

“WHAT YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT THERE AND THEN, IT’S HAPPENING RIGHT HERE AND NOW”: MANAGING GROUP DYNAMICS IN THE MULTICULTURAL CLINICAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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Background

Despite the increasingly widespread recognition that specialized multicultural education is necessary during graduate medical education (GME), providing instruction in this area is complex and challenging, especially with regard to the learning environment. At present, there is a little direction to assist educators in fostering and developing optimal learning environments, despite the development and implementation of new curricula.

Issues of Focus

The classroom environment is more than a mechanism of efficient information delivery; it is also a human small group with its own cultural dynamics. Previous reports have applied core concepts and techniques from group therapy to small group teaching in general GME classrooms and other reports have described ‘learner type roles’ that can emerge in the multicultural education classroom.

Methods

We expand identification of potential small group dynamics in multicultural educational classrooms beyond learner types to include behavioral norms, group formation and scapegoating. We also apply management strategies from the group therapy literature to the classroom setting. Our approach is illustrated using case vignettes and discussion.

Potential Outcomes

By helping instructors become more aware of small group dynamics in their multicultural education classrooms, we may increase teacher credibility and maximize learning.

Implications

Classroom settings are one method for increasing the knowledge, awareness and skills required for effective culturally-conscious care. Attending to ongoing group process in those classrooms, with regard to social identity and cultural dynamics, increases the likelihood of effective teaching.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify group dynamics within multicultural clinical education settings in real time.
2. Apply strategies for managing complicated group dynamics that have the potential to disrupt learning in multicultural clinical education.