How Culture Can Impact Incivility and Disruptive Classroom Behavior

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Objective

• At the end of this session the participant will be able to:

• Describe the impact that culture can have on incivility and classroom management of disruptive student behavior.
Overview

• Different cultures have different rules about what is considered polite and what constitutes incivility.

• For example, many Asian students never use a professor's first name, whereas North Americas can be less formal.

• A student who does not feel their learning needs may respond with disruptive classroom behavior.

• NP educators must use their power to create a classroom environment that supports learning, in essence to be in control of the learning environment.
Overview

• The more respected a student feels, the more respectful the student will be.

• Students feel respected when they feel they are recognized for and valued for their unique cultural differences.

• Ensuring that all students feel respected and appreciated for their uniqueness will decrease or eliminate episodes of incivility and disruptive classroom behavior in NP education.
Incivility and Academic Incivility Defined

To be “civil” is to be polite, respectful, and decent.

“Incivility” is any speech or action that is disrespectful or rude. It can range from insulting remarks and verbal abuse to explosive, violent behavior (Clark & Springer, 2007).

• Academic incivility is any speech or action that disrupts the harmony of the teaching-learning environment (Clark & Springer, 2007).
Incivility is on the Rise

• While academic incivility is not a new phenomenon, Braxton and Bayer (2004, 1999) suggest that it is on the rise.

• Both students and faculty complain about incivility by and against the other.
Examples of Student Incivility

• **STUDENT BEHAVIORS—Reported by faculty and students**
  • Disruptive behaviors (cell phones, texting, computers, side conversations)
  • Rude remarks, sarcasm, vulgarity, cyber-bullying
  • Lack of respect and regard for others—(intolerant of cultural, ethnic, class differences)
  • Pressuring faculty to agree to demands
  • Speaking negatively about (‘bad mouthing’) others—(students, faculty, and the nursing program)
  • Retaliating against faculty and student incivility
  • Academic dishonesty and cheating

• Clark & Springer 2007
Faculty Stressors

- Pursuing a doctoral degree
- Keeping pace with technology
- Promotion and tenure demands
- Maintaining clinical competence
- Impact of the faculty shortage
- Insufficient pay
Faculty Attitude of Superiority

- Exerting position and power over students
- Setting unrealistic student expectations
- Assuming a “know it all” attitude
- Threatening to fail or dismiss students
- Devaluing students’ previous life, work and academic experience
Factors which impact student and classroom incivility

- returning to school after many years
- faculty/student generation gap
- cultural differences
- various learning differences
- individual student issues.
Returning to School

- Often NP students have been out of the classroom and working as professionals (RNs) for many years.
- A return to the classroom can be stressful.
- This can be further complicated when there is a clash of generation and/or cultural background or beliefs between the faculty member and the student NP.
Generation Gap

• While some student NPs are older, many are younger than their faculty members.

• Even the educator Plato recognized the impact of a generation gap between student and teacher when he wrote "What is happening to our young people?"

• Issues can also arise when the faculty member is younger than the student. A study conducted by Goodyear, et al (2010) found that faculty who were women, younger and/or inexperienced were most likely to experience classroom incivility.
Generation Gap

• Younger students were reared in an era when children were protected and coddled; they perceive nursing as an occupation not as a calling, and they care more about their grade than about acquiring knowledge (Kupperschmidt, 2006).

• Conflicts arise when these values clash with nursing faculty, who are primarily baby boomers, who believe that nursing is a calling (Kupperschmidt, 2006).
Generation Gap

• Today’s nursing educational system was devised primarily by nursing educators born prior to 1944 and the beliefs, values, and curriculum tend to reflect this (Kupperschmidt, 2006).

• The average age of today’s nursing faculty is 45.2 years and 48 percent of these nurse educators are over the age of 55 (Kupperschmidt, 2006).

• The generation gap creates tension as values, beliefs, and attitudes differ (Kupperschmidt, 2006).
Cultural Differences

• Thomas (2003) identified several triggers of student anger. A prominent trigger was perceived discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity.

• Another important trigger was the perceived need for conformity by students to the dominant culture or the culture of the faculty member.
Cultural Differences

• Different cultures have different rules about what is considered incivility.
• For example, many Asian students never use a professor's first name, whereas North Americas tend to be less formal.
Definitions

• Traditionally the white culture is the dominant culture. Nursing is traditionally a female, Caucasian profession.

• Race is a socially determined category that is related to physical characteristics (skin color, eye shape, and so forth) (Banks, 2003).

• Ethnicity reflects a person’s group identity based on national origin, language, religion, or food; it is not based on biological traits (Banks, 2003).
Three Important Cultural Constructs

• First, everyone in the world is cultural.
• Second, all people have multiple cultural identities (such as Jewish-American female or middle-class African American male).
• Third, human interaction is cultural, continually shaped and reshaped by social context.
Culture of Nursing

• The history of nursing has forged a culture that rejects the advancement of self while maintaining subservience to a higher authority (paternalism).

• Nursing is an oppressed group. Oppressed groups often act out with incivility (and/or lateral violence).

• Nurses returning to the classroom have experienced and may have initiated episodes of lateral violence or incivility in the workplace.
Culture of Nursing

• As nursing educators we need to strive for a new culture of nursing which is built on respect and support.
Cultural Influences

• Individuals have multiple cultural identities—age, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation—that differentiate them from other individuals.

• The perception of an individual’s behavior by self and others is influenced by the group membership of the person performing it (Alexander-Snow, 2003).
Learning Needs/Style

• A student who does not feel their learning needs are being met may respond with disruptive classroom behavior.

• Many students feel that since they are “paying customers” they have a sense of entitlement and feel they can act however they wish (Clark & Springer, 2007).
Ethnicity, Race and Gender Student Factors

• The role of gender on incivility has been studied in a limited manner.

• Dellasega (2009) found that men tend to express their aggression physically while women tend to express their aggression through “humiliation, betrayal of trust, and exclusion” (p. 53).
Gender

• The study conducted by Altmuller (2012) identified links between gender and ethnicity and incivility. According to Altmuller (2012):

• Gender bias was identified as a trigger for incivility.

• Male students perceived they were assigned patients who required the greatest physical exertion and believed that faculty, mostly female, had greater expectations for them.
Gender

• Women, on the other hand, thought that some faculty favored males and were more positive in their communications with them.

• Favoritism was seen as unprofessional and a faculty behavior that triggered anger.

• Behaviors identified as favoritism included spending more time evaluating work of favored students and testing favored students in a less rigorous manner.
Racial Bias/Discrimination

- Altmuller (2012) further found that: students saw racial bias and discrimination as particularly uncivil and a trigger for anger.
- Study subjects described experiences where minority faculty demonstrated racial bias against white students and vice versa.
- Study subjects told of experiences that were serious enough to have required administration involvement and/or faculty termination.
- Episodes of incivility resulted in a loss of respect for faculty, an interruption in the learning process and a lack of student control.
Types/Examples of Student Incivility

• Types of student incivility include:
  • Passive behavior (such as sleeping or texting in class)
  • Active disruptive behavior (such as coming to class late or talking on cell phones in the classroom)
  • Instructor directed behaviors (open expressions of anger, impatience, or derision by student).
Educator Factors

• Some educators are more vulnerable than others.

• In a study conducted by Goodyear, Reynolds & Gragg (2010) it was determined that students are more likely to be disruptive, rude and/or abusive when their faculty member was young, female, and/or inexperienced.
Respect for Human Dignity

• Behaviors signify our values and our actions (Luparell, 2008).

• When we are disrespectful to others it reflects a lack of value for others.

• This is inconsistent with the basic tenets of nursing - respect for human dignity (AACN, 1998) and is in direct violation of the ANA Code of Ethics (2001).
Respect

• The ANA Code of Ethics (2001) states that “the nurse, in all professional relationships, practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every individual....” (p.4).

• Respect extend to all encounters and prohibits “… any and all prejudicial actions, any form of harassment or threatening behavior, or disregard for the effect of one’s actions on others” (p.9).

• Poor treatment of others is not consistent with the foundations of nursing.
Control of Classroom Environment

• Many faculty enter NP education as expert clinicians with little or no formal educational training.

• This may result in weak skills in areas that are of utmost importance to students, such as effective teaching, classroom management, evaluation of learning, and providing effective and constructive feedback (Luparell, 2008).
Culture of Civility

• Student and faculty must both commit to the culture of civility.

• Where each and every action contributes to an environment of well being.

• Cynicism is the enemy of civility (underlying distrust of motives).
Break the Downward Spiral Cycle

• Anderson & Pearson (1999) identified the downward spiral of incivility.
• This is a tendency to respond to incivility in such a way that the problem escalates.
• Step back, reflect before responding to break this cycle.
• Use effective conflict resolution skills.
• Educators must use their power to create a classroom environment that supports learning.
• Educator need to maintain control of the learning environment at all times.
• The more respected a student feels the more respectful the student will be.
• Students feel valued when their unique cultural differences are recognized and valued.
• This will at a minimum result in a decrease, and may eliminate disruptive and uncivil classroom behavior.
References


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