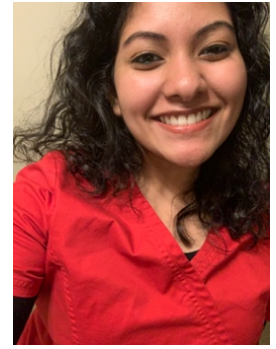


*Open the door of differences with  
the key of knowledge to the rainbow  
of cultures*



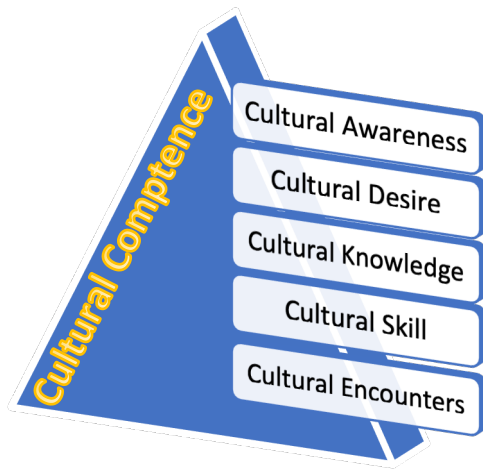
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## How Cultural Competence Makes Society Healthier May 2021

I was only 14 years old when my family and I moved to the United States from India. Never in that 14 years of my life had I heard of cultural competence, awareness or cultural sensitivity. One privilege that I had by living in India was that when I moved to the U.S., everyone was curious to know about my culture and me. First it was very weird because everyone wanted to know about the Taj Mahal. Personally, I have never been there. That is when I first thought about the stereotypical view of people about other cultures.

Some definitions that are helpful to know:

- **Cultural Awareness:** Is taking into consideration other cultures that are different from your own and treating them with the same respect as your own.
- **Cultural Competence:** Is when you find the similarities and differences of people from other cultures or beliefs and respect and appreciate them. You also will communicate adequately with people over a wide range of cultures and being self-aware of your own world view (DeAngelis, 2015).
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The ability to work with, respect and support people of your own and different cultures.
- **Implicit Bias:** When you as a person evaluate another person based on an existing unconscious judgement. Implicit biases involve associations outside conscious awareness that lead to a negative evaluation of a person on the basis of irrelevant characteristics such as race or gender (FitzGerald & Hurst, 2017). In some cases, both implicit and unconscious bias are used interchangeably.



Adapted from Dr. Josepha Campinha-Bacote,  
[www.transculturalcare.net](http://www.transculturalcare.net).

The United States of America is known as a melting pot because of the increased number of people of diverse cultures living in this country. At times, not everyone is open to accept other cultures. Aspects of culture such as language, skin color, practices,

beliefs make each person different. Sometimes, these differences might not be appealing to people who do not share the same aspects of culture. In order to open that door of differences, people need to have **cultural awareness**, which is the key to identify the differences between the cultures and yet learn to appreciate them. To be culturally aware, one needs to have a **cultural desire** which is the willingness/desire to learn about different cultures. Doing so can help a person become **culturally knowledgeable** and have the **skills** to do well during a **cultural encounter**. Different cultures are just like a rainbow, each layer has a different shade and tone. However, in the end, they all are just colors and the differences within the culture are what makes it attractive.

Knowing about various cultures can certainly help with how we evaluate things when it includes people with different cultures. There is a lot that can be done to bring awareness to people of different ages. Starting with children within schools, it is very easy to have a class that gives the kids exposure to different cultures. Encouraging them to learn another language also gives them an excuse to learn and be more appreciative of their own culture. In addition, being bilingual can become an asset for their future career in this modern world. Teachers and professors could take a program on culture to explore how intercultural sensitivity can affect their own learning and teaching (Nieto & Zoller Booth, 2009). When it comes to older adults, attending a presentation or a seminar on cultural competence or cultural awareness could help them to become self-aware. Sometimes unknowingly, people with a different culture can feel isolated. The association among socially isolated individuals and poor mental and physical health outcomes has been well established in the literature. Being culturally competent can really change the way you treat people and make this society healthier.

### ***Resources:***

[Transcultural C.A.R.E. Associates- Cultural Competence](#)

[Competence Education for Teachers](#)

[Tips to Improving Cultural Competence](#)

[Cultural Competence Within Wisconsin](#)

### References

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