



Cultural Safety Principles and Guidelines

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action Research initiative

2018 (updated in 2020)

Introduction

Through our work together in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action Research (CALD PAR) initiative, we aim to learn what works in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children, and how to improve pathways to safety in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD).

This document proposes a set of principles for creating cultural safety within the context of the CALD PAR initiative, and provides a summary of the relevant sections of the ANROWS Code of Conduct for staff and associates.

The document draws on the history of the concept of cultural safety in Australia. The concept emerged from approaches to strengthen and respectfully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in mainstream services (Frankland et al., 2010; Dudgeon et al., 2014). We acknowledge the resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We also recognise that our efforts to promote cultural safety exist in a wider context of continuing colonialism, racism and discrimination.

The document also draws from the cultural safety work of the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (see Mathumbu & Jiang, 2018; Chen, 2017).

Why do we need Cultural Safety Principles and Guidelines?

The following principles aim to guide us in creating an environment where cultural diversity is celebrated and all participants feel safe to express their opinions freely. Living and working in Australia, we bring a diversity of cultures, experiences, and expressions of identity, family, civil groups, community and institutions into our meetings and work. We are also global citizens with rights and responsibilities under United Nations conventions.

The CALD communities we work with include people with diverse abilities, ages, relationships of class, sexual orientations and gender identities. The diverse cultural values, practices and beliefs we encounter means that there may be occasions for disagreements as we learn from each other. These principles highlight ways of addressing offences, should they occur.

What is cultural safety?

“Cultural Safety” is a term that emerged from the health sector in New Zealand during the 1990s (Papps & Ramsden, 1996; Ramsden, 2002). The concept and practice of cultural safety grew from an understanding of patient needs in the context of social determinants of health, such as racism and inequality (Paradies et al., 2015). In the Australian context, it has primarily been used in relation to the health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association, 2013; see also Queensland University of Technology, 2013).

The concept of “cultural safety” extends beyond cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. It was designed to help health service providers reflect upon their own cultural identity, and recognise the impact of their personal culture on their professional practice. The practice of cultural safety prioritises how service users, including group participants and community members, define safety for themselves.

A commonly used definition of cultural safety is that of Williams (1999, p. 213) who defined it as:

an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together.

Cultural safety frameworks and practices can be used in a wide variety of health and community service contexts to create a positive and respectful experience for participants, clients, patients, and community groups.

CALD PAR Cultural Safety Commitment

The aim of these principles and guidelines is to ensure that in the workplace, we all feel safe, respected and valued in our diversity. We recognise that these principles may change over time to respond to the needs and concerns of those involved in the CALD PAR initiative.

In order to build and maintain cultural safety, we commit to:

- establishing culturally safe principles and guidelines that are relevant to our work together and with communities, and are informed by evidence about best practice in this field
- applying these principles, where possible, at the individual, project and organisational levels
- taking steps to investigate any breaches and repair or rectify them in a timely manner.

Principles

In our work, we aim to achieve cultural safety through the following principles:

Critical reflection and inclusive dialogue

- take action to grow inclusiveness for all cultural identities and to establish equitable, respectful and empowering engagement among CALD PAR projects
- make space for CALD and other marginalised communities to share their lived experience without assuming that we can be experts on their practices
- respond to cultural blindness and offences with openness, generosity and an understanding that when individuals feel culturally unsafe or hurt in exchanges (even if we or others did not mean to make them unsafe), their experiences may be part of a long history of discrimination and should be taken seriously
- critically reflect on our own privilege and acknowledge power relationships, the context of white privilege, and disempowering actions on an individual and collective level
- refrain from culturally unsafe practices and interactions and, where safe to do so, actively challenge potentially unsafe practices and interactions, including such things as stereotyping, discrimination, and racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or other demeaning and harmful commentary
- safely engage with community resistance and reflect on the specific cultural and historical context of its emergence

- work to build a critical knowledge about controversial issues that makes space for different views and a nuanced understanding
- take our actions and reflections on cultural safety back to our wider organisations and workplaces.

Decolonising research

- employ anti-racist, feminist and decolonising research practices, which question colonial power relationships and language, and collaborate with oppressed groups to create more liberating forms of knowing and being in the world
- begin with an approach that recognises culture as a strength
- be sensitive to the impacts of the racialised and gendered regulation of migration on project participants, including impacts on people on partner or temporary visas
- avoid the use of language or meeting locations that may be colonising or 'othering' in nature (for example, avoid the tendency to view 'others' as exotic and one's own cultural group as the 'norm', and note that common references to rights-based and other progressive approaches can come with a colonial history)
- support diverse groups of research participants to be able to safely take part in research and have their views fairly represented
- recognise the continuing impact of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and seek to learn from Aboriginal and international First Nations' approaches to ensure inclusive and respectful dialogue
- continue to educate ourselves about the diversity of cultures, experiences of racism, practices of privilege and identities that we engage with throughout the initiative.

Prioritising safe working practices

- create access to supervision, psychological support and opportunities to debrief with workers or participants who may have had discussions involving disclosures of violence and other sensitive topics
- engage in safety planning with bicultural and other workers, who face significant risks in communities
- confirm referral protocols with the organisations and communities that we work with and discuss pathways to support services
- ensure participants have safe ways to withdraw from research if they experience distress, and provide contact numbers for participants to access support services
- report any incidents that contravene the ANROWS Code of Conduct or the agreed upon CALD PAR Cultural Safety Principles and Guidelines to ANROWS staff for appropriate investigation or referral to the Chief Executive Officer.

ANROWS Code of Conduct

The ANROWS Code of Conduct provides clear guidance to ANROWS staff and associates on expectations of conduct as it relates to the relationships between staff, associates, and stakeholders. While this Code of Conduct does not cover staff from other organisations in the CALD PAR initiative, it does cover the activities in the initiative.

Of relevance to the CALD PAR initiative is the following guidance, outlining actions that demonstrate respect for the inherent dignity of others. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Staff and associates will not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, national origin, marital status or other conditions or status.
- b. Staff and associates will treat colleagues and stakeholders with respect, courtesy, fairness, and good faith.
- c. Where serious disagreements cannot be resolved, they will be addressed according to a fair resolution or grievance procedure.
- d. Harassment, bullying or discrimination, as defined in the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) and state or territory laws as relevant from time to time, will not be tolerated
- e. Practice will be open, transparent, and subject to relevant legal and ethical obligations concerning confidentiality.

Consequences for breach of Code of Conduct

Any breach of the ANROWS Code of Conduct is considered to be very serious and, following appropriate investigations and discussion with funders, may be subject to removal from ANROWS-associated CALD PAR activities and groups, or referral to a relevant legal body.

References

- Chen, J. (2017). *Intersectionality Matters: Guide to engaging immigrant and refugee communities to prevent violence against women*. Melbourne: Multicultural Centre for Women's Health.
- Dudgeon, P., Milroy, H., & Walker, R. (2014). *Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Frankland, R., Bamblett, M., & Lewis, P. (2011). 'Forever Business': A framework for maintaining and restoring cultural safety in Aboriginal Victoria. *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 7(24), 27-30.
- Mathumbu, H., & Jiang, J. (2018). *Making the Links - Building Safer Pathways for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women in Regional Victoria Safety Protocol*. Melbourne: Multicultural Centre for Women's Health.
- Papps, E., & Ramsden, I. (1996). Cultural safety in nursing: The New Zealand experience. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 8(5), 491-497.
- Paradies, Y., Ben, J., Denson, N., Elias, A., Priest, N., Pieterse, A., . . . Gee, G. (2015). Racism as a determinant of health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*, 10(9). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0138511>
- Queensland University of Technology. (2013). Cultural safety. Retrieved from http://www.intstudentsup.org/diversity/cultural_safety/
- Ramsden, I. (2002). *Cultural safety and nursing education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu*. (PhD). Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.
- The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association. (2013). *Position paper: Cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors, medical students and patients*. Canberra: AIDA.
- The Center for Racial Justice Innovation (2009). *Racial Equity Impact Assessment toolkit*. New York: Race Forward.
- Williams, R. (1999). Cultural safety: What does it mean for our work practice? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 23(2), 213-214.

Suggested citation:

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2018). *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Projects with Action Research initiative: Cultural Safety Principles and Guidelines*. Sydney: ANROWS.