LIFE EXPERIENCE AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

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Abstract:

Adult learners in Australia in the second half of the twentieth century have accumulated life experiences and a sense of self which have issued in considerable development of cultural understanding and intercultural interaction. The ways in which individuals process and learn from experience of difference is evident within their biographies. These life stories raise questions regarding agency and consciousness and their interface with constructions of selfhood and identity.

This paper examines life stories of members of so-called dominant culture which give evidence of the impact of multiculturalism and internationalism. It addresses the gap between studies of racism and prejudice on the one hand, and studies of ethnicity and culture on the other, seeking to position lived experience within the context of cross-cultural and intercultural training and its literature with a view to exploring the implications for adult education.
'Cultural understanding' and the state of play within post-compulsory education

In the various fields of post-compulsory education, vocational education, adult and community education and human resource development and training, the 1990's have seen keen debate and extensive development of competency-based approaches to curricula. From the Finn report (1991), through the Mayer report (1992) and on to dispersed pockets of research and application (e.g., Queensland VETEC, 1994), cultural understanding as competence has not escaped the scrutiny of this movement. Particularly where ethnicity or cross-cultural training is high on the agenda of the adult educator, the implications of the inclusion or exclusion of cultural understanding as a key competency have not gone unnoticed. Within this context, as a lecturer in Intercultural Communication at the University of South Australia, I have contributed to the debate (Shearer, 1995) and steered my research towards a deep interest in the questions of personal identity for so-called mainstream Australians, generally of Anglo ethnicities, faced with indigenous and diversity issues (Shearer, 1998). Individuals enculturated within white Anglo-Australian families and contexts in the decades of the mid-twentieth century, have through the last three decades or more, been confronted by a range of experiences which have called into question their mono-culturalism and challenged their privilege within society.

Institutional Applications of the ‘Cultural Understanding’ debate

Research and policy documents reflecting an agenda which questions white or Anglo-ethnic monopoly and privilege are numerous. Closest to my work is the document recently made available to the staff of the University of South Australia from the Equal Opportunity Unit. Its title, Cultural Understandings: Creating An Inclusive Culture At The University Of South Australia, reflects the debate and applies it to a tertiary learning context in which the predominance of educators are mono-lingual and of Anglo-ethnicity. This document calls on tertiary educators to make it their goal to produce graduates who:

- think globally and incorporate multiple perspectives
- exercise choice in their own professional practice, based on understanding of the cultural construction of knowledge and its application
- engage in their profession at an international level
- live and work in diverse cultural environments

(EOU:UniSA, 1997:3)

The document calls for change in attitudes and behaviours with an inter-cultural view of learning and teaching:
"in which students and staff learn to understand and work with 'otherness', learning to observe, compare, analyse, explain and engage with 'other' ideas and people"

(EOU: Uni SA, 1997: 3)

It makes these claims on the basis that:

"Previously they (concepts of learning) were predicated on the notion of a relatively stable and permanent society organised geographically or by language groups, in which there was a body of knowledge which could be transmitted."

(EOU: Uni SA, 1997: 3)

A second example is provided by a project which formed part of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy 1991/1992 Adult Literacy National Projects sponsored by the Department of Employment, Education, and Training. Shore et al (Shore 1993) worked towards two broad aims:

- to put together guidelines for developing gender-inclusive, ethnic-inclusive and non-ageist material in adult literacy curricula
- to develop examples of adult literacy curricula exemplary in the use of non-sexist, non-ageist and non-racist material.

The report addresses issues in curriculum that caters for difference, education for social justice, curriculum for empowerment and difference as positive.

Characteristics of inclusive curricula based on a positive politics of difference are said to be demonstrated by the educators’ ability to:

- acknowledge that all individuals bring multiple perspectives to any learning situation as a result of their gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and/or physical abilities
- recognise that since identification with social groups is multiple and complex, claimed identity will be in response to many contextual factors that position the individual politically
reflect the experiences of learners, both as individuals and as members of particular social groups and value these experiences through their use as the basis of learning and assessment.

Research and Cross-cultural Training Approaches

In this paper, I report on research in progress which explores the ways in which qualities and abilities such as these might be formed within graduates and educators. Against the backdrop of the key competency debate and the call for inclusivity, my research calls into question cross-cultural training approaches which attempt within a few hours or days to bring about transformations within individuals whose enculturation has taken years and whose privilege within monoculturalism weighs heavily against such minimalist (though not to be despised) intervention. It seeks to demonstrate that views of cultural understanding as competence or as manipulable through brief training or awareness raising encounters are inadequate.

It has long been demonstrated that existing attitudes are more likely to reinforced through such training (Shearer, 1984). Within a training program evaluation, measures of change in the direction targeted by the training may be indicated, but on return to the dominant culture environment lapse is evident and the experience can be seen to have reinforced the status quo. At worst, such programs simply adds to the skill repertoire of the privileged and allows them to continue positioning themselves to benefit rather than achieving the desired mutuality and openness intended by the training.

Life Experience Research: Location and Design

An approach which recognises the deep personal investments which most, if not all, educators bring to their work, goes beyond surface manipulation with all its superficiality to the heart or 'habitus' of the person, deeply embedded and deeply ingrained. My research has therefore taken an alternative route to the cross-cultural training and awareness practices of the 1970's and 1980's. Working from the minimal unit of analysis, a single memory, defined within the research program, as a written spontaneous account of an event, episode or action, I engaged in a number of memory work workshops (Haug, 1987) which brought together educators, and in a separate group students, of Anglo-Australian heritage to reflect on their experiences of difference and engage in reflective debate about strategies which would enable their learning and teaching to be more inclusive. This yielded written 20 written memories with reflection and group discussion of them.
Following this first phase of research, I moved to a study circle approach in which six Anglo-Australian women examined their genealogies, travel patterns and work and neighbourhood contexts of over the six decades of the late twentieth century with special reference to their experiences of difference. The group met for three sessions in each of two stages. The study circle yielded thumbnail biographies and embryonic identity projects which called for further exploration. I continued work with two of the women in assisted biography interviews (DeWaele & Harre: 1979).

It is the process of collecting or generating these biographies and my first reactions to the sense that can (and can't) be made of them that I address in more depth in this paper. It is because I am questioning the traditional usage of the term 'biography' within this process, that I have entitled the paper 'Life Experience and Cultural Understanding'.

This introduction then, has served to give broad definition to the two terms in the title and to specify the context in which the research is being undertaken. It has situated the research broadly within post-compulsory research agendas and suggested the points of critique within educational practice involving cross-cultural training and awareness raising. Having glossed in the paragraphs above data collection and analysis which occurred over a two year period, I move on now to the data generation and analysis which constitutes the third phase of my research and has also occurred over a two year period.

**Assisted Biography**

When a researcher invites and then sits with a participant in an intentional assisted biography process, the result is a range and sequence of utterances, a narration, on both their parts, most of which is related to the imagined outcome of the process, a biography. What is popularly imagined in a biography is the description of a path or a journey with a beginning, a middle and an ending. The process presupposes that life is a whole and that in its telling as well as in its living, it unfolds according to a chronological and logical order.

The first difference which becomes obvious within the process of assisted biography interviews is that events do not unfold in strict chronological succession. We lose threads, go back and forth over different time and geographical zones, group sets of utterances around a supposed sequence or topic, make associations and leaps, take tangents and stop to interpret events in the light of later understandings, among a myriad of other nuances and inflections. What is created through the mutual and collaborative efforts of the participant and the researcher, the auto-biographer and the biographer, the memoirist and the scribe, the ideologist and the interpreter, is an artificial meaning or construction. Both have an interest in coherence and necessity and together they construct a 'biographical illusion'
Bourdieu calls for a view of reality different from the popular understanding of biography as a genre, quoting Alain Robbe-Grillet:

‘The advent of the modern novel is precisely tied to this discovery: reality is discontinuous, formed of elements juxtaposed without reason; each of these elements is unique, and all the more difficult to grasp because more continue to appear, unpredictable, untimely, and at random.’

(Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1984:208)

In the generation (or construction) of these autobiographies, one participant told a life history in one sitting of approximately one and a half hours duration. Having launched from the general question, tell me about yourself, within the context of an articulated choice of taking either a chronological or a thematic route through her life (or any other for that matter), she began with her birth and proceeded through various phases of her life. She included themes and metaphors where they occurred to her. She paused three times with a temporal interjection: Is this what you want? Is this too personal? And finally: Is there anything else you would like to know?

Subsequent interviews added to, refined and refuted elements of this first telling. For the commencement of interview three, I had produced and mailed to the autobiographer, a personal profile using a pseudonym and written in the third person, 'she' rather than 'I'. This contributed to a sleepless night for the autobiographer during a period of illness with the flu. She read the profile as an "Anne of Green Gables" description which omitted the pain and struggle of her life which she saw to lie beneath the first telling (and had only partially articulated) and the first profile description (clearly an incomplete and deficient interpretation of the interview). A range of different stories came to the fore over six revisions of the profile which supplemented, complemented and at times contradicted the first telling. Finally, we had produced a profile which could be converted to the first person "I" and headed with the real name. The autobiographer found it quite comfortable to read aloud and give assent to. The reading opened the way for one or two further changes. Extracts from profile drafts are included in Appendix A.

The second autobiographer took a slow and considered journey through her story and carved it more or less discretely into various locations and/or stages of life with each of six interviews. There was evidence of influence from the biographer in maintaining the forward progression. The development of her personal profile, again using pseudonym and third person in the first four drafts, occurred some months later, due to the slower analysis called for by the descriptive and less analytical style of the story-teller. A few additional stories were generated through the profile development stage of the process and a couple of significant episodes were more strongly highlighted and given the emphasis the autobiographer thought they required. She commented that she was concentrating on making it a correct account of her as a person. Again the participant read the final profile in
the first person. She remarked as she began that it could be used as her eulogy. Extracts from profile drafts are included in Appendix B.

This interview process calls into question the degree to which an autobiographer is presenting a self and the degree to which they are producing a self. The production (and presentation) of a desired person is the result of a subtle interaction between their subjectivity and the public models of biography available to them. Within the process, they are at least semi consciously drawing on people they have seen being interviewed and deeply embedded publicly available models of ideal types with whom they associate and disassociate themselves (cf Bahktin).

**Biography as Artefact**

The profiles developed within the interview process might be considered artefacts (Bourdieu, 1987) of the research. Following the interviews, I have worked on producing an artefact more like what the participants might have imagined would be the outcome of the interviews, a chronological life history. In the case of the first autobiographer, I have transcribed and edited the first interview as a telling of the life. This is seven pages of 10 point single lined text. It is written as told in the first person and constitutes a 'naïve autobiography'. This is not to imply that the story of the life lacked depth or maturity. Rather I use the word 'naïve' in the sense that the story was uttered not with a view to being a final product, nor a carefully premeditated and refined version. In the case of the second autobiographer, I have written a biographical review of the transcripts of her interviews, using her pseudonym and the third person. The first rendering of this is 22 pages of 10 point single line text. This is a 'naïve biography' in the sense that it was written as a first draft without any verification or validation process to date, either with the autobiographer or with others known to the autobiographer and mentioned in the story.

Parallel with this process, I have completed an analysis of the two sets of interviews using Nud.ist coding each paragraph of the transcripts as a text unit within a framework suggested by its content. Multiple coding of paragraphs or text units is the rule rather than the exception. Parent Nodes or categories not carefully defined as yet but developed from first impressions and applying to both biographies include:

- themes
- relationships
- family information
- social context
- physical context
- psychological context
- feelings
- experiences of cultural difference
More thorough and complete content analysis may be required, but this first analysis suffices for the present stage of research development. I have also coded interview data relating to questions, leads and other matters related to the structure and process of the interview which need to be the subject of another paper. And I have begun a socio-linguistic analysis which addresses issues of discourse more directly.

However, these outcomes or products of the research cannot be seen as ends in themselves. They are necessary steps along the way, but stop short of the research object which is defining itself (or being defined) within the process. Changes in focus and direction occur in many instances of the data analysis. As researcher, I have struggled to break with native experience, particularly that informed by three decades of teaching and research in the field of intercultural communication. From the sequence of utterances occupying the best part of sixteen 90 minute tapes and the several hundred pages of transcription, there is to date the mutually developed profile, the naïve autobiography and the naïve biography. Within the process of generating the (auto)biographies themselves, there are researcher journals concerned with the process of blending, comparing and combining the contradictions and anomalies which the method and the research products have brought to the surface. These are sufficient to achieve a different sense of the research object, broadly dubbed as 'cultural self' in the early stages of research. It is to this delineation and refinement of the research object that I now turn.

Delineating and Refining the Research Object: Towards a morphology of transformation

I am currently considering the lives depicted by these biographical illusions as a trajectory of positions successively occupied by the person in a space that is constantly evolving and subject to ongoing transformations. The texts are being analysed for the identification of a set of moves and locations in social space which is being defined through objectifiable conditions of existence. The delineation of these from the text, together with an analysis of the systems of schemes of classifiable practices and works and the systems of schemes of tastes and preferences are being used to derive the 'habitus' of the person, that is the set of enduring dispositions which are put to work within the changing contexts of the individual's life and within the choices of occupation and location that are made at various stages of their careers or trajectories. This is being coupled with symbolic analysis of dreams and recurring stories in the narrative. The sets of relationships to which participants make reference and those aspects of the data which can be broadly defined as life style add further dimensions to the analysis. The research has also taken on a search for the species of capital which directed their life trajectory. Cultural capital, together with social, economic and symbolic capital are interlinked and can provide empirical routes through text and data. These are important forms of capital within this analysis but I am also hypothesising that there are other forms of capital relevant to the research question (changes within mainstream individuals in the face of indigenous and diversity issues) which might be derived through such processes of analysis.
The delineation and refinement can be described diagrammatically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis of species of capital</th>
<th>A MORPHOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION</th>
<th>Ù Life Style Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Locations in Social Space)</td>
<td>trajectory understood as positions successively occupied by the same agent in a space which is itself constantly evolving and subject to ongoing transformations</td>
<td>Ù (Moves in Social Space)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Analysis</td>
<td>Ù</td>
<td>Ù Table of Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes, relationships, family info, contexts, feelings</td>
<td>Life Story Content Analysis (~120 Nud.ist Nodes)</td>
<td>• Distilling of Primary Relationship Profile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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I am proposing a morphology of transformation as the final (yet always ongoing) outcome of the study. Morphologies are commonly seen with film and television technology when a child's face fades into that of the same person as adolescent, young adult, middle aged and so forth. The key to the morphology is what remains common within a changing set of depictions. The person is generally still recognisable, but a transformation has occurred. With my study, I intend to select a set of specific ages or stages of the person's life and describe them in terms of the species of capital relevant to the person's life and the research question under consideration. These species of capital will be selected and analysed in relation to the 'habitus' of the person and will be used to demonstrate that and hopefully how a transformation has occurred and is illustrated within the life. It may be four or five depictions. It may be more. Criteria for selection of the 'morph-' or form will need to be developed within the process. Pragmatic and empirical descriptions of 'habitus' will need to flesh out the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings.
If this work proves fruitful, I anticipate an opening of ways of understanding transformations which occur within individuals who are not normally seen to be the subject of change within the cross-cultural and intercultural training literature. Cross-cultural adaptation will be seen to be occurring within the so-called 'host' members of mainstream cultures, as well as in the migrant, the refugee and the members of ethnic groups other than those of Anglo-ethnicities even though there is little to mark the change outwardly.

As this is work in progress I am able to illustrate the data analysis process only in elementary form. I conclude the paper with two examples of draft outcomes of the analysis in the study to date.

Examples of preliminary analysis

Take for example an utterance by a member of a family who lived in a house on a small dairy farm which bordered a country town, between the district's large farms and the town itself.

"Our family didn't have a phone. We used to go to the neighbours' house to use the phone."

This utterance refers of two units: a family and neighbours. It refers to two physical entities, a house and a phone. It explains a lack (didn't have a phone) and a practice (used to go ... to use) acceptable within the culture to overcome the lack. A myriad of questions may be posed to de-code this utterance. What is a family? What is a phone? What is a neighbour? What is a house? Why is a phone needed? Why is it significant to mention this matter? It alludes to an ensuing practice and pattern of interaction, the idea of having one's own phone. It raises questions about the kinds of conditions under which it was deemed appropriate to make use of the neighbours' phone. Some of these are mentioned in the ensuing narrative.

"And to use the phone, they'd go down to the neighbour's, Mrs Brown. And she used to use her phone. They'd pay her for the phone calls. And they only ever used it if it was a dire emergency. Because more than anything else they hated putting people out. Mum and Dad were very, very self-contained people. And no they wouldn't put anyone out, so unless it was to call a taxi because someone was sick or whatever, they would never use the phone."
The physical appearance of the phone is described with an emphasis on the feelings of the speaker about the appeal of a former time.

"And it was the best phone in the world. A wooden box on the wall, with a speaker as part of the wooden box. And the handle that hung on a cord. And you wound that handle. It was a little country exchange. So when you wound the handle, somebody said, number please."

The patterns of interaction which are referred to overtly in these utterances are the notion of visiting a neighbour, paying for a call, not putting people out, being very self-contained, not engaging in a certain practice. The patterns of interaction which are inferred are the reference to a 'Mrs' as constitutive of the neighbour household, implying a 'Mr', that it was perhaps more often the mother who initiated such calls, that the payment was a joint initiative of the mother and the father, that they were of one opinion about uses of the phone which were appropriate and uses which were not, and that unnecessary use constituted 'putting other people out'.

The description of the phone also suggests patterns of interaction which are overt and others which are covert. For example, the voice of the 'somebody' is an overt expression of an interaction event. It introduces another unit to the culture, a voice representing a person whose role it was to be at the end of the line when the handle was turned. More covert in terms of patterns of interaction is the attitude of the speaker of this utterance, what constitutes 'best' for her and why? What does this say about her attitude to the past and her sense of mystery at a piece of technology she recalls from her childhood days?

Yet in a more macro-analysis of the life, in what ways are these utterances to be taken as significant. Her reference may be seen to be to the lack of capital which the family possessed. The social and economic capital of being in possession (or not in possession) of a phone and being able to call those outside the home with the assistance of a telephone operator. The cultural and symbolic capital which the phone represented in a small country community. In making reference to this entity, the speaker is placing herself and her family within a social space. She is defining the 'have's' and the 'have not's'. She belongs to the latter and not to the former. She is reinforcing the remoteness of her childhood and lack of interaction which her family engaged in beyond the immediate extended family and the professional help which might need to be called in a time of emergency. She is defining a pattern of interaction between neighbours which for her family was sanctioned. By inference, one can read the patterns of interaction which were not sanctioned.

Whether these utterances are interpreted to contribute to the significance which the individual places on her life overall can only be assessed through a thorough going life experience analysis. At best the researcher can hope to glean an accumulation of such interpretations and demonstrate a case for their significance through the repetition and reinforcement which an ordered telling of the life and an even more orderly analysis of the life might yield.
At a broader level, there can be no hope of making claims that this is part of mainstream culture, except that it can be shown to have existed in this one case. The researcher's own life experience is operative in a reflexive way, in that the utterance calls forth similar understandings of the days when phones were not common to the majority of households. Her own stance within mainstream culture is necessary for the utterance to be interpreted in this way. The notion can be tested against mainstream myth and literary sources which in their own way contribute to the patterns of interaction and to the patterns of telling one's story.

At the end of the day, we have an utterance, we have an interpretation and we have a body of knowledge, privately owned and individually possessed, which in some ways yields enough meaning for sense to be made of what is being said. We also have an infinite number of utterances, an infinite number of interpretations and a body of knowledge, publicly owned and collectively confessed, to create a sense of meaning and a sanctioned set of patterns of interaction, however, illusory and shifting, this set of patterns may be.

Cultural understanding grows incrementally. It grows through a life, formed and shaped by a dominant cultural heritage, against which other aspects of life are judged, pre-judged and re-formed. This re-formation of cultural selves is the essence of this research agenda.

The second example in more macro-form attempts to described the two sets of life experience side by side.

**Life Experience: A Story Of Two Women**

Born in the middle of the twentieth century, one in the city and one in the country, one the last child by seven years to a family of meagre means, the other the first child to an affluent couple in a prominent suburb of a capital city. Each met 'strangers' within their early years. Each chose a life path which brought 'strangers' across their paths in intimate and profound ways. Each could be said to belong to Anglo Australian culture, in the sense that they had no lasting markers of an ethnicity other than this one.

They describe their enculturation by reference to predictable indicators, such as home, school, siblings, relatives, father's occupation, mother's supportive role within the family life, church and youth activities. They go on to describe their relationships with others, husbands, children, friends, work-mates, bosses, clergy and with 'others' who originate from elsewhere, who speak a different language, who organise their lives in different ways, who live
according to different principles. They describe the lack of belonging they feel with these 'others' and at the same time the sense of sameness with them which they also feel.

The process of generating a life story brought unifying images to their dreams and reverie. One saw herself as a set of pristine, white boxes, neatly tied, not in any particular order, but neat and clean and tied up with bows. The other spoke of autumn leaves returning to their roots. She revelled in their colour and their value in returning to the earth. Both related these dreams to the desired goals and outcomes of their lives.

The narratives twist and turn as their stories unfold. The detail supports the over-riding themes that emerge for each: for one, a strong sense of home and family, of being in control and making do well; for the other, a transition from supportive dependency to her own uniqueness and sense of choice and control. Their lives illustrate the interweaving of families which are like their own and families who are of different backgrounds and origins. They both show a sense of valuing of difference, a desire to re-define themselves in the face of this difference and an achievement of inner harmony between who they are and will always be, and who they have become and are becoming as their lives embrace the lives of 'others'.

Their adaptation to future societies may be minimal and embryonic, yet nevertheless is traceable through their biographies. Multiculturalism shifts within their lives from being an external, societal and political affair, to being an internal orientation, which neither denies the value of their own heritage, nor casts off without due appreciation, the value of the heritage of others. Cultural understanding comes home to the individual through such life experiences.

Together we move towards new forms of interaction as we leave behind the monoculturalism of the past and embrace the multiculturalism and internationalism of the future. These lives are empirical evidence of change within host culture members, examples of the adaptation required to achieve an equitable and just society, one which leaves no culture under-valued and no stone unturned in the search for a diverse yet common humanity.

Conclusion:

To return to the research question and to the ideals raised in the discussion at the commencement of this paper, I am suggesting that there is much more to cultural awareness training and to shifting institutional policy and practice than can be achieved in either short and focussed programs or in pithy and pragmatic policy documents, however appealing and however much in the short term they can be shown to be evaluated to be effective. These are serious issues for education in Australia and there are serious stakes.
My research is working towards illustrating that an individual per se will maintain an essence through their lives of who they are formed to be within their initial enculturation. They will be tied to the field and the forms of capital which they inherit from their families. And even when they make deliberate shifts of field, or follow the trajectories of their partners (or other primary relationship effects - with the various combinations of capital which such a relationship entails), that capital and its associated habitus will reappear and re-form in new yet recognisable disguises. It is not by changing something inside a person's head, nor by changing the language we use about curriculum, pedagogy and institutional practice that will effect the outcomes desired, such as viewing difference as positive or making curriculum inclusive. Lives are complex and the study of lives and identities even more so. Multifacteted, complicated changes in identity are rarely investigated (Rossan, 1987:304). When the social space and structure are included in a meaningful way within the study, as they must be, the work takes on an even greater degree of difficulty. We are each self reflexive researchers and ideologists of our own lives. Our journey takes a life-time and is never complete. As researchers in the formal sense, we often attempt to make participants in our studies ideologists as well. The pedagogy of the research process contributes to the field. Although our attempts to view the lives of others in both a scientific and phenomenological way may be faltering and fraught with difficulty, the reliability and validity of life experience in all its complexities can be established through in-depth analysis.

I conclude with a plea for consideration and support by research funding bodies. Fast trends and research indicators which favour the superficial and give credence the immediate outcomes described in competency statements may be important in the short term. What becomes more difficult in the light of studies like this one is to include fuzzy notions of identity and self and even broadly defined concepts like cultural understanding within the intentional outcomes of educational practice rather than exclude them as too all pervasive to warrant specific attention in the first instance. And then to achieve the degree of commitment to them that allows longitudinal and depth research of which this research is an example or prototype in the long term. Our research agendas (or lack of such) in the field of intercultural training say more about the bureaucratic field which drives the research (or excludes it from the race) and the associated resources than their value in the future of the species and its ability to adapt to the diverse futures of the twenty first century.
References:


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Queensland Department of Education and the Queensland Vocation Education, Training and Employment Commission, (1994), Cultural Understandings as the Eighth Key Competency, Final Report, coordinated by the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia Centre for Workplace Communication and Culture.


APPENDIX A

I am a ... woman in my late fifties. From early days I have seen myself as ... I am ... I like ... These characteristics have impregnated my life with a sense of ... From early years, I remember being ...

I grew up in ... I love ... and do not feel at home in ... even though I may recognise ...

I am a fourth generation Australian of ... background. My family on my father's side are ..., while my maternal grandfather was ... My mother and maternal grandmother were also born in ... but their origins are unknown to me.

I have strong opinions on ... and voice them freely. This brought a sense of conflict between ... I continue to enjoy discussion of these with ...

I do not remember ever having ... Rather people have ...

My working life began as ... and I moved into ... After a few months as a ..., I became ... and enjoyed this work in two different locations for a number of years. From the time my husband commenced work as ..., I accompanied him in ... Later, I worked part-time as ... My abilities and interest in ... were recognised by ... and I have secured a number of contract positions in these areas ...

I love ..., but I am especially interested in .... I like to be stirred and confronted and to face the change to my life and work which are called for ...

... 

During my life, I have been involved in .... I have actively turned ... towards fulfilment of these and the values they represent.

I may have neglected .... When I went ..., I found that at that time in my life, I had nothing to ...
I like ... I like ... I like ... I like to ... In these conditions, I believe I and others can ... From early years, I was interested in ...

I acknowledge that I feel uncomfortable when I sense that ... I find it easier to befriend people who ... However, I can be quite critical of ...

Through life I have received ... At times I just have to ... I am thankful for ... and I know it ... So, I often encourage others ... I see myself as a better ... than ... I am ... I love .r.

I have always had a passion for ...

I followed my husband to ..., where I found continuity in ...

I experienced ... and somehow arising from that I have ... over the past ...years. From that time, I have taken active steps to ... I now feel more free of ... I also take more active responsibility around ...

My values include ... Within these ..., I like being ... and see myself as ... My work has always been ... My working relationships with ... I like ... Other ... staff have provided ...

In retrospect, I can see that ... In later years I am more aware of the dangers of ... and more able to say ...

My friendships are like ... They are activated through ...

I look forward to being ... in my later years much like ...

... are most important to me. ... In particular, I long to be ... I have found ...
APPENDIX B

My lifestory is a story of ... which embraces the stages of .... I currently live in a suburban home which .... My home has also been ...

I was the youngest child by seven years in a family of .... My life was shaped, I believe, by .... My childhood was ...

My maternal aunts, uncles and cousins lived ... In addition the family ... holiday ... event brought close contact with .... My mother's side of the family held to ....

Nevertheless there were tensions within the extended family ... During my childhood and adolescent years, my family resided ... This side of the family held and practised ..., particularly my paternal grandmother who ... I never felt I belonged, never felt ...

Although this very tension existed within my immediate family, ..., I feel it was well managed. My mother set an example to me .... On the surface, relationships within the extended family were .... Yet I recognise in retrospect that ...

My memories of adolescence are situated in the sense of her family not being .... They issued in missing ... and thus the chance to .... I worked as a ... and then married ... My story is intricately bound to the moves and ambitions of his life and work, ... In these overseas sojourns, I found my own roles in ...

My family of six children includes .... Through life in different stages in two capital cities and two territories, our family ...

Once their schooling had begun, as at other stages of my life, I ... Both have brought ... to the home ... After my youngest son was in secondary school, I worked for two years as .... That enhanced my self esteem which ... I enjoyed ... being ... I felt valued by ... and that was very important to me in ... at that stage in my life. My years as ... have also overlapped with becoming ...
My sense of humour about being addressed as ... takes its roots right back to my maternal grandmother whose life was ... That Grandmother died ... I have always regretted not having known her ... Her life style and values were ...

I can point back to two pivotal points in my life which have helped me know myself. The first ...

The other pivotal event which impacted my life was ... This turn of events threw my whole life perspective into relief and brought to the surface of my consciousness my life approach and response in the face of ... I remember ...

I am happy even when ..., when I look back and realise I may have been quite ... in some choices I made. I keep busy. And I stay ... in the face of ...

In essence, I see myself as ..., who likes things ... and who doesn't function well in .... I don't ever remember not ... I like to feel a sense of ... and generally have the attitude ...

I describe myself as ... My ... heritage has provided continuity and a sense of belonging, and a value base which can be simply summarised as ...