

Title:

A Personality Disorder Gathering: Using Simulation to Create a Transformative Learning Experience

Pamela Adamshick, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, APRN, BC

Jennifer Landis, BA

Helen S. Breidegam School of Nursing, Moravian College, Bethlehem, PA, USA

ACCEPTED

Abstract Describes:

Ongoing Work/Project

Applicable category :

Academic, Students

Keywords:

Personality Disorders, Simulation and Transformative Learning

References:

- Doolen, J., Giddings, M., Johnson, M., de Nathan, G. G., & Badia, L. O. (2014). An evaluation of mental health simulation with standardized patients. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 11(1), 1-8.
- Dreifuerst, K. T. (2015). Getting started with debriefing for meaningful learning. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 11, 268-275.
- Garneau, A. B. (2016). Critical reflection in cultural competence development: A framework for undergraduate nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 55(3), 125-132.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 46(3), 158-172.
- Witt, M. A., McGaughan, K., & Smaldone, A. (2018). Standardized patient simulation experiences improves mental health assessment and communication. *Clinical Simulation in Nursing*, 23, 16-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecns.2018.08.002>.

Abstract Summary:

The personality disorder gathering is a unique simulation situated in a community setting. The scenario mixes a small group of students with several standardized patients, each of whom portray a selected personality disorder type casually interacting with student nurses and each other in a comfortable meeting room on campus.

Content Outline:

Introduction:

Educators encounter challenges in teaching concepts of personality disorders to student nurses. Similar to many mental health disorders, knowledge transformation about personality disorders comprises a complex array of learning taxonomies, including recall of assessment of behaviors, application of communication skills and strategies for care, analysis and management of personal reactions, synthesis of new perspectives on personality disorders, and development of professional behaviors. These learning processes are recognized as difficult to negotiate in a short period of time without an exposure component to augment understanding. A collaborative educational environment that engaged the learners in a natural setting was selected. Simulation was identified as an ideal teaching strategy to achieve the desired goal of transformative learning. In addition, simulation provided the synergistic elements of an expert in the area of simulation technology with the knowledge and expertise of an advanced practice psychiatric-mental health nurse (course professor), and the skill of standardized patients (SP's) to portray the personality disorders authentically (Witt et al., 2018).

According to Mezirow, transformative learning is "The process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). This learning experience, based upon Mezirow's theory, is significant in that it required learners to be actively engaged in their learning, using both discourse and critical reflection to gain deeper meaning and entertain additional perspectives about the topic of personality disorders.

Mezirow's theory:

Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1991) is grounded by three main themes: experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. The themes are further explained by the 10-phase transformation process. A disorienting event is the first phase and represents the experience theme. Phases two and three involve critical reflection and are representative of the theme of critical reflection. Phases four and five represent Mezirow's theme of rational discourse in that one explores new options for roles, actions, and relationships. The final five phases relate to one's perspective transformation, ultimately leading to self-confidence in new roles, and re-integration of these into one's life. The phases of the transformation process can be applied to the Personality Disorder Gathering as outlined in this simulation experience.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of the simulation "A Personality Disorder Gathering" was student nurse engagement in transformative learning about personality disorders. The process involved exposing small groups of students to a group of standardized patients who each acted out a selected personality disorder type as they interacted with students in a casual and comfortable setting on campus (a meeting room). The premise behind the gathering was that both students and SP's were inadvertently assigned to the same meeting room for their respective meetings.

Through participation in the simulation the learner will be able to:

- Differentiate the behaviors related to selected personality disorders.

- Recognize behaviors of those with personality disorders and how these might contribute to clashes or dysfunctional relationships in any community or work setting.
- Display effective communication for interaction with persons with personality disorders.
- Gain perspective of the nursing role to deal with personality disorders on any hospital unit or anywhere in community.
- Recognize appropriate use of boundaries or empathy when interacting with individuals who display personality disorder behaviors.
- Recognize personality disorders are manifest everywhere.
- Feel prepared and comfortable to care for individuals with personality disorders.
- Transfer learning from a life-like situation that one might experience anywhere to other similar situations.

Methods:

The simulation expert, in consultation with the psych-mental health course professor, developed descriptions and case studies of five personality disorders. The simulation expert met with the SP's to discuss typical behaviors and a general script for their interaction in the gathering. Two days prior to the simulated experience, students had a 70-minute class lecture with PowerPoint and discussion on the Cluster A, B, and C personality disorders. Students also were assigned to view a 12-minute video depicting personality disorders prior to the simulation. Thirty-seven students were randomly assigned in groups of 7-9 to a 35-minute session scheduled for the day of the Personality Disorder Gathering. Each session included a 12-15 minute interaction with all the SP's in a comfortable community environment, followed by 20 minutes of debriefing with the course professor and the simulation lab technician.

After debrief, students completed an immediate evaluation of the experience and also answered a worksheet, which was a combination of responses based on recall and deeper learning responses via reflective writing. As part of the nursing program policies, students signed consent for participation in simulated learning experiences, including an acknowledgment that they might be audio and video recorded during such simulations.

Results:

Of 35 student respondents on the evaluation of the experience, 91.43% agreed their confidence in the skill area improved as a result of the simulation. All respondents reported the debriefing process facilitated self-reflection. Content analysis of narrative comments about the debrief illustrated the following common themes: involved all learners in interactive discussion about the conversations and students' experiences and thoughts, enhanced knowledge of personality disorders, gained perspective of what was done well and what could have been done differently, and realized encounters with many people in life who display these personalities.

Content analysis of the reflective writing assignment revealed the following themes: students felt prepared to communicate effectively with someone with a personality disorder, recognized these disorders are present in our society, applied learning to a real-life scenario, realized these experiences with personality disorders will occur outside the hospital, and identified nurses need to balance empathy with caution in care of people in society.

Conclusions:

Based on deeper understanding of the complexity of personality disorders, student nurses were prepared to augment their professional development in the nursing role as

they discussed how they could apply concepts and meanings gained from this experience not only to clinical situations, but also to life in the larger community.

Implications:

Continue to gather evidence regarding the effectiveness of simulations with standardized patients in community settings for student learning about mental health issues or disorders.

Consider expanding such simulations to include standardized patient portrayal of patients with acute or chronic mental illness and their family members or care givers in their homes.

Explore further application of Mezirow's transformative learning theory to simulation experiences, especially as related to psychiatric/mental health nursing.

Topic Selection:

Education Poster Session 2 (Monday/Tuesday, 18 & 19 November) (26149)

Abstract Text:

Educators have encountered challenges in teaching concepts of personality disorders to student nurses. Similar to many mental health disorders, knowledge transformation about personality disorders requires the learner to assimilate all learning taxonomies from recall to synthesis in a brief period of time, usually without the benefit of interaction with individuals who display characteristics of personality disorders. While no literature described the use of simulation to illustrate interaction with individuals with personality disorders, evidence suggests simulation experiences with standardized patient actors can provide realistic situations of mental health disorders. In particular, when learning about mental health, learners explore and integrate skills in assessment, communication, self-awareness, and professional growth in a safe setting (Witt et al., 2018). Furthermore, the debriefing process is an essential aspect of active engagement in simulation learning, allowing learners to employ reflective processes that help connect thinking with action and also help transfer learning from one environment to another to inform future patient encounters (Dreifuerst, 2015). Simulation was therefore identified as an ideal strategy for depicting personality disorders and engaging the learners. This particular learning experience was based upon Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning, which explains that learners use prior knowledge to interpret a revised meaning of their own experience, perhaps taking them out of their comfort zone, yet providing guidance for future action. This was significant for the current simulation in that the process required learners' active engagement in their learning, using both discourse and critical reflection to gain deeper meaning and entertain additional perspectives about the topic of personality disorders.

The purpose of the simulation was student nurse engagement in transformative learning about personality disorders. This was accomplished via interaction in small groups with individuals (standardized patients) who portrayed selected personality disorders, and participation in a subsequent debriefing process and reflective writing assignment. The simulation was arranged in a casual community setting to illustrate that personality disorders are manifest everywhere and to facilitate student transfer of learning from a life-like situation that one might experience anywhere to other types of situations. The

simulation sessions were held on December 3, 2018, with 37 students participating. Of 35 student respondents on the evaluation of the experience, 91.43% agreed their confidence in the skill area improved as a result of the simulation. All respondents reported the debriefing process facilitated self-reflection. Content analysis of narrative comments about the debrief illustrated the following common themes: involved all learners in interactive discussion about the conversations and students' experiences and thoughts, enhanced knowledge of personality disorders, gained perspective of what was done well and what could have been done differently, and realized encounters occur with many people in life who display these personalities.

Content analysis of the reflective writing assignment revealed the following themes about the meaning for students: felt prepared to communicate effectively with someone with a personality disorder, recognized these disorders are present in our society, applied learning to a real-life scenario, realized these experiences with personality disorders will occur outside the hospital, and identified nurses need to balance empathy with caution in care of people in society.

Based on deeper understanding of the complexity of personality disorders, student nurses were prepared to augment their professional development in the nursing role as they discussed how they could apply concepts and meanings gained from this experience not only to clinical situations, but also to life in the larger community. Implications include gathering further evidence about the effectiveness for student learning when using simulations with standardized patients depicting mental health disorders in life-like community settings. Consider expanding such simulations to include standardized patient portrayal of individuals with acute or chronic mental illness along with their family members or care givers in their homes. Explore further application of Mezirow's transformative learning theory to simulation experiences, especially as related to psychiatric/mental health nursing.