

Title:

Cultures in Cadence: Nursing Student Panel Discussions Addressing Unity and Diversity

Melissa L. Schirle, BSN

School of Nursing, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX, USA

Session Title:

Rising Stars of Research and Scholarship Invited Student Posters

Keywords:

Cultural Relations, Panel Discussions and Unity in Diversity

References:

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Abstract Summary:

The concept of an open panel discussion was conceived based on a motivation to promote positive orientation between cultures through communication, understanding, and relationship building. Equally, it

compelled each participant to reflect on their own behaviors in an effort to understand how interactions may affect diverse relationships.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
The learner will be able to discuss the need for an innovative platform facilitating open dialogue among diverse cultures. The objective will be accomplished within 3-5 minutes.	The objective will be accomplished through verbal interaction and content presented in the poster presentation.
The learner will be able to discuss how a cultural panel enhances knowledge of cultural perceptions and provides a guideline for self-reflection. The objective will be accomplished within 3-5 minutes.	The objective will be accomplished through verbal interaction and content presented in the poster presentation.

Abstract Text:

The concept of a Student Panel Discussion was conceived based on a motivation to promote positive orientation between cultures. This initiative was created to facilitate open dialogue among diverse students about perceptions and experiences related to diversity in society. The project also emphasized individualism as well as self-awareness of one's values, behaviors, and interactions.

The ideology behind this project is rooted in the work of Madeleine Leininger's Transcultural nursing. She predicted early on that nursing would be intensely multicultural and developed the Culture Care theory as a distinct body of nursing knowledge to fulfill this (Leininger, 2001). Her work identified 'caring' as the essence of nursing and established a theoretical framework that considered cultural differences and similarities in care (Leininger, 2001). Leininger suggested two guiding principles to help promote cultural development: 1) Individuals should maintain a broad, objective, open attitude toward others and their cultures, and 2) Individuals must avoid viewing members of a culturally specific group as alike...as this does not allow for individual variation (Wells, 2000). The panel discussion project gave students the opportunity to relate with others of various backgrounds through personal interactions. This 'act of doing' helped participants develop a propensity for culturally congruent interactions and nursing care. Rather than building knowledge on cultural development models to use as a guide for personal and professional practices, the sessions gave individuals a tactile method for growing and evolving culturally.

Eleven volunteer nursing students participated in four 1-hr panel sessions with agreed upon ground rules stressing open-mindedness and respect. Session topics were provided in advance and each panel member was allotted a specified timeframe in which to address the topic questions. Panel members, volunteer faculty moderators, as well as fellow classmates who participated as audience members were afforded opportunities to ask follow-up questions and make comments at the conclusion of each session. The following highlights the topics for each session.

PANEL TOPICS AND BRIEF OVERVIEW:

Session 1: Philosophy, Personal Background and Beliefs:

Focused on personal characteristics, beliefs, values, and worldview of each panel member. This session gave participants the opportunity to acquaint each other on a personal level. This session set the tone for respect and understanding.

Session 2: Unity versus Division:

Contemplated and discussed societal views of unity and diversity. Examples included those that promoted or hindered unity and diversity. This session worked to open the discussion about perceptions and examples of unity in diversity on a macroscopic level.

Session 3: Individual Behaviors and Interactions:

Focused on personal views and behaviors that may influence interactions. This session had a more microscopic approach as it explored the impact of “self-division” and methods of balancing personal values and communicating and building relationships with others.

Session 4: Looking to the Future:

Reflected on what was learned and how to actualize the experience both personally and professionally to promote positive change.

Every participant (panel, faculty, and audience) was also strongly encouraged to write a ‘post-reflection journal’ after each session. Certain questions were offered to help guide the participant when journaling. A great deal of information was discussed with each session and the journal was developed to help reflect on what they learned about themselves and others.

After the final session, a post survey was emailed to all participants for confidential feedback. Fourteen participants completed the survey resulting in a 54% response rate. When asked if the panel experience was beneficial, 100% of the surveyors replied, “yes”. Eighty-one percent (81%) of surveyors rated Session 1 and Session 3 as having the most impact. Sessions 1 and 3 focused primarily on introspection and personal reflection. They also facilitated participants to garner an intimate look into the views and experiences of their peers. Numerous reported benefits were noted from participation in the panel discussion. They commented that the sessions helped to challenge them, promote awareness, motivate change and set the tone for culturally sensitive care. All participants also reported that the experience should be continued.

Recommendations by the participants, to help improve the panel experience in the future, included making the sessions longer than an hour and offering more time for general conversation among panel and audience members. There was also a recommendation to have participants bring baby photos and/or family photos to the first session to add to the personalization. After completing the experience, it was also noted that decreasing the number of reflective questions per session could help to focus the discussion a little better.

I believe this experience could be beneficial in a variety of settings. Panel discussions can be replicated in high schools or university settings with a diverse population. Moreover, panel discussions may also be beneficial with groups or populations that include individuals of various backgrounds who come together in a setting for a common purpose. For example, churches and various workplace settings such as hospitals and those in customer service. Through observation and personal experience, a need to bridge the gap in communication among cultures in my nursing cohort was identified. The positive response from this exceeded my expectations and solidified the value of respectful dialogue as a means to unite diverse groups.