

**Vulnerable Populations Paper**

Taylor Lowe

Lakeview College of Nursing

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Professor Travis Whisman

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## **Vulnerable Populations**

Since the beginning of man, humans were created with the intent to be different- race, gender, ethnicity. While some view the differences of others as scary, it is such a beautiful thing. It truly is what makes everyone unique. Imagine a world where life is just bland. The food we eat is cold and flavorless. People wear the same clothes every day. Everyone all looks the exact same. It would be boring. The world would be black and white. However, it is not. Society lives in a colorful world. Understanding cultural competence, those who are in a vulnerable population, personal biases each individual has, and even ethical situations will help nurses to ensure that they give everyone the same treatment.

## **Cultural Competence**

### **Definition**

Discerning what cultural competence is, is vital for each individual living here on this Earth. Every person alive today has and will continue to encounter those who are different. As defined by the *Teaching Cultural Competence in Nursing and Health Care*, “Cultural competence has been described as a multidimensional process that aims to achieve culturally congruent health care” (Jeffreys, 2016, pg. 5). They further explained that the goal is to take health care and mold it around their life- religion, culture, or race. Even forgetting about the nursing aspect, cultural competence is simply the ability to speak to and understand those with different religions, cultures, or races. It is the ability to understand the difference between personal values and views and those of the other person, all while accepting the fact that there is a personal difference.

Because of the diversity that exists in different countries and local towns, society needs to be able to learn to accept and be okay with differences. There is this bumper sticker that many have on the back of their vehicle that says “tolerance.” It shows different religious symbols and different ideologies that man has. Society will never come to one agreement. However, everyone can be tolerant. Be able to accept the differences and look past them.

### **Nursing**

Cultural competence, while should be everywhere, there is no room for error regarding the nursing field. Ineffective care often stems from a lack of knowledge and lack of ability. If nurses do not understand someone’s culture, then they will not have the knowledge and the ability to properly take care of them like they deserve (Sharifi et al., 2019, pg. 1). For instance, Muslims pray at five separate times of the day. When they do pray, it is an uninterrupted time for them. The nurse would obviously need to respect that. If the nurse wants to bathe her patient at nine o’clock, but the patient is in their time of prayer, the nurse will have to wait and come back. This point is brought up because a nurse who is culturally incompetent, would not have given the bath later because she does not respect that individual and was unwilling to make time later. This would affect the patient negatively.

Another reason why cultural competence is important is that it can hinder nurse-patient relationship. A lack of understanding leads to a lack of acceptance which leads to a lack of relationship between the two. Najmeh Sharifi and his colleagues said that the negative relationship can lead to “loss of screening opportunities, diagnostic errors, adverse drug reactions, and even early death” (Sharifi et al., 2019, pg. 2). These reasonings is exactly why cultural competence is crucial in the nursing field. These happen because the nurse judges the

patients, which means then that she is not taking their words, symptoms, or new conditions seriously. At the end of the day, these are real patients and people whose lives are on the line. Refusing to comprehend or understand their culture will result in detrimental effects.

### **Example of One Vulnerable Population**

#### **Homeless**

While everyone can be considered a vulnerable population depending on location, a common one here in this country is the homeless. In this country, it is very difficult to receive good, quality care, especially if one is homeless because of their lack of health insurance. Because of this sad reality, millions are left with little to no care. Those who are homeless experience high rates of HIV and AIDS, depression and anxiety, hepatitis infections, and alcohol and drug addiction. Even if they have access to medical help, there are a lot of challenges they must face, like not having a vehicle for transportation and as discussed previously, money to pay for those visits. Even if they get the help they need, they find themselves right where they started- back on the streets with no money, food, or protection (Sleet and Francescutti, 2021, pg. 1-2). This creates a vicious cycle that is never ending.

These are the people who need the most help, not someone who demands antibiotics for a viral infection. It is devastating to see people suffer. Even if they got themselves into their situation, it is ridiculously hard to get out as well, even if there is a desire to. They need access to therapy services, rehab facilities, shelter, food, and water just like everyone else. The money is getting spent regardless of when they come into emergency rooms. The money would be better accounted for if it went into services for them.

#### **Biases**

### **Personal Biases**

After thinking about this question for a while, I think my personal bias would be people who have a lower socio-economic class. I am not talking about those who are homeless or people who are going through financial hardships because of factors that they cannot control. I am talking about the people who choose to not get a job, those who choose to not shower and be gross, and choose to have eight kids with eight different dads. I know this sounds very specific and may even come across as rude and mean to a lot of people, but at least I can acknowledge that this is a bias I have. My great aunt, who is in her late seventies, always said that one can be homeless yet still be clean, which I agree with for the most part. The number of times I go to the store and am surrounded by the smell of body odor or sour smells is appalling. Soap literally costs ninety-eight cents at the store. On top of it, these are also the families that are so mean to their kids and yell and scream at them in public which is always somewhat understandable because their kids are so misbehaved and have no structure.

I think I have this deep-seated issue because kids hold a very special place in my heart. My parents raised me to be a hard worker. For me, once someone gets pregnant, it stops being about them and becomes all about the baby. It just makes me so upset when people roll up to the clinic or the hospital, in which they are fully capable of working and getting a job but choose not to because they do not want to. Then, their kids suffer as a result. Because I have seen situations like this time and time again, I tend to have a lot of personal biases and stereotypes when I feel that someone fits in that box.

Like I said though, I do realize that this is a serious judgment that I hold that does embarrass me. I honestly did not want to even write that because it is shameful for me to admit

that. I truly do work on this attitude every day by reminding myself that I do not know the situation or circumstances.

### **Ethics Question**

#### **Prisoners Receiving Care**

Would I want to know the crime of a prisoner which I am assigned to care for? The answer is no. Simply put, if I knew, it would probably affect my level of care. Therefore, I do not want to know. As someone who is as nosy as it comes, it would bother me not knowing, but I would also realize that it is for the best. For example, one of the worst crimes I feel that someone can commit is molesting a child. While murder is never okay, there are reasons that can be understood. Harming a child in such a way will never have a valid reason or excuse. If I had a patient and knew what they did, it would change how I view them and may even possibly affect their level of care. Regardless, my job as a nurse is to give the best care. For me to do that, it is best that I do not know.

### References

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