Moving Beyond "Kitchen Table Prejudices": Innovative Research-Based Approaches to Teaching Majority Students About Minority Issues

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This interactive session will draw on my original research with university teachers in Australia. Some of the faculty I interviewed were teaching Aboriginal students; most were tasked with introducing Indigenous Australian issues to white students not always receptive to such topics. Analysis of my findings led to a unique set of online "Research-Based Approaches to Indigenous Teaching". Together, we will tackle how such Approaches might be successfully applied to innovations in participants' own diverse classrooms.

Outcomes:
After my sesssion, participants will be able to build on what has been shared among colleagues in order to further develop your own:

- enhanced understanding of how research can inform our teaching practice;
- awareness of the need for ongoing reflection on our own practice as well as our own values;
- ways to minimise the "emotional labor" (Harlow, 2005), and maximize the satisfaction, of teaching about minority issues to majority students;
- readiness to access online teaching exemplars and evaluation strategies, for application to your own reading contexts.

Category: Innovation
Describe the planned innovation addressed in your paper and what motivates it. Describe what you see in your students', colleagues', or institution's behavior that you want to change. Describe the learning objectives you want students or colleagues to better achieve as a result of your innovation.

Research in Australia (Asmar & Page, 2009) and elsewhere has highlighted the ways in which teachers are often challenged (and stressed) in classrooms where issues of diversity and race are being dealt with. This "emotional labor" can be experienced very intensely by faculty of color (Harlow, 2005), but other teachers can also find it hard going. Majority
students can be resistant to certain curriculum topics. Medical or nursing student, for example, may not see Indigenous health as relevant to their own anticipated careers, and may resent being made to feel "guilty" about what they see as past histories. If Aboriginal students happen to be in the same classroom, this is a real teaching challenge. The Approaches proposed in this session have been developed to support both teachers and students, of all backgrounds, in their encounters with potentially confronting materials and issues.

By engaging with research-based Approaches to teaching, from far away - 'Down Under,' participants may expect to gain some innovative insights and strategies for application in your own diverse contexts, and to develop new confidence and skills. Similarly, in what I hope will be a collegial and congenial environment, I look forward to learning a great deal from you all. (See too Learning Outcomes above.)

If your innovation involves a particular course or curriculum, briefly describe it, its students, and its place in the curriculum or program.

Not applicable

How is your innovation different from ones that others have tried?
What I propose is innovative in the sense that for the first time (in Australia), research carried out over a number of universities has involved interviewing experts in the field of Indigenous teaching; this, in turn, has provided findings with direct practical application to a range of courses and disciplines in an under-researched area. It is also innovative in that the findings are relevant both for faculty teaching minority students and for faculty teaching about minority (race) issues to students from majority backgrounds. While good teaching is always needed, the Approaches identified here go well beyond traditional teaching technique-involving, for example, negotiating emotions; introducing personal experience; and co-teaching with colleagues from minority backgrounds.

Assessment and baseline: Indicate how you plan to determine the success and effectiveness of your innovation. If outcomes are not yet available, indicate when they will be (by the time of the session?).
It is never easy to determine concrete outcomes from an attempt to shift peoples' attitudes and ways of doing things. However, communications from colleagues across Australia (including many Aboriginal faculty) have indicated that the web-based Approaches and Exemplars I have provided online (and via face-to-face workshops) have proved relevant and useful for their teaching. In one university, the Approaches have been adopted as the framework for a new curriculum in Indigenous Health.

References:


**Organization:**

My session, which I plan to make interactive and engaging, will be organized as follows:

- eliciting participants' prior knowledge and experience in the field of teaching about minority (race) issues to students not from minority backgrounds.
- drawing some relevant parallels between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous Australian) teaching issues on the one hand; and Native American and other US minority issues on the other.
- touching on key issues such as "emotional labor" (Asmar & Page, 2009; Harlow, 2005) in this field of teaching.
- sharing selected research-based Approaches identified in my research (Christie & Asmar, 2012).
- asking participants to work on identifying particular Approaches most likely to be relevant to your own practice, and (if time allows) to plan how to actually apply them.
- directing participants to further online resources such as multi-disciplinary exemplars of teaching, plus suggestions for evaluating your success in this important and rewarding field.

**Keywords:**

Diversity/Multiculturalism
Indigenous
Research-based teaching