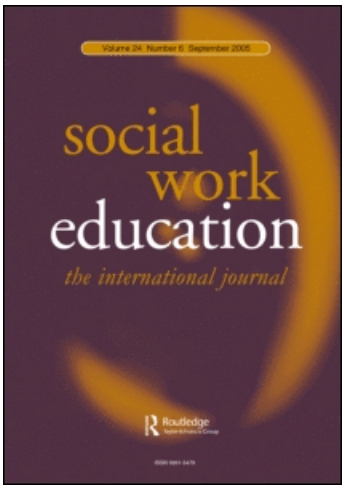

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'Your Mind is the Battlefield': South African Trainee Health Workers Engage with the Past

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'Your Mind is the Battlefield': South African Trainee Health Workers Engage with the Past

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A key problematic in any post-conflict society is how to account for the injustices of the past, while at the same time making a space for the development of a shared future. In South Africa, there is an increasing demand for health and social service workers, who are required to address the impact of an unjust past upon individuals and communities. Educators of health and social service workers are thus faced with the complexities of finding pedagogical practices that would allow students to recognize these past injustices and their impact on present problems. This article looks at data taken from a teaching project across two South African universities, where students from three professions engaged in online discussions about their personal, social and future professional identities. During some of these discussions, students spontaneously entered into disagreements about the relevance or irrelevance of the past in modern-day South Africa. The data indicates considerable reluctance on the part of some students to talk about the past and its relevance to the present. The authors suggest that while talking about the past is both difficult and potentially painful for students, it is nevertheless the responsibility of educators to facilitate such discussions among trainee professionals.

Keywords: South Africa; Students; Apartheid; Race; Interdisciplinary Collaboration; E-learning

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Introduction

One of the key problematics for any post-conflict society is that of how to take adequate account of past injustices while at the same time making appropriate space for the development of a new, and shared, future. Various models of truth and reconciliation processes have been proposed to ease transitions to new societies, and the South African Truth and Reconciliation process has been heralded as a leading example of good practice in this regard, though it has certainly not been without its critics (Swartz & Drennan, 2000b; Stevens, 2006).

Health and social service workers, such as social workers, psychologists and occupational therapists, are commonly those who in any society are exposed to people and problems which are attributable to past and present injustices and inequalities. As a country like South Africa moves further from the moment of transition (in South Africa this is commonly seen as the advent of democracy in 1994) to what is discursively constructed as a more 'normal' democratic present and future, health and social service workers are positioned both as representing the new order and its hope, and as being able to heal the wounds of the past (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2006). Many current trainees in these professions have lived more than half their lives in a democratic South Africa, and were children at the time of transition. They do not hold adult memories of the lived experience of apartheid South Africa, but it remains true that their lives and work are still affected by apartheid's legacy. For trainees who are first generation black[1] professionals, for example, and from families effectively barred from professional health and social service work under the old regime, the leap from past to present is obvious, but even for white trainees from professional families, the world of professional training and work has changed. Some trainees may be continuing family traditions of work but in a context which makes new and different demands on professionals.

At the same time though, despite the rhetoric of transformation, South Africa remains powerfully modelled on and affected by the apartheid past. Indeed, recent theorists on the social psychology of desegregation in post-apartheid South Africa have suggested that despite formal desegregation, race relations in desegregated public spaces reflect an informal segregation in people's spatial and linguistic practices (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Durrheim, 2005; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). These patterns of informal desegregation extend powerfully into university spaces even in universities which in terms of official policy favour desegregation (Schrieff *et al.*, 2005; Erasmus, 2006). It is, furthermore, patently clear that ideas about race continue to infuse professional practices, whether consciously or unconsciously, as in, for example, the common view that 'community psychology' as a discipline is a branch of psychology concerned only with professional work in poor, black communities (Carolissen, 2006).

Examining the complexities of providing health and social services early in the transition period in South Africa, Gibson and Swartz (2001) noted that social service workers were acutely aware of the burden of the past on their work and yet also conscious of the emotional pull to be seen to make something new in a South Africa which held the hope (realistic or not) of being untainted by the apartheid past and

the difficult transition. As one participant in Gibson and Swartz's (2001) study poignantly put it, 'I can't change the past, but I can try'. This quotation contains within it both a sense of the hope and indeed the heroism of the very early phases of the South African 'miracle', as it is commonly called. It also indicates something of a recognition of what cannot be achieved—nobody can, in fact, change the past. Tronto (2003) emphasises the importance of considering the past when thinking about present and future social justice for the wrongdoings of the past. Tronto (2003) critiques some feminist thinkers' privileging of the future over the past, in an attempt to promote women's agency, arguing that to do so 'limits our capacities to deal with past injustice' and may create an 'avoidance of responsibility' (p. 127).

As South Africa progresses in time away from the sense of a society in transition into the realm of an ordinary, if postcolonial society, questions arise in the education of social service workers as to how best to recognise (or ignore) issues of the past which may affect current practice. Adams *et al.* (2007) emphasise the importance of incorporating historical dimensions of knowledge in pedagogical approaches to social justice education in order to understand and locate patterns of oppression over time and the legacies and social situations of particular groups of people. They provide the example of affirmative action in the USA which cannot be understood without a historical knowledge of how whites as a group were advantaged and African Americans disadvantaged through slavery, legal segregation, forced relocations and racial violence (p. 5). Abrams and Gibson (2007) argue for the inclusion of the exploration of white privilege and identity in critical social work education, which would promote an increased awareness and understanding of racial oppression. They suggest that this requires of students to reflect on their own experience with privilege and oppression.

In South Africa, a complicating factor is that at present many educators of social service workers are very differently positioned historically to their students, if for no reason other than being part of different age cohorts. This cohort effect though, brings with it a series of factors influencing teaching. The authors of this article, for example, are all currently involved in educating health and social service workers in South Africa, but we were all adults during the transition years. It is by no means irrelevant to the present article, furthermore, that most of us were involved in anti-apartheid activities, at a time, crucially, when it was very clear in South Africa that social service work was inevitably infused with politics (Dawes, 1985). In a 'business as usual' world internationally, the political aspects of social service work are commonly obscured (Dominelli, 1997) and 'politicised biographies' of academics, teachers and social service workers are erased (Mulinari & Räthzel, 2007). We therefore come to our roles as educators not only with a sense of the past but with a political investment which has its roots in our opposition to a political and social order which notionally no longer exists. How do we, given our political and personal investments, help students take account of the past without imposing on them a sense of history and politics which is ours but not theirs? How do we know when we are requiring students to enact our own concerns, and when, by contrast, students' not wishing to engage with issues of politics and race, for example, can legitimately be seen as a problem for their work in a society which remains powerfully affected by the past?

These are complex questions which cannot be dealt with adequately within the space of one article. As a start, in this article we draw on data from an inter-university, inter-professional and inter-group project to consider the various ways in which students may negotiate their complicated positioning as inheritors of centuries of apartheid and colonialism as well as influential players in the formation of the new South African landscape.

Intergroup Contact in a Collaborative Project across Two South African Universities

The Community, Self and Identity (CSI) project was a teaching and research collaboration between the Department of Psychology and the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Stellenbosch (SUN), and the Department of Social Work and Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The CSI project entailed the development of a collaborative teaching module for final year social work, occupational therapy, and psychology students. The module aimed to provide students with an opportunity to work and learn in small workgroups, using a mixture of face-to-face and online (e-learning) interaction, across the boundaries of institution and discipline, as well as race, gender, class and language. Interdisciplinary education has been found to be important in order to develop emerging professionals that are critical and reflexive, challenging the assumptions of their own disciplines, and so encourage future professional interdependence across disciplines (Davidson, 2004). This is particularly important for health care professionals, where professional stereotyping and rivalry often exists (Barnes *et al.*, 2000; Mandy *et al.*, 2004).

The project required of students to critically interrogate the notions of 'community', 'self' and 'identity', by drawing on their own personal experiences, as well as engaging with relevant academic literature. This literature was taken from occupational therapy, social work and psychology disciplines.

Both universities are located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, but are however very differently situated historically. SUN has historically been the university for white, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. Students generally come from privileged middle class and upper class backgrounds. The university also has a history of right-wing, and at times Nationalist political ideology. By contrast, UWC has historically been the university for coloured and African students, many from underprivileged lower middle and working class backgrounds. The language of instruction at UWC is English, although many of the students speak one of the indigenous African languages or Afrikaans. UWC has a history of left-wing political ideology. Many of these differences remain today, despite the desegregation policies of both universities.

The National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001) has urged higher education institutions to prepare students to be able to make a contribution to transformation and 'a common sense of nationhood' (Department of Education, 2001, section 2.6). Given the continuing divides that exist in post-apartheid South Africa, emerging professionals would need to gain an experience of interacting with diverse groups, and engage with issues of difference.

This may be facilitated through the development of virtual or e-learning communities (Lewis & Allen, 2005; McConnell, 2006), where students are able to interact in groups and work together on a common project, and so develop a sense of belonging and identity. McConnell's (2006) understanding of e-learning groups involves collaborative learning which is based on social constructivist ideas of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which views learning as social, interactive and participatory, rather than individual, linear and passive and involving the transmission of independent knowledge 'out there'.

Method

The broader study of which this is a part was conceived of as a teaching and learning project for training health and social service workers. Details of the programme and methods of data analysis for the entire project are described by Leibowitz *et al.* (2007), and Rohleder *et al.* (2008a, 2008b). For the purposes of this article, we analyse the three online conversations in which students engage explicitly with the issue of the relationship between their current work and South Africa's past and also disagree amongst themselves. In line with the principles of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1984), it is commonly when rules are broken (including through disagreement) that we learn most about what those rules are. Students were not specifically asked to engage in conversations about the past. Students were asked to discuss what they had learnt about South African communities from one another, and so the conversations about apartheid that occurred in these online groups can therefore be seen as being raised spontaneously by the students. In addition, we mention some statements by students from individual reflective essays written as part of course requirements.

Our analytic approach follows guidelines suggested by Hollway and Jefferson (2000). They use a combination of social constructionist thinking and psychodynamic theory to argue that people may draw on prevailing social discourses to construct an understanding of people and social events, but do so with an emotional investment in certain types of discourses over others. Discourse analysis accounts for the role that language plays in constructing reality (Bruner, 1991). In discourse analysis, attention is paid to the '*action orientation* of talk' (Willig, 2001, p. 91, emphasis in the original). Selections of texts are analysed by paying close attention to how language (the terminology, style, metaphors and figures of speech) is used to construct versions of events and the function that it takes as a social action (Willig, 2001). Following the guidelines of Hollway and Jefferson (2000), part of this interpretive process involves identifying how language might be used as a defence against difficult emotions. They suggest that in the analysis of qualitative texts, due account needs to be taken of what they term 'the defended subject'—they argue that analyses of spoken and written discourse need to take account of emotional investments in sensitive topics, and of the ways in which personal anxieties may interact with more global political concerns.

Building partially on Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) work, Frosh (2007) cautions against a tendency in the analysis of qualitative data towards what he terms 'rebuilding

narrative coherence' (Frosh, 2007, p. 637). He reminds us that narrative data are often in their nature fragmentary and contradictory, and that the analytic task is not to impose coherence but rather to illuminate the nature of fragmentation itself. He notes, further, that 'there is, simply, no external point through which the true story of the subject can be told' (p. 638), a caution which is especially pertinent to our analysis in the present study—as authors, we have particular investments in the issues discussed by our students; as both researchers and teachers of these students, we need to acknowledge that our own capacity to reflect accurately their meanings and investments is limited by our own positionings. Elsewhere in our project we have in fact engaged in joint publishing with our students (Rohleder *et al.*, 2007), and continue to do so. The current article though is inevitably a product partly of our students' data but also of our own concerns as educators at this time in South African history.

At the start of the CSI module, students were told of the nature of the course as being both a teaching and research project. They were informed that the nature of e-learning meant that their writing would be of a public nature. After completing the module, they were given the opportunity to decide whether they consented for their written works to be used anonymously for research purposes. Students were given an information sheet and consent form to be completed and signed by them. All but seven students gave their consent. The works of those students who did not give their consent are excluded from any analysis and publication.

Results

Despite some inclusion of apartheid as a topic in the course (in the form of prescribed readings and panel discussions on post-apartheid South Africa), there was little dialogue in the student groups about race and apartheid. There were a few instances where workgroups did have brief discussions about race and the legacy of apartheid. In three particular conversations there was tension and disagreement around discourse about apartheid, and it is on the discussions in these groups that we will now focus. In these particular online discussions, different students made different arguments about the importance (or not) of considering the past and its effects in the present. They did so by constructing particular arguments that positioned themselves in opposition to the views of others.

In the first discussion extract, one student discusses the lived experience of racism. Two other students, while acknowledging such experiences, try to be persuasive in suggesting that such experiences belong in the past, and should not be 'allowed' to influence the present or future.

Discussion 1: 'We as the New Generation Should Not Allow the Past to Shape Our Present and Future'

In one group the following discussion took place:

> *Student A7*: This article as a black child gives me more information about how it was for black people in the institutions. The circumstances that they lived under

> and challenges that they faced in the apartheid era. It brings anger and confusion that why black people who said white is better than black who gives a right to whites to treat blacks as they did and also what was the main point of apartheid was is to torture black people because to me I see nothing else which was done then beside others being against black people. (A7-UWC-SW-F-26-Xhosa-A)[2]

> *Student A3*: I agree that in the past it was only blacks and coloureds, which was also classified as blacks in those days that was discriminated and marginalised. However, we as the new generation should not allow the past to shape our present and future. The manner in which the whites are also being oppressed within the new South Africa, is that when a white individual for example say something or accidentally move in front of a black person unconsciously in a queue, the black person would also for example discriminate and make use of the past experience, by verbally attacking the person. I think that even though we as coloureds and blacks have been discriminated against, we are all victims of these oppressive concepts, regardless of our heritage, culture or colour. I do agree with the student that racial discrimination is a sad thing to have experienced, but some people should just stop using it as excuses in getting what they want. (A3-UWC-SW-F-21-Afr-C)

> *Student A1*: I agree to a certain extent. People of colour did receive really bad treatment in the apartheid regime, and from that treatment the results still show today in the new South Africa, because the majority people of colour still represents the poor in South Africa, because of these unequal treatment in the past. All of the comments you made in your first summary, is in the past and I'm glad that you have shifted your comments onto the present time and day, because all of those things in most part of the country has changed. (A1-UWC-SW-M-23-Afr-C)

The above discussion starts with the comments of student A7, who gives her opinion on the experience of apartheid as it affected 'black people', a personal reflection for this student who herself is African. Two students (A3 and A1) respond to her comments, taking a similar stance in their argument. While acknowledging the prevalence of racism, particularly the oppression of coloured and African individuals, they locate this firmly in the past, and pull the discussion towards the present, where, they suggest, things are different. In their comments, these students express a reluctance to talk about the past. For example, student A3 states, 'we as the new generation should not allow the past to shape our present and future'. Similarly, student A1 talks about the 'past' in comparison to the 'present', where he stresses how things have changed. In this discussion, while the existence of racism is acknowledged, it is located more as an experience of the past, emphasising the changes of the present.

The reluctance to talk about the past is more explicit in another group, and in the following discussion sequence, where one's experience of living in a segregated landscape is partly negated by other students who emphasise the notion of desegregation in the present.

Discussion 2: 'There is No Longer a White, Black or Coloured Communities'

> *Student F2*: I have learnt that our maps[3] shows the differences in our communities in my group there were three different types of communities, the white, coloured

> and black. In black communities are no resources at all. It is common to that resources are far from the people. […] I have learnt that the white communities have big houses and pools in their yards. They have spacious houses. (F2-UWC-SW-F-34-Xhosa-A)

> *Student F6*: There are a few things that I need to disagree with you on when it comes to your essay, when you say there are three types of communities, namely white, black and coloured. I feel that, that is not the case in our country today. I know that there are a lot of communities where there are blacks, whites and coloured people living together. This is the case in my community. I personally think that your perception of how the white people live is a little bit distorted because not all white people are rich and live in big houses with pools, there are many white people who live on the fringe or just below the poverty line. (F6-SUN-Psy-F-21-Eng-W)

> *Student F4*: There is no longer a white, black or coloured communities everything is really diverse. If I should make it clearer from my own experience and views I live in a so called white area but I am coloured. (F4-UWC-OT-F-22-Eng-C)

In this group discussion, student F2 writes about the segregated landscape of South Africa, describing separate white, coloured and black communities and the socio-economic inequality between them. This is a comment on the prevailing unequal and segregated urban landscape of South Africa (Christopher, 2001), which was the result of apartheid spatial segregation practices. The student is met with opposition by two students in particular. Students F6 and F4 object to the description of segregated communities—'this is not the case in our country today' (F6); F4 states how now 'everything is really diverse'. Students F6 and F4 draw on personal examples to justify their generalisations. Their discourse aims to move the discussion away from segregation (and the past) towards a desegregated present. This leaves student F2 feeling silenced, and she later writes in her individual essay:

> There were times that we have tension, contradictions but we discuss them, for example some students does not want to discuss about race issue. (F2-UWC-SW-F-34-Xhosa-A)

In the same group, a different student couple enter into a similar discussion about segregation and inequality. In this case a foreign student tries to persuade a South African student not to dwell in the past, and to have a 'mind shift' to focusing rather on the changes and opportunities in the present.

Discussion 3: 'Your Mind is the Battlefield'

> *Student F1*: Here in Cape point many Black people including some of the few coloured are still living in shacks. Jobs are needed because if everyone can get a job crime will be decreased here in South Africa. There are few wealth people here in South Africa like the first people are Whites followed by Indians after them followed by Coloured and the last ones are Blacks. (F1-UWC-SW-F-21-Xhosa-A)

> *Student F3*: I know I am a foreigner and may be I don't feel the pain you are feeling about what happened in the past, the reason why I am saying this is because I can

> see that you are still talking about the coloureds, white and blacks, and mostly blacks as the disadvantaged, what I want to say is your mind is the battlefield, if you don't change it to accept what happened in the past, to prepare for the future, you are going to miss opportunities, because in this world we don't get what we deserve but what we negotiate. (F3-UWC-OT-F-24-Setswana-A)

In this discussion, student F3 responds to F1's comments about a segregated and unequal society. She stresses that the issues raised by student F1 are issues of the past, by making comments such as 'you are still talking about coloureds, whites and blacks' and 'accept what happened in the past'.

'In Order to Move Forward One Cannot Keep Looking Back'

Such tensions between the past and the present are also raised by students in their individual essays. For example, one student writes:

> I now feel that the context of our communities have been answered exhaustively before; apartheid and the Group Areas Act,[4] these factors and its effect on the community and oneself, as well as how it resulted in us being where we are today. However, I do believe in order to move forward one cannot keep looking back. (O5-UWC-OT-F-24-Eng-C)

The above student explains that this is a topic of the past; it has been talked about 'exhaustively before', that there is a need to leave the past behind and 'move forward'.

In their individual reflective essays, other students acknowledge the difficulty in talking about issues of apartheid, race and racism, and themselves point out how there was a reluctance in raising such topics. For example, one student writes:

> I think the fact that I realized most throughout this course was the just (*sic*) how afraid or avoidant we all are to talk about the past and how it affects us today. We somehow did not want to see how our history has affected us. (C5-UWC-OT-F-21-Eng-C)

As we have mentioned in the introduction, most of the students involved in this module were children during the time of apartheid, and have no adult memory of this time. The older students however, have more of an investment in memories of the past, and some of these students commented on the generational difference when thinking about the relevance or irrelevance of the past. For example, one older student wrote:

> The younger generation of South Africans in many ways are coping better in a democratic society than the older generation, who still remember what life was like before 1994 in their struggle against racism. (K6-SUN-Psy-F-31-Eng-C)

In Discussion 2 above, the generational difference in thinking about the past is indicated by the older student talking about the injustices of apartheid, and two younger students responding to this by stating that it is an experience which belongs in the past.

As can be seen in all of these extracts above, students are variously positioned as to the importance of the past in the present. While some students often use emotive

language to write about lived experiences of racism, segregation and inequality, other students respond with arguments constructed to be persuasive in trying to get students to focus away from the experiences of the past and to rather focus on the changes of the present.

Discussion

The data presented here show that for these students there is some discomfort with talking about the past in South Africa. Whether one calls the reluctance to talk about these issues simply a reluctance or one views it, in Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) approach, as a 'resistance' in the psychoanalytic sense to confronting painful issues, is a moot point. What is clear however is that there are many ways of engaging with the issues of the past—ranging from the view that the past is still very much with us, to the belief that we have achieved a substantial break with the past.

To some extent, the question of the continuity or otherwise with the past can be addressed empirically. It is a fact, for example, that white South Africans continue as a whole to be far better off financially than most South Africans of colour—2007 data from the University of South Africa's Bureau for Market Research show, for example, that whereas 85% of adult Africans earn less than R50,000 (approximately US$7,000) per annum, roughly 75% of coloureds are in this income bracket, and 38% of whites. By contrast, whereas 7% of Africans earn more than R100,000 per annum (approximately US$14,000), 12% of coloureds do so and 48% of whites (Hazelhurst, 2007). At the same time however, the emergence of highly visible wealth in a small but prominent section of black South Africans, may serve to obscure the continuing empirical fact of racial privilege. All our students, furthermore, even those from poor backgrounds, are relatively privileged in comparison with most South Africans merely by virtue of their being in sought-after courses in the higher education system. All students, as professionals in training, have the potential to participate in a very small section of South African society which is racially mixed and highly visible. In the context of their work, students will inevitably contribute to a perception of South Africa as a society which is becoming more equal. The reality is, however, that privilege is becoming more deracialised while South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world—and the overwhelming majority of the poor are black.

Students will be entering professional work spaces which will require them to contribute to a commonality of professional practice. Professional identities, for students to work effectively, need to be foregrounded ahead of potentially more fragmenting racial identity concerns. Professionals, regardless of racial background, have to be able to work together for common ends. Racially diverse health care teams, for example, need to draw on the strengths of diversity, including, crucially, providing services in a range of locally spoken languages (Swartz & Drennan, 2000a), but within a framework in which there needs to be a common approach to client wellbeing. At the same time however, the client population in the public sector in particular (and it is in the public sector that trainees undertake their professional

practice) are clearly marked with the divisions of the past. Most clients of the public health system for example are not white—both because whites are a minority group in South Africa but even more crucially because white South Africans are far more likely to have the income to have private health insurance or other private means which enable them to seek care in the private sector. Almost 70% of whites are members of private medical insurance schemes, as opposed to approximately 20% of coloureds and approximately 7% of Africans (Day & Gray, 2006). In addition, largely for economic reasons, the burden of disease differs substantially across racial groups, with whites carrying the least burden (Burgard & Treiman, 2006; Charasse-Pouélé & Fournier, 2006). The key determinant of who uses the public health system, of course, is privilege, but privilege remains racially structured to a large extent.

The fact that the discussions we have shown here arose spontaneously and that the disagreements about how or whether to take account of the past were so strong raises an interesting dilemma for us as trainers of professionals (and also for other people involved in training professionals in post-conflict societies). Do we in future insist that students discuss issues pertaining to the past, knowing that some of them will object to and resist such discussions, seeing them as irrelevant to their work and identities in the new South Africa? What right do we have to insist on such issues? There is no easy answer to this question, but we believe that in fact we do have both a right and a responsibility to require students to engage in such discussions. As privileged professionals in training they are to some extent protected by a comfortable discourse of equality which belies the reality of some of their own lives, but more importantly, those of the clients with whom they work. It would be easy to say that the uncomfortable question of the imprint of the past on the present is an issue irrelevant to contemporary students, but everything we know (and teach) about human development is that the past always matters in the present. It would be politically collusive and developmentally incorrect to accept that just because some students believe the political past to be irrelevant to the present, we should not require them to engage with the extent to which this belief may adversely affect their work with clients. Because, however, the issues are so intertwined with generational positionings, including our own, there does seem to be a good argument that facilitating peer-to-peer discussions on these issues may be the most helpful way of allowing for a meaningful (if painful) discussion. This discussion, we hope, may help alert students, regardless of their own backgrounds, to the ways in which their clients, like all of us, continue to be formed and affected by a past which we would all like to wish away.

In discussing the question of how professionals engage with issues of diversity and multiculturalism in contemporary Britain, Kai and his colleagues (2007) have recently shown the extent to which trying to act in a culturally appropriate way has become a source of anxiety to some health professionals, who may feel paralysed about not knowing how to do the right cultural thing and to cause least offence. In a similar way, conversations amongst our students have shown that it may be similarly possible to become paralysed by the question of politics in an unequal and historically unjust society. Professionals and professionals in

training, we believe, need safe spaces within which to discuss these difficult issues, without the threat of being chastised for their uncertainties, their differences of opinion, and even their understandable reluctance to speak of difficult things. Through such discussions, engagement may become more possible, to the benefit of patient care.

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Notes

[1] In South Africa, under apartheid, the population was classified into different racial groups and registered under the Population Registration Act No 30 of 1955. Every South African citizen had to be classified and registered as White, Coloured, Indian or African. 'Coloureds' refers to peoples of a mixed-race heritage. Superimposed on these categories were rules about social relationships and where people could live—the Group Areas Act, for example, designated all areas as particular to particular population groups. These categories continue to be used in modern day South Africa as a way to describe groups of people. The authors make use of them here, but recognise the negative connotations of these terms, and that the categories imply a particular history under apartheid. We use the term 'black' to refer generically to all formerly disenfranchised South Africans; some students use the term coterminously with 'African'.

[2] Quotes have been minimally changed for ease of reading. Following each quote, a descriptor of the student is given indicating the reference number allocated to each student for the purposes of data analysis; as well as from which university the student is from, their course of study, their gender, age, home language and race.

[3] At the start of the module, students were required to draw a map of their community and share the drawing and discussion about their community with the rest of the members of their workgroup (see Rohleder *et al.*, 2008b).

[4] The Group Areas Act was one of the cornerstones of apartheid, regulating the segregation of physical spaces by race—race determined, for example, where one could live and where one could do business.

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