

Module 3 Discussion board

Module 3

Holistic Health Assessment: Cultural discussion board exercise

This is an exercise for your reflection—I want you to understand that your patients have cultures, and so do you! Most minority students and those who are from another country originally, understand they are a part of a valued culture with rich traditions-- they have a strong cultural identity. They can readily identify beliefs/traditions regarding diet, illness, death, pregnancy, how respect for others is demonstrated, etc.

Many American students with ancestry from northern European countries think that they don't have a culture. I have heard MANY of them say, "Well, I don't really have a culture, I am just ...well, a plain American and I am not a member of a cultural group." When this happens, I ask a foreign student (who is well aware of his/her own culture), to reveal the group characteristics of the American culture to the ones who think they possess no culture. The foreign students usually say something like this: "For one thing, you Americans are obsessed with TIME! Everything has to be done on time, you try to arrive early for appointments and are always rushing around!" They often point out that Americans need a larger circumference for their personal space than many others. Americans have a strong need for independence—they would rather ride 5 miles on a bicycle they own, and be free to come and go at will, than arrange for friends or family to pick them up and take them places by a more comfortable mode of transportation. Many Americans, they assert, tend to be ethnocentric—they feel that the way they do things is the RIGHT way, and those differing from them are not just culturally different, but...not as advanced.

Although some cultural practices are often engaged in with pride, people may not realize that certain thought or actions have a cultural basis at all—though others would see it instantly. As you can see, actions and thoughts that are linked with culture are not necessarily right or wrong, but they do influence how people behave, how they react, and what they feel to be "normal."

Exercise 1

List three cultures of which you are a member. (Remember that "culture" may include any group—your profession, religion, country of origin or area of the country, philosophy, socioeconomic class, educational level, political leanings, leisure activity

groups, and more.) Every culture has unspoken rules –identify the rules in your culture/s. (Anthropologists ARE beginning to explain these, but what does everyone that is a part of your cultures know to do, that others looking “in” might not understand?)

For instance, all of use us in this class are from the profession and culture of nursing. One of the “unspoken” rules is that everyone gets the best care we are capable of giving under the circumstances. The banker or CEO in room 123 gets the same interest/care from us as the prisoner chained to the bed, with the guard present, in room 124. I was socialized into that culture by nursing school and by my coworkers at one of best hospitals where I have ever had the privilege of working. By their attitudes, my coworkers made me want to be a better nurse, and the culture of that entire hospital was, and is, one that fostered growth in its nurses. (I hope you work in such a place! If you don’t, start doing something to make it better, and foster a welcoming professionalism among your peers and the students you work with.)

Another culture to which I belong is the faculty of Nursing at UTA. A couple of the unspoken rules are: Remain calm and professional when dealing with difficult situations, always try to see the bigger picture, and never wear jeans on campus. ☺ I have been an avid birdwatcher (a “birder” as we say), since I was 14. An unspoken rule is that when encountering other birders who are looking at a bird through their binoculars, you do NOT speak loudly or move fast and scare off the bird they are focused upon. The ones watching the bird will quietly tell you what they see, so you can see it too. They will describe which tree, which limb the bird is on, and try to help you focus on it as well.

Cultures students have listed in the past include: the military, homeschooling, religions, athletic associations, political action groups, support groups for medical conditions—these have a big impact on the way you live and your approach your life.

In this exercise:

First list your ethnic culture, and an unspoken rule that you have discovered. (One student, identifying herself as a “Redneck from the South” listed what she felt were rules in her area—“You always offer guests sweet tea, have a garden (and share produce with your neighbors) and vote Democrat,” she reported. (No doubt her neighbors would have defined it differently, but then, people get to define what they feel cultural rules are.)

Then list another social group, perhaps a church or some charitable organization and an unspoken rule—this would not be a doctrinal understanding but something you “get a feel for” once you have become a part of this group. (For it to be a culture, it can’t be something you do in isolation, like stamp-collecting or gaming, done alone. For this exercise it must be something done in groups, and it must have some cultural mores/customs that you learn as you become a part of it.)

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Name _____

Cultures of which I am a member

Culture (don't select nursing--we are all nurses!)	Unspoken rule in this culture (1-2 sentences are all that is needed here).
1. Ethnic culture	
2. Social group	
3. Recreational group	
4. (Optional—other group).	

Who socialized you into each culture you listed?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What culture/s have you been a part of, and are not now? (Name at least one, and more if you can.)

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You will fill out this form (which is also under the discussion link, minus these instructions to make it shorter for you to upload), copy and paste it to the discussion board, and reply to 2 colleagues with a substantive remark, citing an experience you have had or seen/heard of, a reference, or a link.

Please be polite and professional here—list something you don't mind others knowing about you. If someone lists a culture you don't appreciate, comment on someone else's posting instead. Keep it positive! This is to be a forum for introducing cultures which you understand from the inside, to the class members who will not know them as you do. This exercise will give you insight into cultural mores/customs you may encounter in your work with diverse patients. I hope that you come away from your RN-BSN classes with a new respect, enjoyment, and willingness to work with those of other cultures. Make it a goal to learn what the unspoken rules are in other cultures and even the variations of those in your own culture!