

CURTIN UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MEDIA, CREATIVE ARTS AND SOCIAL INQUIRY

COMS1003 Culture to Cultures
ASSIGNMENT 3 *Reflection* COVER SHEET

(ALL SECTIONS MUST BE COMPLETED)

STUDENT NAME: SARIAH

STUDENT ID:

DUE DATE: 23 NOV

SUBMISSION DATE: 23/11/2020

If submitting after the due date, do you have a CAP or been granted an extension?
Yes / No

WORD COUNT: 1606

Group on Discussion Board: GROUP 5

TUTORS' NAMES:

There is only ONE submission point - this coversheet and your essay need to be in ONE document.

DECLARATION:

I declare that I have retained a copy of this assignment.

I have read and understood Curtin University policies on Plagiarism and Copyright and declare that this assignment complies with these policies.

I declare that this assignment is my own work and has not been submitted previously in any form for assessment.

Signature: SARIAH

Date: 20/11/2020

I would like to acknowledge the Whadjuk Noongar people as the traditional custodians of this land that I write from today. I pay my respect to the Elders of the community, past, present and emerging.

1. What effect has learning about concepts like essentialism, non-essentialism, culturism, etc. had on your own perceptions, views and intercultural capabilities? Why do you think this is? (approx. 200 words)

This unit has made me more aware of my tendency to generalise and the essentialist perspectives I have on those I deem the 'other'. In my world the 'other' is usually anybody white. I know I have become quite a jaded person after being bullied for being brown, a woman and a sex worker. Sometimes I am quick to dismiss others as 'them', as a defence mechanism. This unit has made me more patient and forgiving when interacting with others around me, I find myself pausing more and assuming less. Another thing I am still trying to unlearn is my association of geographical location to one's culture. Given my own context and how much I dislike it when people assume things about me based on my heritage, I feel like this should be so easy for me to grasp. Unfortunately I still find myself projecting my pre-conceived ideas onto people from foreign places.

Learning about culturism was interesting - I wasn't aware of this concept even though I have definitely experienced it. It feels like the gap in my vocabulary has been filled. I always assumed people were being racist, when in fact they were being culturist. I think the distinction is important as they reflect discrimination against different identities.

2. What has been the most interesting, surprising, or useful aspect of the unit for you? (approx. 150 words)

I found all of the content on Indigeneity really interesting, but it also left me saddened and frustrated that it isn't a compulsory part of the education curriculum. I also found a lot of the case study's from the book to be quite affirming of my own experiences. I have struggled with my identity for years and have experienced varying levels of racial discrimination, from violence to more subtle forms like exotification. Racism can be such a visceral experience. Growing up I didn't have the vocabulary or anybody around me with a shared experience to help

me understand what was actually happening. To learn about it in an academic context was really validating.

3. Reflecting on the unit this semester, what are the areas of the unit that you've got stuck on, struggled with, or have caused you discomfort? Maybe some of the concepts were difficult to understand, or the unit challenged your ideas on some issue. What 'baggage' (eg: essentialist points of view, stereotypes, misunderstandings, lack of understandings etc.) do you think you brought to the unit? (approx. 400 words)

I found researching the media analysis quite difficult, it had me reflecting how my own attitudes have been shaped by media in the past. Not necessarily towards Aboriginal people, but definitely towards women. My mind immediately goes to reports on women who have been assaulted, and how pre #MeToo movement I would often be quite skeptical. Partly because I didn't want to believe that people could be so violent for no reason, but also because of the way the events were presented. Most of the media I consume today is very left leaning, I have curated my social media to be that way. I suppose I live in a bit of a progressive bubble. I hadn't forgotten how influential and biased mainstream media was, but it was concerning to see the subtle ways it promotes certain agendas.

Learning about the treatment of Aboriginal people at the beginning of colonisation was very unsettling. Again, it's just not something that I was taught in school. I feel like going into this unit I was more aware of present day colonialism than I was on the history of how Australia came to be. Even hearing stories of how Indigenous people were treated over the last 50 years was really disturbing.

I think every now and then I get carried away for calling others out on their privilege while not fully acknowledging my own. I find as a person of colour it can be so easy to lump my experience in with every other non-white person's, but sharing the same oppressor doesn't mean we face the same hurdles. This unit

forced me to confront my own ego. In all honesty I didn't find the content very stimulating to being with, learning about the effects of stereotyping, prejudice etc. felt too familiar. As the unit progressed I realised that to assume prejudice is the same for every person of colour is a really essentialist perspective to have and I needed to decentralise myself from the learnings.

4. In the unit we have explored a range of theories, concepts, ideas and issues around identity (eg: social categorisation, cultural membership, privilege, kinship, location/relocation, globalisation, multiculturalism, the nation, cultural appropriation). Critically reflect on how your learning around these relates to your experiences of your own identity. (approx. 400 words)

I still cringe when I think back to my teenage years and early twenties. I had a very confused identity, I was raised by my white mum, with little to no connection to my Sri Lankan heritage. Most of my life I have felt too white to be accepted by the Desi community, but not white enough to be treated equally by my peers. In primary school I was the only non white person until my brother enrolled. I remember being called aboriginal slurs and having no idea what they meant, just knowing they were meant as an insult. In the past I have reflected on how this may have shaped my attitudes towards Aboriginal people.

In High School I just wanted to fit in so badly, I was happy to be the butt of everybody's joke. I was called the 'N' word and nicknamed 'blacky' which I accepted. It felt wrong but I wanted friends. For me it was a way of surviving socially. I adopted the identity that others wanted me to be, without realising the harm it caused to the culture I was so heavily borrowing from. I didn't realise at the time that I was actually appropriating blackness. I thought being brown was close enough, and I knew more from popular culture about blackness than I did about being Sri Lankan. It wasn't until I accepted my heritage and experienced my own culture being appropriated, that I recognised I had also been doing the same thing.

It's interesting to reflect on how many times my identity has changed over the years. From screaming 'I'm Australian!' in retaliation to my playground bullies, to the shame I currently feel whenever somebody overseas asks me where I'm from. It's only over recent years that I've learnt to embrace the fluidity, rather than judging myself and others over the perceived hypocrisy. There has been so many times when seemingly conflicting parts of my life would intersect and I felt as though I'd have to make a choice between the two. Reconciling being a Feminist and a Sex Worker was hard when I first started in my industry. I was young and didn't have much understanding of either roles, let alone the knowledge that they could coexist. This was a time when mainstream media was my main source of news, I didn't have the same access to information that I have today. This unit has really helped me accept the multiculturalism within myself and others.

5. Critically reflect on how the concept of critical cosmopolitanism would impact your future professional or personal life. How do you see it affecting your role in the world? (approx. 200 words)

Maybe I'm too cynical but it's hard for me to imagine a world where any sort of cosmopolitanism is successful while capitalism and white supremacy still exists. Capitalism teaches us to prioritise self over community. The concept of cosmopolitanism also just feels a little colour blind and homogenous. I know critical cosmopolitanism is supposed to resolve the ethnocentric nature of traditional cosmopolitanism but I think I'm a little suspicious of any theory that wants one answer to every problem. I can see how these theories are influential today, in politics and public spaces. For example the UN seems to be largely based on cosmopolitanism ideology. If critical cosmopolitanism infiltrated my professional life I would probably feel safer at work and hopefully experience less discrimination from those outside of the industry. On a personal level I would also feel safer and less pressure to conform to Western standards of beauty and living.

6. Have you changed your views and attitudes about any issues since completing this unit? What has been the biggest influence on this

change? If not, what is an issue you feel the unit might have tried to contested or opposed your views on, but did not change? (approx. 150 words)

I'm not sure if it changed any of my attitudes, but it definitely reaffirmed a lot of them and deepened my understanding of where they come from. I think I am already quite critical of the media I consume, but I appreciated the reminder to remain vigilant.

I am still undecided on whether or not I fully reject essentialism. There is no denying the harm stereotyping and social categorisation can have on marginalised communities. However on a personal level and as somebody who experiences a lot of identity dysphoria, sometimes I crave the simplicity. Even though I try not to project stereotypes onto others, I find myself leaning into them from time to time. As reductive as they can be, they give me a false sense of community and solidarity. They make me feel seen.