

'My Story' – A student's example reflection

Upbringing

- Consider myself to be part of the white western middle class "norm"
- In saying this, I have had a particularly privileged upbringing, in terms of material things like a nice house to live in, clothes and travel experiences and many other opportunities that my parents have worked hard to provide. I have also been privileged in the way that I have always had an extremely supportive, interested and loving family
- My parents have instilled many values in myself and my brother and sister

Values

- Family
- Friendship
- Honesty
- Humbleness
- Hard work to reach your goals
- Education
- Health eating right and exercising – enjoying a range of foods
- Kindness to others
- Giving things a go, and getting involved
- Having an open mind, and trying different things
- Making the most of your opportunities
- Being financially stable e.g. having a house and a car, being able to afford holidays, and being able to provide your children with a stable/safe/loving environment
- Freedom of speech, and a democratic nation
- Equal rights and opportunity for men and women, as well as different cultural groups
- Tolerance/respectfulness
- Helping those less fortunate than yourself

Educational opportunities

- I attended my local state primary school until I was in year 6. I moved to St Margaret's in year 7, where I was provided with many academic, social, cultural and sporting opportunities. I am eternally grateful to my parents for working hard to send myself, and my brother and sister to a private school. Although I probably didn't realise the privilege and opportunity associated with attending such a school when I was actually there, I now do.
- One of the best things about going to a school like St Margaret's was the fact that it is a boarding school, and so I have had the opportunity to meet many people who live in rural and remote areas. I think this has enriched my life, because I have been exposed to a way of life that is extremely different to mine.

Family situation

- I live with my mother, father, brother and sister
- We speak only English at home

Cultural practices

- Being from Australia, where such a diverse range of cultural practices and beliefs are carried out, I have probably been influenced by many of them. I would like to think that I am able to identify, and respect the different cultural practices and choices that individuals make.
- Ancestors come from England/Scotland/Ireland – some aspects of these cultures, more the traditions have influenced me.
- Father's side – all convicts, mother's side "paid their passage"
- Father's Farming family – always lived in rural areas, father was the first generation to move into the city; value hard work, sacrifice.
- Mother's always lived in the city
- Both families highly involved in the community
- Don't really actively practice, but am Anglican and went to an Anglican school
- My extended family live further away, however we try to see them regularly for events such as Mother's day/Father's day/special birthdays/Christmas/Easter.
- Sport has been a huge part of our life as a family particularly, Mum and Dad have always encouraged us to be involved in some sort of sport, if only for the social aspect. We follow the rugby/tennis/cricket/swimming mostly.

Assumptions we make about Indigenous Australian's

- Dole bludgers/unemployed
- Involved in crime/uneducated/unhealthy
- Do not value hard work, making their own way in life
- More skewed towards indigenous people living in rural and remote areas, rather than those living in urban areas
- Many opportunities are provided for them, but they don't make the most of the opportunity
- Professional protesters
- Society that is rampant with so many social/health/educational problems etc. It is an impossible situation to fix.
- They are not even trying to adapt to 'normal' Australian life; seem to still be so caught up in past events, unable to move forward. Say they want to, but don't really show that they are. Don't really want to "better" themselves.
- At the same time, there are a number of indigenous Australian's who are prominent in the media, that are known to have "done very well for themselves", but I definitely don't see this as the norm, more the minority.
- They are looking to blame what happened over 100 years ago for everything that is going wrong with their people now. They don't take ownership or responsibility for their situation.

How do I feel about the history of indigenous people? Why?

- I think what happened all that time ago was so wrong, and so awful, but I don't particularly feel like it is anyone's fault. It makes me feel quite sick to think about the terrible violence and other conditions that Indigenous Australians, particularly children and babies were exposed to, and I cannot imagine anyone ever thinking that it would be acceptable to do the things that were done. So I try to believe that the people taking such actions were doing it because they had been so heavily influenced by the values and beliefs prevalent at that time.
- I don't think enough has been done in terms of reconciliation, and I do think that this is such a disaster and will probably never be resolved. I do think investment in areas such as health and education is one part of the solution, addressing the social problems, particularly the wider perceptions of the community is also so important.
- I think the saddest part of the whole situation is the fact that an ancient beautiful culture has been distorted, and in some parts destroyed.
- Before I started this prac, I have never really known that much about indigenous history. Although I knew it was an awful time, I hadn't really realised the true extent until I had the opportunity to research it and meet with indigenous clients and co-workers and hear their stories.
- It is something that I, probably like many non-indigenous Australian's have put at the back of my mind, as it is not something that directly impacts on me. Although now, I think it will be harder to do that.
- Knowing more about the indigenous history makes me realise that the stereotypical views of Indigenous Australian's may be true in some cases, but that they are not entirely accurate and definitely do not apply to everyone. The truth is that even though these issues exist in every population.
- I realise now that the people around me, and my upbringing has made me see only one side of an extremely complex situation. For this, I am quite remorseful.

How might this impact on my practice as a health care provider?

- I think that my own upbringing, experiences and opportunities that I have received have shaped me to believe in and value a certain type of lifestyle. I would be lying if I said that I didn't think my kind of lifestyle was ideal. I do find it hard when I need to work with people who have no aspirations to live this kind of lifestyle. I can be very judgemental at times.
- It is important to recognise that not everyone has had the same types of experiences as I have had, and so would not particularly agree that the kind of life I live is the "best". It is a matter of personal preference.
- I also find it particularly hard when parents are not like my parent's. I have now realised that having parents like mine is something common to the people that I have grown up with and know best, however it is probably not so common in the wider community.
- It is important to keep in mind my tendency to judge, and to enter situations with clients with an open mind. I shouldn't try to enforce my own values on another person, but try to understand their own values/hopes/goals and even if they are very different to my own, work with the client to help them reach them. It is important to remember that I should not measure a client's success with the same stick that I measure mine with.

- I would never say anything out loud to an indigenous client, but I know that in my head I would always still have moments of judgement. To know that you can never be non-judgemental, and to recognise when you are judging someone, and make appropriate adjustments is something that is probably more beneficial to me.
- On the flipside, it could be very easy to pity a situation of indigenous clients. It would be particularly easy to look at all of the negative aspects in a client's life, rather than recognise their strengths and opportunities. I think it would be a very fine balancing act between judging a person too much, and pitying them, or providing excuses for their situation. This is a skill that I hope to develop in my time on this prac.
- Because indigenous culture is so diverse, it could be very detrimental to make certain assumptions about a client, or to automatically stereotype them, without getting to know them, and their individual story/history/wants/needs/beliefs. This is something that I need to keep in mind. Another goal for this prac would be to have more confidence in developing rapport with clients who are from an indigenous background, navigating cultural practices and stereotypes for form a good therapeutic relationship.