

Australian Cultural Safety & Security News

Dedicated to the critique of cultural safety and security in Australian social policy

Editorial: #CulturalVoice “gap” inaugural edition of ACSSN. Welcome to Australian Cultural Safety & Security News launched on [National Close the Gap Day](#), 21st March 2019. The ACSSN is dedicated to the critique of the concepts ‘cultural safety’ and ‘cultural security’ in Australia, with an advocacy mission to bridge the gaps between research, policy, practice, theory, and First Peoples’ communities. My focus is on how cultural safety & security could be enabled through healthcare governance. However, the concept of governance is relevant for any organisation that provides services to Australia’s First Peoples and, therefore, I call for contributions pitched to the idea of culturally safe & secure corporate governance.

I begin the inaugural edition by advocating for the following two definitions – Robin Williams’ cultural safety and Shayne Houston’s cultural security – as the *interim* grounding definitions to be used in Australia.

[Cultural safety is] 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. Robin Williams, 1999

Cultural security is a commitment that the construct and provision of services offered by the health system will not compromise the legitimate cultural rights, views, values and expectations of Aboriginal people. It is a recognition, appreciation and response to the impact of cultural diversity on the utilisation and provision of effective clinical care, public health and health systems administration. Shane Houston, 2001

William’s cultural safety is referred to by many Australian authors however, the definition of the New Zealand Nursing Council (2011) is also used as the intellectual grounding for Australian authors. It should also be noted that Williams was influenced by Irihapeti Ramsden’s work on cultural safety which also informed the work of the New Zealand Nursing Council. This means the cultural

provenance of Māori cultural safety - *karwa whakaruruhau* – has influenced the Williams’ definition of cultural safety.

The hundreds of Australian First Nations communities are their own politically sovereign entities and should be accorded due respect through local sovereign definitions of cultural safety. As it stands, the cultural provenance of Australia’s First Peoples is made invisible when the New Zealand version of cultural safety is copied and pasted into Australian Indigenous affairs discussions.

I also make a similar argument with Williams’ cultural safety, developed in Darwin through a specific lens and advocated for by *Kija* woman Maryann Bin-Salik (2003), that it is also taken-up as relevant to *all* of Australia’s First Peoples. In research terms, the validity of Williams’ cultural safety is open to scrutiny. Therefore, my advocacy position is that the cultural provenance of individual First Nations be respected through the co-development of local cultural safety and cultural security definitions.

I continue this line of advocacy in the theory section, where I expand on Houston’s uniquely Australian definition of cultural security. Again, welcome to Australian Cultural Safety & Security News, where I encourage you to bridge the gaps by bringing your critical perspective on corporate governance, cultural safety, and cultural security.

Dr MJL – *get social* with #ACSSN #culturalsafety

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