Lets talk about Cultural Safety

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Resource *or* challenge?

⊕ "…a fear for me of getting that label of being culturally unsafe keeps me from ever speaking up unless I know who I am speaking with and [am] comfortable with the people."

(Marie research participant)

My research

- I hoped to draw on knowledge of experienced practitioners to inform practice education
  - Participants: Five experienced counsellors who claim a Pākehā identity
  - Explorations of helpful and unhelpful influences on their practice with Māori and other non-Pākehā clients

Drawing on

- Ideas about
  - Discourse
  - Agency
  - Positioning

- Examples of culturally relevant discourses
  - Colonization, assimilation and postcolonial discourse

Discourse

- Discourse… constructs the topic.
  - It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge.
  - It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about.
  - It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others.
    - (after Hall, 2001, cited in Burr, 2003, P.67)
  - *Cultural safety is a discourse*

Agency

- In a moment where a counsellor is able to act in a desired way she can be said to have agency.
- Restraint implies that in that moment, or on the current terms, a discourse denies the counsellor an agentic position.
- Access to agency enables a counsellor to choose between the positions offered by different discourses;
  - they may be able to decline non-agentic positions and take up agentic positions.
    - (Davies, 1991)

Positioning theory

- Positioning theory offers a way to understand the interface between discourse and person in the moment-by-moment performance of their subjectivity.
  - In each moment we receive a myriad of position calls often from conflicting discourses.
  - When one participant in a conversation takes up a position in discourse others in that conversation also receive a consequent call into a discursive position (Van Langenhoven & Harré, 1999), quite possibly from a different discourse.

Cultural Safety

* In Nursing it draws on the work of Irihapiti Ramsden:
  * "Cultural Safety began with the Māori response to difficulties experienced in interaction with the western based nursing service. ... [It] gives the power to the patient or families to define the quality of service on subjective as well as clinical levels."
    * (Ramsden 2003, p. 110)

Cultural safety in social practice

- Has implications for our work with our clients
  - Are we offering clients what they need to experience cultural safety?

- Also has implications for our practice identity.
  - Might we be considered culturally *un*safe?

Cultural Safety for our clients

⚙ "For myself as a counsellor the hardest [thing] has been to reconcile the ideas about Māori working with Māori – what right do I have to work with Māori? That leads me to a very tentative way of working with Māori, which I think can be agentic for client and counsellor."

⚙ (Marie, research participant)

Cultural Safety for our clients

Working in clients' homes

🎞 "I start off obviously tentatively, I'm obviously on someone else's turf. I'm not the Pākehā expert. … Expertness is not so evident [when you take] your shoes off at the door, [check] out … what is appropriate and what's not appropriate. I'm there as their guest and I feel I start off so differently and I'm not saying I'm more respectful but it feels I have a lot less to sort of cut through in terms of negotiating who we are and how we are, than I do when I'm sitting in the office with somebody who's basically been sent along to see me because this is going to be helpful to them."

🎞 (Lesley, research participant)

Cultural safety for clients

- Clients may be supported to feel culturally safe
  - How are they positioned?
  - Do they experience agency?

Cultural safety for us as practitioners

- Practitioners may be judged to be safe or *un*safe
  - What is the context?
    - What discourses produce this context?
  - How is the practitioner positioned?
    - In which discourses?
  - What position calls might others experience?

Labeled as *un*safe?

- "…a fear for me of getting that label of being culturally unsafe keeps me from ever speaking up unless I know who I am speaking with and [am] comfortable with the people."

- Context: doesn't know everyone

- Positioned: outside of trusting relationships

- Agency? But in which discourses?
  - Without agency in cultural safety discourse
  - May have agency in assimilation discourse

Colonizing, assimilation and postcolonial discourses

- Three powerful discourses

- Each has different effects

- There is an historical progression through these three

Cultural Safety: Resource or Restraint?

- Can be both resource and restraint
  - We can view each possibility positively

- Marie recognized the restraints on her practice
  - Silencing

- Discovered exceptions to silencing
  - Times where dialogue possible

- Found a way to increase dialogue in her workplace around difficult cultural issues

- We can seek to practice in awareness of the effects of discourse and work with the possibilities and restraints of cultural safety discourse

Lets talk

- A conversation about the effects of cultural safety
  - Public conversation format
    - Three rounds of conversation
      - Two rounds to respond to a question
        - 3 minutes to respond to each
      - Third round to connect the conversation

Lets talk

- Question one
  - Please talk about a time when you have been unhelpfully positioned by cultural safety or another postcolonial discourse: How did this feel? What did you think about this?
  - Please talk about a time when you were helpfully positioned by cultural safety or another postcolonial discourse: What effects did this have for you? What effects did this have for the others who may have been involved?

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