

# CHANGING THE LENS ON THE LANGUAGE OF CULTURE

Culture is a word for the way of life of groups of people. It is intersectional in that it is not defined or understood through any singular lens. We can not isolate one aspect of what culture is for an individual and know for certainty that they then share all the other aspects of that culture with other members of the group.

Sometimes we embrace cultural characteristics of a part of our heritage and use them to inform our how we define our current culture and thinking to create an enhanced sense of belonging and psychological safety.

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## CULTURAL SAFETY VERSUS CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Systems and individuals need to be engaged in working towards cultural safety and critical consciousness. To do this, we must be prepared to critique the taken for granted power structures and be prepared to challenge our own culture and cultural systems rather than prioritising becoming competent in the cultures of others.

**Cultural competence** is often defined within an individually focused framework. Some definitions for cultural competency promote the notion that individuals should strive to master a certain level of functioning, knowledge, and understanding of a particular culture to be culturally competent.

**Cultural safety** is about acknowledging the barriers to relationship effectiveness arising from the inherent power imbalance between provider and receiver. This concept rejects the notion that anyone should focus on learning cultural customs of different groups. Instead, cultural safety seeks to achieve

better relationships by being aware of difference, decolonising, considering power relationships, implementing reflective practice, and by allowing the receiver of an experience to determine whether an encounter is culturally safe.

**A key difference between the concepts of cultural competency and cultural safety is the notion of power.**

Cultural safety requires service providers and practitioners to examine themselves and the potential impact of their own culture on their interactions with others. This requires us to question our own biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices that may be contributing to a lower quality of experience for others. In contrast to cultural competency, safety asks us to focus on ensuring our culture does not unduly influence the environment or the culture of the other.

# CULTURAL SAFETY VERSUS CULTURAL COMPETENCY

TERMS	DEFINITION/CONCEPT EXAMPLES
<b>Culture</b>	<b>Culture</b> is the integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group.
<b>Cultural Awareness</b>	<b>Cultural Awareness</b> is essentially, the basic acknowledgment of differences between cultures.
<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b>	<b>Cultural Sensitivity</b> builds on the acknowledgment of difference, developed through cultural awareness, with the addition of the requirement of respecting other cultures.
<b>Cultural Humility</b>	<b>Cultural Humility</b> does not have an endpoint or goal; there is no objective of mastering another culture. Rather it is a continual process of self-reflection and self-critique that overtly addresses power inequities between providers and clients. Attaining cultural humility becomes not a goal, but an active process, an ongoing way of being in the world and being in relationships with others and self. It legitimises and values cultural differences to ensure no harm is caused and ultimately links understandings and actions.
<b>Cultural Respect</b>	<b>Cultural Respect</b> is all modifications made to standard service methods to make services more acceptable, relevant, useful, and/or effective for diverse populations. It is the ability to interact with clientele who come from a range of different cultural backgrounds
<b>Culturally Unsafe</b>	Systems that lack the capacity to help clients or communities due to extreme bias, paternalism, and a belief in the superiority of the dominant group are <b>Culturally Unsafe</b> .  Attitudes, policies, and practices that are destructive to cultures and consequently to the individuals within the culture are culturally unsafe.
<b>Cultural Incapacity</b>	<b>Cultural Incapacity</b> is used in an agency that realises its weaknesses in serving minorities and attempts to improve some aspect of their services to a specific population by building cultural capacity.
<b>Cultural Competency</b>	<b>Cultural Competency</b> is the ability to work and communicate effectively and appropriately with people from culturally different backgrounds. While appropriateness implies not violating the valued rules, effectiveness means achieving the valued goals and outcomes in intercultural interactions.
<b>Cultural Safety</b>	<b>Cultural Safety</b> places an obligation on the service provider to provide care within the framework of recognizing and respecting the difference of any individual. However, it is not the service provider who determines the issue of safety, rather it is consumers or clients who decide whether they feel safe with the interaction.

## SOURCES

*The term cultural safety first was first proposed by Dr. Irihapeti Ramsden and Māori nurses in the 1990s.*

*From: Why cultural safety rather than cultural competency is required to achieve health equity: a literature review and recommended definition*