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PREJUDICE, PARADOX and POSSIBILITY

**Nursing people from cultures
other than one's own**

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Abstract

This study explores the experience of nursing a person, or people, from cultures other than the nurse's own. Informed by the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics, and drawing specifically on some of the notions articulated by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Charles Taylor, it seeks to understand everyday nursing practices within their cultural and historical context.

Against a background of Maori resurgence, nurses have been challenged in Aotearoa-New Zealand to recognise and address racism in their practice. Meeting the health needs of all people has long been important in nursing yet the curricular changes implemented in the early 1990s to enhance nursing's contribution to a more equitable health service created uncertainty and tension both within nursing, and between nursing and the wider community.

In this study, I have interpreted the experiences of seventeen nurses practising in an increasingly ethnically diverse region. Personal understandings and those from relevant literature have been used to illuminate further the nature of cross-cultural experience from a nurse's perspective.

The thesis asserts that the notions of prejudice, paradox and possibility can be used to describe the experience of nursing a person from another culture. Prejudice refers to the prior understandings that influence nursing action in both a positive and a negative sense. Paradox relates to the coexistence and necessary interplay of contradictory meanings and positions, while possibility points to the potential for new understandings to surface from the fusion of past with present, and between different interpretations. As New Zealand nurses negotiate the conflicts essential for ongoing development of their practice, the play of prejudice, paradox and possibility is evident at intra-personal and interpersonal levels as well as in relation to professional and other social discourses. This thesis challenges nurses to persist in working with the tensions inherent in cross-cultural practice. It encourages continuation of their efforts to understand and move beyond the prejudices that otherwise preclude the exploration of new possibilities.

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Key to Transcriptions

In presenting the research findings, the following abbreviations and conventions have been used:

Italics Identifies the interview data provided by the nurses participating. Entries quoted from the researcher's journals are also italicised.

Names With the consent of the participants, the nurses' voices are identified through the use of pseudonyms.

(Name, 1:53) References the participant's name, interview and page number.

[] Indicates alterations made by the researcher to enhance clarity and grammatical flow.

... Denotes material deleted from the original text

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