

## Thesis abstract

# Cultural responsiveness: a conceptual model for mental health professionals engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

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Cultural responsiveness is a term that has become more commonly used by a wide range of organisations and disciplines when referring to the ways in which mental health practitioners work and interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>1</sup> Within the discipline of psychology cultural responsiveness is seen as a fundamental learning and skill area for all practitioners and has become an essential feature of the psychology curriculum taught in universities. However, the concept has lacked clear definition, understanding and measurement.

Through a series of peer-reviewed journal articles, this thesis comprises four components focused on cultural responsiveness when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Initially, the literature is reviewed using a concept analysis, which then formed a foundation for a conceptual model of cultural responsiveness which the author has called Foucault's Oscillation. Following this, a qualitative study involving 12 participants who identified as Indigenous Australians and who were former clients of mental health practitioners were interviewed using a semi-structured format based on the conceptual model. Adopting

an Indigenous Standpoint Theory approach, and listening to their stories, it was crucial both culturally and from the perspective of fuller understanding to afford these people a voice in shaping a sense of meaning of cultural responsiveness.

The fourth and final part of this study sets out the process of designing and validating an instrument to assess cultural responsiveness, which the author has called the Cultural Responsiveness Assessment Measure (CRAM). A Qualtrics survey assisted in the gathering of data from a sample of 400 respondents whose contributions led to a nine-factor instrument that can help mental health practitioners to evaluate and to improve their interventions with Indigenous clients.

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