

Cultural Competence Primer for Student Services Professionals

May 17, 2016

Dalhousie University

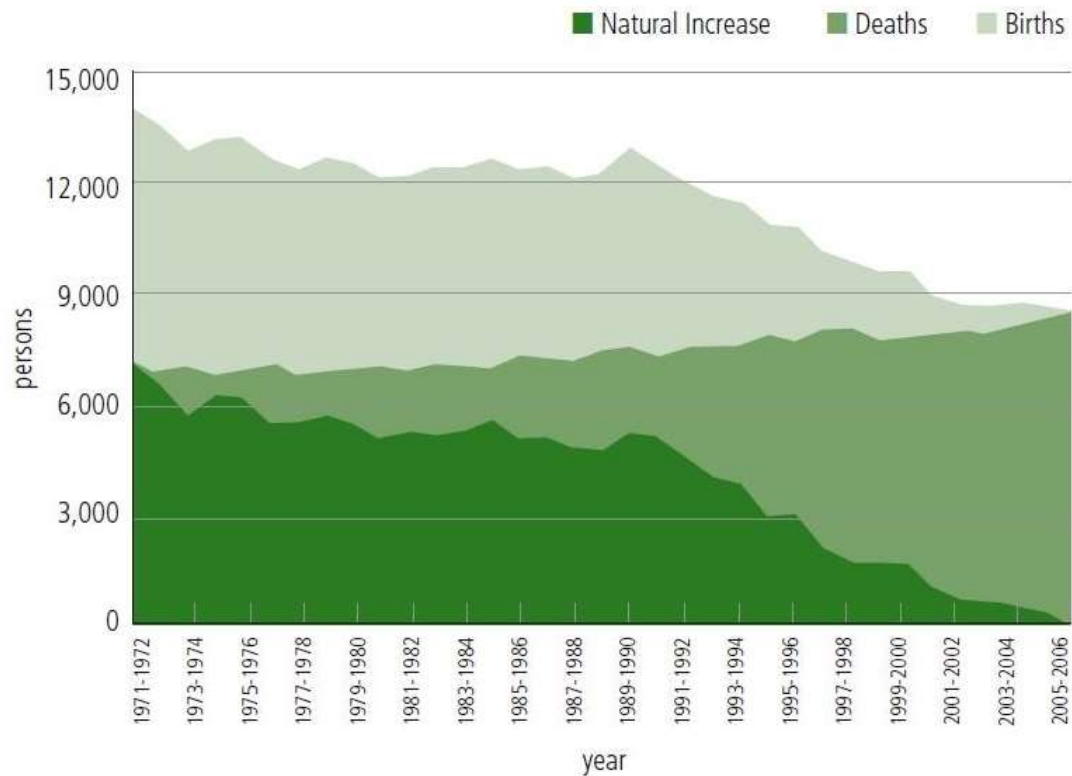
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Cultural Competence: Why?

- Racialized, Immigrant, and Aboriginal Canadians are gaining increasing space in society:
 - Historical social injustices are being addressed
 - Conditions affecting Aboriginal peoples are being recognized
 - Immigration seen as critical to sustainable economy

Local Demographics

Chart 1: Nova Scotia, Births, Deaths and Natural Increase, 1971-2005



Source: Statistics Canada, Annual Population Estimates

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Cultural Competence: Why?

- Cultural competence is being recognized as foundational knowledge in all sectors:
 - Justice – The Marshall Inquiry, 1989
 - Education – The BLAC Report, 1994
 - Health – CC Guide for Prim. Hx., 2005
 - Civil Service – Diversity Competency, 2014

Circle of Safety

- Race and diversity are extremely sensitive issues
- We are all at different stages and levels of our understanding
- To have productive conversations about race and diversity we need to have a “circle of safety”

Draw a “circle of safety”

- Agree to make this a “culturally safe” space:
 - Allow each other space to ask sincere questions without the fear of being judged and accused
 - Share from experience, but do not request that others do so
 - Ask about words or language you may not understand rather than avoid sensitive topics
 - Avoid inflammatory words or phrases (n-word, etc)
- What else can we do to ensure that we conduct the day in a way that ensures your safety?

Cultural Competence: Questions?

- What are your questions as we begin this hour?

Cultural Competence: Definition

- Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises five essential capacities. We must:
 - A. understand our own cultural positions and how they differ from and are similar to others
 - B. understand the social and cultural reality in which we live and work and in which our clients live and work
 - C. cultivate appropriate attitudes towards cultural difference
 - D. be able to generate and interpret a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal responses
 - E. understand structural oppression and demonstrate awareness and commitment to social justice

A) Nichols' Model for Understanding Cultural Difference

Philosophical Perspective on Cultural Difference. Edwin Nichols (cf. work of Jung)

Different world cultures developed out of differing physical environments.

These world views have differing constructs:

- Axiology (values)
- Epistemology (way of knowing)
- Logic (principles of reason)
- Process (practice of reason)

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE DEVELOPED BY EDWIN J. NICHOLS, PH.D.

ETHNIC GROUPS ETHNIC WORLDVIEW	AXIOLOGY	EPISTEMOLOGY			LOGIC	PROCESS
		APPLIED	PEDAGOGY	METHODOLOGY		
EUROPEAN EURO-AMERICAN	Member-Object The highest value lies in the object or the acquisition of the object	One knows through Counting and Measuring	Parts to Whole	Linear and Sequential <i>-Assembly line-</i>	Dichotomous <i>Either/Or</i> <i>-Newtonian theory-</i>	All sets are repeatable and reproducible <i>-Technology-</i>
AFRICAN AFRICAN AMERICAN LATINO/A ARAB	Member-Member The highest value lies in the relationships between persons	One knows through Symbolic Imagery and Rhythm (function) <i>-Gladwell <u>Blink</u>-</i>	Whole Holistic Thinking <i>-The BIG picture-</i>	Critical Path analysis <i>-Cut to the chase-</i>	Diunital <i>Union of opposites</i> Difrasismo <i>-Aztec thought-</i> The In Between <i>Ibn 'Arabi</i> <i>-Quantum theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks <i>-Black church-</i>
ASIAN ASIAN AMERICAN POLYNESIAN	Member-Group The highest value lies in the cohesiveness of the group	One knows through Transcendental Striving <i>-Tree the forest-</i>	Whole and parts are seen simultaneously <i>-To read a Chinese word-</i>	Cyclical and Repetitive <i>-Stroke order in writing a Chinese word-</i>	Nyaya <i>-The objective world is conceived independent of thought and mind-</i> <i>-Chaos theory-</i>	All sets are independently interrelated in the harmony of the universe <i>-Keiretsu-</i>
NATIVE AMERICAN	Member-Great Spirit The highest value lies in oneness with the Great Spirit	One knows through Reflection and Spiritual Receptivity <i>-Purification rites-</i>	Whole is seen in cyclic movement <i>-Seasons-</i> <i>-Medicine Wheel-</i>	Environmentally experiential reflection <i>-Rites of Passage-</i>	Great Mystery <i>-A set of 4 and a set of 3 form the whole-</i> <i>-Super string theory-</i>	All sets are interrelated through the elements, plant, animal, and spiritual networks <i>-White Buffalo-</i>

Traditional Ecological Knowledge

- Nichol's Model is consistent with a growing understanding and articulation of Aboriginal Traditional Ecological Knowledge: an Ancient and yet ever evolving body of knowledge, practice and belief which concerns itself with the inter-relationship of all living things with and within their environment.

Africentricity

- Nichol's Model is consistent with a growing understanding and articulation of Africentricity: A worldview that places all people of African descent at its centre, asserts a common culture, philosophy and history and critiques and perhaps even rewrites global history from this perspective.

This does not suggest pigeon-holing

- Just because a person is identifiably a member of a particular ethno-cultural, racial or aboriginal group does not mean they will ascribe to a pre-set notion of that groups culture.
- The model does give us some understanding of how people **can** differ in themes related to values, worldview, etc.

Emerging Peoples/Cultures

- GLBTIQ persons are similarly “gaining space” and have a unique history and emerging culture.
- Generational cultures exist, shaped by a different history and context with different expectations of the future

B) Social, Cultural and Historical Context

North American Diversity is fraught with complicated and tragic history

- **Enslavement of Africans, Genocide of First Nations, Global strife resulting in trans-global immigration etc.**

A local knowledge of how our racist history is a living legacy is necessary: Africville, Cornwallis.

C) Appropriate Attitudes

- Cultural competence requires that practitioners actually *value* diversity, not just tolerate it. In a nation that acknowledges multiple founding peoples, that was built up on the foundation of ethnic/immigrant labour and whose future depends on immigration any other attitude should reasonably be seen as unacceptable.

D) Communicating Across Cultures

- Cross cultural communication is a complex study in cultural hermeneutics. In sociology: the context of a person's world view is necessary for the proper understanding and interpretation of behaviour and rhetoric.
- Before meaningless, unnatural, non-human or immature behaviour and corresponding values are attributed to people of another culture, it is better to begin by doubting the adequacy of one's own judgment and knowledge.

Elmar Holenstein

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Elmar Holenstein Paraphrased

Before you conclude that I
am crazy you should consider
the possibility that you are
stupid!

Communicating About Culture

- Cultural competence requires the ability to comfortably and competently ask clients **about** cultural issues that may be a consideration in the context of your work with them.

E) Social Justice Commitment

- Most racial variants in social phenomena are better explained by systemic exclusion than by cultural difference
- We must demonstrate an awareness of how structural issues affect our sector, its members and clients
- We must demonstrate an active programme aimed at addressing systemic issues of exclusion and oppression

Bottom Line

People are Different
And we can not treat
different peoples as if we
were all the Same

A Few Questions

- What demographic shifts are we seeing among students entering post-secondary institutions?
- How do we currently engage students about cultural considerations?
- What do we need to do differently?

Q & A



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