

Creating Cultural Competency: Integrating Person -Centered Expressive Arts into Multicultural Pedagogy

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A human being is part of a whole, called by us 'universal,' a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest . . . a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons near to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.

Albert Einstein

Many educational venues are working to implement diversity and multicultural studies. Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, author of "Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria" has stated that we need a language to integrate studies of race into academic pedagogy. (B. D. Tatum, personal communication, August 10, 1995). Recent research on ethnoviolence suggests one out of every four or five adult Americans are being harassed, intimidated, or assaulted for reasons of group affiliation. (The Prejudice Institute cited in Ponterotte, Utsey and Pedersen, 2006, pg. 4). Moreover, much of this harassment occurs in the form of structural violence that results in chronic, continuing and unrelenting assaults on one's wellbeing, both intentionally and unintentionally. Summarizing the results of a 16 -year study on racism, D'Andrea and Daniels (2001) state:

It is very important to understand that much of the racism that exists in the United States is perpetuated by millions of well-meaning, liberal-thinking White persons who react with passive acceptance and apathy to the pervasive ways in which this problem continues to be embedded in our institutional structures. From the results of our extensive research in this area, we have concluded that most of the racism that continues to be perpetuated in the United States is, in fact, fueled by broad-based passive acceptance among the majority of White persons who unintentionally allow this social pathology to persist by their silent and complicit acceptance of various forms of ongoing institutional oppression and racism (p. 294 cited in Ponterotto, Utley and Pedersen, 2006, pg. 24- 25)

Teaching to Transform

Faculty are often faced by the challenge of teaching issues of race and multicultural identity to predominately white students or in mixed race learning environments. The prevalence of ethnoviolence suggests some students in a class will have experienced harassment while other students may have no concept of systemic and institutional oppression when coming from different cycles of socialization into a liberal arts educational environment. This dynamic can become more complex when a faculty of color is working with these issues with a predominately white student body. Bringing diversity issues into educational dialogues can commonly evoke race – related defense mechanisms including color blindness, color consciousness, cultural transference, cultural countertransference, cultural ambivalence, avoidance of race, overidentification and identification with the oppressor. Defense mechanisms are often activated automatically and unconsciously to reduce emotional pain, resulting in a distortion or denial of reality. Many images of prejudice are stored through imagery in the visual cortex of the brain and can be activated habitually and automatically when stressed. (Ridley,2005). Cultural identity development research suggests there are different stages of identity development for majority and minority culture students and that students can be at various stages of these developmental levels during an academic program (Ponterotto, et al, 2006). Faculty are challenged to find ways to skillfully facilitate diversity dialogues.

Counseling students are now required to continually develop culturally competency to be able to be effective health care providers with an increasingly diverse population. Counseling students need to also develop awareness about how potential clients may perceive them in terms of different dimensions of identity. Students need to enlarge their own understanding of identity as being individually based to seeing the historical, cultural and colonial contexts that have contributed to the soulwound, intergenerational post – traumatic stress disorder for indigeneous populations that may present as high rates of suicide, alcoholism and depression. (Duran and Duran, 1995).

Expressive arts languages provide an integrated way of working with cognitive, emotional and intuitive intelligences. Integrating expressive arts languages into the teaching of diversity issues can be one way of making invisible dimensions of power, privilege and difference more visible. Person-centered expressive arts is an integrative process that can skillfully integrate multimodal nonverbal languages with person-centered psychology. Person-centered expressive arts Creative Connection processes are an integral part of the pedagogy of the Multicultural Counseling Program. This work integrates multi-modal expressive arts languages, movement, art, writing, drama and other modalities with person-centered psychology. Dr. Natalie Rogers (1993) has developed the Creative Connection process: the enhancing interplay among movement, art, writing and sound integrating with the humanistic principles of empathy, congruence and positive regard developed by her father, Dr. Carl Rogers. During the Creative Connection process, moving from art form to art form releases layers of inhibition, bringing one to center in connection with the individual creative force. This center opens one to the universal energy source, bringing vitality and a sense of oneness. ((Rogers, 1993, pg 44-45).

Bringing diversity issues into pedagogy can evoke responses intellectually, emotionally and culturally. Many students have experienced trauma from structural and institutional forms of oppression, in addition to interpersonal violence. Emerging understanding of the neurobiology of emotions suggests that nonverbal languages are essential to work skillfully with emotionally charged and potentially traumatic material. A paradigm shift in trauma treatment is revealing how imagery based work has been effective in transforming the neurological feedback loop between parasympathetic and sympathetic activation (Naparstak, 2004). Talking about traumatic situations, even when well intentioned, can unintentionally have a retraumatizing effect. Many students of color have stated that their needs for understanding, safety, respect and communication have not been met in many Evergreen seminars that verbally discussed issues of race and diversity. Recent research from Yale University School of Medicine indicates how the neuroscience of imagery and brain processing of nonverbal information holds much promise to inform clinical and educational practice in myriad ways that are consistent with the principles of brain functioning (Cappas et al, 2005). The skillful integration of expressive arts languages into pedagogy on issues of diversity is one way of co-creating interdisciplinary laboratories when learning across significant differences that incorporates nonverbal languages.

Through the Creative Connection process, students are able to see that they have agency in the ability to create transformation in the areas where they have privilege. Agency allows students to see where they have the ability to make positive changes in society where inequalities exist. For example, heterosexual students have agency to work towards equality on gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered issues. Similarly, students with white privilege have the ability to work towards transforming racism. Shifting student focus about areas where they have privilege from denial and guilt to agency can facilitate a sense of empowerment and being able to contribute to social justice.

Multicultural Counseling Program

Multicultural Counseling is a year long upper division academic program that explores ways psychology can be of service in an increasingly diverse society by addressing the concepts of mental health, the mental health system and psychological counseling that are critical to the creation and maintenance of healthy communities. Theoretical and experiential aspects of multicultural and transpersonal psychology are explored in a community context, as well as ways psychology can contribute to the current United Nations Decade of Nonviolence.

Students in the program study personality theory, abnormal psychology, ethics, research methods, multicultural psychology and counseling skills, Fieldwork includes a 15 hour a week mental health internship during the winter and spring quarter. Additionally, multimodal expressive arts laboratories based on person –centered psychology are implemented throughout the program. As described by Natalie Rogers, an international leader in expressive arts therapy and daughter of pioneering psychologist Carl Rogers, “ The combination of expressive arts – the integrated process of using movement, visual art, music, journal writing and drama – and person – centered listening are powerful, creative ways to become aware of our feelings about world events and to transform these feelings into self – responsible action. The expressive arts bring us into balance by engaging our imagination, intuition and spiritual capacities. (Rogers, 1994.)”

The curriculum of Multicultural Counseling incorporates many different learning modalities including readings and seminar in Multicultural Counseling. Students create weekly mindmaps to prepare to discuss multicultural seminar readings. A Mindmap is a graphic technique that help to unlock the potential of the brain through the uses of images to crystallize a core concept and having themes radiate from the central image as branches with word and image (Buzan, 1993). Students cofacilitate seminar and have incorporated ritual, art, movement, and music into seminar discussions to complement verbal inquiry. A weekly expressive arts laboratory is held to integrate theory with practice. A weekly talking circle allows students to speak authentically about what is working and not working for them in the program. Creating a regular space for student voice and experiences greatly facilitates the cohesiveness of the learning community. Creating a container of trust and interpersonal relatedness is essential when working with highly charged pedagogical material.

A Creative Connection process on diversity may involve embodying perceptions and reactions to Self and Other through image theatre can deepen understanding of intrapsychic and cross –cultural perspectives. This awareness can be deepened through Touch Drawing, a simple yet profound process that allows many images to be drawn through the touch of fingertips on paper (www.touchdrawing.com). The drawing of multiple images and reflective sharing can open creative energy, transformation and insight. Processing experiences of diversity through person –centered expressive arts processes weekly expands student’s capacity for respectful and empathic witnessing of life experiences that may be very different from one’s own. Witnessing inner images created from person centered expressive arts allows students to experience each other at a transpersonal level, catalyzing profound growth, insight and transformation. Importantly, imagery based work on diversity issues works in the visual language that encodes many images of discrimination in the visual cortex.

Participating in the expressive arts laboratory has provided a place for deepening and integrating student learning about anti-oppression issues in developing cultural competence to work in the counseling profession. When engaged in movement, touch drawing visual art, and interactive theatre, students at many different developmental levels of cultural identity development are able to simultaneously process and deepen their understanding of multicultural perspectives that is not possible in a verbal

dialogue where only one speaker is talking at a time. Expressive arts laboratories are complementary to counseling skill laboratories in facilitating the development of emotional literacy through developing the conscious awareness of emotional states and developing greater empathy and compassion for others. The weekly practice of expressive arts dialogues has been instrumental in deepening a sense of responsibility, agency and commitment.

Multicultural Counseling students designed a campus wide diversity dialogue on “ Making the Invisible Visible” as a way of applying theory to practice for the campus wide Day of Presence in the Winter Quarter. Students worked to design an expressive arts dialogue that integrated forum theatre from Theatre of the Oppressed, education in psychological concepts involved in racism and world café dialogues. Students worked to create an event that would incorporate ritual and ceremony based on studies of “Integrating Traditional Healing Practices into Counseling and Psychotherapy” (Moodley and West, 2005). One team of students worked to create theatre vignettes that showed how unconscious defense mechanisms and cognitive distortions occur during interracial interpersonal situations in the campus community. A team of students worked to create a forum theater piece that reflected the cumulative and dehumanizing impact of unintentional racism on the lives of students at Evergreen. The audience is challenged to take the place of someone who is being oppressed in the play and how what can be done differently to break the cycle of oppression (Boal, 1995). All students were able to help in cofacilitating World Café Dialogues (www.theworldcafe.com) with the campus community to explore how to transform cycles of oppression and create more life-serving ways of interacting across difference in the campus community.

Working on this campus dialogue project allowed students to apply theory to practice and experience catharsis for much of their own accumulated frustration over incidents of oppression that they had experienced and witnessed in the Evergreen community. Being able to have one’s experience witnessed has helped provide a place for validation of both micro and macro aggressions related to racism that occur in the campus community, as participation in the college’s Social Contract is voluntary. Academic advising staff have described students feeling extremely frustrated over perceptions of racism in interactions with some faculty and there is currently no requirement for either party to engage in mediation (Academic Advising staff, personal communication, August, 2006). The public

witnessing and acknowledgement of oppression is instrumental in transforming intergenerational cycles of violence. (Tutu, 1999). This campus wide service project and ongoing expressive arts dialogues have seeded an embodied sense of cultural literacy in students that has deepened into a life long commitment to developing cultural competency.

Developmental Journeys

Working to increase cultural competency can be a developmental journey with students at many different stages of identity development. Working through identity development on issues of diversity requires developing the capacity to see both overt aggression/bullying as well as covert aggression/bullying, which includes backstabbing and other exclusionary behaviors. (Gordon,2006 pg. 18). While there are many scales of identity development for both majority and minority groups, Butigan's synthesis and expansion of Dr. Leticio Nieto's work on anti-oppression illuminates the transpersonal level of identification that can deeply ground a lifetime commitment to cultural competency. This transpersonal dimension often emerges in person- centered arts processes and has been described as Universality: a particular experience of feeling creative in which people also had a sense of the numinous, of unity and of connectedness with all life forms. (Khanna,1989).

Ken Butigan with Pace E Bene Nonviolence Services has expanded Dr, Leticio Nieto's five stages of anti-oppression work towards authentic relationship and connection to include Gandhi's notion of heart – unity (Butigan, 2005). Butigan summarizes the six phases of this journey to transformation as

1. *Indifference* – Indifference to structural violence is often rooted in unfamiliarity, isolation, or intentional separation from those who are systematically violated. Often a specific social or personal 'script' in which we attribute some deficiency in intelligence, morality or personality to the oppressed reinforces this. There is a tendency to dehumanize them and a a conscious or unconscious attitude of superiority and supremacy.
2. *Distance* - As awareness of oppression grows, there is a basic recognition of difference, but coupled with a negative evaluation of the oppressed... Overt appreciation for the oppressed is expressed while at the same time

mainstream supremacy is communicated through covert attitudes/ gestures/ thinking patterns.

3. *Inclusion* – This often includes an attitude of universalism (“we are all sisters and brothers” without recognizing the specific structural arrangement by which oppression benefits the mainstream while oppressing those at the margins
4. *Awareness* – As Nieto writes, “ At this step one recognizes and appreciates differences and accepts that oppression operates in systemic, pervasive, restricting, hierarchical, complex and internalized ways. One works from a place of curiosity and inquiry with a willingness to believe the oppressed as experts on their own oppression, and understands the most anti-oppressive action they can take is to maintain awareness of oppression. There is a tendency towards a relative and open stance regarding values and behavioral differences and a person can begin to acknowledge the implications of privilege and benefit.
5. *Allyship* – One develops communication and ally skills with the goal of social change. According to Nieto, “ One maintains sensitivity for experiences of the oppressed, acknowledges internalized dominance and mainstream supremacy, acknowledges privilege and entitlement, and uses them for social change . . . She or he challenges oppressors, oppressive institutions, and norms and consistently speaks to the underlying inherent inequality of the oppressor/oppressed system. There is a tendency towards allyship, advocacy and action.
6. *Heart – Unity* As stated by Butigan, “ All life is one. Yet this oneness is dramatically distorted by systems of structural violence based on physical, political, economic, cultural and psychological threat, fear and separation. Heart – unity is a process that 1) affirms the radical interconnectedness of all life and 2) embodies this by relentlessly challenging, resisting and dismantling any form of structural violence and oppression that distorts or undermines this oneness. Heart – unity goes beyond being an ally, which often can be reduced to a form of “helping” and privilege. It is a profound awareness of *difference*, but also *difference without division* that can transform one’s own self – understanding, assumptions and choices. Heart – unity is a fundamental orientation that can alter one’s relationship to both oppressors and the

oppressed; opening us to the humanity of all while *sharpening* (not diminishing) our will to take steps to challenge and transform structural violence that distorts and destroys the humanness of both oppressor and oppressed.

(Butigan cited in Slattery, Butigan, Pelicaric and Preston – Pile, 2005 pg. 122- 124).

Interdisciplinary pedagogy requires students to make connections and create new neural networks. Working with diversity issues challenges students to make invisible dimensions of identity visible and be conscious of how these systemic oppressions are impacting their lives and the well – being of potential clients. Weekly expressive arts laboratories are one way of leveraging integration in creating cultural competency in ways that would not have been possible with only verbal dialogue.

Student Voices

The five foci of teaching and learning at Evergreen include interdisciplinary learning, learning across significant differences, personal engagement with learning, linking theory with practice and collaborative learning. Additionally, Evergreen graduates are expected to be able to participate collaboratively and responsibly in our diverse society. Working with issues of power, privilege and difference through expressive arts dialogues within the context of an intermodal learning community has allowed many students to deepen in their own cultural identity development, expand cultural competence and ground in heart –unity. Expressive arts laboratories can complement traditional reading, writing and discussion to midwife a consciousness of heart- unity through Universality. Excerpts from student evaluations at the end of the nine- month program, thematized by aspects of the five foci of Evergreen learning are below:

Learning Across Significant Differences

I deepened my self- awareness and conscious interactions with others by peering in to a kaleidoscopic lens of multicultural-based psychology perspectives. ... This took place by engaging in contemplative practices and relaxation techniques, modalities of movement, film studies such as “The Color of Fear”, workshops in Theatre of the Oppressed, seminar groups and lectures, and off-campus study sessions. By honing empathic evocative empathy counseling skills, integrating personality theory, and reading psychology texts that speak to multicultural issues and wrestling with the soulwound (intergenerational PTSD resulting from colonization and genocide), I am more keenly

aware of my language, thoughts and actions; I am more sensitive to diverse cultures and significant differences

This year in the Multicultural Counseling program, I acquired new information and built upon my existing knowledge through a variety of interdisciplinary, hands-on learning experiences. . . . By facilitating and participating in Forum Theatre for the Day of Presence, I was able to create a way for students and faculty at Evergreen to become more aware and unsettled about issues of privilege, oppression and social inequality. I created a climate that was comfortable and safe for all participants to explore their feelings and thoughts. Ultimately, I facilitated a dialogue that was effective with helping participants understand that self – examination is a starting place for transformation of society. . . I collaborated with 2 other students in developing and presenting an expressive arts workshop on emotions. I was responsible for coaching and facilitating a drama exercise, which explored four emotional states, allowing students to investigate the relationship between their bodies and their emotions in a safe space . . . While gaining a well-rounded education, I have become a counselor who is prepared to serve a diverse client population. I am excited for future opportunities to serve and make a contribution to my community.

From the beginning of the year, I was in a class where there were many differences between my classmates and myself. My religion, race, ethnicity, values and beliefs were challenged and because of these challenges I grew stronger in my convictions yet more understanding of others. I felt it was an evolution and learning process that was both freeing and strengthening. This could not have been done without the collaborative, interdisciplinary study and learning which occurred in our class in our yearlong study and ended with my life being changed and my looking forward to helping more in the global community by linking theory with practical applications.

My deep connection with the whole spring quarter class reflects my ability to learn across significant differences in belief and worldview, as well as learning skills critical to my intended profession (counseling) in a collaborative setting. The apparent theme for spring (outside of ethics) was clearly to sit within the fire of my own personal biases and learned isms. By showing an ability to evaluate my personal beliefs and communicate beyond whatever biases I personally held shows a strong ability to personally engage in my work, while at the same time being able to respect the need for others to do the same through their own beliefs and biases. . . Through my work with Bread and Roses, I was able to further increase my ability to work across significant differences, apply theory to practice (I had several occasions where I had to mediate between two conflicting viewpoints), and learn in a collaboratively based system.

Overall I have grown from the person I was in the beginning of the program. Coming into this program, I was still naïve about different cultural aspects and unaware of my own biases. Because of this program, I have become more culturally competent and aware. This includes learning more about white privilege, other privileges, unintentional racism and traditional or cultural healing methods that differ from western medicine. I now have the base that is needed for me to grow in cultural competence. I have become

aware of how my own biases stop me from growing and learning from other people. I now have the ability to question what is “right”, to not my biases override someone’s belief, and to be more aware when working with people who differ from me. I hope to take the experiences and knowledge that I have obtained over the past year and share it with others through the work I do and in my personal life. I believe there is still a lot to learn but I am confident that I have a good start to making positive change in the world.

Collaborative Learning and Personal Engagement

These foci were demonstrated through my cocreation and cofacilitation of sacred ritual, guided imagery journeys, expressive arts labs including global soul collages and mask – making. Through interactions with peers and during my internship, my worldview has become even more enriched – to the beauty of diversity in beliefs, in cultures, and to a greater extent, our world while all the while noticing the intricate pattern of connection amongst our human race.

This program has been intense: emotionally, spiritually, culturally and academically. I am deeply humbled, in awe of, and am honored to have engaged with such a rich diverse group of people. Looking back over the past several months, I clearly see I have great passion for humanity especially where human rights and multicultural counseling are concerned. Multicultural counseling affects every aspect of psychology.

I have discovered that shared learning can be the single most valuable aspect of a diverse learning community. Many minds can produce an outcome greater than the sum of their parts. One aspect of learning that affected me profoundly was my ability to make a stand for my beliefs and have the courage to remain unshaken. The use of expressive arts to explore inner feelings and emotions has become new in my repertoire. Dominant and non-dominant handwork showed a lot of contrast, more than I expected. My true feelings became apparent after the artworks were completed even though I could not articulate them before they were created. Working multi-modally in touch drawing, drawing, clay, movement, and body sculpting deepened my learning. I have gained enduring friendships as well as the energy, desire and tools to make a positive difference in the world and in the lives of those who have been oppressed and marginalized through overt, covert and unintentional isms like: racism, ableism, ageism and sexual orientation. The future looks bright. I hope to fulfill the potential this learning community has afforded me.

Linking Theory with Practical Applications

I was involved with the class production of “Making the Invisible Visible” which depicted covert and overt acts oppression and racism, which was immediately followed by round robin, café style discussions on how to distinguish, resolve and institute conscious changes in myself and others.

I entered the program Multicultural Counseling, which has prepared me to continue my academic career after I leave Evergreen. I believe this course has encouraged every entity of my being to becoming a contribution for society and working to advocate against the oppressions that continue to strain the growth of human stability.

During the year I worked with groups to try to change policies on race and disability issues. A group of us met with the Disappearing Task Force to express our concerns with the way many people of color on campus are treated. Our hope was to help faculty to see the necessity in race training in order to heal the wounds and the flow of those of color away from our campus because they feel devalued. Another group I worked with and approached was Key Access Service and Administration to voice our concern over the lack of accessible parking for disabled individuals and to encourage Universal Accessibility of all services and campus areas. The third group I worked with was the planning committee for the workshop presented by the Multicultural Counseling program for the Day of Presence at TESC. We incorporated expressive arts, poems, vignettes, psychology, and small group discussion and relaxation techniques to raise racial awareness on campus and within the community.

I have spent much of the past nine months learning how to listen; to listen deeply, to listen to the most obvious and the most subtle messages, to listen to myself and to listen to others. This listening was cultivated by my attendance at a community building workshop, my practice of different meditations, and my practice of listening at my internship sites and during a trip to New Orleans. This deep level of listening has been shockingly rewarding. Listening allows me to be more empathic, make better decisions, grow in love and compassion, and enjoy the peace of being more aware, more present and more in touch with reality.

Practicing different techniques of meditation has improved my ability to listen to myself and others. Different movement meditations and Vipassana mediation allow me to become more aware of myself both in motion and while sitting still. They give me a means with which to observe my body, my thoughts and my emotions more objectively. When I carry mindfulness into my daily routine I find that I naturally make better decisions. Due to a stronger awareness of the reality of myself and the particulars of each moment, I am more courageous, spontaneous, loving and able to act more congruently.

I carried this ability to listen deeply into both of my internship sites and to New Orleans where I helped with relief in neglected neighborhoods after Hurricane Katrina. In my internships I worked with seniors, dis/abled adults and homeless women. In New Orleans I talked to residents about their lives and experiences before and after Hurricane Katrina. Everyone had a story to tell and often the telling was healing, rejuvenating, joyous experience that resulted in transformation of both the speaker and I. In New Orleans I was able to take information from program readings about unintentional and intentional racism and experience first hand how these dynamics surface in relationships and institutionalized treatment of African Americans compared to white people, simply by listening deeply, by listening to what was happening under the surface.

Ultimately, learning this skill has allowed me to grow in love and compassion. The more I am able to understand from people and situations I encounter, the more I can empathize

with and connect across differences, and the deeper and richer my experience is, as I journey through life.

I devoted a full year to multicultural counseling, counseling skills and expressive arts therapy. This interdisciplinary learning environment created in me an empathic and compassionate person willing to work toward cultural competency for the rest of my life.

Multicultural Counseling taught me about privilege, power and oppression and how these concepts and more effect counseling. I learned how important it is for me as an individual to know my own culture and how my culture can effect my counseling skills. I also learned how important it was to understand and work with others in their own cultural context. Lastly, I learned how to be an ally to others. Through my internship with Bread and Roses, I was an advocate for homeless women who lived there. Again, I was witness to and was able to be a part of great movements of the human spirit. This internship had a philosophy of equality and holistic medicine – both of which I believe in and hope to work with in the future.

I entered the program Multicultural Counseling, which has prepared me to continue my academic career in a doctoral program after Evergreen. I believe this course has changed every entity of my being to becoming a contribution for society and working to advocate against the oppressions that continues to strain the growth of human stability.

Interdisciplinary Study

In Multicultural Counseling, I have begun to more thoroughly understand diversity, privilege and oppression and how these things affect the counseling process. I used the five Evergreen foci to explore these subjects to their fullest using many different sources. .. I was able to put psychological perspectives into a cultural context and see how much more needs to be done in this field of study to understand cultural differences. I deepened my knowledge of expressive arts therapy through touch drawings and theatre of the oppressed. I kept an art journal throughout the program that followed my exploration of art and healing. During a campus wide discussion on race, power and privilege that I and my peers facilitated, I was able to participate in a Theatre of the Oppressed skit and experience first hand the power that it held to transform ideas and opinions.

Issues of race, gender, ableism, religion and advocacy continued to arise in all the work focusing our third ears and acknowledging the unmet needs currently faced in the mental health field. .. through expressive arts and connecting the healing patterns of these techniques, I have felt compelled to learn more about how using art and interpretive dance can alter the state of consciousness to a higher functioning level of self awareness and calmed sense of being. On an individual note, I have broadened m voice and strived to allow my thoughts to be heard in the learning community, while continuing to increase my listening skills and improve my presence. Through the program I have incorporated mindmapping as a way to expand and delve into the topic of each weekly seminar book,

which I have encouraged myself to work hard on by expressing my ideas through pictures and themes. I believe drawing and expressing myself have been a core principle to this program and I feel fortunate to open myself up to the self-healing that exists within the learning environment.

Active Integration of All Five Foci

Through participation in weekly assignments, reading various texts, researching and composing an internship paper on Community, Crisis, and Healing, creating seminar questions and mindmaps, along with three integrative essays, I linked theory with practical applications. Through cocounseling and integrative writing assignments, I incorporated the five foci with practical applications. By brainstorming with peers (community intellect) prior to our final writing assignments, I gained fresh perspectives on racism, disabilities and the soul wound, co –counseling modalities, and practical applications for healing and transformation via expressive arts and ceremony. . . There is much work to be done and research to explore in the field of mental health and repair of the web of life

A nine month program with interdisciplinary and collaborative learning, theory practicing, personal engagement and bridge building across significant differences has changed my life. All five of these characteristics of my learning environment exist to diversify my knowledge of social issues. The Multicultural Counseling program provided just that. . . . as a class we continued to collaborate and support each other on more intense deconstructing of racism, ableism, and heterosexism. My ability to critically analyze these topics, then speak and act on my reasoned beliefs became stronger as the months went by. This was vital for me as I facilitated more and more discussions based on books read and collective experiences. In the closing months of our program, I co-facilitated a very difficult and intense discussion on deconstructing heterosexism in the counseling profession. I was very proud of myself and my partner for being able to hold a safe space for people to express their diverse opinions. My interest in the importance of voice has led me to deepen my understanding of the healing power of storytelling. Through the medium of PowerPoint, I presented ideas to implement storytelling in crisis intervention as well as prevention. I believe that this ancient ritual will make a powerful comeback in reuniting neighbors with neighbors to form supportive communities. .. Alongside this interdisciplinary work, I have started projects to further my developmental, cultural, and social perspectives. ... I look forward to taking my new found communication skills, empathic listening skills, and enthusiasm for healing into the social service industry. I know I'll make a significant difference in one's person life – if not an entire community. . . This interdisciplinary learning environment created in me an empathic and compassionate person willing to work toward cultural competency for the rest of my life.

When all five foci are actively engaged, a sense of heart –unity and empowerment may emerge in the learning process.

Empowerment/ Synthesis

I choose to take an active stance in being the change I seek - that which works best for all. Being brought up in a familial environment with modest emphases on education, there was scarce support for me there; woman aspires to perhaps a secretary or nurse but seldom a doctor and people considered intelligent were inconsequential. However during my time at Evergreen, including Multicultural Counseling, I have visibly cultivated increased self-confidence, confidence in knowing I have an abundance of heart and soul, intuitiveness, empathic abilities and intellect – fine qualities which will carry me through to a doctorate in Psychology and beyond.

During my final academic year at Evergreen, I enrolled in the program Multicultural Counseling. Not only did I become painfully aware of racism, heterosexism and the other form of oppression; I gained by voice in speaking truth to power with love – to these blights upon humanity. In addition, I expanded my knowledge of abnormal psychology, personality theories, counseling skills, and learned modalities of increasing greater self-awareness including relaxation and meditation techniques. My skills in nonviolent communication were magnified. My evocative empathy listening skills increased as I began listening with the ears of a giraffe. I learned more throughout these last two years than in the entirety of previous adult educational endeavors.

I have learned how to sit in the fire. I must soak in subjects that are the least comfortable, the most challenging. Time and time again I find that if something is difficult to look at then it may be connected to my deeply held beliefs and assumptions, and I can hold tight and search more, search harder, I can find the roots of my emotions and experience profound growth and change; an evolution in my own consciousness. If I become aware of belief systems that do not serve me or those around me, I have the option of adapting them, of changing my worldview, and being an active participant in social change. . . . I can become aware of the invisible forces governing this world that I share with so many others by meditating, reading, observing, conversing, being silent, listening and exploring. With this awareness comes a tremendous, scary and exiting responsibility, because I have learned to see the intricate interconnections between actions, that sometimes seem insignificant, with entire movements; shifts in consciousness, wars, massive tragedies and injustices. Thus, I am learning to see the relationship between my behavior and events all around the world.

Evergreen has truly pushed me out of my comfort zone. I was taught to back up my opinions and ideas, and acknowledge when I was wrong. The learning style at Evergreen helped me to take all the skills and knowledge acquired and apply it to the “real world.” I will leave Evergreen confident, sure and ready for the world. My passion for social change will never go out, and thanks to my studies, I have a desire and commitment to making change happen. Evergreen has truly prepared me to make a huge impact on this world.

One of the things I got the most out of in the program was from our art and expressive arts therapy sessions. I saw many uses for expressive arts therapy and beyond. This class was a huge learning opportunity for me, not only for the course material, but also for personal growth that took place within the program. The Multicultural aspect of this opened up a new viewpoint of the world that I never could have begun to understand without this class. I am very glad to have taken part in this program.

This program has provided me with personal growth beyond my expectations. This class opened my eyes to how I perceive different cultures and how different cultures perceive each other. The power and privilege provided for me, a white male, in our society would go unchecked of its oppressive effect if it were not for this class on multicultural issues: racial, ethnic, differently abled, the elderly, sexual orientation and others. By becoming and advocate and ally for many of these groups, I learned that I am in unique position to make by voice heard where others might not. . . It has not been easy. I have had to remain with my feet in the fire over issues that are my core beliefs. These past nine months have been the most personal growth I have attained in my entire college experience. I cannot wait to bring what I have learned into society and use it to help people help themselves.

My senior level program at Evergreen, Multicultural Counseling, has proven to be personally transformative in a way that many of my other programs at Evergreen were not. I gained not only knowledge, but also compassion and inspiration. Before taking the Multicultural Counseling program I was interested primarily in counseling and have since become more focused on working for social justice. Through my internship at Bread and Roses (a homeless advocacy organization) and the awareness gained from the curriculum I have discovered my passion for working towards eliminating oppression. ... The Multicultural Counseling program has been a challenging and essential step in my undergraduate career at Evergreen. I have gained not only knowledge but also tangible skills. It has helped me to see what is most needed in the field and what can be done to challenge the existing model. The Evergreen State College sparked my passion for learning, expanded my self-confidence, and gave me hands on experience, critical thinking and inspired my personal development. I will continue to question my responsibility to humankind and my role in society.

This year has been an intensive course of learning and fusing many interdisciplinary studies for the benefit of all I come in contact with. All I have learned will enable me to understand where I come from, and why I react the way I do. This has augmented my internal transformations, ameliorated my interpersonal relations and enhanced my metamorphic counseling skills. Throughout the year I have shared experiences with a group of students whose diversities include age, gender, race, LGBT and religious preference. I have grown exponentially through sharing personal incidents of oppression in various discussions, participation in educational projects and utilization of expressive arts labs. I am beginning to understand how private conflicts can create international repercussions. As a result I have learned new ways to address and redress some of them l The knowledge and insight gained this year has encouraged my growth by making me aware of whom I am . I have come to understand some of the principles that guide my

behavior and the society in which I live. Through this understanding I have found ways of implementing constructive solutions to the daily and atypical problems that surround me ... I have now begun to metamorphose into a more universal citizen of the world.

Towards the Future

We live in times of major transformation when many existing systems are breaking down and more life-serving ways of being are emerging. The Dalai Lama has called for this to be the Century of Dialogue based on the promotion of human values and the promotion of the sense of the oneness of humanity. (Vancouver Dialogues, 2006). Educational systems have the opportunity to provide islands of coherence through co-creating learning communities that can develop ways of being that are able to respond to changing cultures, communities and areas of conflict. Our emphasis on critical thinking needs to be matched with an emphasis on developing critical compassion to be able to be of service in a rapidly changing society. Dialogues on diversity are often met with resistance and denial. Education in emotional intelligence and empathy is foundational to engage in dialogues on diversity. Nonverbal languages are essential to integrate into pedagogical practice when working with issues of diversity, based on the neurophysiology of perception. The integration of person -centered expressive arts laboratories in the study of multicultural issues can provide a way to become conscious of our cultural roles, thoughts and patterns that inhabit existence (Lorenz and Watkins, 2001). Integrating expressive arts languages into these dialogues can illuminate the inner knowing of the oneness of humanity that underlies these social constructions of identity, as well as provide a safe environment to express rage, pain and anger. Incorporating expressive arts into anti -oppression work can allow a larger collective intelligence and wisdom to emerge from the soul of the learning community. Developing fluency in facilitating intermodal expressive arts dialogues around issues of diversity can provide one pathway to deepen cultural competency and heart -unity with an increasingly diverse student body.

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