

## The Power of Cultural Validation: A Global Strategy for Combating Infectious Diseases

Julissa Soto

CEO, Public Health Advocate, Health Equity Consultant, USA

### ABSTRACT

Cultural Validation is a technique that works to increase access and break down barriers for what many policymakers and public health officials identify as “hard to reach populations.” During the COVID-19 Pandemic, policymakers and public health officials often cited “vaccine hesitancy” as a key challenge to reaching vulnerable populations, including immigrants, Spanish-speaking communities, and others who have been marginalized. Yet, community-based programs utilizing “Cultural Validation” techniques demonstrated that barriers to access – not hesitancy – were the true culprits. In fact, public health partnerships, laws, policies and funding that support the full integration of Cultural Validation techniques can ensure vaccine equity across the board. Cultural Validation can be applied to any community, and its success is made possible by four 4 key factors:

- Researching and getting to know people in the community through genuine and authentic relationship-building prior to engagements.
- Developing culturally relevant materials and marketing strategies.
- Hosting events at places that are familiar to the community.
- Providing genuine, authentic care in service delivery.

### \*Corresponding author

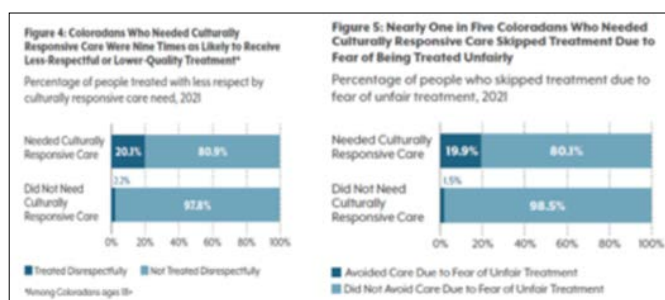
Julissa Soto, CEO, Public Health Advocate, Health Equity Consultant, USA.

**Received:** July 09, 2024; **Accepted:** July 12, 2024; **Published:** July 17, 2024

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, events using the Cultural Validation method provided immediate results. The first event saw more than 1297 vaccines administered in what had been described as “vaccine hesitant” communities. In fact, supplies had to be bussed in to keep up with demand, and vaccines were being administered throughout the night. Cultural Validation techniques have resulted in more than 30,000 vaccinations and the distribution of more than 130,000 testing kits and 100,000 masks. Public health laws, policies and funding that support full integration of Cultural Validation techniques can improve access to care, break down barriers, and save lives. Key strategies include: Cultural Validation training for policymakers, funders and providers; commitment to funding activities and events using Cultural Validation techniques; promoting and fostering a sense of equity and inclusion at all organization levels [1-3].

### References

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**Figure 1:** Colorado Health Institute, Diverse State, Diverse Needs Report - July, 2022

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