



Young Adults Attitudes towards Multiculturalism: Tensions between the Multicultural State and the Intercultural Citizen

Kathleen Blair | PhD Candidate | University of Western Sydney
Advancing Community Cohesion Conference 2015

Method

- Five focus groups (40 participants)
- Sample:
 - Self-identified 'Anglo-Celtic' Australians
 - 18-25 years old
 - Penrith LGA, Outer Western Sydney, New South Wales
- Penrith
 - Ancestries: Australian (29.1%), English (25.2%), Irish (6.8%) and Scottish (5.3%)
 - Australian born - 74.3% (national average 69.8%)
 - Spoke English only – 80.6% (national average 76.8%)
 - Religious affiliation: Catholic (35.2%; national average 25.3%), Anglican (23.6%; national average 17.1%)

Intercultural Citizens: someone with strong intercultural skills and knowledge.

- Has a positive attitude and open curiosity towards diversity
 - Learns about differing cultures
- Is able to look at issues from another point of view; as opposed to believing their culture is superior

(Kiwani 2007; Kymlicka 2003; Liddicoat 2009)

Kymlicka's (2003) tensions between the Multicultural State and the Intercultural Citizen

1

- Intercultural citizens may prefer global interculturalism over local interculturalism

2

- Some groups may dismiss the assertion that intercultural interaction leads to personal growth and enrichment

3

- The ideal of an intercultural citizen requires a level of understanding that is either superficial or utopian

1. Citizens may prefer Global Interculturalism over local Interculturalism



GLOBAL: Distance groups
in other countries
LOCAL: Neighbouring
groups within ones own
country

Fiona: There's an Asian lady
where I work and she takes
me out to have Japanese
and Chinese and tells me all
about her traditions... it's
really interesting because
she teaches me a lot.

1. Citizens may prefer Global Interculturalism over local Interculturalism

James: ...Christianity, Muslims... there's so much media on it, bad things... you just don't want to listen to it anymore and then you've got like Buddhism and the Indian Sikh thing...different things you don't know are out there and are interesting, aren't harmful to people... like how many people do you know are Buddhist and get in your face and go 'Fuck you, I'm gonna blow you up, I'm gonna cut you, I'm gonna touch your little boys'? They don't do that kind of thing... Why don't we focus more on those kind of religions then focus on the ones we always have to talk about?

1. Citizens may prefer
Global Interculturalism
over local
Interculturalism

Joseph: A lot of
hatred comes
from fear of them
trying to change
our culture

Scott: See, I want to travel
and experience other
cultures, but I want to be
able to do it on my own
terms. I don't appreciate
people coming into this
country and trying to make
it their own

2. Some groups may dismiss the assertion that intercultural interaction leads to personal growth and enrichment

Courtney: think of like you're in a class room, right. There's two white people, two Asians and two Sudanese, you have to sit somewhere. Without even listening to them you're going to go and sit next to the white people.

Kaitlyn: If you meet someone sitting down here and you started talking and you're like 'Oh, lovely person', but then next week they come in and say 'Oh, I went to Muslim school, blah blah blah'... I would probably second guess who they are as a person because of their religious beliefs and their cultural background.

2. Some groups may dismiss the assertion that intercultural interaction leads to personal growth and enrichment

Ana: They're all in their little community and you're in yours, so you're not experiencing, dealing with them everyday... you're not understanding what they are

Josh: If they want to live in their communities then they can live there but they also come into this country to get a better life, to understand us... well then come out of your own little worlds and jump in with the rest of us. If you don't want to be shunned upon then join the rest of us and get out there and make yourself known to people... The more you hide in your own communities and we see bad things happen on the media... that's when we become racist, that's when we become not accepting... so maybe you guys should just spread yourselves just like everyone else...

3. The ideal of an intercultural citizen requires a level of intercultural understanding that is either *superficial* or *utopian*

Bella: Sushi

Georgia: I was gonna say food

Bella: Food's good

Liam: We just want the good stuff and not the bad stuff... like we want pizza and pasta...

Samuel: We do kind of embrace other cultures, we eat food from other places, like I do a sport from Korea, we all watch anime


3. The ideal of an intercultural citizen requires a level of intercultural understanding that is either *superficial* or *utopian*

Elizabeth: ...like their religion, they can do at home, but don't do that in public

Michael: If you were to say to a Roman Catholic they need to accept everything to do with bloody Muslims, they wouldn't, they couldn't, because it goes against everything they believe in

Next steps...

- Participants were reluctant to engage in intercultural exchanges
 - Fear of lose of identity
 - Lack of appreciation for cultural diversity
 - Attempt to place limits on diversity
 - Fear of 'others'
 - Lack of understanding and knowledge
- Need safe spaces and means for dialogue (Balint 2006; 2010; Secomb 2000; Young 1990).
 - Engage with ideas and values of others
 - Debate, critique, reject



Blair, K 2015, 'Young Adults attitudes towards Multiculturalism in Australia: Tensions between the Multicultural State and in the Intercultural Citizen', Journal of Intercultural Studies, Vol. 36, No. 4.