

I also spent 12 years of my life in a city where it is easy to identify the damage of colonization and modernization. *La Plaza de las Tres Culturas* allows you to stand in a square from where you can see Aztec's edifications, a church building from the Spanish Conquest, and a more contemporary apartment complex. This image describes my paradox, my ongoing dilemma, which is to be constantly asking myself what it means to descend from the violent encounter of Spanish and Indigenous people.

I have now spent 15 years in the United States, specifically in North Carolina. My exposure to "American" culture has complicated things even more. I am not only a *fronterizo*, *chilango*, and *mexicano*. I am now a Hispanic, a Latinx, and a Mexican-American; some have even called me *pochó*. Yes, not only do I have to live with the fact that I have an accent when I speak in English, but now my Spanish is also questioned.

Undoubtedly, God has used culture to speak to me. My encounter with different cultures is what led me to discern a call for the ministry in another culture in itself. Since my first pastoral tenure in a Spanish-speaking congregation and eventually in two English-speaking congregations, I have found myself being a cultural bridge.

For the last seven years, I have encountered many more cultures by my interaction with seminarians and pastors from different denominations, backgrounds, races, theological convictions, and ways of life. However, I confess that I have made many mistakes. My attempt to be a cultural bridge has been long, painful, and humbling—and at times humiliating.

The pride of cultural competency

In 2012, I was introduced to the cultural humility concept. When I heard about it, it was during a time where I had achieved some significant accomplishments: ordination, a new job in a prestigious institution, and recognition as a cultural bridge in my denomination.

Although I did not realize it at the time, I really felt very confident, competent, and really believed that I was a cultural bridge and an ambassador of the ministry of reconciliation — how wrong I was. My encounter with the cultural humility concept is what has led me to realize that there is always room to grow in our understanding of other cultures.

The premise of cultural humility is described in the following statement by Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia in their article **Cultural Humility Versus Cultural Competence**: "Cultural humility incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique to redressing the power imbalances in the physician-patient dynamic, and to developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations."

Tervalon and Murray-Garcia started developing this concept as they noticed how nurses and other professionals in the medical field reacted after receiving cultural competency training. They started to show arrogant gestures and make assumptions about their patients based on their training. In short, these researchers noticed how cultural competency was becoming more of a "check list." Once someone fulfilled it, they could feel as though they needed no more growth and could relate with all cultures without a problem.

My encounter with the concept of cultural humility helped me realize why I automatically felt fully culturally competent considering my background. Having this false notion led me to hurt many people in my interactions with other cultures.

The current work about cultural humility is mainly from the medical and psychological field, so what I have striven to do is to incorporate a biblical and theological frame. For instance, one of the foundational Scriptures I often use to connect the cultural humility term with biblical language is Philippians 2:1-11. I believe that Jesus embodies what cultural humility means; his kenosis should be a reminder that the "emptying of one self" should be at the center of any effort toward becoming culturally competent.

The cultural humility principles can be especially helpful for leaders, activists, and allies who come from privileged backgrounds. I am convinced that the Church and theological education institutions should be active and leading participants in continuing to develop this concept from a biblical perspective.

The cultural humility principle aligns with the need to grow in our love for God and neighbor. Specifically, cultural humility is in alignment with the notion of Christian holiness that calls all Christians to an ongoing self-examination and critique. It also aligns with seeking justice that reflects God's encompassing love for all. All people are created after God's image and no one has the right to dehumanize anyone based on their background.

on earthly titles or credentials.

Ultimately, I am convinced that cultural humility can help change the paradigms Christian leaders use to engage in social change, mission, evangelism, multicultural, and intercultural ministry. Also, it can contribute to conversations regarding race, racism, anti-racism, power dynamics, and other controversial topics.

READ: Christ and Whose Culture?

Cultural humility has been a means of grace for my life. My exposure to different cultures has expanded my imagination about who God is, what the Christian life is about, and how I can become a visible sign of Jesus' kingdom on earth. More significantly, it has affirmed my own identity because as I learn from other cultures, I also learn something new about what I can offer to others.



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