

‘BRAVE SPACE’: INVESTIGATING CONSENT AND BOUNDARIES AS A FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURALLY SAFE COLLABORATIVE ARTS PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

The term ‘cultural safety’ has been a part of discourse and pedagogy in health and healthcare for close to thirty years, and in the last five years there is evidence of the term’s being used in a range of paradigms, including allied health, education and design, engineering and workplace relations. In each of these contexts, cultural safety is understood as an empowering and transformative process for interrogating the architecture of systems that have been structured by white supremacist, cis-hetero, patriarchal and ableist paradigms. The work and practice of cultural safety requires those within the systems to scrutinise how they are complicit in upholding power structures

and causing harm to those excluded or oppressed.¹ Cultural safety is therefore, in part, a strategy to dismantle existing structures and support the provision of environments that are spiritually, socially and emotionally, as well as physically, safe for people, 'where there is no assault or challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are or what they need'.²

In the arts sector in Australia, cultural safety has emerged as a critical response to the colonial paradigm and the white-centric reality of the arts industry.³ Community engaged researcher Ruth de Souza argues that 'cultural safety has the potential to transform institutional responses' to questions of diversity and inclusion within the arts sector because 'it is a stakeholder-centred approach' that emphasises 'sharing decision-making, information, power and responsibility'.⁴

To date, there is only a small, emerging body of research which examines the idea of cultural safety as a critical feature of artistic collaborations. There is scope for research that investigates an embodied understanding of the principles of cultural safety and how this might translate into creative practice and transform the way we structure and conceptualise collaboration and consent processes within a creative project.⁵

This article aims to extend the understanding of cultural safety in the arts beyond its role as an ethical framework, using the practical features of a consent-based practice originating in the field of Intimacy Direction, and Brave Space methodologies developed

through social justice facilitation. Both these practices can contribute to establishing cultural safety in a making or rehearsal space, by centring strong, flexible mechanisms for articulating boundaries. By identifying the types of boundaries that can exist and offering a clear process for articulation and implementation, unequal power dynamics are reduced. A physical consent and boundary process can offer a collaboration, a tangible and kinaesthetic starting place for discussing and negotiating emotional, cultural and spiritual boundaries using a Brave Space process. Using case studies of the authors' own creative practice, including Austin's facilitation of the *Let's Take Over* programme at Northcote Town Hall in Melbourne's inner north, and Vadiveloo's work as an intimacy director in mainstage contexts at Melbourne Theatre Company and Malthouse Theatre, we draw on an interdisciplinary body of research literature that documents understandings of cultural safety and its impact. This supports an examination of the possible features of a culturally safe creative practice, and we consider how this might affect and transform the way we work in creative collaborations.

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Within the research literature examining practices of cultural safety, the notion of critiquing one's own cultural biases, and examining positionality to understand how that might inform the cultural lenses or understandings applied when working with people from other cul-

tures, has been articulated as the starting point of this practice.⁶ Our work crucially begins with the positioning of whiteness as a non-neutral experience, and the explicit, critical positioning of self within a dominant social and political framework.⁷ Within a research paradigm, cultural safety seeks to redress power imbalances in traditional models of research and in this way intersects with understandings of decolonial research, which begin with an understanding of white and settler privilege.⁸ Culturally safe and decolonised research 'recognises and actively dismantles'⁹ relationships of power underpinning research initiatives and seeks to disrupt, resist and reject 'western terminologies, lenses and practice that are imposed indiscriminately across contexts'.¹⁰ To do this, researchers must adopt a social justice lens and seek to reflexively critique the assumptions that they bring to the research, and to develop a nuanced awareness about how these assumptions might influence and shape engagement, processes and outcomes. Our intersecting identities and positionalities offer a crucial, reflexive engagement with how we interpret new knowledge, how we listen to understand and the way in which we might respond and question.

With this in mind, we begin our sharing of research with an explicit positioning of ourselves. Sarah (she/her) writes:

I am a white settler woman with mixed Anglo heritage
who lives and works on stolen land in Naarm/Melbourne.
I am a mother, an artist, a teacher and a scholar and these

are key intersections of my identity and how I locate myself in the world. Much of my work for the last decade has been as a theatre-maker, director, facilitator and educator working with children and young people. In this work – whether it be at my institution teaching undergraduate students theatre and drama, in freelance roles in the industry facilitating arts programmes on behalf of local government with marginalised emerging artists or engaging with children from diverse backgrounds with arts and performance companies around the country – an enormous part of my practice has been co-designing cultures of space with the people I am collaborating with. My practice as an artist comes from inclusive theatre and I am committed to the practice of transformative allyship, positioning myself in an iterative and ongoing learning relationship with all these ideas. I am interested in ethical frameworks for making, and how power can be disrupted to address systemic inequities in access to the creative process, in access to the industry and in access to the platform of our national cultural conversation. Having an embodied, practical, fluid and informed understanding of cultural safety and its central features is critical and urgent to this work.

Bella (she/her) writes:

I'm a theatre-maker, primarily a director and intimacy director based in Naarm/Melbourne. I work consistently across both mainstage and independent productions in largely traditional theatrical contexts as well as maintaining a devising practice. My work focuses on how we navigate the intersecting identities in the room, and how we can empower our marginalised communities to self-represent experiences of difference, discomfort and chaos through a strengths-oriented lens. I have mixed white Australian and Tamil Sri Lankan heritage and have lived experience of disability. I hold my own positionality at the forefront of how I work, as a settler and a child of migration on stolen land. I also teach at the Victorian College of the Arts in the undergraduate Theatre degree as a tutor, where I am concurrently a PhD candidate.

CULTURAL SAFETY

While the concept of cultural safety can be understood as being tens of thousands of years old, practised by many Indigenous cultures globally, seminal defining writing and documentation of its use was done by healthcare practitioners and researchers in Aotearoa/New Zealand in the 1990s.¹¹

The term 'cultural safety' was proposed by Dr Irihapeti Ramsden and Māori nurses in the 1990s, and in 1992 the Nursing Council of New Zealand made cultural safety a requirement for nursing and midwifery education.¹² Nurses wanted to ensure that the cultural identities and needs of Māori patients were understood by health professionals and organisations that were knowingly and/or unknowingly biased towards non-Indigenous people and practices.

According to the Nursing Council of New Zealand, cultural safety now refers to both an ethical framework and its intended outcome, in which the person delivering a service 'will have undertaken a process of reflection on their own cultural identity and will recognise the impact that their personal culture has on their professional practice'.¹³ In this context, 'culture' includes – but is not restricted to – age or generation, gender, sexual orientation, occupation and socioeconomic status, ethnic origin or migrant experience, religious or spiritual belief, and d/Disability. In this way, cultural safety is informed philosophically by emancipatory or neo-colonial theoretical perspectives and by an emphasis on social justice. Unsafe cultural practices are therefore understood as being any action or statement which in some way may diminish, demean or disempower and therefore cause harm to someone because of their cultural identity.

Ramsden and Papps, writing in *Cultural Safety in Nursing: The New Zealand Experience* in 1996, state: 'it is not the nurse or midwife that determines the issue of safety'. So too is the case in

theatre collaborations – as we begin to empower artists to articulate their own boundaries, we must acknowledge that arts spaces are, for many of us, never culturally safe, and cannot be determined so by those in positions of institutional or social power.

De Souza reminds us that when we build upon this idea of cultural safety in non-health-related contexts, 'it is important to be respectful and recognise cultural safety's history and original intent'.¹⁴ Cultural safety is an Indigenous peoples' approach strengthened by over twenty-five years of development. De Souza and Higgins advocate for the importance of cultural safety practices in the arts on an individual level, allowing us to 'not only recognise the validity of beliefs and practices of people and communities that may differ from our own', but also challenging us to 'act to make spaces safer',¹⁵ and this by 'ensuring that we do not impose our own values and beliefs in ways that result in a loss of power for others'.¹⁶ They further argue the benefits of this framework at a systemic level, allowing us to 'combat the effects of dominant culture bias in our institutions and identify how this impacts the diversity of the arts and cultural sector'.¹⁷

INTERSECTIONS WITH CONSENT AND BOUNDARY PRACTICE

Understanding boundaries in a collaborative arts space as existing across physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual experiences and then positioning each as being equally important in the establishing of safe

working practices expands existing notions of consent-based practices in theatre-making. Without an understanding of this, consent practice risks maintaining the disproportionate amount of work that marginalised artists are expected to do in managing individual boundaries – sometimes referred to as ‘passing’ or ‘masking’.¹⁸ These are terms used by marginalised individuals, originating in the work of Erving Goffman and reclaimed by the Autism Spectrum community. ‘Masking’ refers to a ‘focus on hiding one’s ASC [Autism Spectrum Condition] characteristics and developing different personas or characters to use during social situations ... emphasis[ing] a distinction between the respondent’s “true” or “automatic” behaviours, and what they present to the rest of the world’.¹⁹ In the following section of the article, we shall examine the methodological and epistemological strategies used by Vadiveloo in the rehearsal room to navigate understandings of consent in, and foster culturally safe, rehearsal rooms.

As a woman of colour, and having lived with disability, Vadiveloo was made clearly to understand – and early in her career – that industry standards were established so that boundary violations with the potential to affect the most socially powerful people in the room were worthy of systematised and collaborative workplace management. A creative requirement of a production with the potential to break a bone or draw blood was carefully shrouded in risk assessments and safety protocol, because those potential injuries were inherently understood as a boundary violation, due to the fact that non-marginalised stakeholders in the room could easily imagine

the pain inflicted by that violation. In contrast, boundaries that disproportionately impacted those with less social or professional power were expected to be silently self-managed, or else result in reputational damage.

As Vadiveloo articulates:

For many marginalised theatre-makers, re-orientating consent and boundaries into a shared responsibility is such an upheaval in how we have come to survive our workplaces, the time, understanding, and rigour required can seem daunting. When I begin a process as a director or intimacy director, I position the articulating of boundaries as a gift to the work and collaborators, and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to time, space and flexible process.²⁰

The approach which Vadiveloo articulates here allows trust to develop between those with power and those who have previously been ostracised for bringing their needs into the room. A core feature of culturally safe practice is 'minimis[ing] power imbalances',²¹ and an early focus on how consent and boundaries function in creative collaboration has the potential to directly address and disrupt power.

Vadiveloo describes of her own process:

When beginning work with a new actor, one of the first questions I will ask them is whether they completed tertiary

level theatre training. This is because, and particularly in the case of emerging artists, many actors after completing formal training will struggle to articulate where their boundaries are. In many cases, they have been taught over the course of their degrees to ignore a boundary violation so effectively, they often don't even realise they are doing it anymore. There are similarities between this experience and the experience of existing as a marginalised maker, as outlined above. The self-management or ignoring of boundaries is deeply ingrained in early career makers, as is the belief that their agreeable nature is what will ensure further employment in a small and volatile industry.²²

Intimacy professional Chelsea Pace has developed clear systems for negotiating bodily autonomy in theatre. She begins by articulating a foundational principle of cultural safety practice – namely understanding the power dynamics present in any room.

No matter how egalitarian, consensus-based, and all-around awesome and approach-able you may be, you are still the director, the authority in the room. When you are the one in charge, the cast has been conditioned into certain attitudes through years of training to see you and your requests in a certain way.²³

These frameworks, as well as minimising power structures, work to normalise another key feature of a culturally safe practice – specifically, the ongoing use of engaged communication.²⁴ Pace discusses how an actor is trained to say ‘yes’, and advises against asking questions that can be responded to with an easy ‘yes’, without consideration for how a performer may actually be feeling. She offers an example: ‘instead of “can I touch your shoulder?” try “how would you feel about me touching your shoulder at this moment?”’.²⁵

A ‘self-care cue’, or a word that indicates the need for action to stop or pause, offers actors a communicative tool that resists the emotional implication of being difficult or disruptive for saying ‘no’ to a direction.²⁶ In Vadiveloo’s rooms, she has found it effective to break this concept into two words. The first word she introduces is ‘snapper’ – a short ‘snappy’ stop, where the focus in the room is not broken. When an actor calls ‘snapper’, they don’t need to articulate what they need, but they can if it’s useful. Some reasons for a snapper might be to sneeze, to remember how many counts they’re about to move over, to take a deep breath. Within ten seconds, they either continue work or call a more substantial stop. A longer stop is called a ‘tuna’ – in this instance, focus is broken, touch falls away, and an actor articulates what they need. This could be to discuss a boundary that has changed since the last run, to go and get a drink, to go for a walk around the block to recalibrate.²⁷ Importantly, the word chosen should be ‘neutral’, making it easier to say than ‘no’ or ‘stop’.²⁸ Actors have found it easier to call a ‘tuna’ in Vadiveloo’s rooms, because

it's a word immediately outside the world of the work, and it has no socially ascribed value judgement attached.

If we acknowledge the need for culturally safe practices to correct established industry norms impacting marginalised artists and emerging artists disproportionately, then it becomes apparent that marginalised actors sit at a particularly vulnerable intersection in the established power dynamic. As a director who has a persistent interest in material concerned largely with identity and power, Vadiveloo's process situates this concern at the core of the work. This begins with explaining to the actors the aspects of lived experience and core values that inform her cultural lens and how she conducts her professional spaces. This is an overt demonstration to the group of 'critical self-reflection',²⁹ which positions a singular perspective among the many in the room, rather than the baseline set of beliefs from which others may deviate. Vadiveloo has found:

It has a huge impact on the trust in the room if every notes session begins, or the first thing asked after the run of a scene is, 'Before I say anything, tell me, how did that feel?' Early in a process, responses are usually short and vague – 'good', 'yeah, alright'. But the more empowered actors feel in the work, the more it is clearly demonstrated to them that how they feel, how respected their boundaries feel, are the single most important factor in how the rest of the feedback will be delivered. The more engaged they become, the easier it

is to articulate when something doesn't feel right. Crucially when they are honest in this way, I always respond by thanking them for telling me, and reminding them that by working within their boundaries, we are making the work better, and their performance better.³⁰

When leadership is positioned in this way after establishing boundaries, self-care cues and explicit discussion of the factors involved in giving informed, progressive and free consent, then a culture of consent is being explicitly created and maintained. Consent sits as a foundational aspect of culturally safe creative practice. Once collaborators are encouraged to identify and clarify their boundaries, and are given a vocabulary for disagreeing, stopping or adjusting action as it plays out, a groundwork is laid for emotional, cultural and spiritual boundaries to also be respected.

CULTURAL SAFETY, BRAVE SPACES AND COLLABORATION

The term 'brave space' springs from social justice facilitation methods, where it is situated as an alternative to ideas and discourses around 'safe space', which have been acknowledged as limiting and problematic, specifically when the fostering of a critical dialogue among diverse viewpoints is necessary within a group dynamic.³¹ Brave spaces emerge from the idea that it is likely when you engage in meaningful,

productive exchange and a contest of ideas with people from broadly intersectional identities that there will (and should) be points of conflict or disagreement. It marks a shift away from the language of 'safe spaces', to support diverse groups of people rising to the challenge of genuine dialogue on diversity, social injustice and systemic oppression and marginalisation. The implication is that bravery is needed, because rigorous collaboration necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition or perception in favour of a new way of seeing and doing things in a culturally safe context.³²

Critically, the concept of brave spaces suggests explicitly that you may feel uncomfortable at times within a collaboration, but that this is different to feeling unsafe.³³ The practice is designed to foster an environment in which participants within a collaboration feel courageous enough to take risks, discover, experiment, learn and change, knowing that they will be supported in those sometimes destabilising, uncertain and unpredictable processes.

For facilitators of creative processes, Brave Space work involves shifting how power is working in a room and taking on a collectivist approach. Like the consent work that we discussed above, this disturbs dominant narratives about hierarchies in performance collaborations, and the way that knowledge flows from director to performer, or from professional to emerging artist or young person. Brave Space practice works to challenge the implicit and explicit ways in which inclusion and exclusion, affirmation and disenfranchisement, and belonging and alienation play out for people with

different identities.³⁴ The process of facilitating Brave Space supports a more collectivist responsibility for how the culture of the space is managed and creates systems for shared accountability of communication and support.

BRAVE SPACE AND *LET'S TAKE OVER*

In addition to looking at practices of collaboration and consent in our professional industry experience through modes of reflective practice, part of our research project has been to undertake interviews with emerging artists who have been part of participatory arts programmes where the practice of Brave Space has been centralised. While this research is ongoing and informs part of a larger project, some early findings have emerged that are detailed below.³⁵

The key case study for our research has been a programme called *Let's Take Over*. This is a skills development programme strategically designed for emerging artists aged between fifteen and twenty-five years and presented by Darebin Arts at the Northcote Town Hall between 2019 and 2022. The initiative selects ten young people each year through an application process from across Melbourne, and, over the course of four months, provides a weekly structured creative programme designed to develop their curatorial, creative, producing and programming skills.

The outcome of the initiative was a festival-style performance and installation project, where the emerging artists programmed

a multi-disciplinary, multi-site event that took over the entire space of the Northcote Town Hall. For the first four iterations of the programme – 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 – Sarah Austin was contracted by Darebin Arts to facilitate and co-lead with producer Samantha Butterworth, who initially conceived and developed the idea. During these four years, the practice of fostering a brave space for diverse and marginalised young people was refined, examined and developed as the groups met weekly with industry guests and the facilitators and undertook the process of devising their own creative response for the *Let's Take Over* event.

The participants within each *Let's Take Over* cohort were intersectionally diverse and included representation from First Nations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTQIA+ communities, people of colour, people with disabilities, inter-faith and socio-economically diverse representation. For participants in the *Let's Take Over* programme, participation comes with significant risk. As one emerging artist succinctly put it:

The things that make up emotional and cultural safety are very individual. I know that for me as an Indigenous woman, the way that I would view that is very specific to my mob and how we view things. But that's going to be different, mob to mob, all over this country, and if you're talking about the world as well, that's 500, 700 million possible interpretations.

While this means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to fostering brave spaces within creative collaborations, and that a co-design approach should be centralised, what has emerged from interviews with participants in Brave Space work is a set of constituent features of the practice that intersect with cultural safety. Below we detail some of these features, and we are still in the process of discovering others as we undertake the iterative process of co-designing participatory research projects and developing the practice.

SELF-DETERMINED CULTURAL SAFETY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COLLABORATORS

Within an Australian context, Austin ensures that new projects always begin with a Welcome to Country by local Elders. This has proven essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in new collaborations. Within the *Let's Take Over* context, Austin uses an initial welcoming smoking ceremony, or yarning circle, with local Wurundjeri Elders or representatives, and continues with Acknowledgements of Country each time the group comes together throughout a collaborative process. Throughout the programme, an explicit understanding develops among participants that Acknowledgements of Country are 'more than just the script'. As one First Nations participant reflected on the way Acknowledgements developed over the course of the programme:

I think that was really effective, and I think there were a few times where it [Acknowledgements of Country] was related to what we were actually doing in that time and in that moment and what was happening in the world around us. I think as a First Nations' person, that got me in that moment, because it was like, you're doing what you can, and using your privilege to raise this platform in this moment, right now for us to think about it. Not like, 'Oh, we need to have that, we need to do this, genocide is bad, white supremacy is also bad'.

Further feedback from First Nations participants has established that creating a culturally safe workplace for First Nations young people also requires Austin to actively engage First Nations artists in leadership and facilitator positions. The basic principle of ensuring that there is a Welcome and then ongoing Acknowledgement of Country is useful but ultimately insufficient in cultivating culturally safe collaborative space for First Nations young people working with a white facilitator on stolen land. As Wykes, Lee and Woodland³⁶ discuss in their paper examining the ethical entanglements between First Nations and non-Indigenous collaborators, the complexity of this relationship infuses all aspects of the collaboration. The deep inequities and ongoing impact of neo-colonialism mean that First Nations artists confront historical and contemporary trauma and racism on a daily basis.³⁷ By employing co-facilitators

who are First Nations, Austin ensures that a person in a position of relative professional power is a constant presence for First Nations programme participants. This allows the space and resources to establish a self-determined system for articulating needs, supported by someone with shared lived experience. A First Nations participant in *Let's Take Over* reflected:

The one person who I had cultural conversations with and actually was a huge anchor for me was [the First Nations Facilitator] because [they are] a fierce [Country Name] woman, and she clocked me on the jump, and was like, 'Yeah, I'm here, I'm in your corner', and I loved that ... I feel a real sense of cultural safety with [the First Nations Facilitator], but because – she's a First Nations woman – because she spoke explicitly to that experience, because I'm like, 'Oh we have this shared experience now. I am comfortable.'

**COLLABORATIVE CREATION OF GUIDELINES
THAT EXPLICITLY ADDRESS IDEAS OF THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING UNCOMFORTABLE
AND BEING UNSAFE AND OUTLINE STRATEGIES
FOR ADDRESSING CONFLICT**

Initially through a facilitator-led process – designed to hand over agency and leadership to the participants – Austin instituted a practice of establishing ground rules for collaboration through the active

and collective creation of a Brave Space Agreement. This is a process that interrogates and names agreed values and discusses what behaviours embody these values, and will underpin the collaboration. The agreement is a physical (or virtual, when working in online space) document that is consistently referred to, updated, revisited and revised throughout a process as part of a regular check-in or check-out strategy.

The creation of this agreement works to identify and interrogate what each person requires to feel respect and inclusion within the space and prepares participants for the possibility of being challenged and feeling uncomfortable. It also sets up parameters to support participants to feel comfortable to express themselves and participate fully without fear of attack, ridicule or a denial of experience. To create such spaces, participants need some basic discussion guidelines that underpin collaboration and communication and ways to navigate conflict in a culturally safe way. This may mean introducing strategies of listening to understand, not to respond. As one participant reflected on the creation of the Brave Space Agreement:

When you don't come from a culture that has the power,
the conflict ends up being abuse or harm on the person
who has less power.

And another:

For me, it's about how do we create spaces that are cognisant of everyone's cultural history, of the power dynamics in cultural history, and of the fact that every single day we are meeting in this riverbed and we're having intercultural frameworks occur.

Building a Brave Space Agreement requires critical reflection on one's own positionality and cultural biases. This critical understanding of personal identity and how that frames specific understandings of terms like 'respect' and 'inclusion' works to combat and problematise the idea of a neutral space and, by extension, a neutral culture or cultural position. By starting from a position where there are no assumptions about what respect might mean to an individual or what inclusion looks like or means, the group is free to build terms of engagement that can decentralise whiteness, and other dominant normative discourses and subject positions.

The same critical interrogation of the normative position applies to lived experiences of queerness and gender diversity. Creating time in sessions early to speak with participants directly about what gendered language is and its potential for harm is an important strategy. For some *Let's Take Over* participants, the idea of gendered language was actually quite new:

We did a thing about gendered language, so when I refer to a group of people, I'm like, 'Hey, guys. What's going on, guys?' I was just doing that, because that's what I knew. I've never ever thought about the effects that that can have on people, so when we were introduced to all these other words that you can use to make everyone feel good and included, I was like 'Yeah, that is cool. That's great. Let's do that. Wow!'

And another participant reflects:

We had a major session even on pronouns, and that was just really helpful. I know that I wouldn't have felt as comfortable making this work if we hadn't had that little talk about pronouns and gender and stuff like that.

Likewise, a disability-led session on access and inclusion as a strategy for collaborative making and on transformational allyship and what that might mean for disabled artists and audience has consistently been named by participants as a highlight of their *Let's Take Over* experience. As one participant reflects:

I never thought about this. I'm able-bodied and I've never understood what that means. I need to know more and be educated about access and inclusion and allyship, especially in the arts. This has been a bit of a wake-up call.

To position the notion of transformative allyship³⁸ and its role, relationship and practice as a strategy for inclusion and cultural safety, we have instituted a practice of working through a process with participants of acknowledging the layers of privilege and how they might function or be leveraged in certain contexts. We discuss how societal privilege is shaped by systems of power, and, although differentiating these from structured privilege upheld by systems of power, we also discuss how you might identify personal and cultural powers in strength-based ways. For example, you might identify as being part of the Queer or Disabled community and have a pride-based relationship with identity as a personal power. The discussion also examines how privilege can contribute to problems or be leveraged to help provide potential solutions.

There was literally a three-hour session of us brainstorming our privileges, and what they mean, and what we do if we – say if someone says something that may hurt someone – how we react to that and how we negotiate different views.

Understanding the practice of allyship as ‘an interdependent, social, professional and aesthetic practice’³⁹ supports the development of participants in the *Let’s Take Over* programme capacity for successful, safe and respectful ally–artist relationships. There is further work to do here, as Hadley and colleagues note, but the cultural exposure to disability arts practice and community is a

key to developing transformative allyship, although the question of how to do this without over-burdening disabled artists with too much educational labour remains. We acknowledge this as a limitation in our approach to Brave Space practice.⁴⁰

NORMALISING BOUNDARY-SETTING AND WORKING FLEXIBLY AND ELASTICALLY

It's important for facilitators to work with no assumptions throughout a process. Things can shift very quickly for young people. Realisations of neurodiversity, a change in pronouns, a change in financial security or personal safety have commonly happened during collaborations. A process like *Let's Take Over*, or any cross-cultural collaboration is a risk for emerging artists from marginalised identities, and most have existed in these spaces masking the issues that have created unsafe working environments for them.⁴¹ As one participant put it:

But when we live in the world that we live in, with white supremacist values, it's actually a safe bet for us to not show these things to secure ourselves and to look after ourselves than actually face ridicule and criticism and unintentional harm because people just don't understand the cultural framework.

It is powerful to create a space where tools for expressing boundaries (whether they be physical, cultural, emotional or

spiritual) are understood, embodied and respected and this is critical to successfully building a culture of collaboration that fosters ideas of brave space. However, in practice the process of creating a show or event means that there is inevitably pressure on deadlines and interactions with less flexible structures and schedules that cannot bend and flex in the same way as a creative process. We have encountered the limitation of Brave Space methodology in the interaction of a creative process with a production or technical timeline or framework, and this has been experienced by participants in *Let's Take Over* as culturally unsafe and problematic. The work of building an institutional or company approach to cultural safety, and for Brave Space work and a Brave Space Agreement to be supported and understood by all those who are involved in the realisation of a creative project, requires further consideration.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we argue that creative and facilitatory practice that builds cultures of consent and understanding which honour physical, cultural, spiritual and emotional boundaries to underpin creative collaboration, moves us toward a more culturally safe space for artistic practice. By committing to an ongoing collaborative approach to the negotiating of boundaries, marginalised artists in particular can benefit from bringing their full identities into the room, rather than feeling an expectation to consistently self-manage their lack of cultural safety.

We have researched these tools in the context of young people and emerging artists, but believe the findings are potentially more widely applicable to any intercultural, multi-generational creative collaboration. We also acknowledge the potential limitations of the practice, in particular the risk that by co-opting a practice (for short-term projects and outcomes in artistic contexts) that emerges and originates from Indigenous and non-European knowledges intended for the creation of community, we perpetuate forms of colonial violence and risk being unsafe in our cultural approach.

Advocates of a cultural safety approach suggest that practitioners should interrogate the ways in which they unconsciously enact, and in some cases embody, a white, Western, heteronormative, ableist viewpoint. This notion of critical consideration should be a key guideline for artists who desire to work in culturally safe ways and should be reflected as practice in spaces of creative collaboration. As facilitators of creative processes, we find ourselves – once we begin to critically reflect on the institutional power we hold, as well as the additional cultural dynamics that may exist between us and collaborating artists – in need of overt structures and tools that can directly challenge a dynamic that has been deeply ingrained in our rehearsal room culture. We suggest that frameworks of consent and collaboration, underpinned by culturally safe principles provide new ways of disrupting existing systems and processes.

NOTES

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- 7 Kerry Taylor and Pauline Thompson Guerin, *Health Care and Indigenous Australians: Cultural Safety in Practice* (Melbourne: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
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