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## Using the pluriverse concept to critique Eurocentrism in education

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### Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that teachers need to interrogate and transform how Eurocentrism underpins educational practice. This paper argues that teachers can actively engage with decolonial frameworks and concepts to productively expose how Eurocentric categories of thought shape teaching practice and curriculum. We describe how six teachers “walked with” the decolonial concept of the pluriverse (a sense of multiple co-existing differences) during collaborative reflections about our diversity teaching of culturally safe healthcare. Our research processes drew on the principles of collaborative, reflective practice. We co-participated in conversations, which aimed to collectively explore how the pluriverse concept intersected with our teaching and undertook qualitative co-analysis of themes emerging across these dialogues. The paper outlines how employing the pluriverse concept as a companion to our reflective process enabled us to ask critical questions about Eurocentrism in our teaching practice and content. Our questioning, in turn, generated principles for embedding the pluriverse in the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and teacher dispositions. The paper discusses what enables and hinders the pluriverse being embedded in curriculum materials and classroom activities and the limitations of our activities in relation to the broader project of decolonising pedagogy.

## 1. Introduction

Scholars and activists have exposed how education reproduces colonial power structures to the detriment of students (Connell, 2007; Nakata, 2007). In response, decolonising perspectives — which seek to unlearn and relearn in relation to dominant Western ways of knowing, doing and being (Walter & Baltra-Ulloa, 2016) — have increasingly been used to critique education paradigms. This paper is situated in this broader terrain and arises from a specific teaching context. During the research phase, all six authors taught about culturally safe healthcare to large cohorts of health profession students at four campuses across Tasmania and New South Wales, Australia. The aim of this teaching was to equip students with the ability to critically reflect on the assumptions embedded within their professional institution and prepare them to both work effectively with marginalised groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and become agents of change. This type of teaching has been increasingly prioritised in higher education settings as part of a significant shift towards advancing the cultural safety skills of university graduates (Riley et al., 2015). We are a group of teachers who identify with a range of diverse, intersectional social and cultural locations. We share commonalities in the ethos we bring to our work; we acknowledge we are socialised into the dominant Western paradigms in education (Krursz et al., 2020) and are committed to bringing a decolonising lens to our teaching practice.

This paper responds to an issue, which arose in our dialogues — our aspiration to interrogate how Western paradigms of thinking pervade our teaching. Although we bring an intersectional lens to our teaching, classroom discussions include references to marginalised groups. We discovered these discussions, and student essays, often created a dominant majority, and “diverse” minority; groups with the dominant majority group often being equated with “us”, and the other groups attributed the status of “them”. This illustrates the pervasiveness of the conventional Western conception of the world as a single, moral universe, with dominant groups and minority or “other” groups. Scholars have highlighted issues arising from this worldview. For example, Nakata et al. (2012) explain that sliding into “us” versus “them” content produces binarised, essentialised Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities. We found that when classroom conversation tipped into “us/them” formulations, it fed into homogenising perspectives about “diverse” cultural groups (Hollinsworth, 2016). This experiential evidence from both students and teachers points to how identities can be reified and populations generalised in diversity teaching in a way that is counter-productive to critical and reflective thinking. The team discussed strategies, which may be beneficial in this regard, such as committing to speaking to different identities in the room and ensuring the dominant Euro-Australian identity is just one of them. However, it was clear we needed to investigate further how Eurocentric thinking shapes our teaching and how students engage in the classroom.

The purpose of this collaborative exploration was to explore how decolonial theory — and in particular the “pluriverse” concept, that is the “decolonial political vision of a world

in which many worlds would coexist” (Mignolo, 2018, p. ix) — might assist us in exposing how Eurocentric thinking shapes our teaching and enable us to bring more epistemic diversity to our teaching about culturally safe healthcare (Zembylas, 2017; Zondi, 2018). In this project, we specifically tried to achieve this by actively engaging with decolonial theory in our ongoing collaborative reflections about our shared teaching experiences.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The broad agenda of the contemporary tradition of decolonial theory includes: acting against the harms of colonisation; resisting the Eurocentrism of the West and the ways it subjugates peoples disempowered by colonialism, and interrogating how we relate to the universality of Western thought (Mbembe, 2016; Mignolo, 2006; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Wynter, 2003). Decolonial frameworks provide apt tools for interrogating how our teaching, and specifically our discussion of differences between people, are imbued by “Western, colonial and Eurocentric epistemological foundations” (Zembylas, 2017, p. 397) that in turn perpetuate the idea of one universal world composed of major/minor groups, featuring a “human” who is underpinned by colonial epistemological “Western Man” (Wynter, 2003).

This paper contributes to the significant and emerging work by scholars who explore what it means in practical terms for teaching practice to be informed by decolonised perspectives. Decolonising perspectives have been used to critique and expose how Eurocentric thought shapes education paradigms and pedagogy (Bhambra et al., 2018; De Lissovoy, 2010; Kester et al., 2019; Nyoni, 2013; Zembylas, 2018); expose the violence of modernity in higher education (de Oliverira Andreotti et al., 2015), and disrupt how teaching practices and curriculum reproduce settler realities and colonial power (Mackinlay & Barney, 2014). Importantly, the decolonisation agenda lends support to embedding Indigenous epistemologies in the educational curriculum as they serve as powerful counter-hegemonic action to dominant discourses and support Indigenous staff and students’ wellbeing (Edwards & Hewitson, 2018; Walter & Baltra-Ulloa, 2016).

The pluriverse concept arises from decolonial scholarship (Escobar, 2016; Mignolo, 2018). It has particular utility for this project because it provides a fundamentally different concept to the idea of one universal world. Mignolo (2018) notes that Western Christian philosophers of the European Middle ages claimed superiority over other groups. This began searing Western epistemology with the imperial and colonial project. In contrast, “the pluriverse consists in seeing beyond this claim to superiority, and sensing the world as pluriversally constituted...[by] the entanglements of several cosmologies connected today in a power differential” (Mignolo, 2018, p. x). The pluriverse concept challenges the logic of universal modernity — which is promulgated by capitalist and colonial modernity — that there is only “the world” and “other” worlds exist in relation to “the world” or are rendered non-existent. The pluriverse is a world in which multiple worldviews, practices and livelihoods co-exist; a world where no one particular way of living shuts down

others (Escobar, 2001, 2012; Mignolo, 2006). The pluriverse interrupts the commitment to one common world. Rather, the focus shifts to the ongoing processes of making many worlds, to “heterogeneous worldings coming together as a political ecology of practices, negotiating their difficulty being together in heterogeneity” (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018, p.4).

The pluriverse concept has been used to think about pedagogic practice in a limited way. “Pluriversalising” education has predominantly been linked with the notion of epistemic diversity in which the Eurocentric story is decentred and dialogue among different epistemic traditions is privileged instead (Mbembe, 2016; Zembylas, 2017; Zondi, 2018). For example, Waite and Robbins (2017, p. 38) note how the pluriverse can inform a general pedagogical orientation of “teaching in relation to plural worlds, a never finishing project”. In the Australian context, Nakata (2007) describes the related concept of the “cultural interface”—the space between Western and Indigenous domains where knowledges intersect; the place that Indigenous people are constantly actively negotiating. Nakata et al. (2012) propose bringing a pedagogic focus on the cultural interface to challenge the way that binaries such as Indigenous/Western and primitive/modern are perpetuated in learning environments.

### 3. Methodology

We are a small group of colleagues with a shared passion for challenging Eurocentrism and embedding decolonial theory into our teaching of culturally safe care to health profession students. In 2017, we were drawn together through collegial discussions about the emotional labour that inevitably arises in this teaching space. These discussions evolved into a community of practice (Wenger et al., 2002) and formalised our collective reflections about decolonising our teaching. This, in turn, developed into collaborative research that made a case for peer collaboration as an important way of supporting teachers who are bringing a decolonising lens to their teaching practices.

The methodology for this project involved a group of colleagues “walking with” the concept of the pluriverse and engaging in *collaborative* and *critical* reflective conversation about shared teaching experiences (Ng & Tan, 2009). While we acknowledge that reflective time can occur introspectively, in conversation with ourselves, we concur with Brookfield (1995, p. 140) that the full value of reflection “occurs only when others are involved”. Collaborative thinking can uncover assumptions and enhance processes of inquiry through shared dialogue (Allard et al., 2007). Our reflections were intuitive, implicit and took a broad view. This enabled us to challenge assumptions and current thinking in “diversity” teaching and maintain a broad vision of our work as it relates to issues of social justice, in particular decolonising pedagogies and educational goals and values. The methodology was emergent, in the sense that we were open to the connections made and directions taken through the conversations (McLeod, 2014). Additional connections were also derived through the iterative movement between our reflections on previous and ongoing teaching

experiences, reading, thinking, talking and curriculum review. This was, overall, a productive methodology for exploring our research question, aligning with what Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 19) describe as a “praxis of decoloniality”: “a walking, asking, reflecting, analysing, theorizing and actioning — in continuous movement, contention, relation, and formation”. The conversations generated insights into how educators can draw on the pluriverse concept to challenge Eurocentrism in education.

Our group conversations were enabled by the degree of trust in our group, which has developed through working together as teachers and co-researchers for the past three years. The group has the capacity to support and care for each other as we share multi-level responses to our teaching experiences and allow questions to arise (O’Dwyer et al., 2018). We share being invested in peer collaboration as a way of exploring how whiteness informs pedagogical practice (Andrew et al., 2008; Charbeneau, 2015; Jupp, 2017). Thus, we embarked on this project with an already-established, comfortable process of working with each other and a sense of the scholarly value of being in a shared process of reflection about our teaching processes.

The data collection for this project constituted six collaborative, reflective conversations by Skype, between the members of the project team. These conversations were approximately 60 minutes in length and were audio-recorded. The project lead, Kim McLeod, wrote summary notes of each conversation. The group undertook a meta-reflection process and discussed the detailed notes from the Skype conversations. Kim conducted a thematic analysis to identify patterns across all the project materials (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial themes that emerged from this process included: questions of power and privilege; how students shore up or resist normativity; presence and absence in students’ navigation of their cultural locations; negotiating difference in an intercultural space; students’ complex identities, and implications for us as teachers.

We engaged in group discussions about the initial themes and further meta-reflection. Kim then examined these materials to identify instances where the pluriverse concept propelled us to see how Eurocentric categories of thought were shaping the teaching and learning environment. The data was organised into categories based on the themes as well as instances of teaching strategies that demonstrated “walking with” the pluriverse concept.

### 4. Analysis and Discussion

Our active engagement with the pluriverse concept in our collaborative reflections enabled us to expose how Eurocentric categories of thought shape teaching practice and curriculum. In the first part of this section, we show how Eurocentrism informs how students learn about, and relate to, intersectionality, social and cultural locations, and difference. The following part of the analysis presents our response to these insights, and our desire to teach differently. We then outline some principles for embedding the pluriverse in the curriculum, pedagogical approaches and teacher dispositions. We highlight the productive

interplay between the pluriverse concept and our capacity to teach about culturally safe healthcare practice.

### **How Eurocentric categories of thought shape teaching and learning about our own differences**

In this section, we outline how the pluriverse concept alerted us to the way students drew on Eurocentric categories of thought as they navigated the idea of intersectional identities. Intersectionality recognises that each individual belongs to multiple groups; the various “cultural locations” within each of us interact and intersect depending on the context and change over time. We use the concept of intersectionality to help students reflect on their social locations and to consider each patient as an individual with distinct experiences, histories and intersecting identities rather than as a member of a group, such as Muslim, Aboriginal and/or lesbian. Students are encouraged to consider how institutions, structures and systems discriminate against some identities and communities and afford privilege to others. Students gain insight into how some identities experience multiple forms of discrimination, which in turn shapes their experience in unique ways.

The Eurocentric idea of the human at the centre of one, universal world was at play in key tensions that arose in how students engaged with intersectionality. Students embraced the concept of intersectionality, as it resonated with their own lives. Some of our teachings focus on diversity in terms of race, religion, gender, sexuality and ability. We encountered an enduring tension in how students related power and privilege to their intersectional definition of self. On the one hand, some students had “light bulb” moments. They recognised that the parts of their identity they found difficult to identify was due to them belonging to dominant groups with associated invisible privileges. On the other hand, students could limit their engagement to aspects of diversity with which they felt comfortable while glossing over points of tension. We noticed that many students readily focused on aspects of their identity for which they experienced discrimination but seemed less able or willing to examine how some social locations afforded greater access to power and/or privilege at the structural level. As Kim reflected, students tended to use the intersectional framework to *“celebrate the complexity of individual uniqueness in ways that flatten everything down to the level of the individual”*.

These students used this exercise to understand themselves as intersectional and complex, but in ways that reinforced, rather than challenged, norms associated with locating their identity at the “natural” centre of the world. Students actively selected “what representation is given and not given to the intersections of cultures, colonies, colonists, classes, races, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicities, power and privilege” (Baltra-Ulloa, 2018, p. 129). For example, students drew on discourses of victimhood (Nelson et al., 2018) to produce a “different but equal” narrative, which led to power being elided. Or, the disadvantages experienced by someone from a low socioeconomic (SES) background were equated with being an immigrant of colour. Students engaged with an exercise to explore how they might stereotype, and be

stereotyped, by filling in the blanks: “I’m \_\_\_\_\_, but I’m not \_\_\_\_\_”. Sarah found a typical response was *“I’m white/Australian, but I’m not racist”*, indicating how students used the activity to shore up unquestioned belonging to their chosen groups (and the groups’ associated privileges). We recognised similarities between our students’ responses and (white) students’ resistance to the knowledge that threatens hegemonic understandings that have been documented in the literature (see Brookfield and Associates, 2019; Cabrera, 2014; Hollinsworth, 2016). Following Picower (2009), we recognise that students’ strategies encompass not merely passive resistance but active protection of the status quo. Their reluctance to acknowledge racism suggests that it would be too discomforting for them, creating too many problems that they would have to deal with in their lives (Brookfield et al., 2019).

We identified another tension relating to students engaging with intersectionality. Students maintained and reinforced the dominant Eurocentric worldview by placing their identity at the centre in an unquestioned way. As Robyn reflected, thinking about intersectionality alone was comfortable for them, *“because they [could] choose what aspects of their intersectionality they [could] focus on”*. However, engaging with the intersecting space was vital, as Robyn mentioned, *“so that they don’t feel like they are outsiders in that space, and that they don’t feel uncomfortable in that space”*. In other words, an intersectional understanding of self can help students to feel they are relationally present, and relationally active in shaping their future health encounters. We were led to ask to what extent the students’ “presence” had been enabled by students reifying their own positions through drawing on the dominant Eurocentric worldview, with “me at the centre” during their engagement with intersectionality. The pluriverse was a useful concept for bringing these issues into focus for us. In our discussions, we wondered if the concepts we introduced to disrupt normativity, such as intersectionality, were being used “creatively” to shore up normativity instead.

### **How Eurocentric categories of thought shape teaching and learning about others’ differences**

This section details how Eurocentric categories of thought shaped the ways students explored differences in other individuals and populations. Above we detailed how students selectively engaged with the “comfortable” aspects of their own identities. Sarah observed how this tendency extended to how students relate to the differences of “others”: *“They do that thing, I’m going to allow that kind of difference, I’m OK with that because it fits with my way of thinking to a degree, but I’m a bit funny on that difference.”* Students construct difference as “other” to my/our common world of “non-difference”. They enrol difference into the Eurocentric idea of one world, with all other worlds relegated as different. Kate mentioned that she often got *“feedback about students valuing learning about the ‘other’”*. In other words, students came to class, expecting to learn about “others”. However, as Sarah identified, our aim was for students “to learn about themselves”. We saw how students could inflect difference with Eurocentric thinking, thereby removing any connection to the idea of pluriversal differences between co-existing

worlds. In addition, students can remain in the centre, detached from “others”, rather than navigating difference as a person who is located among and connected to other peoples.

To interrupt this, we needed to find ways of teaching students to see that what they do relationally is the key. This is what creates change, not the differences they see as embedded in the “other”. We found the pluriverse concept a rich resource for us because it directs attention to the negotiations and contestations between multiple and intersecting worlds. The challenge in this is to think about groups as different from each other with some commonalities in-between—arguably, what the earlier debates about multiculturalism have offered. If we can locate the dialogues in this space that is “in-between”, we can go beyond categorising different groups, and creating “us” and “them” dichotomies, and think instead about our connections as people sharing the same space.

We were provoked to ask whether it is possible to bring these students into a conversation about how difference is produced through intersecting relations at this early stage of their learning about cultural safety. Nakata et al. (2012) argue that privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge is a good starting point to understand how knowledge systems and societies that have been decimated through colonization. However, it is not a position to uncritically maintain. For example, in our teaching which focuses on culturally safe healthcare with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients, students need an initial grounding in the invasion, colonisation, and the rupture of kinship to understand the ongoing differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people’s health outcomes. They also need an appreciation of self-determination as it relates to the distinct rights and responsibilities of Australia’s Indigenous peoples. Moreover, students had been exposed to sociological health literature, which draws on the idea of majority/minority groups to aid thinking about power and how resources are distributed unevenly. In contrast, the pluriverse concept highlights how Eurocentric thinking informs knowledge generated about the broadly defined Indigenous (“minority” group) and non-Indigenous (“majority” group) in one universal world. As such, it propelled us to ask how we could engage students with these critical perspectives, without replicating what Nataka (2007, p. 10-11) describes as “the western order of things and its constitution of what an Indigenous opposition should be”. We discussed whether it is possible to teach structural group differences alongside ongoing relationality. We explored whether our teaching could be underpinned by the cultural interface while still giving students an initial grounding in the social, cultural and historical determinants of health for Aboriginal peoples. A challenge for us was to reflect on this notion productively with students who are often only beginning a process of learning about structural discrimination and their own identities.

Two telling illustrations show how students relate to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people as binary groups and replicate the “taken for granted ways of thinking that are the foundations of cultural practices that reinforce epistemological and ontological superiority” (Baltra-Ulloa,

2018, p.130). This manifested in the students’ learning as the simultaneous reinforcing of an unquestioned centre and the distancing of the “other”. An eye-opening point for us was to see students’ reflections to a case study of the preventable death of Ms Dhu. Ms Dhu was a 22-year-old woman of the Yamatji Nanda Nation and the Banjima People who died of septicaemia in police custody in South Headland, Western Australia in 2014 within 48 hours of being incarcerated for failing to pay fines. She was taken to the hospital twice after complaining of pain but was returned to her cell after medical professionals attributed her pain to “behavioural issues” or “drug withdrawals”. The coroner’s report found that both the police force and health and medical institution failed to deliver the duty of care owed to Ms Dhu and that the behaviour of responders was both unprofessional and inhumane (Western Australia Coroner’s Court cited in Klippmark & Crawley, 2018). Referring to students as they discussed this case study, Kim reflected that it was:

*shocking [to see] that they didn't relate to her demise like they couldn't relate to her, an air of inevitability of it. [It was] very easy for the students to position themselves as outside it.*

As Whitt (2016, p. 432) explains, distancing is problematic because it “prevents students [and others] from critically examining important aspects of their world, lives, and knowledge”.

The second (even more) telling example saw students mobilise their recently gained insights into colonisation in Australia within their reflective essays. Many non-Aboriginal students absented themselves by enacting the identity of “white person with a handle on invasion” and by collectively not empathising with Aboriginal peoples’ lived experiences. As Duncan observed:

*It's that placement of racism in the past, it's that they get to push themselves away, they say that happened, and I'm acknowledging it now, and that's the only journey I can go on, I can't understand it's still relevant.*

We saw this response to a marked degree across our student cohort: students removing and distancing themselves from relations to peoples. This positioning contrasted starkly with how the students related as people (and locating themselves as people) in their learning in our teaching which focused more broadly on exploring race, religion, gender, sexuality and ability, where there was more leeway (as we described in the first section) to locate the self in desired and comfortable ways.

Overall, the pluriverse concept helped us to sustain our questioning about how identities can be reified and populations generalised in diversity teaching in a way that is counter-productive to critical and reflective thinking. In addition, the concept helped us to reveal how Eurocentric thinking shapes our teaching, and the students’ learning, about difference.

## Principles for “pluriversal” pedagogies, curriculum and teacher dispositions

In this section, we outline some principles for pedagogical approaches, curriculum development and teaching strategies, which are informed by the pluriverse concept.

### Teaching to and from multiple positions

This principle entails taking as a *departure point* that we are teaching from multiple perspectives, with people of all different identities, all interacting and working through the content together. The principle supports always interrogating, as Robyn observed, “*to what extent our teaching and the materials [are] aimed at the dominant group, rather than a broader group*”. This can be mediated by presenting multiple worldviews as the norm, and unpacking which worldview is dominant, and why. Kate noted how the pluriverse concept helped us resist acknowledging a dominant worldview, yet framing this worldview as one of many, by saying: “*yes, there is one dominant worldview... but it is just one.*” In our teaching context, we impressed on students the many worldviews on health, and what makes the biomedical model central, due to its dominant power position. This means not just *avoiding* positioning white Western ways of doing, being and knowing as the norm, but highlighting how a worldview is centred.

This principle supports asking what it means in teaching and learning encounters if we understand teachers and students as relating to multiple, intersectional positions. This presents an effective strategy to avoid patterns in centring one group and othering other groups, in classroom conversation and in the content. We recognised, however, that this entails being attentive to how we are shaped by our own intersectional positions, as Robyn indicates:

*With my training in whiteness and wanting white students to get it, I can speak to the white students. But if I'm doing that, I'm ignoring all the other students in the room. How [do I] make sure I'm not only speaking to the dominant groups and the position of non-dominance. The conversation needs to encompass everyone.*

This was crucial to reflect on because if we only focus on “white students”, we would be ignoring all the other students in the classroom — or excluding or silencing some students who may be able to make connections and relate. We noticed a striking difference between some Anglo- or European-originated students and those with other backgrounds in terms of reflecting on their positionality and making connections with other peoples. As Kate reflected, “*my non-Euro students were already so aware of their racial selves*”. Although it is important to enable voices and expression from a diverse range of intersectional positions, we are mindful of not reifying a student as representing their “group” by asking them to be the voice for the group. For that, Duncan pointed to the benefit of initiating classroom discussion by introducing multiple perspectives: “*...it's about how we start up the workshops...we can integrate the idea,*

*that there are multiple voices here, there is a pluriverse of knowledges; you shouldn't have to look to that person to be that voice*”.

### Modelling working in-between

This principle emphasises being attentive to how difference is readily attributed to those who are positioned as “other” to the norm of “Human Western Man” (Wynter, 2003). Instead, attention needs to be sustained on how differences are relationally produced, rather than embedded in an “other”. We made links between our own practice as teachers and the practice we discuss in the classroom. This led us to model working in-between in our teaching; linking what we were asking students to do in the future to the classroom environment. This approach was supported by Nakata’s (2007) concept of the cultural interface as well as understandings of the pluriverse discussed by Dunford (2017), where the world is constituted through ongoing interrelationships. We remained cognisant of the fact that, similarly to healthcare spaces, workshops are relational spaces and what happens in those spaces is determined by who is in them. Sarah indicated how the pluriverse supports pedagogical approaches that enable us to:

*debunk the idea that “there are groups who are different, this is how they are different, the specifics of their difference”...The pluriverse has weight in forcing students to learn about how others are different, but that everyone is different, and it is about their position of power, and it is about co-existence, and how do you do that without bringing an air of superiority.*

We discussed how teaching strategies, which enable students to explore what they do relationally, are key; activities that allow students to learn about how their own responses are at play in creating a “centre” and a “periphery”, which position some people as acceptable and others to be “tolerated”. This principle, then, suggests a focus on learning through our responses. These teaching and learning processes engage with students’ and teachers’ sense of identity, belonging, and community.

Vulnerabilities, emotions and affective responses feature in our classrooms and require attention, and care (Hollinsworth, 2016). This is supported by understanding everyone in the classroom as not distinct from the many contexts that matter outside the formal learning environment. In other words, being a student or a teacher is “not an identity binary, as we often try to enact, but an assemblage” (McLeod et al., 2020, p. 7). The principle connects with commitments of our earlier work together, of teaching orientations that include co-learning with the students — enacting that we too, as teachers, are part of, and accountable to, what is happening relationally in the teaching and learning space. Underpinning our teaching with the same ethos, we are asking students to consider that we are “always implicated in each other’s lives” (Baltra-Ulloa, 2018 p. 135).

## The potential of pluriversal, culturally safe practice

As the above section shows, the pluriverse concept enabled a productive emphasis on intersectional relatedness in terms of how the students and we engaged with difference. We found this thinking was generative in relation to our teaching about culturally safe practice. Cultural safety is a concept developed in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1980s by Irihape Ramsden, in response to the inappropriate healthcare practices being used with Maori peoples. The idea has now been adopted as a framework in many countries around the world, including Australia. Firstly, cultural safety involves awareness and appreciation of difference by the healthcare practitioner. Secondly, it also involves legitimising differences, as well as an exploration of the self and one's own beliefs, attitudes and values. Cultural safety occurs when the practitioner provides care that is focused on the cultural requirements of the client, where the two points mentioned above are applied (Phiri et al., 2010).

The pluriverse concept helped us to think into, and emphasise, the "doing" of cultural safety as informed by intersectional relationality and pluriversal, co-existent worlds. It is a shift to relational doing as culturally safe practice. As Robyn reflected, "to actually engage with the idea of the pluriverse, it's not just about imagining how things are for someone who is different to you; it's about engaging in collaborative dialogue." A pluriversal perspective on cultural safety is underpinned by "a cultural politics founded on a belief that multiple ways of knowing, being, and doing can have equal value in understanding care" (Baltra-Ulloa, 2018, p. 130). This enables discussing our (including students') histories, spaces and positions as relational — that is being connected to each other — in all our teaching about cultural safety. In the classroom, we made a concerted effort to get students to think about intersecting, in-between spaces, highlighting that these are the kinds of spaces where they will navigate cultural safety in their future healthcare practice. In every interaction as a practitioner (or teacher), they/we need to approach interactions with an awareness of self, considering and legitimising intersecting differences (including within groups), negotiating power imbalances and being aware of the operationalisation of whiteness, while also ensuring that they/we work relationally and with respectful curiosity (Bansal, 2016; Phiri et al., 2010). This approach to practice is similar to that promoted by social worker Ann Joselynn Baltra-Ulloa (2018, p. 133), who argues that in an ideal world, there would be no right or wrong way to practice, it is about "learning in and through practice". She explains that it is through being in relationships and navigating such spaces together that we learn how to care for and be cared for.

The pluriverse concept highlights ongoing contestations between co-existent worlds. As a result of our discussions about the pluriverse and its relationship to our teaching, we also included activities, videos and case studies into the content that exposed students to a diversity of positionalities and explored how they might navigate them in practice. The students we teach are being taught to be health professionals within the Australian healthcare system where the biomedical model, a white Western approach to health, is dominant. As a result, this approach is positioned as the norm for them. A guest lecture by Aboriginal scholar,

Jacob Prehn, specifically explored working between the biomedical and Aboriginal models of health. Robyn noted how Jacob modelled this by "*critiquing the biomedical model, but in some ways also utilising the biomedical model. There's no sharp line between Western ways and Aboriginal ways of health treatment. In lots of ways, there are, but there is lots of cross-over. So maybe in that cross-over, that's where you get away from that reification.*" This way of thinking enabled a productive focus on what it means to work between the biomedical and Aboriginal models of health.

We also found the pluriverse helped us explore in-depth how the Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary can reduce the complexity of culturally safe healthcare with Indigenous patients, to a simple model of a privileged white health professional interacting with a marginalised Indigenous person. Instead, we utilised and kept central the concept of intersectionality to highlight that there is a multitude of practice scenarios that can occur in the health sphere. For instance, a successful Aboriginal professional could be dealing with a white nurse from a low SES background. This also helped to challenge views of a static, one-dimensional Aboriginal identity. With this focus, we highlighted how a dialogue between different epistemic traditions is productive in healthcare encounters. As others have found, these exercises proved the usefulness of the "pluriverse" concept in decentring the Eurocentric narrative about patient-health professional relatedness and bringing more epistemic diversity to our teaching about culturally safe care (Zembylas, 2017; Zondi, 2018).

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper highlights the need for decolonising pedagogies and teaching strategies that critique Eurocentric thinking. Integrating the pluriverse concept into our pedagogies has allowed us, as a teaching team, to become attentive to the impacts of Eurocentric thought and to rethink our pedagogy. We offer principles for embedding the pluriverse in the curriculum, pedagogical approaches and teacher dispositions, and in doing so, contribute to the existing literature about the pluriversalising of education through the incorporation of diverse epistemic knowledges (Mbembe 2016; Zondi 2018).

This paper indicates the importance of attending to how normativities can be reinforced in the pursuit of inclusive pedagogies. "Walking with" the concept of the pluriverse has allowed us to critically engage with and consider what would typically be deemed an "inclusive" teaching environment. When Eurocentric thinking underpins notions of inclusion, it means inclusion on the basis of sameness. The notion of "inclusive" teaching, which aims to provide the same learning opportunities regardless of students' backgrounds, enjoys widespread and institutional support (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). Using the pluriverse as a platform for critical discourse towards what Eurocentric thought situates as "diverse" identities creates a dialogue into what we are asking those who are positioned as "diverse" to be included in. The creation of "diverse" identities lies within Eurocentric thought, and that difference is defined by those who are "including" (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2018), often

negating the opportunity to ask those who are positioned as “diverse” about their thoughts on inclusion. Working towards “inclusion” does not necessarily guarantee a safe space for all people as it requires certain conformities. Focusing on the need for people not being the same (Raghuram et al., 2009), along with the recognition that that can be for the betterment of everyone (Baltra-Ulloa, 2018), lies at the heart of a decolonised pluriverse praxis. We concur with Stentiford & Koutsorius’ (2020) observation that discussion about inclusive pedagogies in higher education needs to take the time to acknowledge the complexity of pedagogic issues, such as those we have identified in this paper.

Integrating the pluriverse, and hence questioning dominant narratives, has allowed us as a teaching team to relate to the multiplicity of differences that co-exist alongside each other and work towards praxes that are about creating a sense of belonging. Part of this process has been learning through how we teach and the importance of maintaining a “co-learning stance”. This has been critical for developing knowledge and pedagogies that create an understanding of both students’ and teachers’ needs. In this way, we respond to the literature about what it means in practical terms to decolonise teaching and learning, including engaging with students to critique the complexities around knowledge production and the limits of Eurocentric thought (Nakata et al., 2012). This breaks down the student/educator relationship in that we as educators respect and understand the knowledge that students bring, along with their own resistance to the dominant Eurocentric thinking (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2009). As Kate identified in the first conversation: “we need to ensure we don’t assume students are part of the dominant group[s]”. Students who are considered “diverse” need to feel that that they are understood so that they are able to trust us as educators and negotiate their own terms of “inclusion” (Makhubela, 2018).

The process that this teaching team has undertaken contributes to emerging decolonisation literature concerning praxis (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). We have shown how critical and collaborative, reflective conversations that engage with promising theory can be a productive way of developing practical tools for decolonising education. Due to student resistance and the integration of new knowledge, it is significant that a finding of this project is the beneficial nature of the connective group relationship, which allowed openness and vulnerability in our collaborative conversations. The reciprocity that was integral to these conversations necessitated the need to be able to not only “walk with” the pluriverse as a concept but also the need to be able to walk with each other as a team.

An identified limitation of this project is the question of how far decolonisation processes can be achieved within a predominantly non-Indigenous group. As a teaching team engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, five of the team identify as non-Aboriginal and one as Aboriginal. Scholars of colour have identified the limits to how predominantly white teachers can engage with each other about whiteness and Eurocentrism (Ohito, 2019; Zembylas, 2018). This became a discussion point during the assemblage of this paper, in terms of how we could have been more purposefully engaged with this limitation during

our collaborative conversations. This project could have also extended its methodology through bringing the research team into contact with scholarship in the space, including slow scholarship (Hartman & Darab, 2012); relational responsibility and care (McEwen & Goodman, 2010), and yarning methodologies (Shay, 2019).

A recommendation from this project is that redefining “inclusion” from non-Eurocentric thinking can contribute to a greater sense of students feeling safe and, from that a sense of belonging. The following quote from Kim speaks to how the pluriverse has helped this process, “I feel overall it has been a useful lens for us to use, to think about how it is that we create groups of us and them, how different identities are enacted, I feel like it’s helped us to ask critical questions about the extent to which we are able to get the students to think about what it means to navigate difference.” The development of this approach within our teaching praxes has helped us as a teaching team to identify practical means in which we can decolonise our teaching. Expanding on this recommendation is the identification of engaging with the breadth of the decolonial project as it sits not only inside teaching and curriculum but also outside the classroom and the dominant culture.

Our conclusions have shown that while this project has helped us to question Eurocentric thinking and worldview, it has also generated enduring questions and tensions, identifying the need for ongoing examination and experimentation. The pluriverse has allowed us to critique our teaching praxes and the complex nature of “us” and “them” dynamics in the classroom, thereby working towards creating spaces of belonging for all who sit within our classrooms.

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