very elementary ... word so that people can identify with it...see what I believe is there's a lot of people that still don't know what it [lateral violence] is...Well what would I suggest as another name? Well I haven't really thought about it but more a name that I guess suggests that we need to identify it with something closer to home, you know, and even though it extends into some violent behaviour, that's not how it starts out.*

Rita: *... it's a feeling right now, we need to put a name, a proper name to it, and they [the Aboriginal community] need to put a proper solution to it that we own, and that's really all I wanted to say so.*

Daisy (age category 46-50): *I think it's good in that it gives people words to understand what's going on, and you know how divide and conquer can then become lateral violence... the marginalised people will attack each other but I think sometimes it's a bad thing cos it's negative wording... It therefore oppresses a marginalised people more; it's like a badge they wear... so it's not keeping it in the positive.*

Although the labelling process of infighting was considered extremely important, precisely what the label signifies and represents and how it is used was considered equally important. In the narratives above participants are oriented towards a concern that the label could potentially be used to further stereotype Aboriginal people as all violent by mainstream society. As Daisy explains there is always the risk that lateral violence becomes a 'badge' that Aboriginal people wear, perhaps indicating 'violent person'. Clearly, Aboriginal people do not need to be further stigmatised for behaviours related to colonisation, oppression, trauma and disadvantage. A label such as lateral violence may then be seen as intrinsic to Aboriginal culture, enabling a victim blaming approach which in turn excuses mainstream society from any responsibility and culpability.

A label for infighting could be framed in a constructive way that captures some of the positive behaviours of Aboriginal people. From the first author's experience labels such as 'intra-cultural respect' and 'lateral respect' have been in circulation to describe positive approaches to prevent lateral violence within the Aboriginal community in Adelaide and South Australia. Both Daisy and Rita also wanted a label framed positively to capture the positive or 'loving' side of Aboriginal people but they didn't offer any suggestions.

The narratives infer that a two-pronged approach to naming infighting might be preferable. Reference was readily made to lateral violence when participants talked

about negative experiences of infighting (see for example Rita in theme 2) but they also used or wanted to use alternative labels that were more positive when they were in oriented towards solutions. For example, within the "lateral love" website and campaign infighting is still referred to as lateral violence and lateral love is used in a context for solution focused responses to lateral violence. Similarly in Victoria the term "lateral healing" is used to counteract lateral violence (Koorreen Enterprises, 2015).

Summary and Discussion

This article has fulfilled its aims by drawing on participants' understandings, concept formations and experiences of lateral violence in order to consolidate information and to add to a body of knowledge on lateral violence in the Australian context.

Many participants in this study welcomed the concept of lateral violence and described how the label was useful in making sense of their experiences. On the other hand there were also participants who opposed the label and believed it didn't resonate with what was happening in their communities. This appeared to be related to the negative connotations associated with the word violence being attached to a label. Such a label could mean that Aboriginal people are further stereotyped.

Even though naming and categorising a social issue is an intrinsic human process; there are potential ramifications from the media and the general population when a label has the potential to stigmatise and fuel any existing prejudice and racism. The awareness campaigns for domestic and family violence have been widespread, but these may have undergone the same process of uncertainty and scrutiny, particularly as society stereotypes the primary form of violence as physical. As with the definition of lateral violence, family violence includes a definition of psychological and emotional violence – not only physical violence⁴. The potential for stigma and prejudice toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a real concern despite the fact that violence and its many forms – whether it

be intra-group or inter-group violence – exist throughout the world. This potential for stigma and prejudice is likely to cause fear and uncertainty within Aboriginal communities. It is also a possible factor as to why awareness of lateral violence has been slow in proliferating in Aboriginal communities and action towards prevention, minimising or stopping lateral violence, in communities has been rare.

To return to a previous question asked about whether lateral violence was the most appropriate label to describe the infighting within the Aboriginal community, the response would be 'yes'. This is despite the limitations and stigma discussed, as highlighting lateral violence experiences and making the label tangible was nonetheless deemed very important by participants. This also meant that lateral violence is no longer a secret and/ or normalised to individuals and Aboriginal culture. Before the label many participants gave lateral violence a convenient or local name to help make the infighting process concrete; but an overarching label, such as lateral violence, can ensure that Aboriginal people are consistent and work together to find effective solutions. Such a label is consistent with other labels such as domestic and family violence which are readily used within the Aboriginal community.

If lateral violence remains an overarching term there is nothing to stop local labels being used or to introduce other labels, particularly those associated with prevention and healing initiatives. The examples of "lateral love" and "lateral healing" have provided positive ideals to move towards preventing lateral violence. Thus perhaps two alternative labels can be used – lateral violence as the destructive force and lateral love or lateral healing (or an alternative positive label) – as the mending force.

Lastly, it is important to note that Aboriginal voices and literature were prominent and privileged in the study. The number of participant responses was both surprising and pleasing. This says something about the willingness for voices to be heard, despite lateral violence being a sensitive and

perhaps hidden/reluctant topic within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The introduction of the term 'lateral violence' into these communities was relatively slow, from 2006 with its spread and uptake over approximately nine years. Moscovici (1988) indicated that some ideas take longer when there are associated implications. In this study approximately a third of participants were vague or unfamiliar with the term 'lateral violence' and its meaning. Thus this study may have empowered and been a voice for some people to find out and speak out about lateral violence in Adelaide and to not remain silent. Moreover a process of comfort, confidentiality and anonymity may have also been a factor in participants' motivations to be part of the study as they could speak out without being identified and therefore in relative safety. Furthermore strength of the study was the "insider" approach by the primary researcher which enabled connection and deeper understanding due to contextual knowledge and exchange. This approach is essential to an Indigenous methodology.

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Notes

¹ Preventing lateral violence, one day workshops, have been delivered predominately in Adelaide since 2007. The facilitators (Yvonne Clark, Karen Glover, and Stan Butler) have formed a consortium and deliver the workshops on an ad-hoc basis and on request.

² Baker discusses the notion of the native informant at length in her book and it has many contexts. A broad understanding is an Indigenous person who passes on information about Indigenous matters to the wider community as a 'go between' (Baker, 2012).

³ William Brian Butler & his niece Nicola Butler are the individuals behind the Lateral Love® & Spirit of Care for all Humankind 2012–2022 Campaign.

⁴ A definition of family violence accommodates the complex interlinking and intergenerational nature both within family and community. The violence includes physical, sexual, emotional, social, financial abuse (Lumby/Carlson & Farrelly, 2009) and cultural and spiritual abuse (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2006).

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