

# Factors affecting success in nursing school: Experiences of African American BSN Students

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## Purpose

- Successful strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate African American (AA) nursing students are needed.



- To identify African American students' perspectives of factors that facilitate successful completion of nursing school.

## Background

- Increasingly diverse United States population
- Lack of diversity in nursing workforce
- Ethnic minority enrollment in pre-licensure programs has remained relatively constant for the past 15 years.
- Minority attrition rates, particularly AA, are significantly higher than the majority population
- AAs accounted for <10% of recent RN graduates

## Methods

### Setting

- A private, Christian university with a nationally accredited nursing program
- Descriptive qualitative study
- 15 AA students (sophomores, juniors, seniors)
- 43% of respondents have previous college degree



### Procedures

- Face-to-face focus group session
- Three subsequent e-questionnaires
- 2-week data collection period

## Findings

### Data analysis revealed five themes:

#### Being invisible

- Perceptions of being overlooked by instructors and classmates during class activities

#### Sense of belonging vs. isolation

- Significant feelings of isolation at different times during the program, particularly in the clinical setting when there was only one AA in the clinical group.



#### Working twice as hard

- Perception of having to "prove themselves" and having to demonstrate that they worked significantly "harder than their White classmates"

#### Focus on school

- Having no meaningful connections with faculty and no commonality with classmates
- Not being comfortable with going to faculty for help

#### Being misunderstood

- One informant stated, "I've been told by classmates I pronounce medication [ghetto] before".
- Another shared that "I also ask a lot of questions as a student for better understanding, but it is viewed as challenging the professor and as being unprofessional".

## Implications for Nursing Education

- Nursing faculty attention to the perceptions and expectations of AA students may improve retention and completion rates.
- Identification of strategies for graduation success may lead to a more inclusive learning environment.
- Diverse nursing workforce enhances communication.
- Diverse nursing workforce increases likelihood of high quality, culturally sensitive health care.

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