Transforming counselor education pedagogy through attention to relational practices:

Applying research about white counselor awareness of their discursive positioning in cross-cultural conversations.

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Outcomes from my doctoral research project were exciting. Senior practitioners experienced significant developments in their practice. Could I introduce these ideas into my teaching?

Why I engaged in this research project
- Locating my teaching practice in the socio-cultural-political context of Aotearoa New Zealand
- Seeking to resource teaching and practice

What I learned from the research
- Potential social constructionist contributions to relational practice

What I am learning as I seek to apply understandings from the research in my teaching practice
Why I engaged in this research project

- Locating my teaching practice in the socio-cultural-political context of Aotearoa New Zealand
  - Treaty of Waitangi as the metaphor for postcolonial practice
    - Partnership, Protection, Participation
    - Pākehā (white) the dominant grouping
    - Māori are tangata whenua, people of the land
  - Seeking to resource teaching and practice
    - Significant shifts for all students asked for
    - Available teaching resources have not always supported desired teaching outcomes
Locating in the context of Aotearoa N Z

- Treaty of Waitangi as the metaphor for postcolonial practice
  - Signed 1840, legitimizing government, settlement and protecting Māori rights to *tino rangatiratanga* – self determination
  - 1850s to 1970s Treaty repudiated. Most Māori land alienated. Māori population decimated by disease
  - 1970s Treaty returns to Pākehā consciousness
    - Māori political action (Marches, land occupations)
    - Treaty grievances able to be settled
    - Pākehā more open to Māori views and values
My teaching practice in the context of Aotearoa N Z

- Seeking to resource teaching and practice
  - Significant shifts in student outlook are desired
    - Dominant cultural views are dominant, how to challenge
  - Mismatch between macro-structuralist views of culture and micro-practice
    - We are not all either Māori or Pākehā
    - Not all Pākehā are in the colonising moment
  - Many accounts are problem-focused, hard to access examples of Pākehā practice which are Treaty honouring
    - Could we learn from experienced Pākehā practitioners?
What I learned from the research: Theoretical frame

- Pākehā counsellors explore their positioning: towards postcolonial praxis
  - Postcolonial: Orientalism, Imperialism (Said) & the Treaty of Waitangi history
  - Poststructuralist
    - Social constructionist/Narrative Therapy
      - Discourse, Care of the Self
        - Foucault (1987, 1988a, 1988b)
      - Positioning theory
    - Landscape of Action & Landscape of identity
      - White (1990, 2007)
    - Three moments of Pākehā identity
      - Developed from Frankenberg’s (1993) three moments of white identity
    - Intersectionality
      - Crenshaw (2001)
  - Cultural Safety
    - Ramsden (2003)
Three cultural moments for Aotearoa

Three moments of whiteness

1. Essentialist racism
   - Race difference understood in terms of hierarchial, biological inequality

2. Color & power evasiveness
   - ‘we are all the same under the skin’

3. Race cognizance
   - Recognition of difference in terms set by people of color
     (Frankenberg, 1993)

Three moments of Pākehā identity

1. Colonisation

2. Assimilation and indifference

3. The post colonial moment of Treaty honouring
   - Incorporating cultural safety
What I learned from the research: Designing methodology

- Desire to treat participants respectfully, not imposing my interpretations on them (Lather, 2007, Smith, 1999)
- Public Conversations as method

How could I get beyond conversation to discursive context

- Multi stage process
  1. PCP meeting #1
     - Identity stories. Hopes & fears about practice as Pākehā
  2. Online reflection #1
     - Opportunity to begin to reflect on discursive context of research conversations & practice
  3. PCP meeting #2
     - Exploring the discursive context of practice. Stories of difference emerging
  4. Online reflection #2
     - Accounts of practice & shifts in practice consolidated
What I learned from the research: findings

- A respectful research process
- Intersectionality as critique of identity politics and Treaty of Waitangi discourse
- Position calls for counsellors, accessing agency
- Structure and Discourse
- Taking up a Pākehā identity is an ethical stance
- Cultural Safety –illustrating the postcolonial moment
- Critical discursive praxis
- Critical Pākehā praxis
Position calls for counsellors, accessing agency

- Position calls are constant and reciprocal

- Research: the Counselors could identify problematic position calls
  - Descriptions of how difficult position calls declined and agentic positions taken up
  - Once counsellor in agentic position client also offered agency
  - Position calls can be external to conversations
    - ‘Māori males are best suited to work with Māori males.’ (Ann)
  - Deconstruction of discourses can lead to new possibilities
    - ‘Māori and Pākehā, men & women might work with Māori males’
    - ‘While it might be appropriate for Pākehā to be silent in some cultural contexts, there are contexts where I can speak’ (Marie)
  - Both Ann & Marie reported significant shifts in practice through attention to discursive context of practice
Hegemonic or powerful discourse has the ability to construct the counselor and client as discursive object as well as subject

Janet as domestic violence programme facilitator has court mandated responsibilities

Janet must both submit to this hegemonic discourse and master its requirements if she is to be able to take up her preferred subjectivity as counselor.

Maraea as mandated referral is also objectified by the court’s edict.

Once Janet has located agency within hegemonic discourse and counselling discourse Maraea is called into an agentic position
Taking up a Pākehā identity is an ethical stance

- Identity projects are long lasting: 20-30+ years for these participants

- Taking up a Pākehā identity is a commitment to act in Treaty honouring and postcolonial ways
  - Janet, about the need to locate cultural supervision (consultation)
    An overwhelming task for a Pākehā organization to do it in a way that is respectful, not colonizing again and not using up resources of local Māori who are busy trying to set up their own organisations.

- Rarity of conversations about Pākehā responsibility (Janet)
  - Does responsibility to provide cultural supervision/consultation need to rest only with Maori?
  - How can Pākehā take up responsibility?
Cultural Safety – illustrating the postcolonial moment

- Nursing concept, radical alternative to cultural competence.
  - Cultural safety defined in the terms of the patient/client

- Emerged when Marie described being silent in some situations so as not to risk being labeled culturally unsafe

- A counsellor acting with the client’s cultural safety to the fore is acting in the postcolonial moment

- There are situations where it is also culturally unsafe for a Pākehā to speak.
Critical discursive praxis

- Postcolonial identity
- Openness to the discursive context of practice
- Close attention to positioning; what calls are made?
- Reflexive deconstruction
  - Addressing the binary positions thrown up in some discursive contexts
- Becoming open to previously unrecognized possibilities for practice
Critical Pākehā praxis

- Pākehā identity
- Eschewing essentialised thinking
- Seeking to meet client in their intersectionality
  - Marie: ‘a tentative approach to working with Māori combined with a strong intersectional analysis enabled her to work successfully…’
- Openness and responsiveness to difference
  - Some level of cultural knowledge & skill
- High levels of practice skill
  - Discursive empathy (Sinclair & Monk, 2005)
  - Declining non-agentic positions
Seeking to apply research understandings in my teaching

- The Wintec programmes
- Their theoretical framework
- What I teach
- Can I apply research understandings in my teaching?
The Wintec programmes

- Parallel social work and counseling programs
- Undergraduate degrees
  - Lead to professional membership
    - Counselling
    - Social work
  - Lead to registration
    - Social work since 2004
    - Counselling pending
- Content is beginning to be shaped by registration bodies
Common theoretical framework

- Year one;
  - Treaty of Waitangi & practice 1
  - Psychology
  - Sociology
  - Human Development
  - Working with Difference

- Year two;
  - Treaty of Waitangi & practice 2
  - Social Science Research
  - Social Policy

- Year three
  - Transforming Treaty based practice
What I teach

- Year three
  - Transforming Treaty based practice
  - Development of counselling practice
    - What happens to me when I practice?

- Year One
  - Working with Difference
  - Introduction to Group work
My experience so far: Year three

- Transfoming Treaty based practice
  - My colleague and I attempted to teach students basic social constructionist ideas, extremely challenging for most students who are used to see the world in received romantic/structuralist terms
  - My publication (Crocket, 2008) included in year three readings but not directly addressed

- Development of counselling practice
  - ‘Positioning’ offered as an alternative to language of transference
    - Crocket (2008) introduced along with Winslade (2005), Sinclair & Monk (2005)
  - Some students who had been seeking to adopt narrative approaches worked to take up these ideas
    - Some struggled to accept the externalisation of discourse, positioning
My experience so far: Year one

- Introduction to Group work
  - Short 30 hour course 50% theory, 50% group experience, based on Corey & Corey’s (2004, 2006) work
  - Introduce narrative therapy & social constructionist ideas where possible

- Working with Difference
  - One of five, year one theory papers taught to Social Work & Counselling students
Working with difference: module intentions

- Theory paper with a strong personal/professional development focus

- Key theoretical tools
  - Social constructionism
  - Identity Politics
  - Intersectionality
  - Positioning theory

- Pedagogy designed for individual challenge within large group context
  - Use of online reflective journals 1st five weeks of module, responded to by following week
  - Public conversations
Considering the *traditions of thought* in this degree

- Sociology
- Working with Difference
- Te Pu
- Psychology
- Human Development
Working with difference: initial impressions

- Some students could immediately respond to social constructionist tenets
  - eg. cultural and historical relativity of knowledge

- Intersectionality: reading ‘Fly away home’ (Latham-Coates, 2007) spoke to students especially those with Māori & Pākehā heritages (often marginalised by Māori-Pākehā binary)

- Reference to ‘children overboard’ incident a powerful demonstration of identity being shaped externally
  - Supported by social constructionist reading (Davies, 2003)

- Public conversations process demonstrated that structuring conversations in particular ways produce effects.
Challenges & possibilities at program level

- Will the foothold for social constructionist ideas established in *Working with difference* remain a resource for students?
- Will 3rd year teaching of social constructionist ideas be able to sit on a sustained foundation?
- Will the shifts in understanding their own identity reported in journals be storied into students’ personal & professional identities?
- Recent shifts in staffing of counselling stream have opened possibility to give social constructionist theory and practice more prominence there
- Will the teaching in the social work stream support/build on social constructionist thought?
Bibliography


Davies, B. (2003). Positioning the subject in body/landscape relations In R. Harre & F. Moghaddam (Eds.), The self and others: Positioning individuals and groups in personal, political and cultural contexts (pp. 279-286). Westport, Conn.: Praeger.


