Cultural Competency vs Cultural Humility

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“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” – Aristotle
What is Culture?
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Culture

the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group.

synonyms:
civilization, society, way of life, lifestyle
What is Culture?

Culture is a word for the 'way of life' of groups of people, meaning the way they do things. Different groups may have different cultures. A culture is passed on to the next generation by learning, whereas genetics are passed on by heredity.
This isn’t so simple in a multicultural society.
Which of these represents American culture?
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Which of these represents American culture?
Which one represents best?
It gets even harder to define on an international scale.
What is cultural competency?
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Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situation.

- Crosse et al.
What is cultural competency?

Cultural competence - Having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors and needs presented by consumers and their communities.

Office of Minority Health, National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care (CLAS Standards), 2001
I’m nice to everyone / rude to everyone. I’m good then.
I’m nice to everyone/ rude to everyone. I’m good then.

Ummmm…. Maybe not.
How any one group defines an action or behavior may vary from one group to another.
How any one group defines an action or behavior may vary from one group to another. What is good, bad, nice, rude, kind, normal, or abnormal can vary greatly based on background factors.
Is is rude... or polite... to look a stranger in the eye and say “Hello” to them on the street?
Tell me about a time when you had difficulty relating to a person on a different background...?
Many situations of discomfort come from a misunderstanding of what is socially acceptable in another person’s culture.
In a practical sense, cultural competence means understanding social mores for another culture and applying them appropriately.
Elements of Cultural Competence
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Cultural competence has four major components: Awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills.

-Diversity Officer Magazine
Elements of Cultural Competence: Awareness

**Awareness**: to examine diversity-related values and beliefs in order to recognize any deep-seated prejudices and stereotypes that can create barriers for learning and personal development. Many of us have blind spots when it comes to our beliefs and values; diversity education can be useful for uncovering them.
Elements of Cultural Competence: Attitude

**Attitude:** Values and beliefs impact cross-cultural effectiveness because they convey the extent to which we are open to differing views and opinions. The stronger we feel about our beliefs and values, the more likely we will react emotionally when they collide with cultural differences.
Elements of Cultural Competence: Knowledge

Knowledge: The more we have about people of different cultures, the more likely we are able to avoid stepping on cross-cultural toes. Knowing how culture impacts problem solving, managing people, asking for help, etc. can keep us connected in cross-cultural interactions.
Elements of Cultural Competence: Skills

**Skills:** Even with the “right” attitude, self-awareness, and knowledge about cultural differences...If we have not learned skills or have had little opportunity to practice, our other elements are insufficient to avoid and manage cross-cultural landmines.
NOTE THAT THE FIRST STEP IS AWARENESS.
This is where cultural humility comes in.
“The world in which you were born is just one model of reality. Other cultures are not failed attempts at being you; they are unique manifestations of the human spirit.”

— Wade Davis
Cultural humility is an ongoing process to evaluate your own biases, prejudices, and culture in a way that allows you to accept and understand other people as being equal to you and deserving of respect.
Cultural humility is

“ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]”

Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey (2013)
Cultural humility is listening to yourself and to the people you are around.
Elements of Cultural Humility

lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique

Underlying this piece is the knowledge that we are never finished — we never arrive at a point where we are done learning. Therefore, we must be humble and flexible, bold enough to look at ourselves critically and desire to learn more. When we do not know something, are we able to say that we do not know?
Elements of Cultural Humility

a desire to fix power imbalances where none ought to exist

Recognizing that each person brings something different to the proverbial table of life helps us see the value of each person.
Elements of Cultural Humility

aspiring to develop partnerships with people and groups who advocate for others

Though individuals can create positive change, communities and groups can also have a profound impact on systems. We cannot individually commit to self-evaluation and fixing power imbalances without advocating within the larger organizations in which we participate.
The self-exploration part of this is critical. Our brains like patterns and putting things into groups, to the extent that we’re not aware of it most of the time.
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Questions to ask ourselves


○ What are my most closely-held values?

○ What things about my background help define me?

○ In what ways do I see myself as being “better” than others?
Now, think back to that situation where you had difficulty relating to another person.
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Was any of the difficulty brought about by your assumptions? How did your own background play into it?
To use cultural humility, we cannot dismiss another person’s experiences as being invalid or that we are experts by association.
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“I have a BLACK FRIEND, so....”
This is a very uncomfortable journey.
This is a very uncomfortable journey. It’s worth it.
I WANT, BY UNDERSTANDING MYSELF, TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD
Sources and resources:

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