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Indigenous culture and entrepreneurship in small businesses in Australia

Jock Collinsa, Mark Morrisonb, Pakikshit Kumar Basub and Branka Krivokapic-Skoko

aUTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney, Ultimo, NSW, Australia; bFaculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, NSW, Australia

ABSTRACT
The impact of Indigenous culture on Indigenous entrepreneurs in Australian small to medium-sized enterprises is outlined in this paper. Qualitative interviews with 38 Indigenous entrepreneurs were carried out across urban, regional, rural, and remote locations Australia. This article argues that the relationship between Indigenous culture and Indigenous entrepreneurship is complex and sometimes contradictory. This complexity arises for various reasons including: (1) the great diversity within the Australian Indigenous community; (2) the fact that most Indigenous people have non-Indigenous partners; and (3) the way in which racial discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage has impacted on Indigenous communities and indigenous culture in Australia. Exploring the evolution of Australian Indigenous enterprises and entrepreneurs from the late 1980s to present, this article provides unique insight into the complexity of the social, cultural, and economic dynamics that shape Indigenous entrepreneurship across Australia.

KEYWORDS
Indigenous culture; Indigenous entrepreneurs; Australian SMEs; cosmopolitan entrepreneurs; racial discrimination

Introduction
One of the most significant developments in the Australian Indigenous economy over the past two decades has been the increasing importance of Indigenous entrepreneurs and enterprises. Hunter (2013) stated that from 1991 to 2011, the number of Indigenous self-employed almost trebled from 4600 to 12,500, an increase of more than 271%. Moreover, Hunter (2014) highlighted that the number of Indigenous employers in remote areas had grown in the five-year inter-censal period between 2006 and 2011, while the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous entrepreneurs in remote areas was closing. Nevertheless, the rate of Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia is much lower than that of non-Indigenous Australians. In an analysis of 2011 national census data, Hunter (2013) demonstrated that between 1991 and 2011, the rate of self-employment for non-Indigenous Australians was about five times that of Indigenous entrepreneurship. Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia is structured in many forms: (1) Partnerships between corporate Australia and Indigenous corporations/communities; (2) Indigenous community-owned enterprises; and (3) Indigenous social enterprises and Co-operatives.
However, the majority of Indigenous enterprises are private small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The relatively low rate of Indigenous entrepreneurship is not exclusively an Australian phenomenon, but it is replicated in countries with Indigenous populations around the world (Dana & Anderson, 2007). Since most entrepreneurs (including Indigenous entrepreneurs) operate SMEs, this under-representation of Indigenous peoples in the global SME sector requires some explanation, although a combination of factors can be hypothesized. Most Indigenous peoples experience socio-economic disadvantage relative to the non-Indigenous population. Other factors such as low income, poor health, lower levels of education, high rates of criminality, unemployment, and inadequate housing all constitute formidable socio-economic barriers to Indigenous entrepreneurship (Langton, 2013). Furthermore, the latest data for Australia demonstrate that little progress has been made in reducing this Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage, or *Closing the Gap* as it is referred to in Australia (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2016). Indigenous enterprises play a crucial role in reducing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage by increasing the standard of living of indigenous entrepreneurs’ and their families, plus generating indigenous employment and contributing to the economic development of their community. Indeed, Hunter (2014) found that Indigenous entrepreneurs in Queensland within a particular time period created 300% more Indigenous employment than other Australian enterprises.

Global Indigenous culture is often characterized by an emphasis on communality (‘the benefit of the many’) rather than on individuality and the primacy of wealth acquisition. This is in contrast to the central characteristic of ‘rational economic man’ in neoclassical free market economics (Cassidy, 2009; Quiggan, 2010). In this sense, Indigenous culture could be characterized as anti-entrepreneurial. However, as this article argues, such characterization is a crude stereotype that offers little to understanding the contemporary relationship between Indigenous culture and entrepreneurship in Australia. It does not correlate with the data on the rapid growth in Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australian SMEs and the growing strength of other Indigenous community enterprises, co-operatives, and corporate partnerships.

The aim of this study was to investigate how Indigenous culture impacts on Indigenous entrepreneurs in Australian SMEs. This article begins with an overview of Australian Indigenous Enterprise. It then examines the challenges to indigenous SME enterprise development and explores the relationship between Indigenous culture and Indigenous Enterprise. The results are intended to inform policy-makers and stakeholders seeking to grow Indigenous SMEs in Australia, and academic researchers who wish to engage with this under-explored contemporary research area.

**An overview of Australian Indigenous enterprises**

Australia’s Indigenous peoples historically come from over 600 tribal and/or clan groupings with their own land and, in most instances, their own language/dialect. Australia’s contemporary Indigenous peoples are mostly an urbanized population living in the large Australian cosmopolitan metropolises, although some still live in regional, rural, and remote areas. Most Indigenous Australians have spouses or partners who are non-Indigenous and have family histories of complex multi-generational intersections with
non-Indigenous family members (Biddle, 2013). Family obligations and relationships resonate strongly in contemporary Indigenous households and communities (Altman, 2001).

In one of the earliest surveys of Indigenous businesses in Australia, Byrnes (1989) estimated that there were 500 Aboriginal commercial businesses across the country by the late 1980s, and that ‘more are starting all the time’. In 1991, the rate of self-employment among Australian-born males was 7.6%, while the rate of self-employment among the Australian Indigenous peoples was 4.0% (Hunter, 1999). One of the critical arguments for the establishment of Indigenous enterprises in Australia is that they provide an opportunity for generating employment of Indigenous people. Collins (2004) survey of Indigenous enterprises in New South Wales (NSW) demonstrated that 66% of Indigenous enterprises employed five or less people, while 13% of enterprises employed between 6 and 10 workers, 8% employed between 11 and 20 workers, and 13% employed more than 20 workers. This finding provides evidence of the need to support the growth of Indigenous enterprises in general, and community-owned Indigenous enterprises in particular. Hunter (2014) estimated that:

‘Indigenous businesses are still about 100 times more likely to employ an Indigenous Australian than non-Indigenous businesses’. Indigenous enterprises in Australia thus provide an opportunity for generating Indigenous employment – central to any ‘Closing the Gap’ strategy – and a way out of welfare dependency within the framework of self-determination that entrepreneurship offers. (p. 16)

A common theme emerging in the Indigenous entrepreneurship literature relates to the motivations and goals of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Traditional entrepreneurship literature stresses that the main goal of business enterprises is to generate profit and the main goal of entrepreneurs is private wealth accumulation (the fundamental backbone of neoclassical free market theory) (Cassidy, 2009; Quiggan, 2010). A minority of Indigenous entrepreneurs in the NSW survey (Collins, 2004) reported that they did it for the traditional materialistic reasons embedded in the capitalist spirit: Thirteen enterprises were started to make money; another nine for ‘financial independence’. However, more than two in every three enterprises surveyed stated that they had commenced the enterprise for communitarian reasons (e.g. providing Aboriginal people with education, training, employment, and enhancing community development). This highlights that Indigenous SMEs in Australia are embedded in Indigenous culture. Furthermore, cultural obligations to both immediate family members and broader indigenous community members are deeply felt by Indigenous entrepreneurs.

Yet there is an anxiety about Indigenous business enterprise failure, particularly within co-operative or community-owned businesses. In part, this is shaped by reports of misadministration of the Aboriginal Lands Councils and other organizations (Norman, 2015). It may also be shaped by a stereotypical perception by mainstream society of Aboriginal people having an inability to succeed. However, small enterprise failure is part of the generic nature of small business per se, rather than a result of particular Aboriginal entrepreneurial inadequacies. Research by the Standing Council on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (2000) demonstrated that:

only about 3 per cent of small businesses are truly successful, with 17 per cent providing a reasonable result for their owners where they are at least maintaining the values of their assets, 40 per cent are vulnerable in that their equity is steadily devaluing, 25 per cent are
at risk with their asset base rapidly eroding and 15 per cent are at a critical stage in terms of survivability as their equity runs out or their positions become insolvent. (p. 188)

In a 2004 NSW survey, just over half of the business enterprises surveyed made a profit in the previous year, though all reported that they thought that their business was a success (Collins, 2004). This leads to the question – is it possible to have legitimate business goals other than profitability? What benchmarks do Indigenous entrepreneurs use to judge the success of their entrepreneurial endeavours? For some, survival is the measure. For others, growing the business in employment size, improving community and inter-cultural relations, or improving their community’s outcomes are such benchmarks. For others, a good reputation and continued usage by local Aboriginal peoples is critical. Interestingly, even sole-owned enterprises often included some measure related to their community while calculating business success – not just profits (Morley, 2014).

**Indigenous culture and entrepreneurship**

It is evident then that there are a number of dimensions to the relationship between indigenous culture and indigenous Australian entrepreneurs. At one level, Indigenous culture generates a series of goods and services for which Indigenous entrepreneurs have a comparative advantage or an entrepreneurial market niche. Enterprises focusing on Indigenous art and craft, Indigenous tourism and workforce education and training about Indigenous cultural sensitivity are examples of this. At another level, Indigenous culture is embedded in a history of dispossession, invasion, a contemporary reality of persistent racial stereotypes and lived experiences of socio-economic disadvantage and social exclusion (Langton, 2013). Altman (2001) argued that the competitive advantage of Indigenous enterprises relates to those which are rooted in Indigenous culture:

> Indigenous communities only have competitive advantage in a small number of industries, mostly in the areas of ‘culture business’ (the manufacture of arts and crafts, the provision of cultural tourism services, etc.). (p. 15)

Here culture is used to refer to goods and services that derive their distinctiveness from Indigenous culture. Yet at the same time, Altman (2001) suggests that there is an apparent contradiction or paradox between Indigenous cultural and business culture and a critical issue that many communities now face is determining where their competitive advantage lies. In many situations, it is in what is termed the ‘culture business’, but a problem with culture business is that it is not very amenable to commercial business. Conversely, commercial business is not very amenable to cultural priorities. The result is a major potential development mismatch.

Research suggests that Indigenous businesses face both racial and gender discrimination from mainstream society in addition to discrimination from Indigenous communities (emerging from a lack of understanding of entrepreneurship) (Australian Tax Office, 2009; Foley, 2006). Other barriers faced by potential Indigenous entrepreneurs include a lack of basic business skills and financial literacy (Baguley, 2007; Collins, 2004; Schaper, 1999), a lack of education and training (Collins, Gibson, Alcorso, Castles, & Tait, 1995), a limited pool of skilled labour (Flamsteed & Golding, 2005; Schaper, 1999); poor mentoring and inadequate business advisory support in the establishment phase (Altman, 2001; Collins, 2004); and a lack of access to finance and
education (Collins, 2004; Foley, 2006). Such barriers have been identified by some scholars as a colonial impact, resulting in the underdevelopment of Indigenous social and human capital (Klyver & Foley, 2012). Low levels of human and social capital have led to other social and economic problems, including an undermining of the incentive for individuals to engage in entrepreneurial activity, welfare dependence, and substance abuse (Baguley, 2007).

In addition, Altman (2001, 2002) highlighted that the poor management practices in differentiating commercial from non-commercial objectives in Indigenous enterprises, and the tension between property rights as defined in Australian law and in customary law, presents challenges for indigenous entrepreneurs. Moreover, the ‘metro-centrism of service delivery’ has resulted in the inaccessibility of government and banking services in remote areas (Altman, 2002; Flamsteed & Golding, 2005). The extremely small size of most Aboriginal communities also has negative impact on the commercial viability of Indigenous enterprises (Altman, 2001; Beer, Maud, & Pritchard, 2003). Furthermore, government-support programmes for Indigenous businesses are sometimes designed without consultation and inefficiently administered (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, 2003). But studies on Indigenous Enterprises in Australia have generally focused on single issues rather than mapping the prevalence of a range of critical success factors. Additionally, few studies have investigated the factors that are known to be important in influencing business success within such communities, notably social capital (Foley, 2008; Hindle & Lansdowne, 2005; Van Es & Dockery, 2003).

Based upon findings from the literature review of Australian Indigenous Enterprises, the following important research questions need to be addressed: Theme 1: In what ways does Indigenous culture impact on the goals of Indigenous entrepreneurs and their business dynamics? How is Indigenous entrepreneurship embedded within Indigenous culture and Indigenous family and community relationships, responsibilities, and ambitions and what is the impact of this cultural embeddedness on the dynamics of their SMEs? Theme 2: How important are non-Indigenous partners in Indigenous SME enterprises and are Indigenous enterprises at the same time cosmopolitan enterprises? Theme 3: What is the impact of racialization on the experiences of Indigenous SMEs in Australia?

Methodology and findings

To address the themes identified, a qualitative method was deemed the most suitable approach for this study. Using this methodology, researchers sought to explore, explain, describe, and interpret the meaning of Indigenous Enterprises in Australia. The data collection method was twofold: (1) Primary Data were drawn from in-depth, semi-structured interviews undertaken with 22 male and 16 female Indigenous entrepreneurs located in urban, regional, and rural across Australia using a networking or snowballing methodology to explore the complex and often contradictory ways that Indigenous culture impacts on Indigenous small businesses; (2) Secondary Data were drawn from census data and research on Australian Indigenous entrepreneurship to help build a stronger profile of the entrepreneurial activity in the community. Once the data were gathered, it was coded and broken into the themes highlighted from the literature review. Following detailed analysis, numerous interesting findings were generated.
Theme 1: Indigenous culture and Indigenous entrepreneurs

In the qualitative fieldwork, the role of Indigenous culture in business enterprises was explored and it was found that the perceptions of informants of the cultural impact on their businesses were complex and multifaceted. In some fields (such as tourism and art), Indigenous culture enhanced the business. However, in other Indigenous enterprises, Indigenous culture constrained the business. For example, some participants recounted difficulties in securing reliable Indigenous workers in some locations, or the dichotomy between private capital accumulation and the perception by their extended family of their obligation to share their wealth with their relatives. In one tourism business owned by an Indigenous woman in Darwin (Northern Territory), an Indigenous cultural interpretation of tourist sites was the key competitive advantage of the business but at the same time the key barrier to the business success was an inability to secure reliable Indigenous workers for the business. Unsurprisingly, the concept of ‘culture’ was interpreted differently by business owners, but four strong themes were evident: Family priorities (values and morals around responsibility and care); egalitarianism (values around fairness); survivor mentality (individual and collective traits around strength, determination, and resilience); and cultural knowledge products (externalization of cultural heritage through food, dance, art, stories, and lineage).

Commitment to family was also a very strong indication of Indigenous cultural identity across the business owners. In this reasoning, priority was placed on maintaining kin relationships and fulfilling notions of responsibility to family members. As Foley (2010) argued, strong views remain among Indigenous people concerning protocol and ethics. It was evident from the research that what has evolved are contemporary Indigenous values that allow an Indigenous Australian to maintain their cultural standards concerning kinship within the broader modern Australia society. One informant (B14) who ran a pizza shop business with his non-Indigenous wife, expressed this ethos directly. His family was very much involved in the business and making business decisions:

It’s all part of your life. If your family is involved, it’s like any ethnic thing, really, like the Chinese, a family business. It’s about your family, and Aboriginal people are no different. … People think that what I’m doing doesn’t involve culture, because it’s all business. But it’s a lot of Indigenous business, really.

B8, who ran an industrial laundry in Melbourne, had claimed that her Aboriginal culture ‘doesn’t influence us in any way’ until she spoke about her family:

I think the only thing with being Indigenous, is that family is priority. … I’ve got nieces and nephews that I’ve been able to help at times when they’ve been out of work for a little while.

Other participants preferred not to mix business and family for this very reason. B28, for example, found it difficult to separate her work from family needs in her household,

In an Aboriginal household, everyone wants to use the computer. So, it’s just trying to cut that down, cut that right back.

B32, who ran a cultural tourism business with his brothers, also highlighted the sacrifice that needed to be made to extended family and kin for the business to thrive:
You can’t go off in the car and say I am going to the footy game … or … I am going to the funeral … you have to put the business first and it’s hard … But then, other people in the community don’t see us all there … So it’s a difficult balance.

This concept of sacrifice was a common theme in the entrepreneurs’ business histories. Entrepreneurs had to put the business first, and the down side of this sacrifice was felt to be especially taxing on Indigenous cultural relations which relied on participation, care, and responsibility.

Outside of the family, participants differed considerably in what they identified as Indigenous and the impact of Indigenous culture on their business. Some entrepreneurs felt that there were key points of difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal businesses. These differences included significant forms of power structures, the role of women, and transparency, as detailed by B27:

I think that there’s definitely a different way in which we handle things in comparison to corporate business. Yes,

She ran an Indigenous food café in Sydney and saw her Indigenous cultural identity as impacting on ‘everything’ in her business from how she managed her staff to the food she served and the suppliers she used,

Everything is based on being, not just culturally safe but culturally aware … . In Aboriginal business, you join a team and work as a team, everyone’s on the same level.

In this explanation, B7 drew on an absence of hierarchy and a focus on egalitarianism to distinguish her business as both Indigenous and separate from ‘corporate businesses’. B26, whose company ran dances and cultural workshops in Sydney, also had a perception of cultural heritage and its impact on her business as being morally guided. For her, this was akin to a form of faith, which she felt determined the nature of her business success, explaining:

I rely on my culture for a lot of things to run the business. I truly believe that if I have done the wrong thing culturally over the years, I wouldn’t still be in business.

This cultural protocol featured strongly in several entrepreneur’s identities and practices, as well as in the narratives of the products they developed and sold. While the predominant impact of Indigenous culture on businesses appeared to be how one treated family and maintained kin relations, for those working in fields perceived to be more ‘traditionally’ aligned with overt cultural heritage (such as tourism to Indigenous sites or Indigenous arts and crafts), seeking guidance and permission from elders was another central component of their business.

**Theme 2: Indigenous entrepreneurs and relationships**

The 2011 census data shows that most Indigenous Australians who have a business partner, have a non-Indigenous partner (Biddle, 2013). The importance of non-Indigenous partners in Indigenous enterprises was also a very strong theme in the qualitative research. The Indigenous entrepreneurs were more likely to have a spouse than be single, and these spouses were more likely to be non-Indigenous. Non-Indigenous male
entrepreneurs were also more likely to be in a relationship with a non-Indigenous woman, whereas Indigenous women were more likely to be single.

Several entrepreneurs in this research were also in a formal business partnership with their spouse, and many of these partners also played a key role in the Indigenous enterprise. Approximately 42% of all participants identified as receiving a significant input into the business from their spouse. Spouses occupied many different roles, ranging from business advice and management; financial, technological and administrative advice and support; childcare, and emotional labour. In most cases, the spouse who occupied this informal role did not receive a formal wage from the business.

For example, B10, who managed an Indigenous graphic design and printing company, explained that he could not have gone into business without the financial support of his spouse. For B2, a painter-decorator in regional NSW, his wife maintained the technological and administrative side:

It’s just basically my wife and myself, is really that’s just sort of how we run it … I’ve never had financial help or anything like that from anyone.

His wife did not receive a wage for her work but was instrumental to the business. Likewise, B21 ran cultural tours in the Northern Territories and she made her husband’s role explicit when she explained:

He does the backbone. I’m more of the show pony, so we work really well together.

While her husband was not a formal business partner, he managed much of the financial and administrative side, including the website.

The participants in this study with non-Indigenous spouses also cited clear advantages in access to finances, such as their spouse owning property, less racial discrimination, less gender discrimination among women, and access to wider cultural capital from non-Indigenous networks and education. This suggests that non-Indigenous spouses contributed considerable human and cultural capital in the form of education, experience, and networks to Indigenous entrepreneurs. These findings corroborate with the research findings of Foley (2006). This was particularly evident with financing, with eleven entrepreneurs having sourced a range of mainstream finance which they combined with their own personal savings. Ten of these eleven entrepreneurs also had a spouse, nine of whom were non-Indigenous. This strongly suggests that entrepreneurs with a non-Indigenous spouse were more likely to seek and obtain a mainstream bank loan for their business than Indigenous entrepreneurs without a non-Indigenous spouse.

A corollary of the high rate of Indigenous exogamy over generations is the fact that many Indigenous couples and families (including entrepreneurial couples and families) have strong multicultural family lineages. Several entrepreneurs mobilized their non-Indigenous cultural identity in their entrepreneurial identity. In doing so, they highlighted forms of ‘ethnic capital’, identifying traits which they felt were innate to their cultural origins. B19 identified her entrepreneurial heritage in the Chinese-Malayan ancestry of her great grandfather, and drew on this inter-cultural family heritage in the narrative of her success and motivation:

I’ve found out through my heritage and my DNA, that my great grandfather who was Chinese/Malayan was a very, very predominant businessman … I’ve come to the realisation
that it’s actually in my DNA. My dad was self-employed and ran his own painting contracting business, so I have been around men and women within my family that have been self-motivating to own and operate businesses.

B19 contributes to a subtle theme that comes through in the transcripts of people re-interpreting and re-writing Indigenous history as one of being highly entrepreneurial and ‘in my DNA’, so to speak. In another example of a cosmopolitan heritage, B34 sought to ‘draw people who are non-Indigenous into my business’. He had an emblem which combined the Aboriginal flag with the union jack, and called it ‘tribal street wear’:

I don’t call my business Aboriginal street wear … A lot of people see the Aboriginal colours and the flag as a negative thing, so I’ve kept the colours but I’ve put in a British emblem as I’m half-British. So, I’m trying to meet halfway without removing who I am … that’s my main emblem for the business and it’s accepting everyone.

**Theme 3: Indigenous entrepreneurs and racialization**

It can be argued that Indigenous Australians have been a racialized minority in Australia for most of white settlement. They face discrimination in public spaces and places (Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008) and in the institutions of Australian life such as the labour market (Biddle, Howlett, Hunter, & Paradies, 2013). Racial prejudice and lowered expectations among both Indigenous community members and outsiders were common themes regarding the impact of Indigenous culture on their business.

Some immigrant entrepreneurs from Asian backgrounds dealt with the prejudice that they faced by adopting practices of ‘playing the mainstream card’, obscuring their Indigenous identities in certain respects (Chiang, Low, & Collins, 2013). B1, an older man who had been in business a long time, spoke of people being reluctant to buy his product in the early days due to racial prejudice, which was overcome by market demand.

It was basically they just wouldn’t buy. But eventually when people were asking for the product, then it turned around.

B12, who ran a retail outlet in regional Victoria, also spoke of an implicit prejudice he experienced directed towards him as an Indigenous business owner.

With your suppliers, it’s nearly detrimental. Because they think, ‘ah, he won’t pay his bill’ … you’d have more hope if you told them lies.

With Indigenous customers, the other side of this was making sure that Indigenous customers in the community would pay:

You’ve gotta just let them know that it’s all got to be paid for all the way. Give them a discount, do the right thing, but they’ve still got to be treated as customers.

B22, a non-Indigenous consultant working for a community business in the Northern Territory, further explained:

there is a bit of an expectation that if it’s an Aboriginal company … you’ll get the job done but the standards might be somewhat lower or something.

B26 stressed how crucial it was to break both the perception of Indigenous people being in welfare, and of Indigenous people perceiving themselves as being entitled. She argued that
it was important that young Indigenous people understood that they have to work hard, to ‘give Aboriginal people a go’, and to be treated in the same way as other non-Aboriginal people, citing, ‘give us a hand up, not a hand out’.

Discussion

Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia is growing both numerically and in terms of importance for Indigenous socio-economic development. More and more Indigenous Australians are moving to establish a small business to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families. These developments are important because Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia plays a central and growing role in reducing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage, providing Indigenous employment and contributing to the economic development of Indigenous communities. However, there has been inadequate contemporary research into this issue. This article has drawn on new qualitative research with Indigenous entrepreneurs in SMEs across urban, regional, rural, and remote Australia to explore how contemporary Indigenous culture impacts on Indigenous entrepreneurship. One key finding is that Indigenous culture both enables and constrains Indigenous entrepreneurs and their enterprises. Most Indigenous entrepreneur informants gave a higher priority to their enterprise achieving social aims (creating Indigenous jobs or contributing to Indigenous community development) than the literature suggests for non-Indigenous SMEs. Private capital accumulation and individual wealth is not the only goal of Indigenous enterprises. The contribution of this paper is to situate the explanation for this difference within Indigenous culture where social and community obligation and priorities are given high importance.

Indigenous entrepreneurs in small private businesses also aim primarily to provide for their family, a trait that they have in common with other Australian entrepreneurs in such enterprises, including immigrant entrepreneurs (Collins & Shin, 2014). Investigations into Indigenous culture often construct it as traditional and static. This paper rejects this approach, demonstrating that the families of Indigenous entrepreneurs are increasingly cosmopolitan in character. Most Indigenous entrepreneurs have non-Indigenous spouses or life partners who are also formal or informal business partners. Many Indigenous couples and families also have strong multicultural family lineages, and this paper suggests that this cosmopolitan aspect of Indigenous entrepreneurship (and the way that contemporary Indigenous culture exhibits increasingly complex cosmopolitan elements) has often been overlooked in the literature. This is a new insight into the literature on Indigenous SMEs and requires further investigation.

The paper also argues that the racialized experience of Australian Indigenous people impacts on Indigenous entrepreneurship in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. It constrains their movement into entrepreneurship and at the same time, it shapes the dynamic of their enterprise and their entrepreneurial goals, elevating the importance of their contribution to their (racialized and disadvantaged) Indigenous community. Furthermore, a move into entrepreneurship is a way for Indigenous people to achieve better economic outcomes than are generally available to them in the Australian labour market where racial discrimination still constrains the achievements of Indigenous and other racial minorities. A key contribution of this paper is to view racial discrimination as a barrier to, and a motivating force for, Indigenous entrepreneurship and to
situate racial discrimination as a dimension of contemporary Indigenous culture in Aus-
tralia, and in other countries that profoundly impacts on Indigenous entrepreneurship.

Conclusion

Indigenous entrepreneurship in small business private enterprises in Australia is a complex phenomenon. To understand it we need to investigate how Indigenous entrepre-
neurship is embedded within cultural, family, and Indigenous community relationships. It
is evident from this article that there is a strong potential for Indigenous entrepreneurship in small business to grow even more rapidly in coming decades. Policies and programmes
to support the formation on new Indigenous businesses and the development of existing
Indigenous enterprises would assist in this regard. These policies and programmes cannot just be copied from existing programmes to support other Australian entrepreneurs in small business. Rather, they need to be tailored to the different social, cultural, and economic dynamics that shape Indigenous entrepreneurship across urban, regional, rural, and remote locations in Australia.

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Notes on contributors

Jock Collins is Professor of Social Economics, UTS Business School, University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

Mark Morrison is Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia.

Pakikshit Kumar Basu is Associate Professor of Management, Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia.

Branka Krivokapic-Skoko is Associate Professor of Management, Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia.

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