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The challenge of making relationships central in online cultural safety education

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Abstract

Cultural safety education entails the pedagogical strategy of taking students on a journey of discovery. This requires sustained openness to uncertainty, which can present myriad challenges for students and teachers. Learning about cultural safety is enabled when respectful, productive relationships characterise classrooms. In this paper, we report on the collaborative, reflective observations made by a group of university educators. We discuss educators' efforts to facilitate positive relatedness in online classrooms compared with their experiences in shared physical space (SPS) classrooms. We found that online environments enable and constrain relational possibilities in ways that differ from SPS classrooms and which escalate educators' emotional labour. Our findings highlight the significant role material/technological affordances of learning and teaching environments play in shaping relational possibilities. We argue that considering how the proximate materials and technologies in classrooms mediate relationship-building and connection needs to be factored into curriculum design and teaching practice. We propose drawing on culturally responsive pedagogies at the outset of cultural safety education design across SPS and online environments to prioritise relationship-building in ways that both enable students' learning and support educators' emotional labour.

Introduction

Health professions in Australia increasingly expect graduates to enact culturally safe health care. A culturally safe environment affirms the manifold aspects of a person's lived experience (Bennett & Gates, 2019) and ensures no assault, challenge, or denial of any aspect of a person's identity (Williams, 1999). Culturally safe health care with Indigenous Australians requires health workers to support Indigenous Australians' sovereignty and demands. This requires "the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism" (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2021, p. 9).

Cultural safety education requires a transformative learning process that intersects with students' and teachers' lives by exploring the self and one's beliefs, attitudes, and values. Students are invited to step into a lifelong process of considering what it means to be culturally safe in interaction with others (Best, 2018). Learning about cultural safety engages teachers' and students' emotions and bodies (Deckman & Ohito, 2020; James et al., 2022; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Vulnerabilities and affective responses feature in the classrooms and require attention and care (Hollinsworth, 2016). Effective cultural safety education requires teachers to take a shared co-learning stance with students (McLeod, Moore et al., 2020), consistent with asking students to consider that we are "always implicated in each other's lives" (Baltra-Ulloa, 2018, p. 135). Teachers must 'walk the talk' and aim to model and enact ways of relating that cultivate the "atmosphere of openness, approachability, fairness, and safety" that Phan et al. (2009, p. 328) indicate is necessary when teaching in this space. Importantly, student-educator relationship building is essential to ensuring the classroom itself is culturally safe for students from marginalised groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Fernando & Bennett, 2019).

Cultural safety education aims to enable students to create new frameworks of thinking in which differences are legitimised. McDermott (2012, p. 15) describes the pedagogical strategy of taking students on a journey of discovery, which requires a sustained openness to uncertainty. The challenges for students, when presented with this learning opportunity, can manifest as resistance (Denis, 2011; Gatwiri, 2018; Hollinsworth, 2016). Cultural safety education is characterised by the emotional labour involved in facilitating and participating in these "hard conversations" (Sjorberg & McDermott, 2016, p. 29). Teachers must "anticipate the discomfit of disruption" (McLeod, Thakchoe et al., 2020, p. 187) associated with unlearning processes and work productively with this resistance in the classroom (Sjorberg & McDermott, 2016).

The quality of relationships between students and teachers in the cultural safety education classroom is critical to ensuring a productive learning process (McGill et al., 2021). Relatedness is defined as an individual's experience of relationships with others where there is a "sharing of meaningful feelings including warmth and affection in human contact" (Hagerty et al., 1993, p. 292). Respectful

connections between students and teachers generate a learning environment where students can create new understandings and insights from being ontologically disturbed (Ohito & Oyler, 2017). As McDermott (2012, p. 15) observes, "good cultural-safety education generates disquiet but makes the uncomfortable comfortable enough, through sensitive classroom facilitation in a mutually respectful environment". For Gill (2022), this objective can be achieved by establishing 'brave spaces' in which discomfort is explicitly acknowledged while authenticity and vulnerability are facilitated. As Pawlowski (2018, p. 63) asserts, "[b]rave space assumes that tension, conflict, and risk are at the heart of the cognitive and personal transformation". Within 'brave spaces', students are encouraged to rise to the challenges of genuine dialogue (Hole & De Luz, 2022).

Challenges associated with establishing the relationships that are imperative to effective cultural safety education can be amplified in online classrooms. As Powell et al. (2021) observe, "there remain critical questions around how best to ensure student engagement within the online environment" (p.1). The debate about how students engage in online classrooms also identifies its potential for supporting students' learning and transformation. For example, Hodges et al. (2020) suggests that online teaching can produce sound pedagogical outcomes. Similarly, Canty et al. (2020) state that the increasing range of online technologies can provide "high-quality distance learning that is engaging, interactive and increasingly personalised" (p. 3). Social interaction where students can share their values and interests has been identified as essential to student learning in online spaces (Alqurashi, 2019; Tang & Tsui, 2018) and there are calls for more teaching strategies to facilitate social interaction online (Baber, 2022).

This project contributes to the literature about cultural safety education by exploring how the online space mediates teachers' experiences of forming relationships with students and creating the 'brave spaces' that facilitate productive learning and teaching environments. We contrast online and SPS classrooms with the aim of contributing to the development of knowledge about best practice in relation to cultural safety education. The rapid shift to online learning in tertiary institutions due to COVID-19 (Crawford et al., 2020; Hodges et al., 2020) provides a unique opportunity to investigate these claims by comparing pre- and post-online teaching and learning experiences. This project resonates with other explorations of replicating SPS teaching online during the unique conditions of COVID-19 (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020). To this end, we asked:

- How do teachers experience the delivery of cultural safety education online compared to SPS classrooms?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of online delivery for cultural safety education?

Methods

This article examines the experiences of five educators from three campuses at a regional university. Two participants in the project are also members of the research team (authors one and three). All educators teaching cultural safety to allied health students at the university at the time (n=12) were invited to participate. At the time of the study, all participants were casual employees, either PhD students or early career researchers. Educators who agreed to participate submitted consent forms. This study was approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee.

Participants were responsible for delivering six two-hour online cultural safety workshops as a mandatory course component for allied health students. The workshops covered race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender and sexuality. Following this content, students undertake a discrete unit about culturally safe health care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. All educators had previously facilitated the workshops in SPS classrooms and were required to abruptly shift their teaching to online in response to COVID-19.

At three points during teaching delivery, participants reflected on their experiences. Initially, participants submitted written reflections to a shared Microsoft Teams folder. After the submission of each set of written reflections, a collaborative reflective conversation (CRC) was facilitated by Author Two, who was not a participant. CRCs were audio recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Thus, the data for this project comprised 15 written reflections and three transcribed CRCs.

Although our sample size is relatively small (n=5), the iterative nature of data collection supports in-depth exploration of educator experiences. The sample size also meets the requisite criteria outlined in Malterud et al. (2015) and Morse (2000) in relation to aims and scope of the study, study design, analysis strategy and quality of the data. Our sample size allows for diverse experiences to be explored while also enabling a thorough thematic analysis of the qualitative data (Boulton & Hammersley, 2006).

In line with the exploratory nature of this project, individual educator reflections were not guided by instructions or prompts beyond the project's information sheet. The aim was to allow topics not previously discussed in the literature to emerge. Nevertheless, to ensure that our research question was addressed in sufficient detail, the CRC facilitator guided participants to explore their experiences in relation to the specificity of cultural safety education, in particular, the challenges and rewards of teaching online.

This mixed-methods project is collaborative in design and analysis. Collaborative team research is increasingly recognised as more effective and productive as it tends to achieve greater outcomes than research conducted in isolation (Kelly et al., 2020). Mixed-methods research is becoming accepted as the third research approach (Johnson et al., 2007; Terrell, 2012; Molina, 2016). By combining individual written reflections with collaborative reflective conversations, we aimed to increase the depth with which

the research questions were explored.

Individual reflections were chosen for this project due to the wealth of literature that describes journaling as a process that supports professional development for teachers. For example, journaling has been demonstrated to support teachers to increase their understanding, connect with others and pose questions (Alterio, 2004; Göker, 2016). Sharing their reflections with other participants and contributing to CRCs supported the development of collegial relationships as participants jointly explored classroom dynamics and teaching experiences (MacPherson, 2010). In this way, the CRCs were not solely focused on data collection, but also designed to cultivate a community of practice (Sumer et al., 2021). In line with our aim of building collegial relationships, reflections shared to the Teams folder were not anonymised. However, participant extracts in this paper have been anonymised.

Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology that emphasises a systematic inductive approach to data collection and analysis focusing on building theory from data rather than hypotheses (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Grounded theory was chosen because its inductive principles align with the exploratory aims of this research, allowing us to generate new theories about the experiences of teaching cultural safety online, where little previous research exists. Following the grounded theory method, data were analysed first by in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2014, p. 590). All researchers independently coded the data using the participants' actual language. After sharing our individual codes, we met online to collaboratively develop a coding framework by identifying higher-order codes. We then jointly categorised the data according to this framework.

While time consuming, the collaborative nature of data analysis allows for individual readings of the data to be critically examined. The limited size of our research sample rendered this method of data analysis feasible. Our coding framework comprises the following higher-order codes: 1. Mechanics of the online space; 2. Interactions—peer-to-peer and student-teacher; 3. Teacher observations of student learning; 4. Teacher identity; and 5. Teaching strategies. These codes were further refined during the writing phase to produce our final two themes. Our first theme discusses the implications of online teaching environments lacking many of the often taken-for-granted benefits of SPS classrooms. Our second theme explores how these affordances of online environments affect student-teacher relationships. These themes are explored in turn below.

Analysis and discussion

The affordances of online space enable and constrain relationship-building

Teaching environments have traditionally been predicated on people being physically present in a classroom. The interactions that take place in the classroom offer both the teacher and students the capacity to connect not only through words, but also through body language. Converting the classroom to an online space has implications for the

interpretation of non-verbal responses, especially if cameras are not used. This can be crucial for cultural safety learning, which engages teachers' and students' emotions and bodies (Deckman & Ohito, 2020; James et al., 2022; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). On the other hand, online classrooms may hold increased potential for collaboration between teachers and students by undermining traditional power dynamics. The relative anonymity of online classrooms may increase student sharing if students feel less vulnerable in comparison to SPS classrooms (Malbon, 2022). For example, Stacy described her surprise at students' willingness to share personal information in relation to their own identity and how the online space created affordances for collaboration and sharing of experiences.

The greater anonymity that students have online may be one of the reasons they seem to have been more willing to give their opinions and take part in a discussion although, as with face-to-face teaching, there were still a few who said nothing. (Stacy, RJ [Reflective Journal]1)

Stacy recognises that, for some students, the online space created possibilities of relatedness and sharing that were sometimes missing in the SPS classroom. In her experience, the online space, particularly the written chat function, provided students with anonymity and democratised the learning experience. Other participants commented that, rather than a few 'vocal' students dominating discussions as often occurred in SPS classrooms, the conversation was more evenly shared in the online environment.

In person when I was teaching, there were some people who would really carry the conversation...but I feel like there is a lot more shared, even though it is a bit like getting a text message and there's not much detail. (Mackenzie, CRC [Collaborative Reflective Conversation]1)

Educators attributed students' increased willingness to participate to their use of the written chat function of online classrooms, which was by far the most prevalent method of student interaction. The chat function established a more democratic and safe space for students to contribute their experiences and ideas than might have been possible in the SPS.

Largely the class used the [written] chat function offering short and concise responses to the questions. (Octavia, RJ2)

Most students seemed more comfortable commenting on, and exploring content, via the [written] chat function...I feel like this function, allowed students—who might otherwise feel uncomfortable commenting—feel safe, and able to make points and respond to questions. (Mackenzie, RJ1)

The written chat function also offered opportunities for peer learning as students engaged with each other, often "asking relevant questions" (Selmah, CRC1). For the most part, however, student reliance on short, perfunctory written

responses left educators questioning student engagement (Chen et al., 2020) and their ability to 'gauge the room' and adjust their delivery accordingly. Crucially, short written responses did not allow for more nuanced conversations, restricting the capacity of teachers and students to develop their relationships. Our participants' observations about limited engagement through short written responses connect with the findings of Mulrooney and Kelly's (2020) study, which stresses the critical role of relationships in virtual learning. They affirm that building strong teacher-student relationships is pivotal for fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing overall learning experiences while observing that online environments present challenges to developing these relationships.

As research participants reflected on teaching online, fundamental questions frequently arose about how to assess student engagement, and what constitutes a good learning experience for students. In this section we discuss implications arising from the lack of embodied responses, the severing of happenstance interactions and the benefits of dedicated in-person study spaces.

Effective classroom management and pedagogical approaches contribute to engagement, but this is predicated on student-teacher relationships, the teacher's capacity to read the room and their ability to create 'brave spaces' (Hole & De Luz, 2022). These features become challenging when classes move from SPS to online (Lonie & Andrews, 2009). Participants explained that students generally did not use their cameras and microphones to engage in the online space and this impacted the capacity for the teacher to establish relationships in the classroom. Kedraka and Kaltsdis (2020) similarly discovered that students exhibited a marked preference for written communication when posing questions, displaying notable reluctance to use microphones and cameras. Interestingly, these same students noted the loss of interaction and connectedness in the virtual space affected their learning experiences.

Stacy (RJ1) reflected that it was "strange and disarming" to speak into the webcam of her computer and "not seeing faces or hearing voices". The silence experienced by teachers made the process difficult. As Mackenzie (CRC3) described, "there was just this silence from the group", making it difficult to establish cultures of relatedness so that students felt safe sharing their experiences and beliefs.

For me, the main classroom was like talking to the empty room I was sitting in. I felt pressured to talk to get some sort of discussion going. (Ewan, RJ1)

Research participants questioned how they received or read engagement in students when the embodied demeanour or facial and bodily expressions were absent, with their only clues being limited comments and questions shared by audio or typed in the chat. Chen et al. (2020, pp. 224-225) observe that the loss of body language and non-verbal cues in online learning environments force teaching staff to consistently check in on the student's comprehension of material. This was also true for participants in our study. For example, Stacy (CRC2) stated that she consistently asked the students for feedback on how they were progressing through the material.

It was only in the process of teaching online that participants realised the value of embodied responses, which they had previously taken for granted. They missed the common cues that point to “how students [are] receiving and responding to the material” (Stacy, RJ1). As Mackenzie noted, students’ reliance on participating via written chat meant that it was difficult to know if students understood the task at hand or merely gave responses that they believed were sought by the educator:

I don’t know if they got it, or if they were just saying what they wanted me to hear...but it was a lot more difficult to tell. (Mackenzie, CRC1)

This restricted level of engagement and lack of input from students was perceived by educators as a lack of engagement (Chen et al., 2020), which led them to experiencing teaching as one-sided with feelings of being surveilled. Mackenzie described the experience as similar to an interview and Octavia likened it to Bentham’s panopticon.

Sometimes when people just say things like, “Yes, I agree” or “I feel the same as such and such”, it kind of feels like I’m almost interviewing them as you would a research participant...as opposed to just discussing ideas or helping thinking. (Mackenzie, CRC2)

[Teaching online] reminded me of Jeremy Bentham’s idea of the panopticon...it was this feeling of being constantly under surveillance. (Octavia, CRC1)

Research participants observed that, in online classrooms, some forms of contact and communication between students, and students and teachers, no longer happened. For example, participants noted the absence of the informal conversations between students that are possible when students move in and out of the classroom together. They noted how the incidental learning that happens when students discuss unit content as part of their social connections with other students is missing in online classrooms.

A further benefit of SPS classrooms is that they support students to be present both physically and mentally with, ideally, minimal distractions from classroom activities. In contrast, students in virtual classrooms may be joining from busy home or work environments rather than a quiet study space. Anecdotal evidence reveals that online students may be distracted and passively listening or embarrassed to share their personal space on camera (Stafford, 2020, pp. 150-151). As Thatsara et al. (2020, p. 44) note, the lack of a “proper study” environment at home creates difficulties for student engagement. The distractions typical of home environments may have been exacerbated during our project due to COVID-19 lockdowns in which all family members were home and caring responsibilities were often increased. In addition to making learning difficult for students, this can also create disruptions for others in the virtual space.

When breakout groups were closed and students returned, their microphones were still on and you could hear the noise and that others were in the same space during class. I reflected on how difficult

it must be for students—to have other things taking place in the background. (Octavia, RJ1)

With students no longer in physical proximity to each other, a key dynamic the research participants observed in SPS classrooms, where students readily form groups and generate a commentary together to seize or resist the learning opportunity, was disrupted. Research participants shared how students can aggregate to create what Selmah described as a “negative downward spiral or you can have a really positive spiral” (CRC3). This occurs when one or a few students carry a conversation and propel other students into a negative or positive and robust discussion.

It’s easier (for me) when students absent themselves rather than having to deal with active resistance, silence, refusal to engage while present in person. Is it better for the students though? Do we hope to get through to the ‘resisters’ by the discussion, activities, peer modelling? If the students are present then, in theory, there’s a possibility of them changing their perspective. (Selmah, RJ1)

This points to the importance of establishing strategies to foster relationships that enable teachers to critically engage with negative discussions and create ‘teachable moments’, something not possible if there is limited interaction between the cohort and teacher. Research participants discussed how their experiences of online classrooms prevented the conditions they know are required to facilitate critical discussion and the necessary ‘ontological disturbance’ in students. As Ewan observes, fostering student-teacher relationships online can be challenging due to the nature of virtual learning platforms.

I want to have difficult, tough conversations that are going to ontologically disturb them, but you need to bring people close to that for that and you can’t in this environment. (Ewan, CRC3)

Overall, the educators participating in our research project felt that online classrooms lacked many of the often taken-for-granted benefits of SPS classrooms—embodied responses, happenstance interactions and dedicated study spaces. This left our participants feeling surveilled and increased the emotional labour of teaching. In the next section, we discuss the implications of the online environment for participants’ sense of developing the relationships that are fundamental to cultural safety teaching.

Constrained relationship-building in online spaces escalates teachers’ emotional labour

The quality of relationships between students and teachers in the cultural safety education classroom is critical to ensuring a productive learning process (McGill et al., 2021). These relationships demand a mutually respectful environment (McDermott, 2012) in which educators model ways of relating that cultivate openness and co-learning. This orientation to teaching necessitates the emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) of managing and regulating emotions—a

widely observed part of teachers' work in SPS classrooms (Constanti & Gibbs, 2004; Dismore et al., 2019). Research participants in this project found that additional dimensions of emotional labour were associated with attempting to create relatedness in online environments. For example, some research participants described how they mitigated the perceived lack of engagement by students, by becoming much more performative to encourage interactions and participation in the virtual classroom. Selmah commented that her "performance as a teacher felt quite contrived" as she sought to do "whatever [she] could, to keep the students interested and engaged". Ewan shared similar sentiments:

I was performing a bit more than I usually would. I know my teaching style is a bit performative, as a way to loosen people up and welcome them in, but it felt really forced. (Ewan, RJ1)

This experience is supported by Chen et al. (2020, p. 230) who found that online platforms required teachers to "rehearse their performance...more like 'show time'". However, performativity is not conducive to developing 'brave spaces' (Hole & De Luz, 2022) to enable the relationships necessary for effective cultural safety education. When educators model performativity rather than vulnerability, openness and co-learning, the conditions for facilitating the "hard conversations" (Sjorberg & McDermott, 2016, p. 29) that produce transformative learning outcomes are not created. These limitations are not conducive to supporting students to critically reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes.

The additional demands of the virtual classroom (Lavine et al., 2012) necessitate different kinds of emotional labour, which left the participants in our study feeling drained. This finding resonates with Nyanjom and Naylor (2021), who assert that the emotional labour of online teaching can have negative impacts on teachers' well-being. This feeling was augmented by technological difficulties, which disrupted educators' focus on cultivating a productive classroom environment for cultural safety education. Echoing the experiences of many teachers forced to switch to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic (Martin, 2020), participants in our study noted issues with technology and bandwidth. The proliferation of online teaching globally (Arday, 2022; Crawford et al., 2020; Mulrooney & Kelly, 2020) has prompted discussions about the importance of technological tools (Baran et al., 2011; Eri et al., 2021; Kaqinari et al., 2021; Sumer et al., 2021) to establish virtual learning spaces through chat rooms, video meeting spaces and interactive whiteboards (Crawford-Ferre & Wiest, 2012; Major, 2015; Montelongo & Eaton, 2019). However, this is predicated on having access to required equipment and bandwidth, and for all the systems to operate efficiently. While not a focus of this research project, it is important to note that the rapid shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that student access to equipment or digital capacity cannot be assumed (Mshigeni et al., 2020). As noted by Arday (2022), the pandemic exacerbated inequalities, laying bare the flaws in the system.

Educators' attempts to create effective learning environments while managing technological issues often proved challenging. Bower et al. (2014) found that the technical

difficulties required teachers to make snap decisions under pressure. We noticed similarities with how participants in our study described their experiences with internet connectivity issues.

Soon after the introductions and icebreaker activity, however, things started to go awry...my connectivity was low...I was dropping out occasionally. (Stacy, RJ1) Whether it was my Internet, my laptop, or the MyLO system, halfway through the final workshop—when I attempted to create break-out groups—the site froze. (Mackenzie, RJ1)

During the tutorial, I experienced my own issues with the bandwidth... forcing me to switch from WIFI to a mobile hotspot. (Octavia RJ1)

In the second workshop, I had 11 students and they consistently dropped out of the session. At one point when I was providing instructions before putting them in breakout groups, all 11 students dropped out of the session. (Octavia, RJ2)

Struggling with bandwidth and having the teacher and/or the students drop out of the virtual classroom can be very disruptive and stressful, taking away from the time set for facilitating the learning process (Martin, 2020). The need to manage the technology added an additional layer of complexity, which at times distracted participants in this project from engaging and relating to the cohort in ways that are conducive for cultural safety learning. Participants reflected on the different experiences between online and face-to-face teaching.

I suddenly missed the classroom experience. Whilst I have encountered technical difficulties with the projector or audio-visual equipment in face-to-face teaching, nothing had ever been so disruptive, and help was at hand. (Stacy, RJ1)

It is futile to focus on cultivating supportive relationships while negotiating connectivity issues. The need to manage technology impacted participants' capacity to create an optimal classroom environment, leaving them feeling exhausted and disillusioned with the experience. This study shows that technological issues made communication harder and increased participants' emotional labour (Kennedy et al., 2022).

Participants in this study emphasised the increased emotional labour associated with a sense of lost reciprocity in learning experiences with students. The most prevalent theme in educator reflections was student reliance on the written chat function in the online classroom and implications arising from this. Students' inability or unwillingness to engage via video and audio was often perceived as a lack of engagement and/or reciprocity (Chen et al., 2020). In combination with teachers' attempts to engage students, the perceived lack of reciprocity left teachers feeling "exhausted", "tired", "drained" or "pooped".

By the end of the workshops, I felt completely drained and exhausted after having to be switched on and engaging while my students were 'just there'. It is really hard to be talking to students and not getting anything back from them. The experience felt like being on radio or doing a podcast and not knowing how the audience is experiencing the learning experience. (Octavia, RJ1)

Across the teaching team, the perceived lack of student engagement left our participants struggling to feel like effective educators. Similarly, Stafford (2020, p. 151) reflects that lack of student engagement contributed to "unmet expectations and frustration for teachers" who were not accustomed to such student behaviours. In our study, while participants experienced "unmet expectations and frustration", this was combined with feeling "disheartened", "inadequate" and "dejected".

No one talked. And it was really hard work just getting them to even respond in the chat box...I just sort of sat there in silence and just waited until someone got so uncomfortable that you know that they'd say something. It was awful, yeah, really hard. (Stacy, CRC2)

And I feel like an absolute failure at the end. Like, I'm just thinking 'what am I doing wrong'? (Octavia, CRC2)

It was incredibly hard to get people to engage. (Mackenzie, RJ2)

Participants' comments above highlight the emotional labour involved in the teaching process and how this impacts their experiences. Similar observations about the impact of the rapid shift to online learning during COVID-19 on the well-being of educators has been found in other studies (Konstantinou & Miller, 2022; Kennedy et al., 2022; Nyanjom & Naylor, 2021). In our study, the ability to engage students in critical and reflective conversations was hampered by the technological limitations of attempting to replicate SPS workshops in an online environment. As Lee (CRC2) noted, "in this space, we're being set up to fail". This has implications for teachers as high levels of emotional labour are demanded in online teaching spaces in order to achieve any level of successful engagement with cultural safety education to prepare students for their future professions. Participants felt that the predominantly 'unembodied' nature of teaching online impeded the development of the relationality that is crucial to effective cultural safety education.

Participants' comments above demonstrate our research participants' commitment to their teaching and the effort they perform regardless of the learning and teaching environment. Participants' commitment to their teaching was also evident in the suggestions made for improving learning experiences for students:

- Provide more clarity and explanation about course aims, the kind of learning journey to expect and how this may differ from other learning experiences

in their degrees. Centre relationality and deep listening as core learning outcomes.

- Mandate attendance by designing assessment items that must be completed in class, alone or working collaboratively with peers. This will help to emphasise the importance of the classroom interaction and enable assessment of how students engage with peers. Develop peer feedback tasks.
- Consider students' own insights into their ongoing learning about their relational capacities for collaboration and their sensitivity to difference. Provide more feedback to students about their learning journey.
- Develop learning activities in which students reflect on what happens in the workshops.

These examples reveal the repertoires of practice that educators draw on to create culturally safe classrooms.

Conclusion

In this project, the abrupt shift to online teaching provoked observations and questions about how online classrooms mediated students' engagement with the learning activities, and how this contrasted with participation in SPS classrooms. The research participants in this project had all previously facilitated similar learning activities in physical classrooms. This enabled a direct comparison of the effectiveness of the learning activities in virtual classrooms. The comparison between SPS and online teaching environments shows that the affordances of the environments themselves mediate how relationships are built. This study supports previous research about cultural safety education in SPS classrooms, arguing that relationships and connection are vital to good teaching practice. Participants felt that the predominantly 'unembodied' nature of teaching online impeded the development of the relationality that is crucial to cultural safety education. In facilitating cultural safety learning with healthcare students, a key element is the development of relatedness to create a 'brave space' (Hole & De Luz, 2022) for students to share their values, ideas and experiences (Bennett et al., 2022). The development of respectful student-teacher and student-student relationships provides an essential foundation for individuals to discuss their values, ideas and experiences regarding confronting topics such as race, gender and sexuality. This study shows educators need to actively and creatively work with the technological affordances to facilitate connection in online spaces between students, and between teachers and students. We found the affordances of online classrooms somewhat enabled, but mostly constrained relationship-building. In this case, SPS interactive workshops were replicated online with insufficient time to update materials or modify the design of learning activities. The changed material and technological affordances substantially impacted the potential for relatedness. This study points to the importance of factoring into curriculum design and teaching practice how the proximate materials and technologies mediate relationship-building and connection in the classroom.

We propose drawing on culturally responsive pedagogies at the outset of cultural safety education design across SPS and online environments to prioritise relationship-building in ways that enable students' learning. Culturally responsive pedagogy has emanated from colonial settler countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, arising from the civil rights movement. Culturally responsive pedagogy sits within the critical pedagogy tradition, draws on sociocultural learning (the notion that learning is socially mediated and relates to students' cultural experiences), and views learning through an anti-deficit lens (Morrison et al., 2019). Key pedagogical approaches include drawing on and speaking to the realities of students' lives and using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them (Gay, 2013). Positive and meaningful relationships between students, teachers, and their families and communities, are considered critical to enacting culturally responsive pedagogies (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012).

The question of how to establish relatedness in online learning is a live question in the growing body of scholarship that explores how culturally responsive pedagogies apply to online learning environments (Lawrence, 2020). For Montelongo & Eaton (2019, p. 42), this extends "the traditions of Paulo Freire, Bell Hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, and other critical standpoint theorists to deconstruct power dynamics in online learning spaces, centre relational and dialogic praxis" and furthers the development of critical digital pedagogy. Bennett et al. (2022, p. 1660) indicate the importance of respectful relationships in online teaching and draw on culturally responsive and trauma-informed pedagogical approaches, with the specific aim "to create a democratic, collaborative, and reflexive space whereby students and educators can feel simultaneously supported in the diversity of their respective lived experiences and learning". Scholars who draw on culturally responsive pedagogies provide examples of innovative teaching strategies that enable connection and communication between students and teachers in online spaces. Strategies include collaborative group work; creating a welcoming virtual environment via an assignment for students to introduce each other; using synchronous online meeting spaces (Woodley et al., 2017); immersive video experiences; chats between students; creating a course song playlist; activities to model active listening (Montelongo & Eaton, 2019) and building class community through whole class communication (Lawrence, 2020). Culturally responsive pedagogies support educators in bringing sustained attention to enabling relationships between students, and students and teachers, in both SPS and online environments, suggesting ways that educators can work actively with the affordances of the online teaching spaces to support connection and communication. Drawing on culturally responsive pedagogies at the outset of cultural safety education design across SPS and online environments is, we suggest, also a way to support educators' emotional labour. Culturally responsive pedagogies value all relatedness in the classroom, including with/from the educator. Teaching educators about culturally responsive pedagogies is a way of making emotional labour explicit in teaching practice, as something that can actively be engaged within the classroom for the purposes of

relationship-building. It is important to support this critical dimension of educators' work with professional and collegial learning which shares coping strategies (Nyanjom & Naylor, 2021) and enables links between emotions and beliefs, and professional practice (Fu & Clarke, 2023). Also critical is the institutional recognition, acknowledgment, and support for the emotional labour of online educators (Konstantinou & Miller, 2022; Nyanjom & Naylor, 2021). Given the high proportion of university teaching undertaken by casual staff, this requires consideration of how best to support casual educators (Moore et al., 2021). As Kennedy et al. (2022, p. 30) observes, "since emotional labour is often borne by the least privileged sections of the university workforce, this study uncovers uncomfortable questions about the persistence of systemic problems causing staff inequalities that cannot afford to be ignored."

We acknowledge the limitations of our study, particularly regarding the scope of the paper, which primarily focused on the teacher experience during the pandemic. Initially, the study sought to contrast online and SPS classrooms with the aim of contributing to the development of knowledge about best practices in cultural safety education. However, during the analysis phase it became clear that gaining insight into the student experience would have enhanced the findings by providing the research team with a different perspective. However, our study aligns and complements the findings of Mulrooney and Kelly (2020), who examined the student and teacher experience in relation to belonging in the United Kingdom. They too recognised the constraints of the online space for academic engagement caused by socio-economic conditions and the lockdown experience. Moving forward, future research should aim to investigate the experiences of teachers and students to attain a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding. Additionally, this inclusion of student perspectives will enrich our findings and enable us to identify key areas that require attention and improvement in the realm of online education. By doing so, we can generate insights that have meaningful and actionable implications for cultural safety education.

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