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What is it like to teach cultural safety in a New Zealand nursing education programme?

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in nursing at Massey University

Frances I. Richardson

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This thesis explores the experience of teaching cultural safety in a New Zealand nursing education programme. A qualitative approach was used to interview fourteen teachers about their experience of teaching in this area. The teachers were all women and most had taught in cultural safety education programmes for a number of years. Five were Maori and nine were Pakeha. The experience of teaching was different for both groups.

The study asked the question "What is it like to teach cultural safety in a nursing education programme?" The participants revealed thoughts, feeling and experiences which together provided a picture of what the experience of teaching is like.

Using thematic analysis three themes were generated from the data and analysed against a theoretical framework of power and knowledge derived from critical social theory and feminist influence.

The findings of the study demonstrated that the experience of teaching is shaped by a number of factors. These include personal, political and professional factors. These form an integral part of the teaching experience and shapes what happens in the classroom situation. The findings also demonstrate that teachers have developed a high level of teaching skill in teaching a controversial subject. Although the teachers experience times of stress in teaching, this stress is balanced by moments of satisfaction and a sense that they are contributing to change in nursing and health care delivery in a way which reflects the realities of people using the health care system.
PREFACE

I have been involved in cultural safety teaching for eleven years. During this time I have experienced frustration and satisfaction in the teaching the subject. Like some other cultural safety teachers I came to the subject through a personal commitment to socio-political change. I was involved in the lesbian, feminist and women’s health politics of the 70s and 80s. It was during this time that I became aware that the world I inhabited was not the same world that I had been brought up to believe it was. Through what were at times, painful experiences, I came to realise I could act on my own behalf to help change social practices which discriminated against my full participation in society and join with others who were also seeking recognition and full participation in society.

I come from a background in which I was privileged to grow up in an environment, that prepared me for my later political involvement. Both my parents were psychiatric nurses; consequently I grew up in a community where I came to understand difference from a very early age. I mingled with and was befriended by people whose behaviour did not conform to the social mores of the society at the time. In later years this gave me an insight into the impact of society’s ‘rules’, on a person’s ability to be self-determining in terms of who and how they are in the world.

My professional development involved registering as a general nurse followed later by registration as a psychiatric nurse. I firmly believe in the comprehensive nature of nursing and believe that to make distinctions between the mind and body is an anathema to the overall well being and health of individuals, groups and communities. Developing my nursing practice mainly in the area of mental health has equipped me with important personal and professional insights and understandings about the socio-political nature of health care in New Zealand.

It is out of this personal, political and professional background that my research topic was born and for the purposes of this study I am researcher-participant.
Acknowledgements

Completing this research project would not have been possible without significant support and guidance from a number of people who have been with me through this journey. To name everyone who has walked with me during the process is not possible. However I want to name some people who have made a contribution to the study by way of giving of their time, critical academic comment, editorial and technical support.

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Thanks to my Maori and Pakeha colleagues in cultural safety teaching with whom I have shared many special moments as we have ‘grappled’ with the complexities and issues surrounding the topic, the hurts, the pain, the challenges along with the love support and caring.

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Flyer for Heads of Schools of Health Sciences and or Nursing Studies
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Consent form for participants
Interview guide
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