

Aboriginal Adolescents' Experiences with Racism Study (AAERS) Study Information

Who are the AAERS Team?

My name is Bep Uink and I am a Researcher and Noongar woman from South WA (Katanning, Tambellup regions). I am leading a research study run by Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, Murdoch University. The study is called "Aboriginal Adolescents' Experiences with Racism Study (AAERS)". The rest of the AAERS research team is made up of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers from different institutions: Rebecca Bennett, Paris Dickerson, Shoshanna Scott, Jenna Woods (Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre & Murdoch University), Ashleigh Lin (Telethon Kids Institute), Gregory Martin (University of Technology Sydney), and Yin Paradies (Deakin University).

What is AAERS?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents face increased risk for mental health issues. Aboriginal adolescents' mental health is directly linked to their survival, as poor mental health is associated with suicides. Suicide remains the leading cause of death for Aboriginal youth in Australia. Thus, understanding factors which contribute to Aboriginal adolescents' mental health has direct relevance to their survival and to broader community wellbeing. An Indigenous model of Social Emotional Wellbeing (available [here](#) on the National Indigenous Australians Agency website) highlights that exposure to racism has the potential to impact Aboriginal peoples' physical, psychological, spiritual, and cultural health. Increasingly, researchers are recognizing that racism does not always happen as overt or aggressive acts but can occur in subtle and covert ways. This covert, or 'everyday racism' is sometimes referred to as daily microaggressions. Daily microaggressions are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour".

Daily Diary (DD) methodology has been used to study microaggressions in international adult samples (Ong et al., 2013). It is a form of survey methodology where participants complete brief (1-2 minutes) surveys each day for a set period (i.e., across a week). Surveys typically include questions on experiences and emotion states across the day. DD studies often utilize digital technology, e.g. phone calls, text messages or mobile apps.

What does AAERS aim to do?

The study aims to find out:

1. What types of racism and microaggressions do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents witness and experience daily?
2. What are the positive ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents respond to microaggressions?

3. What are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents' views on the suitability of DD methodology for studying the frequency and impacts of daily microaggressions?
4. What specific methods of technology do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents endorse for DD studies?

How can my organisations get involved?

Recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people for this study to participate in two focus groups. We are aiming to recruit students aged 12-17. This would include distributing information letters and consent forms to Aboriginal young people who attend your organisation as well as having a nominated support person to be available to discuss participation in the study with the participants. Focus groups will be run with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (approximately 5-10, roughly equal gender representation). Each focus group will run for 1-hour, one week apart.

Focus group 1: The purpose of the first focus group is to explore participants' experiences with microaggressions. Young people will be given a brief overview of the concept of interpersonal racism more generally and racial microaggressions specifically. Brief vignettes will be provided to prompt participants. Specific vignettes have been developed in partnership with a Community Reference Group consisting of Aboriginal adults who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. Participants will then be asked to identify whether they had witnessed any microaggressions directed towards others their age (e.g., in the community, at school) and to describe these incidents. Participants will then be asked to identify whether they had witnessed either interpersonal racism or microaggressions directed towards their family or friends and to describe these incidents. Finally, participants will be asked to identify and describe any incidents of interpersonal racism or microaggressions they had personally experienced.

Focus group 2: The purpose of the second focus groups is to assess if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents' experience the same forms of microaggressions as other ethnic groups as well as ascertain their views on the suitability of DD methodology for future studies. Students will be shown the questions that measure microaggressions which have been developed with international samples. The participants will be asked to look over and discuss each type of microaggression and answer the following questions:

- *“Do the events on the list ever happen to you or other people in your community?”*
- *“Do other events need to be added to this list?”*
- *“Does the way the questions are worded make sense? If not, what would help them be more relatable to you?”*

Participants will then be asked to each pick the top 10 things from the list that they witness or experience most often. This list will be used to inform a daily microaggressions measure which can be used in future research. The researchers will then provide participants a brief

description of DD methodology and how it has been used to study microaggression in other populations.

Participants will be asked the following questions:

- *“Do you think other Aboriginal people your age would enjoy taking part in a DD study on microaggressions? Why/why not?”*
- *“What would be some of the concerns you would have about taking part in a DD study on microaggressions”*
- *“How long do you think a DD study should last?”*
- *“What is the best method for delivering a DD survey to other Aboriginal people your age? E.g. Text, phone call, app, website”.*

Stereotypes workshop: This is a voluntary extra component for participants, to share knowledge and strategies for dealing with microaggressions and other racism in their everyday life. It will run for approximately 1 hour and has been used successfully in the past by Kulbardi with Aboriginal high school students before.

To what extent is participation voluntary, and what are the implications of withdrawing that participation?

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Young people’s participation in this study is entirely voluntary and they do not have to take part if they feel uncomfortable. They are free to withdraw consent from participation at any time without consequence.

Expected outcomes:

At the conclusion of the study, a summary of the research findings will be made available to via a community level report. You can expect this report to be completed 6 months after the focus groups have taken place.

Risks and Safeguards

The safety and wellbeing of young people who participate in this study. We will take several steps to protect participant safety and wellbeing, which we are happy to discuss with you.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss the project further?

If you are interested in hearing more about the study, please can contact me on 08 9360 1783 or at b.uink@murdoch.edu.au. Alternatively, you cant contact our study team at ACEEracism.study@murdoch.edu.au

Sincerely,
Dr Bep Uink and the AAERS Team