Cultural Competency: Is it a level of consciousness or just (plain ol’) common sense?

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**Outline**

1. Defining culture, cultural competency, cultural sensitivity...
2. Problems with the idea of cultural competency
3. Self-awareness
4. Key elements of effective cross-cultural communication
5. Utilizing resources to plan/prepare work in a cross-cultural context
Why is appreciating diversity important?
The Herman Grid
**pop quiz!**

1. Cultural competency can be acquired after attending a sufficient course T/F

2. What communication strategies are essential when working in a cross-cultural context?
answers...

1. Cultural Competency can be acquired after attending a sufficient course
   ◦ F, it is a life-long process

2. Which communication strategies are essential when working in a cross-cultural context?
   ◦ Respect personal space, learn and follow cultural rules about touch, establish rapport, express interest in people, listen carefully, value stories, notice eye contact and body language, reach the appropriate family member, study a person’s responses, check for understanding; ask questions, avoid jargon and stereotyping based on looks, language, dress, and other outward appearances, be careful not to impose your personal values, morals, or beliefs, learn to laugh at yourself and listen to lessons brought to you by humor.
free association...

1. Culture
2. Cultural competency/sensitivity
3. What groups of individuals or in what situations do you think is important to be culturally competent?
Cultural competency...what are we doing and is it working?
...but, what we really need to look at is this!
so really...why are we here?

1. Why are we STILL talking about cultural competency?
2. Knowing the “rules” of being culturally competent...who does it benefit?
3. What is the “problem” with the concept of cultural competence?
   ◦ The idea the cultural competency can be reduced to a technical skill for which someone can be trained to develop expertise.
definitions
culture

An integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting, and roles, relationships and expected behaviors, of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.

~National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC)
**culture competence**

The knowledge, interpersonal skills, and behaviors that enable a system, organization, program, or individual to work effectively cross-culturally by understanding, appreciating, honoring, and respecting cultural differences and similarities within **AND** between cultures.

The acquisition of cultural competence is a **dynamic, ongoing, developmental process** that requires a long-term commitment and is achieved over time.

Maternal and Child Health leadership: http://leadership.mchtraining.net/?page_id=126
cultural humility

Acknowledgement of your own barriers and limitations to intercultural understanding, and working to overcome those barriers to provide better services.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.

- C.S. Lewis
cultural sensitivity

1. Being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning, and behaviors

2. Components of cultural sensitivity:
   ◦ Valuing and recognizing the importance of one’s own culture
   ◦ Valuing diversity
   ◦ Realizing that cultural diversity will affect an individual’s communication and participation in programs/education in various ways
   ◦ A willingness to adapt one’s communication and behaviors to be compatible with another’s cultural norms
   ◦ A willingness to learn about the traditions and characteristics of other cultures
how to achieve cultural competence?

1. Understand the relationship between social, political and economic dynamics that result in the community’s behaviors
2. Recognize one’s own subconscious and conscious bias (including stereotyping, recognition or privilege, etc.)
3. Identify that mistrust is born from historical and institutional practices
4. Use non-authoritarian, cross-cultural communication
5. Identify/analyze power distribution in practices/policies
6. Relinquish the role of the expert through self-reflection

Continuum of Diversity
Awareness/
Cultural Sensitivity/Competence

Put these in order in level of competence, define based on what you know/maybe know

Cultural incapacity
Cultural blindness
Cultural pre-competence
Cultural destructiveness
Cultural empowerment
Cultural proficiency
Cultural competence

Adapted with permission from P.C. Coggins & Associates, LLC. Multicultural Education Institute.
**Cultural destructiveness: (-)**
Forced assimilation, rights for dominate groups only and creates uneasiness and disconnect

**Cultural incapacity: (-)**
Inability of systems to respond to the needs, interests, and preferences of culturally and linguistically diverse groups

Institutional or systemic bias, practices of discrimination in hiring and promotion, disproportionate allocation of resources that may benefit one cultural group over another

Subtle messages that some cultural groups are neither valued nor welcomed

Lower expectations for some cultural groups

**Cultural blindness: (-)**
Differences ignored, treat everyone the same

Only meet the needs of dominate groups

Ignores cultural strengths

Blaming the victim

Workforce lack diversity and recognition of culture’s perception and response to disease and illness

**Cultural pre-contemplation: (-, +)**
Willingness to explore cultural issues

Hiring practices that support diverse workforce

Token representation on boards and administrative positions

No clear plan to achieve individual and organizational cultural competence
**Cultural competence: (+)**

Organization recognizing individual and cultural differences

Seek advice from diverse groups, hire culturally unbiased staff

Adapts evidence based promising practices that are culturally and linguistically competent

**Cultural proficiency: (+)**

Implement changes to improve services based upon cultural needs, do research and teach staff new approaches to being culturally and linguistically competent

Cultural competence is integrated and held as a core value in the organization

Develop and publish all health promotion materials and communications that are sensitive and adapted to the cultural and linguistic needs of the population served

**Cultural empowerment: (+++++)**

The ultimate level

Reflected in the philosophy that the student/staff is a co-equal partner in the learning process

The organization’s cultural proficiency is actualized in intake, assessment, treatment, planning, and follow-up
**self-awareness**

Consider the following self-assessment:

– “I’ve found that I can only change how I act if I stay aware of my beliefs and assumptions. Thoughts always reveal themselves in behavior. As humans we often contradict ourselves- we say one thing and do another. We state who we are, but then act contrary to that: If we want to change our behavior, we need to notice our actions, and see if we can uncover the belief that led to that response. What caused me to behave that way and not some other way?

– Now consider the following self-assessment tool:
The following 15 personality-related abilities are related to notions of social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual “intelligence”.

Reflect: How well developed is this ability in my life? What life experiences have helped form this ability? Then, on a scale of 1(low) to 5 (high), assign a rating beside each attribute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capabilities</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My ability to identify and assess personal strengths and weaknesses <em>(Integrity)</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My interest in learning about new cultures <em>(Inquisitiveness)</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My ability to think positively about the cross-cultural situation <em>(Optimism)</em></td>
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<td>My confidence in being able (mentally and physically) to accomplish goals <em>(Self-confidence)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to self-start and approach unfamiliar situations in a proactive manner <em>(Initiative)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to remain composed in stressful situations <em>(Emotional stability)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to “laugh things off,” including my own cultural blunders <em>(Sense of humor)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to withhold judgments until I can absolutely “see” behind the scenes <em>(Open mindedness)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>My ability to “read” local situations based on knowledge of the country’s social, cultural, and political systems <em>(Context awareness)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to form effective working relationships with people from different cultures <em>(Collaboration)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to “feel into” the experiences of others and to “see” form their perspectives <em>(Empathy)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to “try on” different ways of speaking, valuing, believing, and behaving <em>(Experimentation)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to appreciate what’s good and true in other cultural traditions <em>(Respect)</em></td>
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<td>My ability to follow through on self-directed tasks <em>(Conscientiousness)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>My ability to persevere in the face of unfavorable conditions and failures <em>(Hardiness)</em></td>
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your abilities

These abilities or personal traits appear to positively influence cultural integration and are typically formed through “transitional” life experiences.

• Study the ones you scored “low” and think about ways these may impact your experience. What can you do to enhance the weak abilities?

• The following communication strategies may assist you:
communication strategies

– Respect personal space
  • Not ‘in your face’, female/male rules

– Learn and follow cultural rules about Touch
  • In some Asian cultures a person’s head shouldn’t be touched because its considered the “seat of wisdom” and some American Indians see a vigorous hand shake as a sign of aggression

– Establish rapport
  • Build relationship. Allow TIME! Share experiences
    exchange information, greet and respond in culturally appropriate ways

– Express interest in people
  • Smile, be genuine, ask open honest questions
Listen carefully

• Don’t interrupt or put words in one’s mouth
• Listen and observe more than you speak
• Value stories
• Notice eye contact and body language
• Be careful not to impose your personal values, morals, or beliefs

Study a person’s responses: A “yes” doesn’t necessarily indicate understanding or willingness, it may just be showing respect. Check for understanding; ask questions

• Avoid jargon and stereotyping based on looks, language, dress, and other outward appearances

Learn to laugh at yourself and listen to lessons brought to you by humor
self-quiz!

1. Provide definitions of cultural competency and cultural humility.

2. Identify five key communication strategies effective when working in a cross-cultural context.

3. When considering your work in a cross-cultural context, what are your biggest challenges?

4. *Cultural Competency: Is it a level of consciousness or just (plain ol’) common sense?*
Thank you for your attention!