'ETHICAL POSITIONING' A STRATEGY IN OVERCOMING STUDENT RESISTANCE AND FOSTERING ENGAGEMENT IN TEACHING ABORIGINAL HISTORY AS A COMPULSORY SUBJECT TO PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes and analyses the issues that impacted on pre service Primary Education students' engagement with the subject 'Aboriginal[1] culture and history' at a rural university. The paper identifies how issues including pioneer identity and local 'conversations' about race related strongly to this particular rural context. It names and demonstrates 'ethical positioning' as an effective pedagogy in shifting often unrecognised racist values and attitudes, thus enabling students to move beyond ethnocentricity. The paper highlights the openness of the students to becoming transformative educators when issues of identity, racism and its ethical implications are reflected on overtly.

INTRODUCTION[2]

The official organisation that accredits university teacher education courses in New South Wales the NSW Institute of Teachers (NSWIT) listed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education as a mandatory area of study[3] for all pre-service teachers

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[1] The term 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal' is used in this article, not to blur the cultural and historical differences but to make the connection between the commonality of experiences of colonisation shared by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. The subject taught was called 'Aboriginal History and Culture'. The term 'Indigenous' was used when lecturing and in unit evaluation forms.

[2] This paper is written by a non-Indigenous person and thus will contain biases and positioning that the writer attempts to overcome, but can never fully know or fully overcome. The writer considered the responses of the non-Indigenous students who comprised about 95-97% of the cohort (not all students who are Indigenous identify). This focus was adopted to apply a clear politics that is to address the issue of non-Indigenous problems in Indigenous issues as perceived by a non-Indigenous person. Of course it would be another rich area of research to explore the perceptions of non-Indigenous students who also have to participate in this subject and in the same classes as their non-Indigenous peers.

[3] Initial teacher education programs approved by the NSW Institute of Teachers require documentation that demonstrates how the Graduate Teacher Standards will be met in the program. Policy and Procedures for Approval of Initial Teacher Education Programs states, 'Teachers need to understand Aboriginal history and its significance for the diversity of Aboriginal cultures and perspectives'. From Section 2.2 Aboriginal Education

(see the New South Wales Institute of Teachers Policy and Procedures for Approval of Initial Teacher Training Programs).[1] The assumed rationale was that this would facilitate the Primary Education students' capacity to be culturally inclusive, responsive to Indigenous students in their classroom and able to provide an 'Indigenous perspective[2]' in their curriculum. Through their studies, these students would acquire and maintain respectful views towards Indigenous people and Indigenous cultures. This approach has been adopted in other States and Territories either as a compulsory measure and/or as a policy recommendation[3]. If Indigenous perspectives are taught, the embrace of social justice values is a likely outcome.

This paper explores the complexity of teaching this mandatory area of study at a tertiary institution in a rural location and examines how ethical positioning can assist in engaging rural students. It is based on an experiential analysis of teaching the unit 'Aboriginal Culture and History' over two years to two different cohorts of students. The paper describes how ethical positioning was developed as a teaching tool and found to be an effective pedagogical technique when the subject was taught again to a second cohort of students. Ethical positioning was a strategy developed in this research. It was found to foster greater engagement and an expressed awareness in these students that they could be important agents of social justice concerning Indigenous issues.

One of the issues that emerged in teaching this subject in a rural area was the challenge Aboriginal history posed to a sense of 'white' rural identity that was linked to pioneer mythology and founding national identity. Ward (1966/74) discusses this pioneer identity and White (1981) examines and critiques it. Another challenge posed was the students' limited understanding of what racism constituted. This absence of awareness was influenced by the students' homogenous cultural experiences. Related to this was an unwillingness to reflect on their own positioning and constructions about race in relation to Indigenous Australians. In this rural context ethical positioning was used to implicitly consider the rural pioneer identity and foster engagement and a desire for social justice in the students as well as deepen the students' understanding of this identity.

This article contributes to the reflective development of rural pedagogies (McConaghy, Lloyd, Hardy & Jenkins, 2006; McConaghy & Burnett, 2002) at a tertiary level, deeper thinking about teaching Aboriginal history to non-Indigenous students and awareness of ethnocentric (non-Indigenous) barriers to engagement. In a review of pre service teacher education in the field of Indigenous education Craven (2006) noted there is a lack of empirical research on what actually works in Indigenous education. Teaching pre-service teachers is a key component in this and gaining pre service teachers engagement is a key issue. The article makes a valuable contribution in the study of engaging rural students. It identifies both what does not

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http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/IgnitionSuite/uploads/docs/website%20DOCUMENT%204%20MANDATORY%20AREAS%20MAY%202007.pdf accessed 30/10/09.

[1] The requirements for initial teacher education programs with regard to Indigenous education can be found on the Institute's website at _http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/ITE_Program-Requirements.html_.

[2] Terminology of NSWIT.

[3] For example Appendix 13e, no. 21 states the aim, 'To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures.' http://www.ecsinquiry.sa.gov.au/files/links/link_80497.pdf accessed 26/1/10

work and describes a new strategy of 'ethical positioning' and discusses its use and effectiveness and builds on the work of Craven, Halsey, Marsh, Mooney and Wilson-Miller (2005).The article has clear relevance to many rural contexts. It also encourages reflection on ethics, local context (and conversations) for effective engagement with racism and with history. In addition, the article contributes to a discourse on ownership of non-Indigenous problems of engagement with the past that impact on race relations and social justice in this country[1].

BACKGROUND: A DIFFICULT PEDAGOGY

There is a growing body of literature that suggests teaching pre-service teachers Aboriginal studies[2] is a 'difficult pedagogy'. Aveling (2006) describes the racist views held by some of her university students in the compulsory unit she taught in Aboriginal and multicultural education in Western Australia. Aveling (2006) also noted non-Indigenous students' resistance to Indigenous and multicultural education and considered that the compulsory nature of the unit was a factor in student resistance to engagement.

Mellor (2003) provides an informative discussion on racism towards Indigenous Australians with a focus on the perspectives of the victims of racism. Racism is likely to have an influence on engagement with Indigenous history. Barton and McCully (2005) in their study of Protestant and Catholic students in Northern Ireland report that students tend to draw selectively from the curriculum to support their own identification with history. Aboriginal people are subjected to racial discrimination both in and outside schools. Black-Gutman and Hickson (1996) has described the development of racial prejudice in children in Australia and found that anti Aboriginal racist attitudes became stronger as children grow older; this contrasted to racist attitudes to Asian people which became more tolerant as the students aged.

Students growing up in isolated locations are frequently cut off from the cultural and social capital of the large cities (Corbett, 2007) and this can impact on rural students' personal and thus collective understandings and reactions to different perspectives on culture and difference. Racial discrimination in more homogenous communities may be more focused on those visibly different, with De Freitas and McAuley (2008) finding that teaching in a largely homogenous community contributed to problems of engaging students to reflect on white privilege in their experiences in an isolated Canadian community.

In rural contexts where there may be a more limited presence and visibility of non-Anglo people prejudices may have a greater focus on Indigenous Australians. Also, the option for Indigenous Australians to not identify is closed if their families are from the region. The experiential issues of a rural locale may impact differently on the students' attitudes and values, including reasons for resistance to engaging with the subject being taught. However, viewing the non-Indigenous rural students

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[1] As discussed see footnote 2.

[2] The term 'Indigenous Studies' is used to cover a subject area that includes post 1788 Aboriginal history. The subject the author discussed in this article was called 'Aboriginal History and Culture' but the issues of student resistance were similar in other subjects I taught including the Aboriginal pedagogy units when the history was discussed as part of that unit.

from a position of rural 'deficit' should be resisted as advocated by Wallace and Boylan (2009) when reflecting on the thinking of Tumey, Sinclair and Cairns (1980). This program focuses on strengths and attributes that these rural students bring to their tertiary study in this area, not their disadvantages.

Rural locations present lecturers with similar issues of engagement and resistance with Indigenous Studies but also different issues which merit exploration for educators wishing to be effective teachers.

Clearly there are social justices issues involved in teaching Indigenous Studies. Rural students are more likely to remain teaching in rural areas,, would have less options to avoid contact with Indigenous people and conversely would have more opportunity to make contact with Indigenous communities, and typically a teacher holds high social status and thus potentially significant influence as a professional. Consequently, rural school teachers can be effective agents for social change. To produce teachers who see the value of teaching Indigenous Studies effectively is very important to enhance social justice, cultural awareness, cultural competence, respect and achievement. In short, effective pedagogy at tertiary level will produce effective teachers (Trimingham & Hitchon, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The paper uses an action based researcher approach (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2003; O'Donnell, Reeve & Smith, 2006) to consider the teaching of a compulsory Indigenous History unit and to compare the impact of using ethical positioning in pedagogy. Using reflexive practices (Hayes, Mills, Christie & Lingard, 2006; Kalantzis & Cope, 2008) the author reflects on her own positionality, self and culture and that of the students as she attempted to engage students in learning. The two case studies discussed suggest that the use of ethical positioning contributed to a 'turn around pedagogy' (Kamler & Comber, 2005) with cohort 2 which engaged the students and promoted their interest in social justice.

As a non-Indigenous lecturer, the author chose to reflect on the responses of the non-Indigenous students in two different year cohorts (cohort 1 and cohort 2) who comprised around 95% of the cohorts. The data is drawn from observation and two evaluations conducted in week 3 and week 12 of the semester. The format of the subject was an hour lecture which all students attended and a two hour tutorial every week for 12 weeks. The lectures and tutorials were a one third/two-thirds split with the non-Indigenous lecturer doing two-thirds of the lecturing and tutoring over the two years

In reflecting on ethical positioning the paper also draws on 'standpoint epistemology' described by Harding (1998). It reflects how a view, seeing and thoughts are shaped by the context which includes the embodied experiences from which we observe. '… The context from which one observes an entity shapes what he or she sees' (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p.138). As a non-Indigenous researcher I draw on Indigenous epistemologies that argue actions and reactions are not independent of history, context and agency (as advised by Smith, 2000, p.229) and consider how history, place and action influence/d understandings and constructions of knowledge. Therefore the article reflects on the context: local and rural and a classroom that was relatively homogeneous with white, non-Indigenous

students and a minority Indigenous student presence. The paper is the analysis of the non-Indigenous lecturer experiences of teaching the subject to non-Indigenous students. As such it contributes to a deliberate discourse of owning a 'non-Indigenous problem' in undertaking effective education and gaining social justice for all Australians.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF RACISM VIA 'CONVERSATIONS'

In a keynote address Wallace and Boylan (2007) argued for a re-evaluation of the ways educators, engage with conversations around rural education and argued for the concept of a *rural lens* (from Corbett & Mulcahy, 2006) as a way of reconceptualising or rethinking practices. Wallace and Boylan extend the idea of 'conversations' as a central element to understanding the contexts in which individuals formulate their own perspective and construction of issues. The term 'conversation' (not discourse) is used here to describe the varied positionings that are held and expressed in communities where people grow up and live. Conversations, including casual conversations (with family, friends, acquaintances and strangers in homes, cars, footie club, pubs, supermarkets) may influence and shape views and constructions of the world. The views on race may be unthought out and formed by limited information, yet assumed as 'normal'.

Barton and McCully (2005) indicate how people acquire prejudice through the views around them. In the context of Australia it is the sub-communities within the country that create differing conversations about Indigenous Australians and result in the presence, extent and intensity of racism towards Indigenous Australians. As discussed, racist views about Aboriginal people exist (Mellor, 2003, Aveling, 2006) and therefore will occur and prevail in certain conversations heard in Australia. When there is only one minority group and that group experiences discrimination and racial exclusion that group is more likely to be the sole focus of local conversations. These conversations may become part of the way certain sub-communities talk and understand racial and cultural differences. The constructions thus developed may become uncontested and understood as 'facts' about Indigenous Australians.

The concept of constructions arising out of local conversations may explain why there appeared to be a static view of racism among the students in cohort 1. People were either 'racists' or not. Being racist was not something desired. One student stated on their evaluation, 'It would be helpful if we could feel free to voice opinions without fear of being labelled a 'racist' just because we may not be considered 'politically correct''. While the lecturer was not articulating to individual students that they were racist, she did speak about racism and racists in a generic sense. The term 'politically correct' was used on the evaluation forms the students completed and in classroom discussions. It was one the students were comfortable about using and owning and enabled acknowledgement of views that in fact were racist but not perceived as such.

Some students in cohort 2 where the teaching involved the use of ethical positioning did acknowledge that their husband or boyfriend or grandmother was racist. It was spoken of in an open way, as a negative but comprehensible. Consequences of these views for Aboriginal people were not voiced in this

conversation. The students inferred that they did not share these views. Consequently the students moved in and out of racist conversations. Clearly the students who acknowledged racist views had not accepted them. To the students, to be a racist seemed to involve consistency. Without consistency the implication was that a person was not really racist, but simply held views that were normal to their experiences of sub-communities of conversations and constructions that some held about Aboriginal people.

In this rural location people saw Aboriginal people and 'knew' them both in the present and in the past through conversations about the past. Some conversations reflected distinct racist opinions about Aboriginal people across a range of matters particularly work, welfare and grog. Some students accepted and repeated these views as 'facts'. For example, in one cohort 1 evaluation, a student stated that Aboriginal people were not entitled to the receipt of government benefits as they were, "Not deserved but rather the benefits keep the 'chip on their shoulder' mentality … ." Another wrote, "I think members of the Aboriginal community are being indulged in money that they are capable of earning just like every other Australian" (no 56).

Yet the same students wanted to assist young Indigenous students in their classrooms. It appeared that these students did not perceive that they held racist views towards Indigenous Australians. Yet the issue still presented as to how to engage the students with the subject and not to experience refusal to reflect on previously held positions. The history was threatening. There were those who believed that the history did not hold any relevance to the present.

RURAL IDENTITY: NOBLE PIONEERS

One of the challenges that cohort 1 faced was the history of the impact of the British in 1788 and the subsequent disempowerment of Aboriginal people. The students stated that they knew little of this history from their school experiences[1]. This was also true for the small numbers of mature aged students. So the subject content for them was a shock — upsetting and unsettling (For a discussion of colonisation of Indigenous people see Beatty, 1962, Blomfield, 1992; Broome, 2001; Carnegie, 1898/1973; Harris, 1990/1994; Plomley, 1987; Reynolds, 1982, 1984,1987; Rowley, 1970. For accounts of more contemporary colonisation[2] see Broome, 2001, Haebich, 2000, O'Dowd, 2009). A common reaction of the students was to reject any engagement with the past and the major reason provided was that they did not consider it relevant. They frequently suggested a focus on the more pleasant aspect of Indigenous/non-Indigenous interaction.

The pioneer stories of settling the land and conversations around this from grandparents and parents had a clear resonance with these young Australians growing up in a rural location. It represented a pleasant and honourable identity. Rejecting engagement with the past enabled the students to retain this identity and to hear history as they wished it to be told.

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[1] In the students' evaluations that were part of this research the majority stated they knew little about Aboriginal history.

[2] The term contemporary colonisation is used in preference to post-colonisation as the colonisation of Indigenous Australians has not ceased.

National history and identity are bound up together and people 'hear what they want to hear'. Barton and McCully (2005) demonstrate this in their study of national identity and history in Northern Ireland. They relate how Protestants and Catholics hear history selectively to reinforce their separate identities. They note how as students get older they are more inclined to hear the history selectively. Berger (2007) in his edited book brings together historians from across the world to discuss how history and national stories are bound together. Each chapter illustrates the importance of national story to national self.

While multiculturalism has been fostered in Australia (Hage, 1998; Docker & Fischer, 2000) discussions with the students reveal that the experiences of multiculturalism as a conversation in this largely homogenous rural locale is much more limited. Thus the challenge this history of colonisation posed to these students' sense of rural identity may be greater than in less homogenous locations. The students' resistance was heightened by the challenge the history posed to a foundational construction of rural and thence national identity they were proud of having and felt necessary to defend. As one student stated in reference to the content "… (it) just really feels like lecturers come into class looking for an argument and to make ppl[1] feel crap".

ETHICAL POSITIONING: RACISM AS A LOCAL DEFINITION

One of the major issues that appeared in the first weeks of teaching cohort 1 and which continued the whole semester was that some of the students clearly held racist views about Aboriginal people yet failed to recognise these views as racist. They were simply understood as facts, not prejudice. The students found difficulty considering different views as valid. They could appreciate that Aboriginal people might view the invasion versus settlement debate differently but not non-Indigenous people. Thus the non-Indigenous lecturer's views were perplexing for some. For example, a question on the evaluation asked if the perspective of the non-Indigenous lecturer was valuable. A student responded, "When the lecturer does not give a non-Indigenous view how does it help?" This evidences a position on what constitutes a non-Indigenous view and a non-Indigenous person. These students did not, apparently, consider their views racist.

The positions adopted when speaking 'about' Aboriginal people often was, "I have Aboriginal friends so …" and the implication was then that the students could speak without prejudices because they had Aboriginal friends[2]. Indeed in relation to conversations the students possibly heard about Indigenous Australians they might view themselves and be viewed as liberal. What constituted 'racism' was defined by student and community knowledges which the lecturer as outsider was not privileged to know. Indeed one of the things students retorted on several occasions was, "…that's just your view".

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[1] Ppl = people.

[2] Some might contest whether such students did have Aboriginal friends but it is interesting to accept this at face value. Clearly the student had not given any consideration to the cultural accommodation the Indigenous student had to make to his/her views

'ETHICAL POSITIONING' AND REFLECTING ON JUSTICE

There were five tutorial groups in cohort 1. In one tutorial group there were two very articulate mature aged students with a strong sense of social justice. They were surprised and outraged when they read the history. With humour and passion they continued to voice views counter to the dominant voice in the group. They had a camaraderie with their peers developed over the years of studying together, and held their respect. There was genuine discussion in this tutorial. While the two mature aged women held a minority voice, it was listened to and occasionally refuted. There was discussion and engagement with the ideas.

Towards the end of first semester, the lecturer stepped beyond the postmodern haze that considered all views as valuable (as the students would state, "that's just your view") to discussing ethics. This was of course challenged as "just your view of ethics" but the students began to see how ethics could be considered a base for a position to agree or disagree based on a view of social justice. So a view was required to become a position with ethical consequences and developed later into 'ethical positioning'. It was too late with cohort 1 to have much impact.

ETHICAL POSITIONING: HOW IT WAS USED

'Ethical positioning' developed into an applied strategy to assist students in reflection on the implications of their views and to develop their perspective on social justice. Ethical positioning provides a framework for the individual and group to identify and analyse the constructions and views developed out of 'conversations'. Through this the students could reflect on the implications of views for others and whether these views were indeed a harmless personal norm or if they were incontestable 'facts'.

The students were explicitly called on to reflect on the implications of their views from an individual level for him/herself and the 'other' and then go on to a community, national and international level in terms of the implications for justice. In this supportive process students were asked to name, accept or re-evaluate and then 'own' their ethical view. The process of identifying and engaging in debate with the ethical view of others was to listen, ask and debate implications and possible consequences of positions in terms of ethical outcomes again at the individual, the local, the societal and the global level. They were required to own the consequences of the view as an ethical position.

This enabled constructions, community and personal beliefs and 'naturalised facts' to be reflected on and then to be modified or rejected in the process of ethical positioning - or indeed accepted. Thus 'ethical positioning' was developed to enable students to consider what justice was and what racism might be. It enabled racism to be recognised and to enable it to be named. It enabled thinking as it took a step away from the stigma of the term 'racism' in the first instance.

WORKING WITH ETHICS RURAL POSITIONING AND IDENTITY WITH COHORT 2

The subject 'Aboriginal history and culture' took on a new dimension with cohort 2. There was a strong attempt to work through local rural understandings. The concept of equity had been difficult to fathom for the previous cohort. Most had accepted that equality was a just goal but equity was a problem. Students in tutorials frequently argued, as one student wrote on an evaluation, "everyone should be treated the same". In teaching, explicit links were made to the ethical basis of social justice programs for rural students. Rural disadvantages concerning the economics of travelling and living in a city to attend an urban university were all too apparent when contrasted to urban students who could stay at home and attend university. Thus the social justice of rural scholarships for equity reasons was clear. That the majority of these students were the first generation of their family to go to university was also articulated in terms of equity of access contrasting with their parents' lack of opportunity to go to university. Links were thus deliberately made to inequities these students personally experienced compared to the inequities that Aboriginal Australians experienced through history and recent history and thus to the ethics of equity. Equity was thus addressed from the start as an ethical consideration for them to consider.

The term ethics was used from the first lecture with cohort 1. Furthermore their rural experiences which included confidence and pride in the past and their role on the land and their sense of distinctive rural identity became values that were built upon to promote their motivation for social change. Thus the emphasis in the Indigenous history subject teaching became teaching became the ethics of the pioneers: fair go people, battlers, and independent people standing up for what they believed was right. Thus the pioneer identity was unchallenged and held up as a reality. The history of the encounters with Aboriginal people was interpreted in this context. The students appreciated how some pioneer Australians demanded justice in the face of significant criticism and peer pressure to be silent. These concepts were discussed and appreciated as ethical and courageous behaviour. So, for example, while discussing massacres the non-Indigenous students were provided with an example of the Australian pioneer spirit. This was possible without diminishing the brutality of the massacre and more importantly, the lessons of history. So in the case of the Myall Creek massacres (see Blanch, 2000) those who reported the massacre, those who brought the perpetrators to trial and the perseverance of those who obtained a second trial was seen as admirable and an example of Australian idealism.

In this way, the teaching became linked to ethical action and social justice. The value of learning the history was linked to the present. It was easier for the students to make connections to their present through standing up for and working for justice. By challenging racism they could see and name themselves as transformative teachers connected to their history and the identity of defending oppressed people.

The approach of focusing on ethics and strengths in rural identity was effective. A small minority in cohort 1 stated comments similar to "I am loving this subject. I'm finding it really makes me question my views and understanding of

Australian History. It makes me realise how much I haven't been taught in school". The lecturer's goal was to get the majority of cohort 2 to the position of the minority in cohort 1. Another cohort 1 student wrote, "This is an extremely valuable subject. It forces us to look inside ourselves and question our thinking. It has created a lot of discussion amongst students and had led me to further study". The goal was to have these students understand themselves as agents as social transformation and so as a very important influence to promote social justice in the classroom and communities where they will be a part of. The evaluations from cohort 2 were overwhelmingly positive. This suggested that building on their positive rural identity views enabled many more students to engage with the content of the unit.

Several students in cohort 2 remarked that they had been "warned" about this subject by students from the previous year, but had found the content engaging. When the students in cohort 2 were asked to vote on whether the readings (which were compulsory) were worthwhile, the response in 4 out of 5 of the tutorials was a resounding 85+% stating "yes". In one tutorial group, the response was down to 60/40, but still in favour. The use of ethics had developed into 'ethical positioning' where the students were educated to perceive the connections of the past to the present.

CONCLUSION

This paper established that racism and ignorance about the colonisation of Indigenous Australians persists into the 21st century. If this is to change it is critical non-Indigenous pre service teachers fully appreciate and engage with the issues of Australia's colonial history in order to be transformative educators who are culturally inclusive, informed of the history, aware of its implications and appreciative of Indigenous cultures. Through theoretical and reflective analysis of experiences of teaching Aboriginal studies in a rural context this paper identifies how particular rural experiences including exposure to particular 'conversations' may influence in a particular way understandings of what constitutes racism towards Aboriginal people and shape views of what it means to be racist. Ideas of rural identity and rural pride within traditional understandings of a pioneer identity had posed particular challenges for rural students in engaging with Indigenous history. However when considered in a particular way, with a sense of national identity being refined as an ideal to be built on and not destroyed, the students engaged more effectively with the history and with their role as transformative educators. 'Ethical positioning' was critical to this engagement.

Rural teachers often have significant social status. Their potential as educators means they may have a significant impact on future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The paper highlights the students' openness and desire to achieve social justice for Indigenous Australians when the issues of ethics, identity and racism are named and reflected on through ethical positioning as part of learning about Aboriginal history and culture. Reflecting on locale enabled a communication about racist values and ethical values to occur so students could think through ethical positioning and thus see themselves as transformative educators. The lynch pin of overcoming resistance to the teaching of Indigenous history was using 'ethical positioning' as a pedagogic strategy.

While this article advocates consideration of ethical positioning this strategy cannot be regarded as a panacea; racist attitudes are not altered overnight and a different mix of students in a group can influence that group's engagement with the topic both positively and negatively. The most effective assessment of teaching pre service teachers would be follow up with these teachers in the classroom to assess the long term impact of their university education where issues of engagement with 'Indigenous issues' should ideally be integrated across all subjects. [1]

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[1] 'Indigenous issues' the author disputes such terminology when used to describe the space between the cultures where non-Indigenous people acted, act and interact (O'Dowd, forthcoming paper).

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