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### Course Work and Research for Social Benefit

It is thrilling to participate with this class at a time in my life's journey where a meaningful confluence of events are taking place. Through my position at the University of Arizona psychiatry department as the manager of program innovation and strategic initiatives, I am working to connect academic work to community activities and healing. The connection between graduate work and professional work was explicated in the module two, discussion post three "Research Ethics & Decision-Making: From Radical Love to Self, Systems and Society," where I explain working on a grant proposal for our department:

In reading through the request for proposals, I was thrilled that acceptable budget items included paying people for their time, their meetings spaces, buying food, and bringing gifts. This felt like a new paradigm, "characterized by a more holistic, systems-based approach" (Gray and Malins 10). For the university to be mindful of what is culturally meaningful for building relationships with tribal groups and marginalized communities, to offer culturally congruent gifts as an expression of gratitude and compensate people, to not "make (unpaid) claims on the time of others" (FitzGibbon 21) was a great relief to me.

We are intentionally reaching out to three different organizations to “do less better” (Kara and Khoo 25), to “amplify voices beyond the academy” (FitzGibbon 25) by listening to what is best for the communities and organizations we are reaching out to, to learn if they are desiring to collaborate. We know that “to form allyship in engaged and collaborative research, sharing decision making” (FitzGibbon 25) is vital.

Compared to the positivist paradigm I was taught as an undergraduate, to learn and explore different paradigms is both exciting and liberating. I include references to these paradigms in the two artifacts that I connect to course learning objective one “identify assumptions that inform various worldviews.” In it, I combined discussion posts from module two to explore the detriments of capitalism and how, as FitzGibbon wrote, “care should be part of our wider resistance to capitalist norms and discourses that commodify our labour (time) and economic value over wider social and moral values” (22). Another aspect of shifting paradigms from the positivist of my undergraduate years is the observation by Jolivéte that research justice is the “process of resistance, revitalization, and cultural autonomy that supports the knowledge production, design, dissemination, and stewardship of critical research practices by and from the communities most impacted by the negative consequences of globalization and capitalism” (7).

For my first artifact connected to learning objective two, I included the map created for the module two assignment, “map your role in a social change ecosystem.” This is related to “identifying relationships between cultural worldviews and constructions of knowledge as they function related to specific social issues” in the realm of my goal of creating cultural change in ending stigma surrounding mental illness. The map shows how numerous individuals, organizations, and agencies are vital to moving the needle on social issues. A combination of the

worldviews of these individuals, organizations, and agencies are crucial for strengthening community and featuring community input and work. The exercise of creating an ecosystem map to visualize the various roles needed for solid communal change was an eye-opener for me and enlivened my motivation for creating a community event series.

During module four, discussion prompt two, we were asked to trace a historical moment which brought forth new knowledge and also connect it to oppressive power structures and marginalized communities. I connect this artifact to learning objective two because of what I learned through reading Rodin et al.'s "Community impacts resulting from the Exxon Valdez oil spill." Different worldviews and knowledge had tremendous impact on how the relationships were between the tribal groups in Alaska and the non-native people from Exxon's corporate world of the oil and gas industry. Exploring the different perspectives in that crisis was an illuminating lesson in being aware of and mindfully working through distinctive cultural practices in communication and decision making.

I utilized two artifacts, two discussion post I interwove, for learning objective three: "articulate the relationship between cultural know-how and formal thinking across at least two cultural systems or historical periods." Both module discussion posts reflected on different chapters in Robin Wall Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. The sweetgrass plaiting is a metaphor for combining theory, knowledge, and skills as a means of guiding community work where we can pull together cultural know-how and formal thinking streams. The combined artifacts also incorporate how examining language is imperative for decolonizing knowledge and mobilizing community. Kimmerer eloquently wrote, "For what good is knowing, unless it is

coupled with caring?” (345), which relates to people understanding – which is achieved through clear and culturally congruent language.

The two artifacts associated with learning objective four, “how various worldviews approach problems in real world contexts,” were discussion posts one and two in module three. The combination of the two artifacts into one conversation in the portfolio centered on what Camargo-Borges describes as “language as action” (94). As a writer, I am galvanized by what these authors wrote about regarding how “language and knowledge cannot be separated. Knowledge production is a form of social action” (Camargo-Borges 94) and the point Kara and Phillips made about utilizing “informed empathy” (9) when doing research and writing.

I had the most creative fun with the artifacts I posted for learning objective five: “imagine alternative worldviews in the context of today's ‘wicked’ challenges.” The first artifact was the mapping activity from module four, a layout of seven cards pulled from the *Investing in Futures* website. With that artifact, I created a new future based on the cards and sharing some of the ways we can imagine a different reality. This was a really great exercise in what Camargo-Borges described as approaching

research as a construction, then we do not need to restrain ourselves with positions such as objectivity and neutrality toward the phenomenon of study, trying to discover what it is; rather, we can open our imaginations and use our creativity to focus on what it might be (94).

The second artifact I used for learning objective five was the “Worlds of Possibility” discussion post in module seven. Looking to objects – in my case, art, a letter, a song and its

lyrics, along with relationships – will help me remain motivated to stay the course when working on my community event series. I understand how much effort it will take to create and launch this series, so having the three things I included will remind me about my care to ease suffering, the significance of knowing ourselves, and the deep importance of relationships.

It has been thrilling to engage with class colleagues on the readings, spoken works, and film we have covered throughout the semester. I appreciate the foundational knowledge I have learned in this course when it comes to navigating databases and scholarly articles, using proper MLA format, and being reminded that there are different ways to understand knowledge. Re-learning how important liberal studies are to scholarship, critical thinking, and being contributing members of society is a privilege. This is a privilege that needs to be stoked and shared.

I believe that creativity is an essential aspect of human ingenuity and learning about how paradigms in research are shifting is quite exciting to me. I very much appreciate the freeing aspects of knowledge construction that we've learned about in this course. Utilizing imagination, creative writing, and various worldviews to inform and shape research is so intellectually stimulating for opening up worlds of possibility. We know that imagination can become reality, we just need to nurture this understanding in ourselves and other people, and envision brighter futures with community.

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