McMaster University

Family Medicine

David Braley Primary Care Research Collaborative

Supporting Inclusion Through Culturally Competent Research in Primary Care

Watch a recording of this session

Alicia Wright (Manager, EDI & Anti-Racism Initiatives)

Neha Arora (Clinic Research Coordinator, EDI Lead - Research)

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Menti.com code - 91966279

Presenter's Twitter Handle

@McMasterFamMed

Michael G. DeGroote SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- **Define some key concepts** related to cultural competence and inclusion in the context of clinical research.
- **Reflect on your own cultural identities** and assess how these influence your interactions and understanding of diverse populations.
- **Apply principles of cultural competence** to various stages of the research process.
- **Evaluate real-world examples** of inclusive research practices and discuss their impact on team dynamics and community engagement.

"Researchers are representatives of their culture and society. If they are unaware of how their biases and values affect what and how they ask research questions, conduct research and interpret findings, then they may perpetuate stereotypes and create a biased knowledge base."

Derald Wing Sue (2006)

Cultural Competence - a lifelong journey

"In every facet of life, I was a 'cultural infant' when I landed in Canada over two decades ago."

Alicia W.

Reflection: Understanding ourselves and others culturally

- How would you describe your cultural heritage/background?
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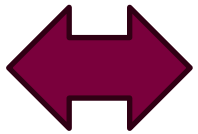
- Can you think of a time when you encountered someone (eg. a colleague/research participant) from a different cultural background?
  - What was your first impression of them? How did this influence your attitude/behaviour towards them?

Why is it important to become more culturally competent?

- Power
- Prejudice
- Privilege



- Sexism
- Racism
- Ableism
- Ageism
- Classism

- Antisemitism
- Islamophobia
- Homophobia
- Xenophobia

Cultural Awareness

Becoming a culturally competent and culturally safe person:

- Begins with being aware of our own culture and how our intersecting identities shape our **beliefs, biases** and **actions.**
- Requires an understanding of how our **thoughts, feelings, values** and **background** influence our interactions, relationships and our work.
- Requires a recognition and **understanding of differences** and **similarities** between cultures.
- Involves agility in thinking and behaving when situations become difficult, uncertain, or in times of urgency.

Cultural Humility

- Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a **learner** when it comes to understanding another's experience.
- A lifelong process of **self-reflection, learning/unlearning** and **accountability** to challenge personal biases and systemic power imbalances to develop and maintain **respectful processes** and **relationships** based on **mutual trust**.

Cultural Sensitivity

- The **practice** of **recognizing, appreciating** and **responding appropriately** to cultural differences - treating people from different cultural backgrounds with dignity and respect.
- Being **judgment-free** about cultural values that are different from the normative culture (and/or your own).

Cultural competence

Understanding cultural differences, **being aware** of our own cultural worldview, and **developing positive attitudes** towards other cultures.

- **Attitudes/beliefs** - an understanding of one's own cultural conditioning that affects personal beliefs, values, and attitudes.
- **Knowledge** - understanding and knowledge of the worldviews of culturally different individuals and groups.
- **Skills** - use of culturally appropriate intervention/communication skills.

"Cultural competence is **more than cognitive and intellectual understanding**… [it] must be **obtained through experiential reality**."
(Derald Wing Sue)

TABLE 1: Components of Cultural Competence

Belief/Attitude	*Knowledge*	*Skill*
1. Aware and sensitive to own heritage and valuing/respecting differences.	1. Has knowledge of own racial/cultural heritage and how it affects perceptions.	1. Seeks out educational, consultative, and multicultural training experiences.
2. Aware of own background/experiences and biases and how they influence psychological processes.	2. Possesses knowledge about racial identity development. Able to acknowledge own racist attitudes, beliefs, and feelings.	2. Seeks to understand self as racial/cultural being.
3. Recognizes limits of competencies and expertise.	3. Knowledgeable about own social impact and communication styles.	3. Familiarizes self with relevant research on racial/ethnic groups.
4. Comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and others.	4. Knowledgeable about groups one works or interacts with.	4. Involved with minority groups outside of work role: community events, celebrations, neighbors, and so forth.
5. In touch with negative emotional reactions toward racial/ethnic groups and can be nonjudgmental.	5. Understands how race/ethnicity affects personality formation, vocational choices, psychological disorders, and so forth.	5. Able to engage in a variety of verbal/nonverbal helping styles.
6. Aware of stereotypes and preconceived notions.	6. Knows about sociopolitical influences, immigration, poverty, powerlessness, and so forth.	6. Can exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of clients.
7. Respects religious and/or spiritual beliefs of others.	7. Understands culture-bound, class-bound, and linguistic features of psychological help.	7. Can seek consultation with traditional healers.
8. Respects indigenous helping practices and community networks.	8. Knows the effects of institutional barriers.	8. Can take responsibility to provide linguistic competence for clients.
9. Values bilingualism.	9. Knows bias of assessment.	9. Has expertise in cultural aspects of assessment.
	10. Knowledgeable about minority family structures, community, and so forth.	10. Works to eliminate bias, prejudice, and discrimination.
	11. Knows how discriminatory practices operate at a community level.	11. Educates clients in the nature of one's practice.

NOTE: Adapted from D. W. Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis (1992).

Cultural Safety

- Cultural safety is an **outcome** based on **respectful engagement** that recognizes and strives to **address power imbalances** inherent in the [systems within which we operate].
- This **results in an environment free of racism and discrimination**, where people feel safe.

Creating a Climate for Change

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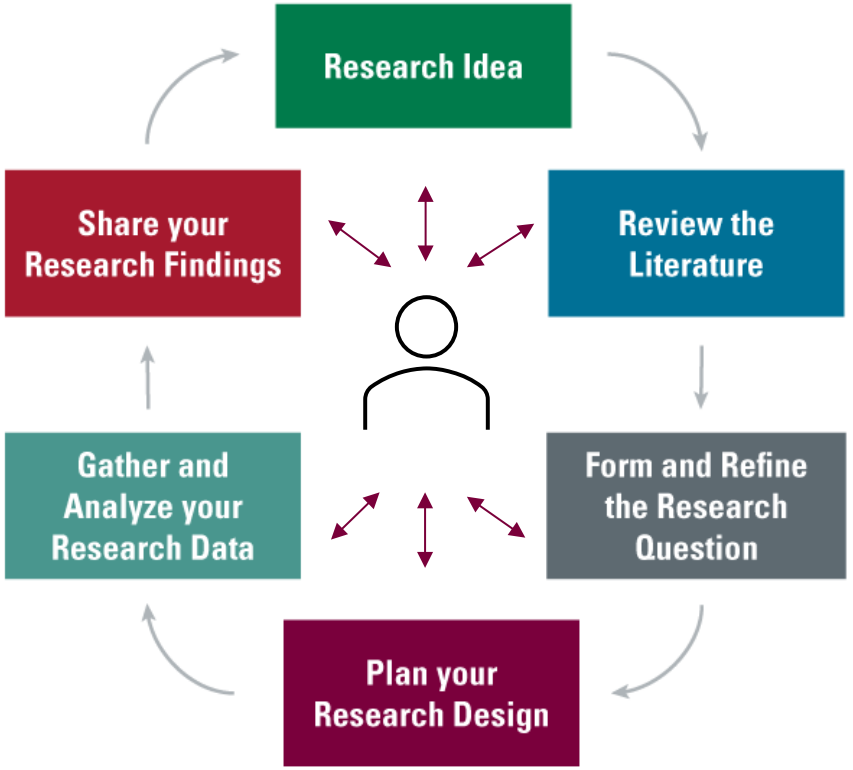
Cultural Competence in Research

Why it matters?

- Uni-cultural Perspective in Research
  - **Marginalizes other worldviews**: Dominant cultural frameworks overshadow alternative knowledge systems. Risk of reinforcing systemic biases and excluding marginalized voices.
  - **Reinforces power structures**: Risks perpetuating inequities by excluding non-dominant perspectives.
  - **Undermines relevance:** Research may fail to reflect the lived realities of diverse communities.
- Researchers must critically examine whose voices and values are being prioritized.
- Including multiple cultural perspectives improves validity, promotes equity, and encourages co-creation of knowledge with communities.

Culturally Competent Researcher and Research Team

- Researcher Positionality
- Ongoing Reflexivity
- Worldview - Research Paradigms
- Research Context



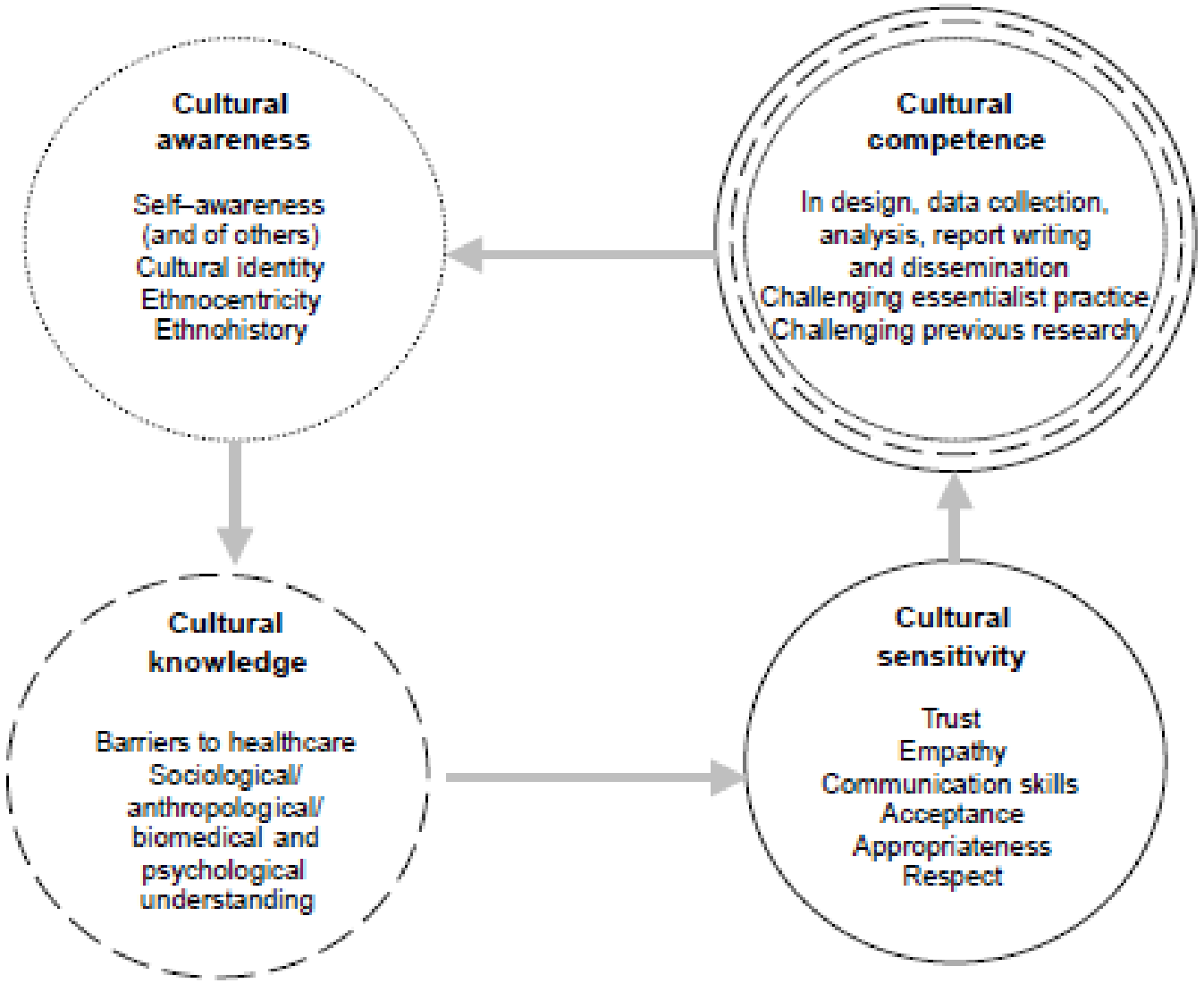


Figure 1 Concepts of cultural competence of research (adapted from Papadopoulos *et al.*(1998)).

Papadopoulos, I., & Lees, S. (2002). Developing culturally competent researchers. Journal of advanced nursing, 37(3), 258-264.

Cultural Awareness - Positionality and Reflexivity

- Research team examines and challenges their own personal value base and understanding how these values are socially constructed.
- Being reflexive
  - Reflect on how our own values, perceptions, behavior or presence and those of the respondents can affect the data they collect.
- A reflexive researcher should be conscious of the need to be explicit about her/his position in the research process and how the cultural backgrounds of the researcher and the respondents interrelate.

Insider-Outsider Reflection

Insider: Researcher shares identity or experience with participants.

- May have easier access, ask more meaningful questions, and gain trust, but may also face biases and assumptions.
- Must explain how their identity will impact the research.

Outsider: Researcher does not share identity or experience with participants.

- May bring fresh perspectives and ask “obvious" questions that insiders might overlook but may struggle with access and trust.
- Must explain how they will mitigate bias and indicate awareness and commitment.

Deepening Cultural Knowledge

- Cross cultural engagement
- Structural awareness
- Challenging power dynamics
- Avoid essentialism
- Intersectionality matters

Cultural Sensitivity – Partners not Participants

- Participant as partners in research
- Foundation of trust
- Engagement and access
- Education about re-traumatization

Cultural Competency in Research

- Apply previously gained cultural understanding in research design and analysis.
- Recognize and challenge bias
- Avoid Ethnocentrism
- Engage diverse participants
- Respect language preferences

Culture-generic vs Culture-specific Competency

Culture-Generic Competence

- Broad knowledge and skills applicable across diverse ethnic groups.
- Serves as the foundation for deeper cultural understanding.

Culture-Specific Competence

- In-depth understanding of a particular ethnic group's values, beliefs, and cultural norms.
- Builds on culture-generic competence and evolves as researchers engage with new communities.

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From Theory to Praxis

Research idea and background

Relevance to the community

Use an equity lens

Engage Diverse Stakeholders

Critically examine whether previous studies were diverse

Identify gaps in representation or cultural relevance

Research Design and Methods

Align with cultural norms, traditions and values.

Engage cultural leader or community specific ethics boards.

Consider language and accessibility

Ethnic matching

Better understanding of cultural context.

Analysis, Interpretation and Reporting

Be reflexive

Ensure conceptual and translation equivalence

Value diversity

Accessible knowledge translation

Culturally grounded insights

In summary…

- Start early
- Build relationships
- Practice transparency
- Empower participants
- Slow down

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Red Flag – Green Flag Game

Case 1: The Healthy Hearts Study

Context:

- This is a new research project focused on improving cardiovascular health in adults aged 40–65.
- The research team is based at a large academic hospital is planning to recruit participants from the surrounding community, which includes a diverse population of newcomers, Indigenous families, and long-standing residents from various cultural backgrounds.

Recruitment:

- Flyers in English with medical terminology, distributed at local gyms and coffee shops near the hospital.
- Study appointments available weekday business hours.
- Required participants to complete a 10-page consent form written at a Grade 12 reading level.
- Hired a research assistant who speaks only speaks English and has extensive experience working with diverse populations.

✅ Green Flags:

- The team is actively trying to engage the local population.
- A dedicated research assistant was hired to support recruitment of diverse participants

🚩 Red Flags:

- Language and literacy barriers
- Limited outreach
- Inflexible scheduling
- Lack of community engagement
- Cultural disconnect

Case 2: Community Wellness

Context:

- For a community-based study exploring mental health and well-being among youth in an urban neighborhood, the research team partnered with a local youth center to co-design the study and collect data through interviews and focus groups.

Data Analysis:

- Invited two youth center staff and three youth participants to join the analysis sessions.
- Provided training on qualitative coding and created a safe space for open discussion.
- The drop-in sessions were held daily from 9am-5pm.
- PI and co-PI were a part of these conversations, often steering the interpretation toward the study hypotheses.
- Some community members felt their insights were “toned down” in the final report but did not share this with the larger team.

✅ Green Flags:

- Inclusion of community members in data analysis
- Training and capacity-building for youth
- Co-authorship and shared credit

🚩 Red Flags:

- Inaccessible meeting times
- Power imbalances
- Community voices not fully reflected in final outputs

Thank you!

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Department of Family Medicine
Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine
Faculty of Health Sciences

fammedmcmaster.ca
@McMasterFamMed