



Melting Polar Icebergs: Teaching Law Students to Access Empathy and Channel Their Passion to Empower Their Clients and Themselves

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The Challenge: “THE OTHER”

- **Children’s Rights Clinic**
- **Working with children and families in St. Louis area**
- **Population of clients is mainly minority and is from marginalized populations**
- **Population of students is not this (for the most part)**
- **Students struggle with representation, students struggle with recognizing and acknowledging some of the challenges, students judgmental**

The Fix

- **Need to be able to help students surface the issues**
- **Need to do this relatively early in the semester**
- **Need to something that can help us begin the conversation at the beginning of the semester and revisit it throughout**

The Article

- **Five Habits for Cross Cultural Lawyering**
 - Sue Bryant and Jean Koh Peters
 - *Race, Culture, Psychology and Law (2005)*

The Habits

- **Trust**
- **Habit 1- Degrees of Separation and Connection**
- **Habit 2- Rings in Motion**
- **Habit 3- Parallel Universe**
- **Habit 4- Red Flag and Remedies**
- **Habit 5- The Camel's Back**

The Exercise

- I have students read the article in preparation for our bootcamp.
- I open up the discussion by simply asking students what they are worried about as they start to do the work.
 - Agency, authority, competence

Starting to dig

- Sometimes a student will give me the bridge and other times I have to push a little more
 - Difference

Identifying Self

- I ask students to identify cultures that they are a part of
 - Ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, age, economic status, social status, language, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, marital status, role in family, birth order, immigration status, religion, accent, skin color etc....

Identifying How Others View You

- **Stereotype yourself.**
- **Think about how others view you.**
- **How are you different than those stereotypes?**
- **Stereotypes can be based on difference or similarities.**
 - **Because you look like me, you are going to act a certain way.**

Connecting to the Client

- Just as you are weighing similarities and differences our clients are as well.
- One thing we all have in common with our clients?
- Be mindful and thoughtful of the person behind the “client”.

And then we
are off to the
races...

- **Trust**
- **Habit 1- Degrees of Separation and Connection**
 - Previous exercise that we revisit as needed
- **Habit 2- Rings in Motion**
 - Helping students see how clients might perceive the action in the courtroom often seems to ignite and empower.
- **Habit 3- Parallel Universe**
 - We spend A LOT of time here as the semester continues.
- **Habit 4- Red Flag and Remedies**
- **Habit 5- The Camel's Back**

The End Result

- **Students seem to be better able to think about difference and seem to be more empathetic.**
- **It provides a safe frame to discuss difficult issues.**