Chapter 5  Rubin and Babbie (2008)
Culturally Competent Research

Much of social work practice—both direct and indirect—involves work with people of color and oppressed groups. Cultural competency is therefore required in practice and research setting.

Cultural competence is defined as a researcher’s ability to provide information that is relevant, useful, and valid for minority and oppressed populations.

Culturally competent research involves being aware of and appropriately responding to the ways in which cultural factors and cultural differences should influence what we investigate, how we investigate, and how we interpret our findings.

Culturally competent problem formulation is an important first step.
• Avoid ethnocentrism (the belief that your own culture is superior)
• Learn about the cultures that you are doing research with
• Consult with affected groups to determine what is worth researching for them
• Use information in this chapter and from the literature review to inform yourself about particular cultures

Work to recruit and retain participation of minority and oppressed groups in research studies
• Obtain endorsement from community leaders
• Use culturally sensitive approaches regarding confidentiality
• Employ local community members in research staff
• Provide adequate compensation
• Alleviate transportation and childcare barriers
• Choose a sensitive and accessible setting
• Use and train culturally competent interviewers
• Use bilingual staff
• Understand cultural factors influencing participation
• Use anonymous enrollment with stigmatized populations
• Use specialized sampling techniques
• Learn where to look
• Connect with and nurture referral sources
• Use frequent and individualized contacts and personal touches
• Use anchor points
• Use tracking methods—phone, mail, agency, field

Incorporate culturally competent measurement
• Assure culturally competent interviewing by working toward using interviewers who 1) speak the same language, 2) are of the same ethnic background, and 3) have adequate training related to the ethnicity of the respondent
• Avoid language problems by addressing translation validity
• Avoid cultural bias through background knowledge, pre-testing, and other means
• Assure measurement equivalence by addressing translation, conceptual, and metric equivalence
• Assess measurement equivalence

Address additional issues in making research more culturally competent (see pp. 116-118), including 1) not attributing to ethnicity differences that are really due to other factors, and 2) overgeneralization to an entire people of color based on observations of a subgroup.