

# Indigenous Counselling: Black or White?

Transcultural Counselling

Training Package

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## History of Training Package

- Assoc Prof Tracy Bunda & Dr Geoff Denham collaboration
- Mentoring indigenous students at UC
- UC Teaching Grant- principal researcher Carmen Cubillo

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## This workshop aims to:

- Provide training for those working with indigenous clients
- Critique cross cultural counselling
- Introduce transcultural relationship
- Reflect on the presented training package

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## Reflective practice

- Asking questions about practice
- Focusing on the relationship
  - Knowledge of counselling practices
  - Knowledge from practising counselling

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## Video segments

- QLD health registrar video
- Interview with “Jack”

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## Case study – Peter video Scene 1

- Individual Task: written answers
- Group task: discussion

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### What's missing?

- Genuine dialogue
- Cultural sensitivity
- Understanding
- An adequate conception/understanding of culture

### Case study – Peter video Scene 2

- Individual Task: written answers
- Group task: discussion

### What informs practice?

- Understandings of culture as they inform
  - Counselling
  - Interview practice

### Our UC first year text (Westen, 2006) says culture ...

- “refers to the shared rules that govern behaviour; it is a filter through which we see and understand our current reality”

### Psychology texts say...

- “A culture is a way of life of a group of people, the configuration of all the more or less stereotyped patterns which are handed from one generation to the next through the means of language and imitation (Barnouw, 1973)

### Counselling texts say...

- “By culture, Pederson includes demographic variables (e.g.. Age, sex, place of residence), status variables (e.g.. Social, educational, economic) and affiliations... as well as ethnographic variables such as race, nationality, ethnicity, language and religion” (Hackney & Cormier, 2005)
- ?culture reduced to *variables* – abstract entities that *vary*

**More on culture later- but first another video**

**Case study Jack – scene**

- Individual Task: written answers
- Group task: discussion

**How culture impacts on transcultural professional encounters- common assumptive errors**

- Culture belongs only to ‘the other’ not to ‘us’
- Culture is best considered as a thing or variable
- Culture is ‘only’ language
- Identity is made outside culture
- Culture-free formulations are possible

**Culture belongs only to ‘the other’ not to ‘us’**

- White culture is often left unexamined
  - Hospital or outpatient procedures (Can they be modified to accommodate indigenous people?)

**Culture is best considered as a thing or variable**

- “culture is... a process, a process through which ordinary activities take on emotional tone and moral meaning for participants” (Kleinman, 2004, Trimbos Lecture)

**..thing or variable? (cont’d)**

- “Cultural processes include the embodiment of meaning in psychophysiological reactions, acute attentiveness in different situations to what is most at stake” (ibid)

## Culture is 'only' language

- Culture tells us what is most at stake
- From culture we derive a sense of what is valuable, of what matters

## Identity is made outside culture

- Identity is formed in culture and in discourse

## Culture-free formulations are possible

- The Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association is a cultural document
  - It is a 'white' document
  - Resistance to making it 'culturally-friendly' (Mezzich et al, 1999)

## And Westen goes on to say:

- "The discipline of psychology is a product of the European and North American cultural environment and most psychological theories and practices have been developed in Western countries. Consequently, the way psychologists understand human behaviour is bound and limited by these same cultural contexts" (Westen, 2006, p.771)
- Is Westen a 'white' document?

## Black psychology?

### References

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## Closing reflection

"We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated. This remark takes on its full force when we refer to the necessity to save the history of the defeated and the lost. The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative" (Ricoeur, 1984, p.75).

## The TTP

You have been part of the development of the TTP - thank you for your participation and input- if you would like to be kept posted regarding the development of the TTP please email [geoff.denham@canberra.edu.au](mailto:geoff.denham@canberra.edu.au) and your name will be added to our mailing list. Just put TTPmailinglist in the subject line.