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Teaching the welcoming of diversity and difference in a contemporary Australian university

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Abstract: Reimagining an Australia where diversity and difference are welcomed rather than feared holds particular challenges for academics charged with the task of educating new undergraduate students who have been raised on a diet of conservative binary discourses and fear-inducing political slogans. This paper reports on the thinking we have done and on the practices we adopt to create a one-semester undergraduate unit on working respectfully and inclusively across diversity and difference. The unit is designed for delivery to students who will be working as professionals in contemporary Australia. Although our unit is currently being taught to students in the human services and community development areas, it can be tailored to suit students bound for any professional arena including teachers, health workers, engineers, social workers, psychologists, business executives, musicians and media commentators.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication; ethics of encounter; respect and reciprocity.

Reimagining an Australia where diversity and difference are welcomed rather than feared holds particular challenges for academics charged with the task of educating new undergraduate students who have been raised on a diet of conservative binary discourses and fear-inducing political slogans. This paper reports on the thinking we have done and on the practices we adopt to create a one-semester undergraduate unit on working respectfully and inclusively across diversity and difference. The unit is designed for delivery to students who will be working as professionals in contemporary

Australia. Although our unit is currently being taught to students in the human services and community development areas, it can be tailored to suit students bound for any professional arena including teachers, health workers, engineers, social workers, psychologists, business executives, musicians and media commentators.

What distinguishes this unit from others we are familiar with in the tertiary sector is its emphasis on three-way thinking born of poststructuralist understandings of subjectivity and power (Davies, 1994; Davies et al., 2006) and its insistence on the ethics of respectful communication (Hopkins, 2006; Irigaray, 1995). Additionally, it introduces students to sociological understandings of relevant concepts like prejudice, racism, difference, whiteness and othering within which to read their own cultural specificity (Jureidini & Poole, 2003; Kimmel & Aronson, 2009; van Kreiken et al., 2010).

To create this unit we drew initially on two existing undergraduate units, the first written specifically to prepare first year counselling students for working cross-culturally, and the second to prepare undergraduate students in the human services to recognise and use a specific values framework when encountering difference and diversity. In creating this new unit we have adopted what we consider to be the most useful features of each of those units and additionally cast our nets wide to reflect on the philosophical and epistemological traditions we might most judiciously incorporate.

We begin this paper with a discussion of the ideas and values that underpin our new unit, and move then to a discussion of the philosophical and epistemological traditions we have drawn on, and those we have rejected. Finally, we outline the content and structure of the new unit in some detail, and conclude with a comment on the teaching practices that facilitate this learning and on the personal and professional shifts it requires of students.

The concepts and values underpinning our new unit

African-American scholar and activist Audre Lorde's exploration of notions of difference, marginalisation and fear, published in her 1984 collection *Sister Outsider*, remains disturbingly relevant in contemporary Australia, and provides a starting point for our thinking. She writes:

> We have all been programmed to respond to human differences between us with fear and loathing and to handle that difference in one of three ways: ignore it, and if that is not possible, copy it if we think it is dominant, or destroy it if we think it is subordinate. But we have no patterns for relating across our human difference as equals. As a result, those differences have been misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion. (115)

Lorde reminds us that the challenge remains for difference to be an empowering exchange, rather than a threat:

> It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behaviour and expectation. (115)

Further, she warns,

> It is a lifetime pursuit for each one of us to extract these distortions from our living at the same time as we recognize, reclaim and define those differences upon which they are imposed. (115)

Crucially, Lorde argues that we need to develop tools for using human difference as "a springboard for creative change within our lives ..." (115).

Following Lorde, then, we begin with the understandings that difference and diversity are intriguing if one is curious rather than afraid; we argue, too, that power is most usefully understood in poststructuralist terms as fleeting and fluid and able to be resisted and negotiated; and that cross-cultural interactions have to be undertaken with reciprocal deeply-held respect for the self and respect for the other; and finally that it is an ethical responsibility of the tertiary educated professional to learn the art of becoming cross-culturally competent.

In the context of our unit, we use the term *culture* in its broadest sense: hence, cross-cultural competence and interacting across cultures is code for interaction across any kind of difference—of ethnicity, of ability, of political persuasion, of identity, of socio/economic status.

Let's unpack these understandings a little.

Firstly, as Audre Lorde (1984) has advocated, we encourage students to approach their encounters with people and ideas and practices and capacities that are different from their own with curiosity born of wonder and a generosity of spirit, rather than with fear and loathing. One of the conceptual tools we have used to underpin this manoeuvre is to invite our students to become self-aware by understanding the cultural and sociological underpinnings of exclusions and fear of differences by introducing them to notions of the discursive construction of racism, prejudice, othering and privilege. This begins to allow students to reflect on the discursive construction of their own identity or socio/political location. If we then link this sociological knowledge with understandings of the self not as an essential category that can be subsumed or taken over by difference but as multiple and capable of negotiation at all levels, we can learn to find similarities as well as differences within others, and to make points of connection with others. Curiosity, coupled with this understanding of the self as multiple, permits engagement without judgment, without superiority, without needing to 'change the other to make it the same' because the other is no longer viewed as threatening to an intrinsic, authentic self.

Secondly, we acknowledge that power plays exist in every relationship, and that in order for communication to be effective the power relationship between players has to be read and negotiated. Poststructuralist understandings of power which emphasise its fleeting nature, its fluidity and flexibility, give students insight into both-and thinking, allowing them ways to negotiate their own positions in an encounter, rather than feeling stuck in either/or binary thinking.

Thirdly, our suite of understandings about the communication process is underpinned by the following values:

- that respect for the selfhood of the other is central to any genuine human exchange;
- that respect for the self is, simultaneously, central to any respectful human exchange;
- that the process of respectful communication is, consequently, reciprocal.

Finally, we consider that it is an ethical responsibility of the tertiary educated professional to learn the art of becoming cross-culturally competent.

The philosophical and epistemological traditions on which we draw

There are many ways to present a unit such as this one and many philosophical and epistemological traditions on which to draw. Recent work by Chun and Evans, for example, features what they call an ecological framework to re-think ways to teach cultural competence in higher education (Chun & Evans, 2016). It is not our intention here to survey the current crop of teaching texts, nor to suggest that ours is the only way to proceed. Rather, following Irigaray's understanding that every scholarly moment is preceded by a specific genealogy of reading and research (Whitford, 1991), we provide the following account of our own intellectual journeys towards that moment when this unit becomes, for us, a solid working tool.

Our thinking on bringing curiosity fuelled by wonder and a generosity of spirit to the cross-cultural encounter emerges from our engagement with feminist scholars who advocate enacting a relational politics of difference rather than an adversarial politics of opposition—scholars such as Luce Irigaray (1985, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995), Helene Cixous (1981, 1991, 1997), Elspeth Probyn (1993), Trinh T Minh-ha (1989, 1993) and Marguerite La Caze (2002). For these and many other scholars, curiosity allows engagement without interpellation; it allows us to know difference without becoming that difference; it allows us to connect across difference without fear for the integrity of our selfhood.

Developing the capacity to work with respect for the self and respect for the other requires ways of knowing that are both conceptual and experiential. For insight into how to communicate the complexity of this process to students, we have turned to the seminal work of Trinh (1989), Irigaray (1995) and La Caze (2002).

Trinh uses a maternal metaphor to illuminate the processes of connecting across the space between the self and the other:

> In her maternal love, she is neither possessed nor possessive; neither binding nor detached nor neutral. For a life to maintain another life, the touch has to be infinitely delicate: precise, attentive and swift, so as not to pull, track, rush, crush or smother. (Trinh, 1989: 38)

The key to this delicate manoeuvre, we feel, is imagination: if we can fly on the wings of our own imaginations, then surely we can bridge the gaps between our own embodied suite of memories, dreams and reflections and those of the other, to glimpse, if only fleetingly, the sensory register which will allow us to empathise without ever claiming to know the experience as our own (Hopkins, 2009).

Our thinking on respectful communication draws explicitly on the work of Luce Irigaray, who, in her work on sexual difference, has eloquently articulated a process of non-hierarchical exchange and interaction, where two people who are different stand beside each other, neither one more central nor more marginal than the other, to uncover points of similarity and points of difference. For Irigaray, the notion of reciprocity offers one of the most fruitful dimensions of intersubjective bonds. As Irigaray states so eloquently "in *J'aime a toi* (I Love to You), 'I don't dominate or consume you. I respect you (as irreducible)'" (1995: 171).

Our understanding of the intricacies of the intrapersonal manoeuvres needed to bring curiosity to the cross-cultural encounter has been enlivened by the work of Australian feminist philosopher Marguerite La Caze (2002). La Caze reflects on Irigaray's work to argue that the passion of wonder and the virtue of generosity can be seen to underpin these ways of working. La Caze explains that Irigaray, following Descartes, has argued that wonder is the first of all the passions, and provides the basis for an ethics of sexual difference. One of the challenges facing our students, though, is that they will be required to connect across many differences beyond sexual difference. La Caze elegantly argues that generosity and wonder are both needed in the development of an ethics of respect for difference:

> *We should respond to other differences beyond sexual difference with wonder ... The passions of generosity and wonder need to be brought together to ground an ethics; ... wonder and generosity must be understood as attitudes that we can cultivate in ourselves. (2002: 1)*

In thinking through ways to respond to differences between the self and the other, and to connect with respect and reciprocity across those differences, La Caze argues that we need to mobilise both wonder and generosity in order to recognise similarities and differences. Wonder, she argues, involves recognising others as different from ourselves. We are drawn by curiosity, by wonder, to something new precisely because of its difference. Generosity, by contrast, involves seeing others as essentially similar to ourselves: unlike its present meaning, La Caze explains, generosity for Descartes is "a kind of wonder combined with love, which involves having proper pride or rightful self-regard" (Descartes, 1989: 103, in La Caze, 2002: 6). In summary, then, La Caze argues that "generosity appears to be the converse of wonder, in the sense that it is regarding

others as like ourselves and looking for similarity, whereas wonder involves regarding others as very different from ourselves in their needs, desires and interests" (2002: 6). Having wonder and generosity counter-balancing each other in these ways also prevents the danger to which Iris Marion Young (1997) has alluded, that in our desire to acknowledge difference we may begin to exoticise it, or view it as alien.

Mobilising wonder and generosity to create and sustain respectful and reciprocal connections across the boundary between the self and the other are simultaneously practices that students will take into their professional lives, and practices that underpin classroom interactions. Our task as educators is to find ways to enable students to carry these practices into their everyday lives.

Although it has not been necessary to take first year undergraduate students into the arcane philosophical reaches of the work of Trinh or Irigaray or La Caze, as academics we have each found their work on human integrity, dignity and difference to be deeply satisfying philosophically.

Our thinking on power clearly derives from the poststructuralist theorising of Foucault and a host of followers, including, again, Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, as well as Australian scholars Bronwyn Davies (1994, 1996, 2000) and Jan Fook (1999). Additionally, in order to explain how and why particular knowledges have currency we have drawn on postcolonial understandings of the relationship between the centre—in postcolonial terms, that space in which meanings made are naturalised and assumed to be universal, where the power of dominant discursive understandings of the world often resides—and the peripheries which are seen as other to the centre. For this spatial analysis of cross-cultural connection, we are indebted especially to the work of Susan Stanford Friedman (1998).

Finally, in considering the ethics of respectful engagement, our message is simple: communicating respectfully is not about choice, it is about responsibility. What we have found in our reflections on the way previous units have been shaped and taught is that it is too easy for the ethics of respectful encounters to be overlooked, not explicitly articulated, or simply ignored. The notion that respectful communication is underpinned by an ethics of responsibility to choose a course of action that is least marginalising or dismissive is one we feel the need to stress and to articulate clearly.

Defining cross-cultural competence

The conscious developing of cultural competence in higher education students is increasingly seen as a responsibility of Australian universities, and we recognise that our unit is being developed in the context of some debate about what constitutes cultural or cross-cultural competence. For example, in its recent call for papers to define and discuss the topic Cultural Competence and the Higher Education Sector, the Asian Conference on Education being held in Kobe, Japan, in October 2017 acknowledges that "currently 12 Australian universities include Graduate Attributes that encompass statements on cultural competence and the ability of graduates to engage with diverse cultural and Indigenous perspectives in both global and local settings." It cites a 2020

vision for Australian higher education whereby the system "produces graduates with not only the requisite knowledge and skills but also the understandings, capability or attributes permitting the individual to think flexibly or act intelligently in intercultural situations." "But what," it asks, "is meant by cultural competence and what are the implications for teaching, learning and leadership?" (Asian Conference on Education 2017).

Our own understanding of what constitutes the kind of cross-cultural competence that will prepare our students for ethical cross-cultural engagements in their professional lives is quite specific. From the literature on equipping counselling students to become cross-culturally competent, most especially the work of U.S. academics Smith (2004) and Sue and Sue (2015), we took the notion that cross-cultural competence (for which there is a checklist) is born of awareness (of self and others), knowledge (of one's own culture and the culture of others), and the experiential skills of bringing those two qualities together in the process of respectful communication. Although this combination of awareness, knowledge and skills relates specifically in this instance to the development of cross-cultural competence, where *culture* is seen in its original sociological sense in specific relation to ethnicity, we have applied it to developing the skills to work with populations who are culturally diverse in the widest possible sense.
The following checklist which we present to students is our adaptation of the one created by Sue and Sue (2015). It was originally prepared specifically for preparing counselling students to work cross-culturally. We have adapted it for a wider cohort of potential professionals.

Multicultural Competencies

Cultural Competence: Awareness

- You have moved from being culturally unaware to being aware and sensitive to your own cultural heritage and to valuing and respecting difference
- You are aware of your own values and biases and how they may affect diverse clients
- You are comfortable with differences that exist between you and your clients in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic variables. Differences are not seen as deviant.
- You are sensitive to circumstances (personal biases; stage of racial, gender, and sexual orientation identity; socio-political influences etc) that may dictate referral of clients to members of their own sociodemographic group or to different professionals.
- You are aware of your own racist, sexist, heterosexist and other detrimental attitudes, beliefs and feelings

Cultural Competence: Knowledge

- You are knowledgeable and informed on a number of culturally diverse groups, especially groups that you are likely to work with
- You are knowledgeable about the socio-political system and the treatment of marginalised groups in Australia
- You are knowledgeable about institutional barriers that prevent some diverse clients from using available services

Cultural Competence: Skills

- You are able to generate a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal helping responses
- You are able to communicate (send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages) accurately
- You are able to exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of your client where appropriate
- You are able to anticipate the impact of your interactions, and limitations you possess on culturally diverse clients
- You are able to play professional roles characterised by an active systemic focus, which leads to environmental interventions. You are not restricted by the conventional expert professional mode of operation

(adapted from Sue & Sue, 2008: 47)

Throughout the semester we encourage students to use the checklist to reflect on their own developing level of cultural competence. One of the most successful assignments we have used in the past five years has required students to keep a private weekly journal responding to that week's material and reflecting on what they have learned personally and professionally. At the end of semester they are then required to draw on that journal and, using the four headings that refer to each module (Understanding Culture; Developing Awareness; Gaining Knowledge; Practising Multiculturalism) to write a report on what they have learned in each module on their journey to developing cross-cultural competence. As part of the assignment they are invited to rank themselves on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of their awareness and abilities. Clearly, students are encouraged to view their work in this unit as the beginning of a professional and personal journey, not as an end in itself.

Importantly, the private weekly journal activities we have used are pitched at a very accessible level to enable all students to grapple with the processes of reflection and developing awareness of self and others, regardless of their level of conceptual sophistication. Hence, the journal activity for one iteration of this unit for week 4 asked the following:

> Think back to the film, *Looking for Alibrandi*, which you watched in class last week, and which you wrote about in your journal last week too. This week consider the following:
> This film is about Josie's search for identity. What are the major influences on her identity? Think in terms of family/school/peers/urban environment. Explore these influences with reference to specific scenes in the film.

> Where would you place Josie on a continuum of cross-cultural competencies? Does she become more cross-culturally competent during the film? Where does she sit on the continuum at the beginning of the film? At the end?
> If you were Josie, would you have handled things differently?
> Reflect: Where would you rate yourself right now on a continuum of cross-cultural competencies, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent? Is there room for improvement?

Students are free to discuss their journal entries online or in class; however, the entries are not assessed by the teacher but are used as a resource for the final assignment.

So, how have we shaped our unit?

The unit we teach runs simultaneously for on-campus and off-campus students. Usually it is taught in a 12-week semester, with on-campus students meeting for one three-hour class per week. And so the unit we have devised is shaped to follow Sue and Sue's formula for developing cross-cultural competence: we move from an initial focus on gaining self-awareness in the first two modules (two weeks each) to an understanding of how to gain knowledge about one's own culture and other cultures (in the broadest sense of the term culture) in Module 3 (five weeks), to a focus on respectful communication skills born of bringing awareness and knowledge together in Module 4 (three weeks).

Like all good teachers, in devising such a unit we begin with our students. We recognise that many of our students have been raised in contemporary Australia on a diet of conservative binary discourses (either you're with us or against us) and fear-inducing political slogans. Consequently, we recognise that we need to develop a classroom climate where students are able to trust, to relax their defenses, to look closely at their own suite of prejudices and fears. And so in Modules 1 and 2, the process of gaining self-awareness is couched in sociological terms, so students are introduced to sociological understandings of prejudice, racism, whiteness and othering, and to discursive constructions of power and privilege (Jureidini & Poole, 2003; Kimmel & Aronson, 2009; van Kreiken et al., 2010). Hence, in these two modules students begin to understand the broader social discourses or narratives that often shape our individual responses to difference, and are especially alerted to the danger of stereotyping via the single story (Adichie, 2009). Additionally, they begin to be able to identify a range of value positions (specifically, excluding, ignoring, fixing, valuing) underpinning contemporary Australian responses to marginalised groups. For example, discourses around asylum seekers in Australia can be seen to constitute exclusions. The Northern Territory Intervention can be seen to be underpinned by a paternalistic desire to 'fix' difference, and to accept only that which becomes the same as the dominant social mode. The silences around same-sex families within early childhood education and care pedagogies can be seen to be a form of ignoring difference, where sameness is privileged and difference tolerated only when it is not spoken. Finally, modes of education that are underpinned by a valuing of difference can be seen to be propelled by a curiosity, an interest, rather than by fear.

In Module 3, Gaining Knowledge, we look at the process of learning more deeply about those who are different from ourselves. We look not only at the knowledge about different groups itself, but also how we can go about finding knowledge. Students are encouraged to think about the validity of various knowledge sources, and how knowledge can be taken up. Here, the unit explores issues such as the positioning of transgender youth, the marginalisation of Indigenous people in Australian history, and of cultural diversity in Australia. Students research these topics, watch documentaries, engage with stories and read academic work.

Module 4 develops the skills to connect respectfully across difference through drawing on the awareness and knowledges gained in the earlier modules. In the final week of semester, students are re-presented with the checklist for cross-cultural competencies to gauge their own development along the continuum from incompetent to highly competent.

As we have stressed throughout, the process of connecting across differences is underpinned by the practice of respecting the self and respecting the other, which in turn is underpinned by what we see as an ethics of responsibility. That is, we argue to students that, as professional people working with someone who is culturally different, in the broadest possible interpretation of cultural difference, we have a responsibility to find ways to accord the deepest possible respect for the human dignity of the other when we interact, design programs, work with that other. In this respect, power relations at the level of communication have to be horizontal rather than vertical, even though of course the institutional and structural power held by the professional person will in most cases be greater than the power held by the client. Negotiating these complex relations of power is difficult, often confronting, and demands a level of awareness of the self and the power of its discursive shaping that can be difficult to grasp. As we have seen, according respect at this deepest level also often demands specific knowledge of particular cultures, or at least a willingness to learn this knowledge.

Smith (2004: 15) argues, as do Sue and Sue (2015) and other therapy scholars, that what they call cross-cultural competence and what we might call capacity to connect across difference is attentive to the implicit dynamics of power and culture, and makes these dynamics explicit. Counsellors and community workers and other professionals who communicate effectively cross-culturally are thus attuned to the privileges, inequities, needs and biases, enabling them to respond more effectively to the contexts in which they work. They value others, listen attentively, and work hard to minimise their own defensiveness, reactivity and prejudice. A conscious awareness of the double manoeuvre of bringing wonder and generosity to their encounters helps facilitate this. Cross-culturally competent professionals are aware of their own assumptions, knowledgeable about clients' contexts, and skilful in their efforts to promote positive change.

Clearly, what this kind of cross-cultural communication is designed to combat is the top-down, expert service delivery that is born of unthinking acceptance of privilege (we know best what's good for you), or of discursively constructed fear of difference born of cultural racism or prejudice, or of a lazy kind of ignoring of difference which culminates in assimilation and the erasure of cultural specificity.

Implications for teaching the unit

The implications for teaching towards cross-cultural competence in these ways are that if students have been raised surrounded by discourses of entitlement to be free to express whatever view they want, no matter how hurtful or ignorant, we need to be prepared to provide them with additional ways of seeing to enable them to learn how to interact responsibly, by respecting the self and respecting the other simultaneously. This can involve some undoing of the discursive construction of the free individual in Australia (an assumption that underpinned one of the earlier iterations of this unit and which we discarded) and replacement with a self-aware, ethically caring person who is linked into community. Crucially, we have found that introducing students to using the both-and thinking of poststructuralism rather than the either/or thinking of binary thought facilitates the shedding of a fear response to difference and allows students to bring generosity and wonder to the encounter with difference. Additionally, in order to teach the processes of working with respect and reciprocity. We have to alert students to forming an awareness of the self in relation to the culture surrounding them.

Underpinning the process of connecting with respect is the skill of active listening, evoking in turn the pedagogy of listening articulated by Rinaldi (2006) out of her lively and respectful engagement with very young children.

For most students, this kind of teaching and academic material demands a deeply thoughtful and embodied engagement to facilitate a re-thinking of existing values and aspirations. The implications for students undertaking this sort of education can be personally challenging and emotionally demanding. Smith (2004: 14) is adamant that there's no shortcut here: communicating cross-culturally must be practised in order to be understood. It is not enough to understand theoretically what to do: you have to internalise the values and the processes that allow you to work generously and openly and attentively with people. Where this process is embodied, the learning deepens.

Although Module 4 of our unit is devoted most specifically to the practicing of cross-cultural communication, the development of the skills necessary to do this effectively occurs throughout the unit. From the beginning we attempt to model respectful encounter by creating a classroom climate (both on-campus and online) infused with an ethics of respect for self and other. Because we teach on campus in one three-hour block of time, each week for 12 weeks, we have the flexibility to incorporate practical experiences throughout the semester. Learning can be playful, active, embodied. Sometimes students act out interpersonal interactions to demonstrate a range of responses to a particular situation for comment and discussion by the rest of the class; sometimes students reflect on the range of possible responses to a situation with a series of spatial representations through drawing or painting; sometimes they choreograph their response. When the academic classroom becomes a site of creativity, where imagination itself is welcomed rather than excluded from the academic endeavour, the possibilities for creative and embodied explorations to all kinds of cross-cultural encounters are multiple.

To facilitate the personal deepening often required to become competent, in this sphere, Parham (2001) cited in Smith (2004: 14) recommends that students have courage; become risk-takers; inform themselves through new relationships; rediscover their capacity to trust; and renew their faith.

Finally, Smith (2004: 14) warns, it will not be easy: students are advised to expect to encounter anger, frustration, surprise, humiliation, indignation and ambivalence in themselves—but to understand that experiencing and working with those emotions when they appear is part of the growing process. Real growth, they argue, comes in extending the trust and acceptance that can strengthen a relationship and in working to overcome intolerance—especially outside one's comfort zone.

In their feedback on the unit, students invariably recognise the challenges of this kind of work:

> The last module was a great lesson in understanding how to communicate across cultures and how to welcome difference and diversity (lecture notes).
> I really enjoyed the article by Smith and Draper (2004) where they discuss the importance of placing the awareness not on the individual but on the context that every human being brings to the encounter.

Another student writes of the "inspiration I have found [in the notion of] respecting the self and respecting the other; and also understanding that each person sits at the centre of her own story. As easy as it sounds in real life I find it quite challenging to practise day by day."

Some students clearly articulate a refining of their own awarenesses of socio-political location:

> I realised when reflecting on our week 11 class discussion of our own ethnic specificity that I am used to thinking about myself as an individual. I suppose this is a product of growing up in a westernised individualistic society. But as discussed by Smith and Draper (2004), we bring not only ourselves into the therapeutic setting but also the biases, stereotypes and prejudices that come from our cultural context. It is obvious to me that I am a product of my upbringing and I grew up in quite a racist environment. This is something I already understood and had tried to counter as I grew up by rejecting overt racism, but what I have learned while engaged in this unit of study is that racism, prejudice, biased thoughts and assumptions can go quite deeply and turn up where you least expect them. Understanding where these come from in my cultural context has helped me to see them as things I can now acknowledge, be aware of and work on changing.

Some students feel as if they are well on the way to becoming cross-culturally competent:

> What I have learned from this unit is that it is important not only to recognise differences and the potential biases that I may hold but, to actually embrace and celebrate differences as mutually enriching experiences. I have

discovered that I unconsciously held onto biases before studying this unit, however I have become much more culturally aware and this helps me to accept differences. I believe I have also developed sensitivity to my own negative attitudes and beliefs which will assist in my role as a practitioner. I have gained invaluable knowledge on the issues surrounding cultural diversity and I have learnt especially to take into consideration the importance of the client's cultural context. In regards to skills and implementing them I have developed both verbal and non-verbal skills so that I can communicate accurately to people from cultures other than my own. I am aware that if my own interpersonal skills are not in tune with the client's specific cultural needs this could actually hinder my professional work.

Importantly for us as teachers, we have found that students at all levels of ability have been able to internalise some of the values (respect for the self and for the other; bringing wonder and curiosity to the encounter with difference) and to develop skills that they can use personally and professionally:

In conclusion, this unit has been truly an amazing lesson for me and a very inspiring journey. I have learnt so much and encountered a lot. I believe all of these made me realise so much about my own self, my culture and my identity. I am sure all the knowledge I have acquired will help me to become a more competent person and also professional across the cross-cultural arena.

Finally, some students clearly articulate their understandings of the processes of change their engagement with the unit has begun in them:

I have tried to examine my assumptions and prejudices in a critical way in an attempt to learn from them. I certainly feel that a number of issues and concepts that may have previously been on the periphery of my mind and understanding have now come into focus and under scrutiny. As several of us acknowledged in class, it has not been so much the information in this unit of study that has been so much of value, although it has, but the processes it has begun. I feel this is certainly true for me.

Our reimagined Australia

The Australia that we have reimagined is one where everyone can thrive: where diversity and difference are celebrated rather than being feared, where communities are socially and culturally enriched by living with a generosity of spirit and a deeply held respect for the self and the other, and where university educated professionals of all flavours understand their ethical responsibility for initiating such respectful relations. The unit we have designed draws on the work of a series of fine scholars and on the practices of creative educators to help work towards that goal.

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