



Culturally Competent Practice: An Advanced Introduction

Dr.Arthur E. Hernandez
Dr. Hector Ochoa
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What is Culture?

Culture is the geography, experience, language, values, traditions, rituals and expectations that describe and bind individual members of a group.



What is Culture?

Culturally significant factors encompass, but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, religion, spirituality, social class, caste, language, lineage, disability, sexual orientation, age, gender, geographic region, and socioeconomic circumstances. It is important to note that while these factors include culture they are not fixed and can change over time.

Cultural Experience

It is clear that experience involves an interpretation of history from a cultural perspective so although culture is self maintaining, different events can have the impact of influencing changes to any aspect of culture.

Cultural Assessment

- Identify and briefly describe the most important cultural characteristics that define and discriminate different groups.
- Share your list with a neighbor or two.
- Compare and discuss.
- Be prepared to share your observations and conclusions with the large group.

Cultural Constancy

Culture is dynamic – any static understanding of culture is doomed to irrelevance over the course of time. Thus, cultural competence is a process and never a product.

Defining Culture

Culture is usually described by outsiders. Most folks simply don't think about their own culture; it is a part of their "assumptive world" (Janoff & Bulman; 1992) which is most dependent on culture.

Assumptive World

The assumptive world can be thought of as "the totality of the beliefs, suppositions and expectations about the future, oneself, the world and one's place in it." As such, it seems "real" and "natural", like it is the "one right way" (see Rogoff, 2003).

Cultural Assessment

- Identify the 3 most important statements of cultural value for you. (e.g. "in for a penny, in for a pound", a stitch in time..." etc.)
- Turn to your neighbor and compare and discuss.
- Be prepared to share your observations and conclusions with the large group.

Diversity

That's why diversity is so recognizable and potentially uncomfortable. This perspective can and usually does lead to bias, prejudice and negative feelings and actions which stem from a sense of defensiveness or protectiveness (and so justified).

Cultural Unfamiliarity

These negative feelings and the desire to live in a "normal" world with "normal" people limits our desire to be in contact much less significantly interact with members of different cultural groups.

Consequences

This lack of opportunity for significant experience/interaction and the associated feelings results in stereotyping as a means of coping and explaining. This is because cultural identity, like individual identity is constantly developing. Even as individual identity "plateaus" and "stabilizes" so too does the cultural basis for sense of self.

Cultural Competence

Although “stepping in and out” of a culture that is different from our own can provide an important basis for understanding, it is insufficient to be fully competent with regard to that culture.

Impact on Evaluation

Without due consideration of culture, interpretations of findings (or even the findings themselves) whether related to outcomes or processes are fundamentally suspect since culture not only contextualizes decision making but defines assumptions and beliefs with regard to reality, relevance, rules and relationships.

Mediated Action

Understanding mediated action requires the recognition that every action (and perception?) will be influenced in particular ways by both the variety and number of cultural tools (e.g. language) and the “mediational means” available to the actor which means that actions must be judged in the context of the actor (as opposed to the context of the action).

Participant “engagement”

Any engagement between evaluator and evaluand however negotiated or conducted can potentially result in a reorientation to a particular situation or process as problem or potential remedy to which both would necessarily have to respond.

Power and Privilege

This notion can be informed by the work of Hardiman and Jackson (1997) who define and describe the construct of internalized domination which in turn is influenced by the seminal work of Freire (1970) who described internalized oppression. Both ideas are important to consider as we bring together the culture of the privileged with the cultures of the “different.”

Power and Privilege

The cultural basis for power and privilege provides a particular perspective regarding what should be valued; indicators of worth (e.g. wealth, position, education, age, gender, etc.).

Resistance and Resentment

Power and privilege internal to a cultural group is usually “upset” by interaction with power and privilege of another cultural group which disrupts typical internal power and privilege rules and relationships and has a high potential to cause resistance and resentment.

Cultural Assessment

- Identify for yourself the aspects or criteria by which you determine who is powerful in your life.
- If possible, differentiate that criteria between personal and professional.
- Share with one or two neighbors.
- Compare and discuss – be prepared to share with the large group.

Other Considerations

Underlying (e.g. theories, logic models) models of actions imposed by external observers are based on hypothetical constructs which name and describe the characteristics, rules and relationships which form the elements and dynamics of the explanation for observed and observable phenomena of interest.

Other Considerations

Regardless of the sensitivity of the data collectors or their willingness to include and incorporate particular information, the analysis of what is finally collected depends to a great extent on social-scientific conventions which in and of themselves impute values, judgments, priorities and particular points of view which may be inconsistent or invalid from the cultural context of those who were the focus of the evaluation

Other Considerations

Even when other culture individuals are participants in the analysis and interpretation of the collected information given possible power differentials, level of sophistication and confidence, potential for "secondary gain" and issues of confidentiality among other things, cultural perspectives may be muted or "corrupted".

Cultural Knowledge

Given that ethical practice if not best practice requires cultural competence, it is perhaps dangerous to equate cultural knowledge with competence. This is because, although knowledge is a necessary starting point and may suggest respect, it will not necessarily be received as such.

Cultural Assessment

- Reflect on the difference(s) between cultural competence and cultural knowledge.
- Share with one or two neighbors.
- Compare and discuss and be prepared to share with the large group.

Evaluations reflect culture

Culture shapes all evaluation regardless of type (process, outcome, impact, etc.), setting (government, academia, business, etc.), or evaluand (policy, practice, teaching, etc.).

Evaluations reflect culture

Culture impacts all phases of evaluation—including staffing, development, and implementation of evaluation efforts as well as communicating and using evaluation results.

Evaluations reflect culture

Culture shapes the ways in which evaluation questions are conceptualized, which in turn influences what data are collected, how the data will be collected and analyzed, and how data are interpreted.

Evaluations reflect culture

Those who engage in evaluation do so from perspectives that reflect their values, their ways of viewing the world, and their culture.

Evaluations cannot be culture free.

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence is a stance taken toward culture, not a discrete status or simple mastery of particular knowledge and skills. Cultural competence is a “process” or a sensibility cultivated throughout a lifetime. It requires awareness of self, reflection on one’s own cultural position, awareness of others’ positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others.

Why is cultural competence in evaluation important? (AEA, 2011)

Cultural competence in evaluation is important for three main reasons.

First, the evaluation team is ethically responsible to be culturally competent in order to produce work that is honest, accurate, respectful of stakeholders, and considerate of the general public welfare.

Why is cultural competence in evaluation important? (AEA, 2011)

Second, cultural competence supports validity by insuring that diverse voices and perspectives are honestly and fairly represented, which in turn, helps to make valid inferences and interpretations.

Why is cultural competence in evaluation important? (AEA, 2011)

Third, evaluation is steeped in theories that are, themselves shaped by cultural values and perspectives; therefore, it is important to scrutinize theories in order to understand how they describe societal issues, and how to address them.

Essential Practices for Cultural Competence

- Acknowledge the complexity of cultural identity. Culturally competent evaluators recognize, respond to, and work to reconcile differences between and within cultures and subcultures.

Essential Practices for Cultural Competence

- Recognize the dynamics of power. Culturally competent evaluators work to avoid reinforcing cultural stereotypes and prejudice in their work.

Essential Practices for Cultural Competence

- Recognize and eliminate bias in social relations. Culturally competent evaluators are thoughtful and deliberate in their use of language and other social relations in order to reduce bias when conducting evaluations.

Essential Practices for Cultural Competence

- Employ culturally congruent epistemologies, theories, and methods. Culturally competent evaluators seek to understand how the constructs are defined by cultures and are aware of the many ways epistemologies and theories can be utilized, how data can be collected, analyzed and interpreted, and the diversity of contexts in which findings can be disseminated.

Essential Practices for Cultural Competence

- Continue self-assessments. Regularly monitor the extent to which you can serve as an open, responsive instrument given relevant attributes of an evaluation context.

Values Modeling

Activities	Outcomes	Goals	Associated Emotions	Underlying Values/Beliefs
What are you doing? What's happening?	What should happen as a result? What are the specific things that you're working to achieve?	Why are you doing what you're doing? What do you want to change or improve?	How do you feel about what you're doing and what happens as a result? How do your family and friend feel about what you're doing?	Why is this an important thing to do? Why/how is it valuable or important to you? Your family? Your community?

Cultural “Engagement”

In order to minimize that adverse impact, community engagement should begin without condition or purpose other than seeking that engagement; that is members of the “research” effort should seek to encounter and engage individuals from the target community and come to know and be accepted by those communities prior to implementing interventions or evaluations.

Cultural “Engagement”

This involvement can take many different forms and be of various durations depending on initial cultural competence and is likely to be facilitated by the inclusion, whenever possible, of professional members from the target population on inquiry or implementation teams.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Self awareness and a clear understanding of the potential of personal beliefs, values and perspectives to influence decision making. This self assessment must begin before the evaluation enterprise is begun and extend throughout. Consider your own values related to program processes, participants and expected outcomes and to reflect on how they might be influenced by those values in ways that can influence their planning and execution of particular program evaluations.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

An understanding of the ***purposes for which the evaluation is being conducted*** including the implications for roles and relationships between evaluators, evaluands, the target community as a whole and the sponsors or initiators of the evaluation effort. This recognition and consideration should extend to decision making regarding determining stakeholders, relevant information and appropriate methods.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

An appreciation for ***the language of the community*** in terms of both vocabulary and style recognizing that how and what people say is important to any interpretation of meaning. This may mean enlisting the aid of knowledgeable members of the community.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Reflection on the ***appropriateness of the methods and instruments*** to be used especially the principal design of the inquiry (e.g. qualitative or quantitative methodology). This is in recognition of the clear and obvious cultural differences related to the notion of norm as indicative of the “good” or the group as a whole, the adequacy and representativeness of sample, within culture heterogeneity and interpretation of instrumentation among other things can be quite limiting.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Power differentials between those who implement and those who receive and between all participants and evaluators. These power differentials can influence the information that is provided by participants and nature of the interactions, and the extent to which values are shared between the providers and recipients.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Demography, history and religiosity are important potential influences on judgments of cost, benefit, advantage and challenge. As such they should all be carefully examined to determine to what extent and how these factors impact on process and practice as well as outcomes.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Recognition that regardless of the purpose, in the end **evaluation is or results in a value judgment**. This judgment of value will of necessity depend on a particular world view and as such it is valid to the extent that world view is specified and acknowledged. Reasonable people can and often do disagree regarding judgments of value.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

An understanding that evaluative protocols and methods are an effort to standardize the proceedings and so to reduce “noise.” Ultimately, the findings or results of any inquiry will be dependent on the validity, reliability and credibility of the instruments used to collect information. The relevance of the information collected is often determined based on “probabilistic” or model (e.g. theory, logic, etc.) determinations of causality. Typically the findings of any evaluation are “snapshots” of a dynamic process from which predictions about the future are made from considerations of the past. **Resist the tendency to reify research results.**

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Acceptance of the **non-mechanical nature of human beings and human systems**. The failure of mechanistic thinking has been demonstrated in physics, astronomy, chemistry and other so-called “hard sciences.” It should be clear that this thinking is not likely to apply to people.

Cultural Competence “Checklist”

Careful attention to unintended consequences. Although all of the “indicators” listed above are important, it is this last one that can be the most powerful for cultural awareness and respect. This search for unintended consequences should be facilitated by the collaboration of those who have culturally relevant life experience to identify and interpret those consequences.

Individual Assessment in the Schools

- What are the important assumptions made in the assessment of children in schools?
- Compare and discuss with one or two neighbors.
- Be prepared to share with the large group.

Considerations for Case Conceptualization: Real World Applications

Based on this review, it is important the the following factors be examined and considered during the evaluation process:

- Family & Parental Considerations
- Parents' Perspectives
- Language Considerations
- Cultural Considerations

(Ochoa, 2005)

Applications

Incorporating these factors

- Helps to increase being ethically responsible during evaluations
- Helps to increase the validity of our findings
- Helps to make our evaluations more culturally sensitive, appropriate and relevant

Family & Parental Considerations

What are your perceptions and feelings about the following family issues?

- Families maintaining their native culture vs. not assimilating while living in U.S.
- Immigration
- Low SES families and social welfare
- Illegal aliens and their children receiving educational and other services in U.S.
- Parents' role and responsibility regarding the child's education

Family & Parental Considerations

(Ochoa, 2005)

- Who are the primary caregivers of the child?
- What is the parents' educational attainment level? Where was the parents' education obtained?
- What is the parents' literacy in their first language? In their second language (English)?
- Why did parents come to the U.S.?

Family & Parental Considerations

(continued)

- What was the parents' SES in home country? What is it in U.S.?
- What is the time period that they have been in United States?
- What are the differences between the parents/child's home country and U.S.?
- What are the differences between the parents'/child's culture and U.S. culture?

Parents' Perspectives

(Ochoa, 2005)

- Ask parents to describe what their role should be with respect to their child's education. (Socialization, behavior vs. cognition, readiness)
- Ask parents what their behavioral expectations are for their child at home.
- Ask parents what their opinions regarding their child's strengths and limitations
- Ask parents about any concerns they have about their child and the school that he/she attends

Parents' Perspectives

(Ochoa, 2005)

These questions enable the evaluator to obtain a picture from the cultural perspective of the parent.

These questions also enable the evaluator to obtain a picture of the family's and child's level of acculturation

Language Considerations

What are your perceptions and feelings about the following language issues?

- Bilingualism
- Bilingual Education vs. English Only
- Value of English vs. the Child's/Family first language? Which is more important?
- Speaking English with an accent
- Adults not speaking or unable to speak English
- Bilingual publications (billboards, signs, tv advertisements, school publications, etc.)

Language Considerations

(Capps et al. 2005)

- 2000 Census reported that 7% of all students in PK to 5th grade are English language learners (ELLs)
- About half of parents of (ELLs) do not have a high school diploma
- About two-thirds of parents of ELLs are considered to be low-income
- Spanish speakers constitute 76% of the ELL PK-5th Grade ELL student population

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

- What language(s) are spoken in the child's home? Percentage of language exposure in English vs. first language?
- What type of television programs does family and child watch and in what languages? (Level of acculturation)
- What are the child's and parents' feelings and perceptions about their first language and English?

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

- In what language(s) does child converse with siblings?
- In what language(s) does child converse with classmates on the playground? In the classroom?
- In what language(s) does child converse with friends in his/her neighbor?
- What is child's comfort level in first language and in English?

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

- Is the child a sequential or simultaneous language learner? (Valdes & Figueroa, 1996)

Sequential – child learns native language first and then after age 3 begins to learn second language (English)

Simultaneous – child learns or is exposed to native language and second language (English) at the same time since birth

Language Considerations

Sequential – it is critical that this type of ELL is in an effective bilingual education program in order to experience academic success

Simultaneous – depending on the exposure of native language and English prior to schooling, it is best that this ELL student be placed in an effective bilingual education program

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

What is the child's cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) level in his/her first language and in English?

- **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** – is the type of language proficiency needed to do academic work. This takes 5 to 7 years to acquire. (Cummins, 1984)
- **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)** is the type of language needed to carry social conversations. This takes 2 to 3 years to acquire. (Cummins, 1984)
- Do not equate BICS with CALP when doing your evaluations.

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

What language measures were used to assess child's cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) level in his/her first language and in English?

Many of the language proficiency measures assess BICS and not CALP which can lead to misunderstanding regarding child's language abilities during the assessment process.

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

It is very important to distinguish disabilities from language differences and language acquisition

- Is the child's area of concern observed in both the child's native language and in English?
- If the difficulty is observed in only one language and not the other, this is clinically significant.

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

It is important to be aware of common second language acquisition characteristics that should not be misinterpreted.

- Code switching
- Silent Period
- Language Loss

(Roseberry-McKibbin, 2002)

Language Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

What type of bilingual education program is offered in child's school?

- Pullout ESL
- Content-based ESL
- Transitional/Early-Exit Bilingual Education
- Maintenance/Late-Exit Developmental Bilingual Education Program
- Two-way/Dual Language Bilingual Education

Language Considerations

These different types of bilingual education program vary in their effectiveness in producing positive academic outcomes.

(Thomas & Collier, 1997)

It is also critical to compare the curriculum offered in bilingual education program with that provided in general education classroom (English-only) settings to ensure educational equity.

Cultural Considerations

What are your perceptions and feelings about the following cultural issues?

- The importance of assimilation
- The amount of time that should be given for families to assimilate
- Everyone accepting mainstream America's values and behavioral mores
- Accepting mainstream America's views on disabilities

Cultural Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

Compare their home culture with U.S. culture

- Values
- Behaviors
- Family Structure
- Religious Beliefs
- Gender Roles

Cultural Considerations


(Ochoa 2005)

- How much social support does the family have to adjust to the U.S. culture?
- What unexpected or unpleasant circumstances has the family encountered or dealt when adapting to U.S. culture?
- How does the child's acculturation level compare to that of his/her parents? Does this cause difficulties?

Cultural Considerations

(Ochoa 2005)

- How does the culture of school differ from the child's culture at home?
- How does the particular child's culture view disability?
- How does this cultural viewpoint regarding disability compare or differ from the mainstream American perspective of a medical model of disability?



Thoughts and Conclusions

- Is it ever possible to be “culturally competent?”
- What difference does it make whether someone engaged in an evaluation is culturally competent?
- How can you tell whether someone else is culturally competent?
- For what cultural groups do you feel culturally competent?
