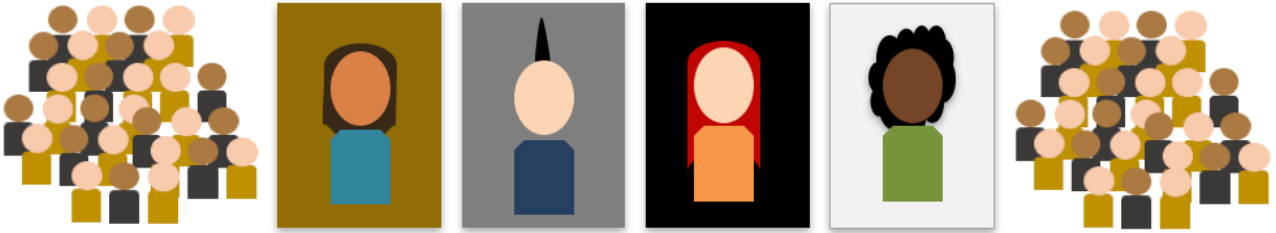


# Cultural Assessment Panel



We live in times of a global society. Students of different cultures have been enrolling in U.S. institutions of higher education in increasing numbers over the last 10 years. There are many benefits of a culturally diverse student body. Higher education should respond to the concept of a globalized society by promoting cross-cultural training and collaboration in a world where this will now be a necessity. The Cultural Assessment Panel is a transformational active learning strategy that promotes the discussion of cultural differences through the voices of volunteer students from the class who are from different cultural backgrounds. It provides real life perspectives from human beings rather than reading about stereotypical cultural expectancies. In addition, the panel has been an opportunity to promote inclusiveness in the classroom for some students who have felt marginalized in the program. The panel members have made the students aware of cultural differences in a positive manner because they are listening to the stories of the friends in their class.

## Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Students fill out a Culture Questionnaire that assesses their own cultural beliefs. The students are asked if they would be willing to share their cultural beliefs with the class.
2. Prior to the day of the panel, students listen to an audiotaped lecture on Cultural Assessment and Cultural Competence in the Healthcare Setting
3. On the day of the panel, the student volunteers sit in the front of the classroom and discuss the following topics with the class in relation to their cultural beliefs:
  - What cultural group do you belong to?
  - How long have you lived in the United States if you were not born here?
  - What are differences in your cultural beliefs in comparison to western cultural beliefs?
  - What are differences in your cultural beliefs in relation to the healthcare system?
  - How can nursing students provide individualized care to someone from your culture?
4. Group discourse with reflection on cultural awareness based on one's prior frame of reference.

*Written by Ellen Gajewski, participant at the 2017 OU Instructional Fair. Designed by Christina Moore.  
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I have implemented this teaching strategy in the Nursing Health Assessment course. The students are learning about performing a cultural assessment on their patients in order to provide culturally competent care.

The class is comprised of undergraduate students in the accelerated second degree nursing program. Students are in a cohort that will progress together for one year in the program. This is the first 7-week course in the program so the students are just getting to know each other.

The panel takes place on the last day of the course before the final exam in order for the students to be comfortable enough to share personal stories.

The panel usually consists of 10-15 students. The cohort of students is a very culturally diverse group of students. There are around 55-60 students in each cohort and usually at least 1/4 of the students are from different cultural backgrounds and are willing to share their beliefs. The students come from many different backgrounds and have included cultures representing Croatia, India, Iraq, Nigeria, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, South Korea, China, Egypt, Japan, and Thailand.

The stories shared are candid self-revelations of how it feels to live and interact with society when feeling like an outsider. The discussions encourage self-awareness of the students' thoughts and feelings regarding different cultures. Issues of culture are charged topics that people hesitate to address. It is important to develop a safe environment in the classroom to discuss diversity. Following the panel discussion, a wall is broken down. Students exchange tears and hugs and acknowledge hidden feelings. Stories touch the lives of classmates and there is both intellectual and emotional growth. Panel members encourage classmates to see each person as a unique individual asking questions to gain insight about the culture. College can feel very impersonal for students of a different culture and opening up the conversation about cultural beliefs can show that their experiences and beliefs are valued.

## Resources

Kozub, M. L. (2013). Through the eyes of the other: Using event analysis to build cultural competence. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 24(3), 313-318.

Moore, J. (2005). Is higher education ready for transformative learning? A question explored in the study of sustainability. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(1), 76-91.

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