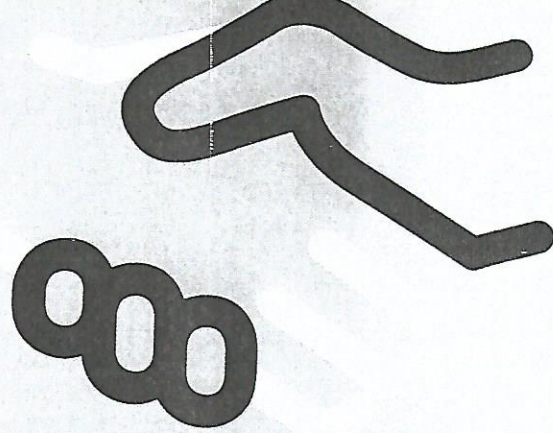




**STRATEGIES
DECONSTRUCTING
RACISM
HEALTH
HUMAN SERVICES**

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Creating a Culturally Competent Research Agenda

MO YEE LEE, XIAFEI WANG, YIWEN CAO,
CHANG LIU, AND AMY ZAHARLICK

While American society has been blessed with and benefited from various forms of diversity, it has also been afflicted by racism, as illustrated in recent incidents such as the Ferguson shooting that involved the fatal shooting of an unarmed black teenage male by a white policeman, thus resurfacing claims of police brutality in the black community. While blatant forms of racism and discrimination have largely been outlawed by civil rights legislation enacted since the 1960s, systematic oppression and racism still exist and can be manifested in the less obvious forms such as microaggression, white privilege, denial, and claims of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Rothenberg, 2004; Solorzano et al., 2000). Microaggression, a term originally developed in the 1970s by Chester Pierce to describe ways that black people were “put down” by their white counterparts (Pierce, 1974), has been expanded to describe both conscious and unconscious or even unintentional acts that reflect superiority, hostility, and racially inflicted insults and demeanors to marginalized groups of people (Sue, 2010). One negative consequence of racism, including the more subtle forms of microaggressions, is the well-documented social and health disparities experienced by many people of color (Children’s Defense Fund, 2014; McLaughlin, 2010; Sanders-Phillips, 2009; Williams, 2007). For instance, children of color are disproportionately represented among the poor. One in 5 black children and 1 in 7 Hispanic children live in extreme poverty, compared to one in 18 for white, non-Hispanic children (Children’s Defense Fund, 2014). The juvenile justice system is plagued with racial and ethnic disparities: children of color between the ages of 10 and 17 represent only 16% of the US population but account for 68% of this age cohort of children in restrictive residential placement (Children’s

Defense Fund, 2014). There has been extensive research examining racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes. Epidemiologic evidence indicates that compared with Caucasians, the African American population presented poorer outcomes on virtually all major health indicators, including coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, HIV, and infant mortality. Equitable access to quality health care is a major problem despite the high prevalence of these diseases in the African American population (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2005, 2007; Forouhi and Sattar, 2006; Keppel et al., 2002; Myers, 2009; Smedley et al., 2003). Further, even when controlling for income, racial disparities in health (e.g., earlier onset and higher rates of cardiovascular disease; higher infant mortality; poor maternal health outcome) still exist for the African American population (Marsiglia, 2014).

While recognizing individual determinants, such as genetic predisposition, neuro-physio-biological characteristics that shape an individual's health behaviors, the concept of social determinants explicitly challenges previous explanatory paradigms that are primarily framed by individual risk behaviors. Pertaining to health disparities, the social determinants explanation concludes that "the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system, weigh more heavily in the cause and course of every leading category of illness than do any attitudinal, behavioral, or genetic determinant" (Robinson and Moodie-Mills, 2012, p. 2). The lived experiences of many people of color are shaped by societal racism, such as institutional discrimination, fixed social power, residential segregation, and perceived stress; those factors, and the limited access to or lack of essential resources, have negative impacts on their physical health, mental health, and social situations. Developing antiracism strategies that help narrow these disparities should be an imminent ethical responsibility for researchers and professionals in the health and human services.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND ANTIRACIST RESEARCH AGENDAS

A classic definition of cultural competence was offered by Terry Cross and his associates. Their comprehensive definition refers to the ability of individuals and systems to respond effectively and respectfully to people of all cultures, races, socioeconomic status, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, disabilities, and faiths or religions in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, tribes, and communities. In doing so, it protects and preserves the dignity of each (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Sue and his associates developed a three-dimensional model in which cultural competence consists of cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills (Sue et al.,

2010). This model has informed the development of the American Psychological Association's guidelines (2002) and the National Association of Social Workers' (2007) standards pertaining to implementing cultural competence in practice across varied fields of professional practice. In the context of research, cultural competence is the capacity to respond to the unique needs of populations whose cultures are different from that which is considered the "dominant" or "mainstream" culture, or when the population being studied is different from that of the researcher. Cultural competence also implies the capacity to function within the context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior defined by the group under investigation (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013).

Critics of cultural competence claim that by introducing multidimensional factors of oppression, it might lead to information diffusion. In other words, when the focus on race is "diffused" by so many other foci (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, disability, faith and religion), it might reduce or diffuse the focus on the negative effects of racism on racial minority groups (Schiele, 2007). However, we propose that cultural competence is integral to developing antiracist research strategies because this approach can address challenges of intersectionality, facilitate understanding of the biopsychosocial process, and promote the formation of multiracial minority alliances in the research process.

Addressing Intersectionality

An individual's lived experience is often constructed by the interaction of multiple identities. For people of color, the intersectionality of their various statuses, such as gender, sexual orientation, ability status, age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, immigration and acculturation status, and place of residence, may exacerbate the effects of the oppression of racism (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Marsiglia, 2014). For example, Wilson and colleagues (2004) studied the experiences and responses to social discrimination of Asian and Pacific Islander gay men. The study showed that the high-risk sexual behaviors among these men originated from discrimination by the gay community, rather than public homophobia. In an effort to combat the historically constructed stereotype of being submissive and weak, these men were more likely to undertake high-risk sexual behaviors, in particular forgoing the use of condoms, in an effort to please their non-Asian partners, and this contributed to the increased HIV risk. By applying the intersectionality analysis of race and sexual orientation, this study implied that the power differential between cross-race gay relationships should be the emphasis of HIV interventions. Understanding the experience of people of color with multiple identities (e.g., African American lesbians with disabilities) is far more complicated than when we only take the dimension of race into consideration.

Cultural competence is required when analyzing the multiple identities of people of color and helps avoid oversimplification of oppression from a single dimension.

Understanding the Biopsychosocial Process of Disparity Formation

Myers' (2009) conceptual model of stresses due to ethnicity and socioeconomic status demonstrated that for people of color, the formation of ethnic and racial disparities is a complicated biopsychosocial process. Cultural competence, focusing on cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural skills, allows the researcher to understand the implications of social and economic inequalities on well-being outcomes that are rooted in institutional structures and race-based discrimination, as well as the adaptive and coping behaviors used to mitigate the effects of oppressive societal conditions. These coping behaviors include a person's tangible resources, social networks and support, personal agency, future orientation, racial/ethnic identity, and values (Myers, 2009). By identifying the unique risk or protective factors that constitute the cultural system of the studied population, researchers can create a research agenda that can contribute to knowledge building with diverse populations.

Promoting Multiracial Minority Alliance

Dialogs dealing with antiracism tend to focus on ways and efforts to change the power differential between the dominant and subjugated groups; the misunderstanding and isolation among diverse racial groups are easily ignored. Racial groups often construct each other as a general and vague image—that is, the opposite of whiteness. Consequently, minority racial groups might have little interest in understanding each other's situation. Instead, they tend to focus on their own plights and suffering or, worse, construct other racial minority groups as competitors or enemies.

The conflicts and competitions among minority groups regarding economic resources, political power, and educational opportunities have been extensively demonstrated by historical facts and empirical studies (Cummings & Lambert, 1997; McClain, 1993; Weitzer, 1997). Korean merchants and African American community residents competed over limited economic resources in major cities (Weitzer, 1997). African American voters supported restrictive immigration measures that targeted Mexican immigrants (Cummings & Lambert, 1997). Recently, Asian Americans opposed legislation in California that proposed reinstating affirmative action measures to increase the admission rate of Hispanics and African Americans in the public education system.

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Hostile interactions among these racial minority groups did not reduce their subordination and oppression. Instead, they had even less power to challenge the injustice imposed by the dominant group, thus becoming another way of promoting white supremacy. As Ikemoto (1992) commented on the tensions between African Americans and Korean merchants in Los Angeles, it seemed that both groups accepted their deprivation and assumed that competition must occur between the minority groups, but not between the minorities and the white population.

People of color are never a homogenous entity. By recognizing the vast diversity and heterogeneity among people of color, a focus on cultural competence has the potential to promote alliance among diverse racial groups. By highlighting the cultural aspects of the lived experience of different racial groups, cultural competence highlights the importance of mutual understanding, communication, and cooperation among and within diverse racial groups. For instance, a culturally competent Asian American researcher will be curious about the oppression and racism experienced by African Americans as a result of historical and institutional barriers, rather than holding them individually complicit in their own misfortune. Similarly, an African American researcher will recognize that Asian Americans are not insolent exploiters; instead, they experience discrimination by constantly being constructed as cultural others, foreigners, non-American, or "a model minority." Through mutual understanding and communication, different racial groups can transcend their particular race identities to form alliances, thereby making concerted efforts to ameliorate oppression and racism in the society.

A CULTURALLY COMPETENT RESEARCH AGENDA

Culturally competent research is defined as research that is subjected to "a continuing, incessant, and open-ended series of substantive and methodological insertions and adaptations designed to mesh the process of inquiry with the cultural characteristics of the group being studied" (Rogler, 1989, p. 296). Culturally competent research is a dynamic system that highlights a researcher's commitment to critically examine his or her own values, to constantly engage with the study community, and to actively disseminate the culturally competent knowledge to the research community (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013). Researchers could use this system to guide their endeavors of conducting culturally competent research (Fig. 4.1; Lee & Zaharlick, 2013, p.13). This system builds on the work of Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) that emphasizes five cultural competency components: valuing diversity, conducting cultural self-assessment, managing the dynamics of difference, acquiring and integrating cultural knowledge, and adapting to diversity and cultural context. These components do not

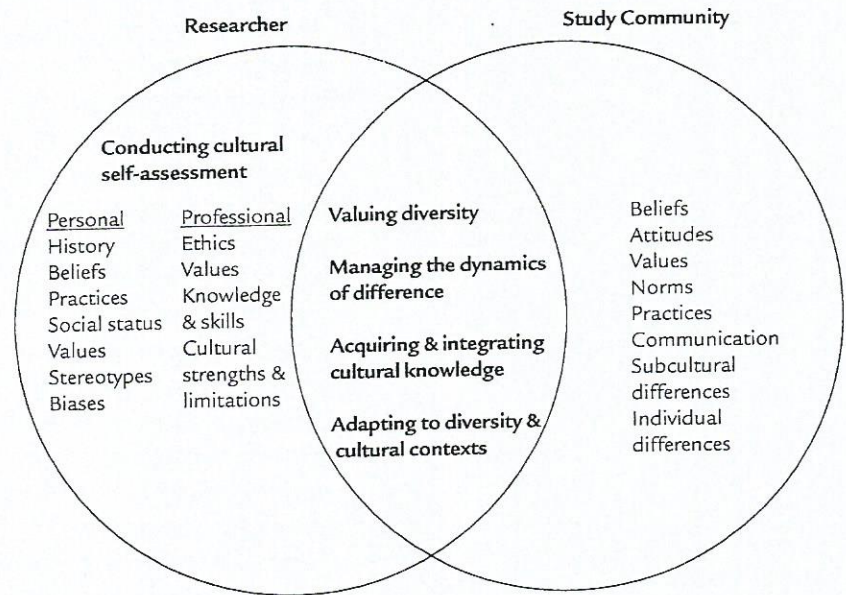


Figure 4.1: A Culturally Competent Research System.

Originally published in Lee, M. Y., & Zaharlick, A. (2013). *Culturally competent research: Using ethnography as a meta-framework*. New York: Oxford University Press, Figure 1.2, p. 13.

happen sequentially, but interact with each other in an iterative, dynamic, and ever-changing manner.

The Study Community

The study community is defined as a fluid and evolving entity that includes the beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, and practices that are shared and learned by a group of people. The community is not viewed as an aggregate of attributes or characteristics. Core to this definition is that people interact socially and communicate symbolically with each other and themselves to give meaning to their lives. Yet, the shared nature of the community does not imply the elimination of subcultural (e.g., social class and occupation) or individual (e.g., age and gender) variations within cultures. Life for each member of every culture is meaningful in his or her idiosyncratic way. Fine (1979) developed the concept of "idioculture" to denote the webs of meaning produced in smaller groups within the broader culture. It is important for researchers to move beyond the acknowledgment of macro-level patterns for a given culture and to appreciate the diverse micro-level social process that individual members undergo to define their personal meaning.

The Researcher: Conducting Cultural Self-Assessment

To conduct culturally competent research, researchers serve as the instrument to appreciate and acquire cultural knowledge that is achieved through their own personal journey of realizing, integrating, and adapting to diversity and cultural contexts. The extent to which researchers are able to value and appreciate diversity is largely mediated via their efforts to understand and assess their own cultures, including history, beliefs, values, stereotypes, and biases. It is not always easy to detect how our culture impacts our perceptions and thus our behavioral patterns. Because cultural influences usually occur outside of our consciousness, researchers must develop a practice of ongoing self-assessment, introspection, openness, curiosity, and self-observation. Researchers become aware of their own value systems and biases when actively engaged in a process of contrasting these with people or groups from another culture, as well as recognizing the individual differences that are present among people in their own culture or from a similar cultural background. One essential part of cultural self-assessment is to know "who you are" in relation to your own culture. Further, this process helps researchers to understand the ways in which their histories, cultural beliefs and practices, socioeconomic status, cultural values, stereotypes, and biases have shaped their personal identities. Self-awareness requires a critical examination of one's own prejudgments or biases on a daily basis. It also involves taking action to acquire and engage with multiple sources of cultural knowledge through advice seeking, consultation, or mentoring.

While it is important to be objective as a researcher, it is equally important to realize the influence of one's training, education, and professional experiences. This includes the professional values, knowledge and skills, and ethical standards researchers are obliged to abide by. We need to acknowledge the strengths and limitations resulting from our professional experiences. Does any part of our professional identity facilitate or hinder our understanding of a specific cultural group? Being reflective and reflexive as a researcher will help check our personal biases in the research process.

Valuing Diversity: The Intermediate Zone

The capacity to manage, understand, and adapt to differences constitutes the intermediate zone between the researcher and the study community in a research context. The crucial step for researchers to undertake is to recognize and acknowledge the differences as well as similarities existing between themselves and the study community, people from various cultures, people within a given culture, or those within the same person. The appreciation of differences includes

an understanding of differing beliefs, attitudes, values, practices, and policies as well as larger contexts and systems.

Becoming culturally competent means being aware of and understanding the dynamics stemming from the interaction between different cultures across multiple settings, whether these interactions are taking place in a professional or private setting or in formal or informal settings. Researchers constantly interact with the history and cultural meaning of the populations who are being studied. Culture is not perceived as a given; rather, it is ongoing and present in every single interaction. Researchers bring their own values, beliefs, and history and create a new meaning by learning and embracing the differences of the other group.

To manage the dynamics of differences, researchers must see and understand research participants in their context. While interpreting participants' cultural identity, researchers must hold back their own biases and allow participants to present their cultural meaning. Researchers allow this new knowledge of cultural differences in values and customs to sink in and be applied immediately in their interactions with participants. This new understanding may also lead to adjustments in the questions asked and the methods and interpretation that are culturally appropriate in the study community.

Cultural knowledge is produced by the experience and in the context of interaction with others. Thus, acquiring culturally competent knowledge requires continuous efforts to explore, define, and refine questions and adjust research designs that are well situated in the cultural context. The research approach is primarily inductive and involves spending time with people in their own settings. Researchers need to understand how patterns of communication, language, and speech play out in various sociocultural contexts. Researchers should assume the learner or apprentice role before interacting with people, as the purpose of the study is to acquire knowledge that researchers did not know before the study. In this way can researchers come to understand people's lives, sense of purpose, goals, and the meanings they assign to their interactions and can discover culturally based themes and relationships. The entire research process is a journey of discovery.

As part of the sociocultural scenes they research, researchers must keep track of their actions and reactions in the process. This means that they need to suspend judgment, preconceived stereotypes, and interpretation of behaviors based on their own cultural backgrounds while interacting with people. They should be prepared for any surprises from interpretations that are completely outside their experience, while being aware of the assumptions their own empirical questions are based on.

In conducting culturally competent research, researchers challenge themselves to go through the cognitive process of identifying confusion, modifying previously held beliefs, practicing new behaviors, and respecting other people's perspective. Adapting to diversity and cultural context involves taking actions.

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Researchers need to learn how to communicate and understand the behaviors and underlying assumptions in intercultural interactions. Researchers must always bear in mind cross-cultural and intracultural differences. Each interaction is interpreted in light of the researcher's culture as well as other cultures and is also a chance to practice what the researcher has learned over time and simultaneously discover differences.

ETHNOGRAPHY AS A META-FRAMEWORK

Because of the infinite possibilities of research and studies with diverse racial groups, conversations on efforts to create culturally competent research agendas will be more helpful if this dialog remains at the process level rather than the content level. Lee and Zaharlick (2013) proposed using ethnography as a meta-framework for conducting culturally competent research. Ethnography is a theoretically driven, systematic research approach to the study of the everyday life of a social group (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Spradley, 1980; Zaharlick & Green, 1991). Ethnography employs both qualitative and quantitative research strategies in the research process as determined by the research questions. Ethnographic researchers engage in an intense investigation of people, places, and other phenomena to "discover" the culture of interest in their natural settings. Wolcott (1995) described ethnography as a way of seeing the sociocultural world as the social group sees it, in its totality, and for understanding their interpretations of that world. Because ethnography encourages developing contextual knowledge in which sociocultural interactions occur and focuses on understanding what the group's members need to know, do, predict, and interpret in constructing the ongoing events of their lives through which cultural knowledge is developed (Bogdewic, 1999; Spradley, 1980), this research method is especially helpful for conducting culturally competent research because of its respectful and collaborative approach with the study community, focus on a contextual understanding of the phenomenon, and an interactive-reactive process that allow ongoing intercultural learning and adaptation to happen in the research process.

While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to provide a detailed description of an ethnographic approach to conducting culturally competent research (for details please refer to Lee & Zaharlick, 2013), the core components of culturally competent research can be succinctly described as the following (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013, p. 65):

- A collaborative social relationship with the study group and community
- Researcher as learner and as research instrument
- Use of firsthand, long-term observation
- Participant observation and a contextual view of phenomena

- An interactive-reactive research process
- An eclectic approach
- Cross-cultural frame of reference
- A spirit of discovery

In sum, researchers taking an ethnographic perspective focus on establishing collaborative, intercultural relationships with the study community as a way to discover and learn from them. Through direct, long-term participant observation, using themselves as research instruments, and taking an eclectic approach to obtaining data and conducting analysis, researchers take a contextual and integrative view of events in their natural settings. More importantly, researchers adopt a dynamic, interactive-reactive process to frame, define, and refine research questions and continuously adjust the study design and research techniques in response to the idiosyncratic characteristics and needs of the study community. They search for explicit and implicit patterns, for their order, their purpose, and, ultimately, their meaning within the sociocultural and political context. As they learn something new about the culture under study, they try to understand how it connects with other aspects of the sociocultural system, and how it can be interpreted in light of what is known about all previously studied cultures and the broader culture (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013; Zaharlick, 1992).

FRAMING THE STUDY QUESTIONS

Cultural competence is an integral part of each phase of a research study: deciding on the study topic, framing the study, designing research methods, collecting data, interpreting results, and disseminating findings. Culturally competent research processes adopting an ethnographic approach as a meta-framework provide helpful and explicit guidelines for the researcher. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to provide a detailed description of the entire research process, we will provide an ethnographic perspective decision-making framework as a guideline for framing the study, which is a crucial and important first step in creating a culturally competent research agenda (Table 4.1, adapted from Lee & Zaharlick, 2013, pp. 69–70).

Designing culturally competent research using an ethnographic perspective emphasizes ongoing interaction, engagement, and consultation with the study community to frame the study, develop culturally appropriate research questions, and construct a relevant research design (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013). The researcher is likely to have an idea of the research area based on his or her expertise, previous research experience, and the existing literature. An ethnographic perspective emphasizes the importance of a collaborative relationship with the study community, researcher as a learner, and a contextual view of the studied phenomenon,

Table 4.1. CREATING A CULTURALLY COMPETENT RESEARCH
AGENDA: FRAMING OF THE STUDY

	Questions to Be Considered	Culturally Competent Research Process
Purpose	What will be studied?	Ongoing interaction, engagement, and consultation with the study community to frame the study
Rationale	What is the rationale for engaging in the study at this time?	The research should answer questions that are important for the community as determined by the community.
	What problems, concerns, issues, or interests will the study address?	The research should build knowledge that furthers localized and contextual understanding of the study community.
Significance	What significance does the study have for research, theory, policy, and practice?	The research should build knowledge that ultimately benefits the study community.
		The researcher should recognize the unique cultural characteristics and strengths of the community.
Locating the study	What information or literature exists regarding similar research (on the topic, the specific group[s], similar processes, etc.)?	The researcher is fully aware of the differences as well as similarities among the culture of the study population, the majority culture, and the researcher's culture.
	How do you conceptualize the phenomena to be examined, and how does it coincide with or vary from existing conceptualizations?	The researcher refrains from making assumptions and hypotheses about the studied phenomenon but actively collaborates with the study community to develop culturally relevant framing of the study based on informed and contextualized understanding of both the population and the phenomenon.
	What theory or theories and methodological approaches will you use to answer the question(s) you have posed, and why are they appropriate (cognitive, behavioral, developmental, etc.)?	
Research questions	What are the initial exploratory questions guiding your research project?	In an interactive-reactive research process, initial research questions could be adjusted and modified using new information and data obtained from the intercultural interaction between the researcher and the community.

This table is adapted from Lee, M. Y., & Zaharlick, A. (2013). *Culturally competent research: Using ethnography as a meta-framework*. New York: Oxford University Press, Table 4.1, pp. 69–70.

which suggests the importance of an ongoing collaboration between the research team and the study community as well as firsthand and continuous observation of and participation with the study community in exploring relevant research topics and questions. This is the first step in creating a culturally competent research agenda. In other words, the framing of the study and the research questions should be developed in consultation with the study community because they are the “expert” of their lived experience and they are the “knowers.” For instance, one of the authors of this chapter conducted a study exploring the perceptions of sexual violence against women in Asian American communities. She and her coauthor collaborated early on with the Asian American Community Services organization in central Ohio, with a team of community leaders, and with others interested in this issue to frame the research, develop the survey, and implement the study (Lee & Law, 2001). Likewise, Karina Walters and her research team at Washington University conducted studies with American Indian populations on issues of trauma, HIV, and mental health (Walters, Beltrán, Evans-Campbell, & Simoni, 2011; Walters, Mohammed, Evans-Campbell, Beltrán, Chae, & Duran, 2011). As a researcher, Karina Walters (2012) explicitly described how she made respectful and collaborative moves to connect with and gain trust from the elders and the community before initiating a conversation about research with the targeted community.

Rationales are usually needed to justify the implementation of any research. Regardless of the idiosyncratic rationales for different studies, culturally competent research agendas should be guided by the following meta-rationales:

1. The research should answer questions that are important for the community as determined by the community.
2. The research should build knowledge that furthers a localized and contextual understanding of the study community.
3. The research should build knowledge that ultimately benefits the study community.
4. The research should recognize the unique cultural characteristics and strengths of the community.

Useful questions could include why this research is important at this time and with this population. For example, a researcher who decides to study abused Asian American children should ask questions about the unique problems, concerns, issues, or interests for this community from their perspective. How is the experience of Asian American abused children being shaped by their historical, sociocultural, political, and economic context? How is it similar to or different from the experience of the majority culture? What is the significance of the proposed study for research, theory, policy, and practice with this community? The

framing of the study is the most important initial step in creating a culturally competent research agenda.

In creating a culturally competent research agenda, researchers should be fully aware of the differences as well as similarities among the culture of the study population, the majority culture, and the researcher's culture. Researchers must be aware of their own possible biases and differences, must listen to the voice of the community, and must develop a contextualized understanding pertaining to the research area. For instance, the reason for and purpose of Asian parents' abusive behavior may be significantly different from those of Caucasian parents and African American parents. Asian parents may physically or verbally abuse their children because of their high expectations for their children, minority group pressures, and an authoritarian parenting style (Meston, Heiman, Trapnell, & Carlin, 1999). Those who have limited knowledge of this population might make assumptions based on the behaviors of the majority culture and overlook these possible differences.

Of course, not all differences among racial groups are a result of cultural differences. For example, not all Asian American parents have extremely high expectations for their children. Within-group variations and idiosyncratic individual and family characteristics and dynamics influence parenting behaviors and parent-child relationships in any particular dyad. A culturally competent researcher refrains from making assumptions and hypotheses about the studied phenomenon but actively collaborates with the study community to develop culturally relevant framing of the study based on informed and contextualized understanding of both the population and the phenomenon. Examples of research questions might be: What are the help-seeking practices of Latino family caregivers of elders with Alzheimer's disease? How do children who are deaf with hearing parents learn deaf culture? How do parents of murdered children deal with their grief? Other research questions may explore service or policy issues: What are the patterns of mental health service utilization of Native American, Asian American, White American, and African American populations? How can the differences be accounted for or explained? The initial framing of the study and research questions may be adjusted and modified with new information and data learned from the intercultural interaction between the researchers and the community, as a culturally competent research process is both interactive and reactive (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013). Regardless of the purpose of the study or the research questions, the importance lies in a process of inquiry that seek answers to questions through an examination of various sociocultural settings; the views, perspectives, and experiences of participants in those settings; and the structure and meanings people give to their lives and experiences. By doing so, culturally competent research provides a way of stepping beyond the known to enter the world of research participants to make discoveries that contribute to the development of empirical knowledge (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Integrating culture competence into the antiracism research agenda addresses the complexity of intersectionality among race and other cultural factors, facilitates better understanding of the biopsychosocial process of disparity and inequality formation, and promotes alliance among diverse racial groups. A culturally competent research agenda requires researchers to be culturally sensitive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, behavioral patterns, and experiences of the people who are the focus of the research. Researchers must incorporate into the research process knowledge of relevant historical, environmental, and social forces that constitute the cultural background and cultural reality of the study community. Paying attention to these factors in the research process, from conception to final published report, promotes the development of cultural sensitivity, cultural awareness, and cultural knowledge that allows researchers to identify hypotheses to be developed, tested, modified, and refined to describe the experiences and perspectives of others and to suggest appropriate interventions. By doing so, culturally competent research studies generate knowledge that can lead to the transformation of beliefs, attitudes, and practices of those responsible for providing services to diverse communities, for identifying the unique needs of diverse populations, and for identifying and removing barriers that limit people's access to needed services (Lee & Zaharlick, 2013). Ultimately, culturally competent research agendas can help eliminate longstanding disparities in the incidence of illness, death, poverty, mental health issues, and other problems of people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds as well as improve the access to, utilization of, and quality of health and other service outcomes (Goode & Dunne, 2003).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why should culturally competent research be an integral part of an antiracist research agenda?
2. What should be included in a culturally competent research system, considering your own research agenda?
3. What are the important considerations in framing culturally appropriate research questions and hypotheses that are consistent with an antiracist research agenda?

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