

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLES

Cultural Safety in Participatory Arts-Based Research: How Can We Do Better?

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The lack of scholarly engagement with the concept of cultural safety when discussing participatory arts-based methods is troubling. Despite stating their emancipatory aims, participatory researchers largely fail to discuss the underpinning principles of their methods and tend to apply those indiscriminately across contexts. The absence of reflexivity can potentially cause harm to co-researchers and reinforce colonialist-infused research approaches. This paper aims to guide researchers to consider the methods they use, their origins, and how they can undertake research in culturally safe ways as part of the decolonization agenda. Researchers should pay careful attention to their positionalities and adopt a reflexive lens to assess how they use participatory arts-based methods to avoid culturally unsafe outcomes.

Introduction

In October 2021, the University of British Columbia's *Centre for Migration Studies* (Canada) invited me to speak at a virtual seminar series on participatory and arts-based methods in migration research. The topic I chose to discuss was: "Are participatory arts-based methods culturally safe?" I had been grappling with the lack of engagement with cultural safety in the literature on non/participatory methods and I thought this would be a great opportunity to explore and share my thoughts on this issue. In research contexts, a culturally safe approach challenges researchers to consider the impact of activities *from participants' perspectives* rather than adopt a "checklist" approach to assess researchers' cultural competence. It is the participants and co-researchers who determine whether research processes and teams are culturally safe and if the team values and privileges their unique standpoints and perspectives (Lenette, 2019).

By choosing to explore this topic, my aim was to open the conversation on cultural safety in participatory research and encourage attendees to think critically about their research approach using a decolonial lens, because we are not doing enough to ensure we use participatory arts-based methods in culturally safe ways. This paper revisits the key messages of the seminar and offers a framework for researchers across disciplines to reflect on their current practices and adopt strategies that are more culturally safe and move towards decolonial participatory arts-based research.

I would like to share an anecdote on why I am interested in the issue of cultural safety in research. I completed my tertiary education in Australia between 2000 and 2011, first as a temporary guest—or overseas student—then as a migrant. My studies had an applied focus and were skills-based, so I did

not have much opportunity to deconstruct, let alone challenge or disrupt, how knowledge and research methodologies were conceptualised. After I became an academic researcher, I attended a conference on ethnography in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2016. This is where my thinking began to change. One of the keynote speakers was Professor Nolwazi Mkhwanazi (University of Pretoria). For me, it was the first time I was listening to a Black woman as a keynote speaker. She shared that her fourth-year students had never read anything from Black scholars before joining her class. Her reflection troubled me because of what it meant for me as a Black person who had studied in a white-majority country. I wondered whether I had read any Black or decolonial scholarship throughout all those years of tertiary education.

I could not think of any course where I had been exposed to Black or decolonial scholarship, or moments when I was told that I should read and learn beyond white scholars. When I did come across Black and decolonial scholarship, such as Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin white Masks* or Arundhati Roy's *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, it was purely accidental. I found their writing interesting, but I did not understand their value, nor did I think critically about how such readings could shape my understanding of the world and challenge the white education I had received. It became clear that, during the first years of my career, I had not actively engaged in decolonial practice in my research and teaching, only paying lip service to cultural safety and its importance (e.g., Lenette, 2014).

Since then, I have written extensively and reviewed several manuscripts on participatory arts-based methods in refugee studies, but the question of cultural safety in research is still glossed over. This could be in part because established academic researchers remain unaware of their lack of exposure to Black and decolonial scholarship on participatory research methods—meaning they also remain unaware of the potential for this oversight to create *unsafe* research contexts. As such, upholding the principles of cultural safety and decoloniality in research practice becomes difficult, while the risks of emotional and cultural harm—especially to multiply-marginalised people—might be significant. The possibility of yielding risky outcomes goes against the ethos of participatory research, which is why the question of culturally safe participatory arts-based methods should be interrogated further.

I first define participatory research, participatory arts-based methods, and decolonial research. I explore the significance of cultural safety and its relevance to participatory arts-based research. I explain reflexivity as a crucial element of ethical research. I then provide key examples of how researchers have decolonised established research methods and discuss the importance of knowing the origins of the methods we use in participatory research. I conclude by outlining how researchers can think critically about culturally safe practices using a series of reflexive questions to interrogate their approach and determine what they can do differently.

Participatory Methods

In participatory research, people with direct experiences of, or interest in, the research topic participate in some or all aspects of the project, such as research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting (Lenette et al., 2019; Mahn et al., 2021). The use of participatory methods across a range of disciplines challenges our understanding of who “experts” are and who can create new knowledge. As such, participatory research reflects a paradigm shift from conventional and extractive methodologies toward subjective and context-specific approaches (MacDonald, 2012) that combine academic-expert research knowledge with local or subjective knowledges (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003). In this context, the term “co-researcher” refers to people with lived experiences as active agents in the co-production (co-design or co-creation) of new knowledge as a core characteristic of participatory research (Lenette et al., 2019). Researchers who use participatory methods aim to share, transfer, or redistribute power to co-researchers by privileging their perspectives, needs, and values about what matters to them (Datta et al., 2015). The likelihood of imposing external research agendas on co-researchers can be significantly reduced using participatory methods.

Participatory Arts-Based Methods

Arts-based research refers to the use of any art form to collect, interpret, and share new knowledge. Arts-based (or arts-informed) approaches are largely collaborative and participatory (Matarasso, 2019). Arts-based methods can be used effectively in participatory research because of their emancipatory aims and the significant potential to produce counter-narratives that shift dominant research paradigms (Lenette, 2019). Examples of participatory arts-based methods include: photovoice (Liebenberg et al., 2018); music-making (Mani, 2020); participatory filmmaking (Lenette et al., 2020); drawings (Harman et al., 2020); body mapping (de Jager et al., 2016); digital storytelling (L. Williams et al., 2017); and theatre (Moyo & Sibanda, 2020). Importantly, researchers who use participatory arts-based methods do so precisely because of their commitment to challenging established, dominant, colonialist research paradigms in favour of research practices that are more ethical, collaborative, creative, and respectful of co-researchers’ unique standpoints and perspectives.

Decolonial Research

Academic research is not immune to colonial influence. Research has a long history of perpetuating unequal power relationships imposed by colonisation as the norm (Lenette & Nesvaderani, 2022). All research projects stem from implicit and explicit philosophical underpinnings, and the choice of research methodology determines processes, activities, and outcomes (Datta et al., 2015). Western or Eurocentric frameworks have consistently ignored or deliberately undermined Eastern, African, Latin American, Pacific/Pasifika, and Indigenous research paradigms and ways of knowing, and their rich sociocultural, traditional, and spiritual knowledges (Lenette et al., 2022).

Recent decades have seen significant efforts to de-center and reframe methodologies to promote inclusive and decolonial research practices (Held, 2019). The scholarship of decolonial, Indigenous, and intersectional feminist research theorists (e.g., Battiste, 2008; hooks, 2012; Moreton-Robinson, 2021; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021) offers methodological and epistemological strategies to address systemic power inequities by privileging knowledge systems excluded or rendered invisible by western and Eurocentric lenses—noting that lowercase ‘w’ in ‘western’ is intentional to de-center colonialist linguistic dominance and white discourses (see Bhattacharya, 2022). A decolonial approach implies exploring the emancipatory and transgressive possibilities of research methods to disrupt western academic norms about what are considered “good” or “acceptable” ways of producing knowledge (Brown & Strega, 2005). A shift towards participatory research explicitly challenges colonialist-infused research frameworks in favour of person-focused and collaborative principles and subjective, affective, cultural, and creative ways of knowing (Lenette, 2019; Lenette & Nesvaderani, 2022).

Decolonial research begins with understanding white and settler privilege (Held, 2019), and “recognizes and actively dismantles” (Mikkonen et al., 2020, p. 107) power structures as an ethical principle underpinning research initiatives. It involves “the changing of the relationships of power, control, and dependency into ones where there can be a shift towards and equality that was not possible under the previous arrangements” (Phipps, 2019, p. 23) to disrupt, resist, and reject western terminologies, lenses, and practices that are imposed indiscriminately across contexts.

Decolonisation in the western academy dominated by white, upper-middle class, male, heteronormative, colonial perspectives can only occur by ceding space for Indigenous, decolonial scholarship and feminist, intersectional, and antiracist perspectives; for majority-world literature; and for scholars from majority-world countries (or what some call the “global south”) who live and work in western settings, and who usually exist at the margins (Lenette & Nesvaderani, 2022). Culturally safe research approaches and methods are crucial to decolonisation efforts in the academy.

Cultural Safety In Research

Cultural safety is a concept originating from Aotearoa New Zealand, which was first discussed in the literature in the 1990s in relation to Māori nursing students’ experiences of racism in transcultural nursing. A group of nurses led by Irihapeti Ramsden challenged Pākehā-(white)centric approaches to nursing training and practice in favour of “an environment in which there is mutual respect, openness and willingness to listen, and there is shared understanding and acknowledgment of identity of others” (Skellett, 2012, p. 382). Their aim was to reframe how health professionals were trained, with added emphasis on recognising and challenging the impact of coloniality (Browne et al., 2009).

Cultural safety implies that “there is *no assault on a person’s identity*” (R. Williams, 1999, p. 213, original emphasis) and posits that the people best equipped to create a culturally-safe environment are usually from the same

cultural background. All practitioners and organisations, irrespective of backgrounds, must pay attention to addressing racist attitudes or run the risk of perpetuating discriminatory practices (R. Williams, 1999). Cultural safety's key tenet is that "it is the service user who makes a judgment about whether the professional relationship feels culturally safe" (De & Richardson, 2008, p. 43). In research contexts, researchers who use culturally safe practices pay attention to their impact on participants and consider the latter's perspectives on research activities. As stated above, it is participants and co-researchers who determine whether processes are culturally safe, i.e., whether research projects and teams value and privilege their unique standpoints and perspectives (Lenette, 2019).

Browne et al. (2009, p. 167) argue that there are several "complexities, ambiguities and tensions that need to be considered when using the concept of cultural safety to draw attention to critically oriented knowledge such as racialization, culturalism, institutional racism and discrimination." Cultural safety seeks to redress power imbalances in research. To do this well, Browne et al. (2009) suggest that researchers should adopt a social justice lens (I return to this point later).

In my book *Arts-based methods in refugee research: Creating sanctuary* (Lenette, 2019), I discussed cultural safety in research, and posed the question: How do co-researchers feel about their engagement in the research process and about the content explored? When a research relationship is culturally safe, co-researchers' perspectives about project design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination are central rather than peripheral concerns. Co-researchers are confident that they can contribute their perspectives without fear of being misunderstood or diminished, and that their narratives will be respected and recognised to their just value.

When I wrote this definition, I had not first explained why decolonising research was crucial or how to achieve this aim. I had not explicitly stated how the use of research methods in culturally safe ways directly relates to the decolonisation agenda. As I wrote my second book, *Participatory Action Research: Ethics and Decolonization* (in press), I dedicated more space to explicitly addressing the decolonial potential of participatory methods and co-research models as well as the crucial importance of decolonising research and the academy. These discussions are critical for the academy and participatory researchers because: 1) no research method, participatory or not, is culturally safe in and of itself; and 2) we all have the potential to use methods in culturally unsafe ways because of our positionalities, privileges, and lack of reflexivity. Decolonising the academy through culturally safe practices is the responsibility of *all* researchers.

The Importance Of Reflexivity

Reflexivity plays a crucial role in participatory arts-based research, especially in diverse and complex settings. Benson & O'Reilly (2020) define reflexivity as follows:

...reflexive practice concerns a sense of our positionality and *positioning*. Second, reflexive practice involves *navigating* our way as the research proceeds and thereby actively learning from a reflexive approach. Third, a reflexive practice informed by practice theory also acknowledges the reflexivity and positionality of the human individuals and groups with whom we undertake research, and an understanding that our *interpreting* of the social world itself, on a broader scale and encompassing a longer time perspective, is made through and informed by reflexive practice (p. 2, original emphases).

When I use the term reflexivity, I refer to how we, as academic researchers, consciously reflect on who we are, what assumptions we bring to the research, and how these influence and shape relationships, processes, and outcomes (Lenette, in press). The different positions academic researchers might hold and their intersecting identities—or positionalities—can determine how they design projects, tackle challenges and ethical dilemmas, and achieve research outcomes (McIntyre, 2008). Positionality involves an awareness of personal biographies and reflexive engagement with the ability to listen, question, analyse, and interpret new knowledge. Importantly, stating one's positionality or worldview alone does not equate to being an ethical researcher if the capacity to be reflexive is lacking (see Benson & O'Reilly, 2020). An explicit commitment to identifying how our identities and privileges shape our research, our choice of methodology, and who we collaborate with is necessary if we want to challenge, not reinforce, colonialist-infused research methodologies.

Without paying careful attention to researcher reflexivity and engaging in an explicit and deliberate exploration of how methods can be used in culturally safe ways, there are many ways that participatory arts-based methods can be used in culturally *unsafe* ways. Further, while the literature on participatory arts-based methods is expanding, there is still relatively little discussion about ethical issues, positionality, and reflexivity. This represents a missed opportunity to provide candid reflections about the complexities of the field, as well as best practices to ensure that co-researchers do not end up worse off because of our research activities.

When accounts of reflexive processes are either non-existent or left out of research publications, there is no guarantee that academic researchers have taken care to fully explore who they are, how they understand the people they collaborate with, and how they ensure that issues such as power differentials, institutional racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, transphobia, and homophobia are not influencing the research process. There is an ongoing need for thoughtful, deliberate discussions to identify preconceived notions.

Decolonising Methods Through Culturally Safe Practices

The literature on decolonising methodologies, and especially Indigenous scholars' writing, is extremely useful to disrupt methodological assumptions (see Baskin, 2005; Battiste, 2008; Moreton-Robinson & Walter, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 2021), especially when academic researchers' backgrounds differ from that of co-researchers. However, even if they agree in principle with the decolonisation agenda, researchers can be unsure about—and lack skills and knowledge on—how exactly we can decolonise *methods*. As Browne et al. (2009) argue, “the concept of cultural safety cannot be neatly packaged or discussed (...) as a concrete set of standards for practice,” and I agree that culturally safe practices will look different for each research project and context. Unfortunately, academic publications tend to neglect providing clear and detailed explanations or frameworks on how researchers have used methods in culturally safe ways. Consequently, research practices tend to remain the same despite explicit commitments to cultural safety and decoloniality in project proposals and negotiations or agreements with community members and participants.

While we need more practical examples of how to decolonise new and established methods, I have learned the most from Indigenous research to understand how to identify what needs to change and what frameworks inform how academic researchers can adapt methods to be used in culturally safe ways. The first two examples relate specifically to participatory arts-based methods:

1. Dickson's (2017) work using PhotoYarning, where Yarning is an Aboriginal norm and respected practice for exchanging knowledge and sharing stories. Dickson (2017) explained that yarning around photographs using culturally appropriate processes yielded rich data that may have taken months to obtain using interviews alone. The approach was successful because it adapted the standard method of photovoice to fit the context and backgrounds of co-researchers and of the researcher, rather than assume that simply asking co-researchers to take photographs and discuss them would achieve its emancipatory aims.
2. Williams et al.'s (2017) work in Aotearoa New Zealand, where Māori cultural protocols were integrated in a digital storytelling project on Indigenous palliative caregiving. *Kaupapa Māori* research is an Indigenous approach where Māori concerns and priorities are the focal point of research and where practices are centred within Māori culture and practice (see Walker et al., 2006). These principles were especially relevant since the research was a collaboration between Māori and non-Māori researchers and involved a Māori research advisory group and Māori community members.

3. Walter and Andersen's (2013) scholarship on Indigenous statistics challenging established, deficit-based practices of Indigenous statistics in favour of a new paradigm for quantitative research, such as *nayri kati* (good numbers). Quantitative research informed by Indigenous standpoints leads to asking different questions and analysing data in a new way.

In my own research with colleagues in Australia, we used body mapping to explore embodied experiences of stigma among women impacted by significant mental distress, disability, or refugee status (Boydell et al., 2020), but we failed to consider if this method was culturally safe. Body mapping involves tracing life-size outlines of co-researchers' bodies and using creative media and words on the map to describe their experiences in response to the research topic(s). An advisory committee member who works in the refugee sector pointed out that some women might not feel comfortable with the method's focus on bodies and the familiarity of someone tracing around their bodies due to contextual sociocultural norms. They also noted that the term *body mapping* itself might carry a biomedical connotation that could be daunting or triggering for some. In response to those insights, we reviewed our recruitment material and the instructions in our workshop outline to emphasise the art-based elements of the method.

Even though the participatory method of body mapping originated in contexts such as Jamaica and South Africa in the late 1990s (de Jager et al., 2016), this tool has been adapted and is now used widely in western research contexts. This whitewashing of body mapping's roots means that some of its initial characteristics, which made the method culturally safe, may have been *erased* over time, leading to a risk of using body mapping in ways that deny, overlook, or disregard unique and significant cultural standpoints and perspectives. This is why reflexive processes are so important in (participatory) research projects: they provide opportunities to discuss methodologies and key concerns as they arise, so that these can be addressed promptly.

Where do our methods come from?

To ascertain whether participatory arts-based methods can be used in culturally safe ways, we need to understand where the methods come from. In a recent project, my colleagues and I used story completion to ask Australian residents to express their thoughts, fears, and experiences in response to a hypothetical scenario or "stem" on the impact of COVID-19 (Vaughan et al., 2022). Story completion is what I would consider a non-participatory method, but our aim was to find a suitable online creative writing tool. When we set out to write up the findings and reflected on the lack of diversity among participants, we discussed how the method is grounded in western psychology and psychotherapy. This clearly indicated the need to unpack these origins and identify what aspects of the method could be culturally unsafe. We decided to write a separate paper on the topic (Lenette et al., 2022), where we outlined a different approach that includes exploring diverse notions of storytelling (e.g.,

from Indigenous, African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, Pacific/Pasifika, or Asian literature) and norms to inform the stem design, to adapt story completion to diverse sociocultural contexts, to challenge western narrative arcs, and to co-create the story stem. We favoured the terms story fragment (rather than “stem”) and story assemblage (rather than “completion”) to broaden the possibilities of storytelling beyond western cultural conventions (i.e., with a beginning, middle, and end, “happily ever after,” or “triumph over adversity”).

Our understanding of where methods come from is often limited in participatory arts-based research. Polk (2010) wrote an excellent paper exploring the western underpinnings of digital storytelling and the suitability of using this method in culturally diverse communities, at a time when digital storytelling projects were booming in community settings as well as in disciplines such as health, education, and disability studies. For other arts-based methods, such as participatory filmmaking, it is possible to draw on the scholarship and cross-cultural analyses from other disciplines, such as Helff’s (2008) work on critical representations of refugees in documentaries (see Blomfield & Lenette, 2019).

But there are many methods that fall under the umbrella term of participatory arts-based methods, and it is not always clear if there have been robust discussions about the origins of each method, or how these discussions determine whether methods can be used in culturally safe ways. Part of our responsibilities as academic researchers is to ascertain, for each method, what principles and ideologies influence and shape it, and what changes should be implemented before using such methods in culturally safe and decolonial research.

In another example, I used walking interviews in a project called *Finding Home*, which explored meanings attached to “home” in collaboration with three refugee-background women co-researchers originally from Iraq. By walking along familiar routes in their neighbourhood, we learned about the women’s stories of homemaking. The focus on place lent itself to a sensory, mobile method, and yielded rich data (Lenette, 2021; Lenette & Gardner, 2021). We consciously chose a small group of co-researchers to co-create narratives of homemaking. During one-on-one walks, the women decided where to go, what to talk about, how long to walk for, what to photograph, and what to record as soundscapes of the different sites. I made short clips retracing the walks using their photographs and soundscapes (see projectfindinghome.net).

An important pre-walk consideration was to discuss the method in-depth before inviting the women to engage in walking interviews. We considered how to explain the method to potential co-researchers; what wording we should use to offer an accurate representation; how the interviews would take place; and how we would ensure that co-researchers would lead these interviews. These discussions meant we had to anticipate how the method might be perceived and how we would tackle issues linked to privacy, confidentiality, and cultural

safety as well as mobility and language issues. Walking interviews have mainly been used in health research and geography, and more recently in disability studies. However, as I anticipated, there was very little information about prioritising cultural safety when using this method.

Through our reflexive conversations before, during, and at the completion of the project, we remained aware of how we would support this co-research model in a way that made sense to the women involved (Lenette & Gardner, 2021). Our discussions led us to conclude that we would not impose a pre-conceived notion of how to “implement” walking interviews, as this should be negotiated with each woman. As migrant-background women, we were mindful to suspend our own conceptualisations of the meaning of home and the kinds of conversations we should have about homemaking.

In my book on Participatory Action Research, I describe PAR as a decolonial intersectional tool. Because PAR has been taken up widely in western, English-speaking research contexts and scholarship, the origins of PAR—grounded in reflexive research practice and debates in majority-world settings—are often forgotten (similar to body mapping, as discussed above). This erasure, or whitewashing, of PAR’s roots highlights how western academic settings can continue to reproduce colonial relations in research over time and across place. But it is *precisely* because of its origins in the majority world that PAR has huge potential as a decolonial intersectional approach (Lenette, in press).

The Way Forward

So, what can we do differently? Our aim as researchers is (or should be) to continually assess our values and approaches to determine how we can do better. As stated above, Browne et al. (2009) suggest that creating culturally safe contexts requires adopting a social justice lens that favours critical inquiry, both at individual and institutional levels. Social justice is concerned with “creating fair relations in terms of opportunity between people and society” (Cook et al., 2019, p. 380). A social justice approach to research challenges assumptions about elitism, exclusion, and prejudice as *normal* in social relations and institutions. Thus, cultural safety involves: 1) laying philosophical foundations as groundwork for dialogue, including exploration of key concepts such as culture, safety, racialization, and reflexivity; 2) being direct and transparent about the political nature of our goals; 3) taking an explicit focus on structural inequities; and 4) initiating reflexivity by examining how we are all socially positioned within wider structures and discourses (Browne et al., 2009, p. 169).

Based on this framework and the reflections shared above, the following questions can assist researchers using participatory and other methodologies to assess and adapt their practices in culturally safe ways:

1. *What is your motivation for undertaking the research?* Simply labelling projects as participatory is far from sufficient to generate culturally safe research contexts. From the outset, use a reflexive process to interrogate: the motivations of the research team (and funders); the realities of institutional racism and discrimination; and

your overall approach, privileges, positionalities, and ethical decision-making frameworks to identify inherent risks associated with your choice of methods. Be prepared to change methods if needed. This is not a sign of research gone wrong; it demonstrates a considerate, ethical, and well thought-through research strategy.

2. *What are the origins of your method(s)?* Most researchers apply methods indiscriminately across research projects because of familiarity and previous successes, or due to lack of funding, time, and direction to explore new options. But as I suggested above, it is crucial to first consider the underpinnings of each method and their disciplinary origins. Otherwise, researchers run the risk of inadvertently reproducing colonialist principles and lenses rather than facilitating culturally safe practices. This can lead to potentially detrimental consequences for co-researchers.
3. *What needs changing?* Be honest about aspects of the project that you can modify or should abandon if these practices can lead to culturally unsafe outcomes. Consider how you can learn from relevant scholarship (i.e., Indigenous and majority-world authors) and through ethical and respectful engagement with the expertise and knowledge of colleagues and community members who are experienced with culturally safe practices. Do not hesitate to state what you don't know, where you need guidance, and to keep asking questions even when you think you get it.
4. *How do you use methods in culturally safe ways?* Adapt, consult, change, reflect, and adapt again. Be prepared for the unexpected. The participatory nature of projects means that research contexts are likely to change constantly and as such, reflexive discussions about cultural safety should be ongoing. You should be flexible and agile to respond to changing contexts. Listen to co-researchers' feedback, especially when it is difficult to hear.
5. *How do you know you have achieved your aim?* Irrespective of the research topic, include evaluative questions about the methodology to give co-researchers an opportunity to share their thoughts on culturally safe and potentially unsafe aspects of projects. Document these issues carefully and, even though it might be difficult to share mistakes publicly, write about these problems and potential solutions so that researchers who may struggle to understand the importance of how to use methods in culturally safe ways can learn from your experiences.

Conclusion

The literature should have a stronger focus on the challenging aspects of participatory methods, the politics of participatory research, the limitations of participatory methodologies, and the intricacies of applying participatory principles in practice. Such comprehensive discussions on the strengths and difficulties of upholding participatory approaches confirm that good research can be—and usually is—complex and messy (see Eversole, 2010; Lenette, in press; Ozkul, 2020; Tanabe et al., 2018). Researchers should pay careful attention to their positionalities and adopt a reflexive approach to assess how they engage with participatory methods to avoid culturally unsafe outcomes. This paper aimed to encourage readers to consider the methods they choose, their origins, how they can undertake research in culturally safe ways, and their contributions to the decolonisation agenda. We need more robust debates on using methods in culturally safe ways—not as peripheral concerns, but as central elements of contemporary practices in the academy.

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