The Lived Experience of Incivility in Nursing Education

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Learning Objectives

• Describe how tolerance perpetuates incivility in nursing classrooms and sequelae reported by faculty resulting from uncivil incidents.
• Evaluate diffusion as a conscious action to deescalate incivility in nursing education.
Prevalence of incivility in educational settings has received heightened attention in academic and popular press.

Nursing education has also seen a rise in reports of incidents of incivility, ranging from classroom insolence to verbal and physical aggression (Clark & Springer, 2007; Hunt & Marini, 2012).

Recent studies affirm that incivility is experienced or witnessed in a large percentage of nursing classrooms and clinical placements, affecting performance and stress levels of both students and faculty (Gallo, 2012).
Incivility Defined

- Definitions of incivility have been put forth by several nursing authors (Clark & Springer, 2007; Morrissette, 2001; Osinski, 2003; Tiberisu & Flak, 1999).

- Commonalities between these definitions are the import of intentional behaviors, whether spoken or action based, that disrupt the learning process for not only all involved, but of witnesses as well.

- Clark (2007, 2008) has attributed uncivil behaviors in nursing classrooms to stress, faulty communication, negative attitudes, and intentional disengagement.

- Gallo (2012) has summarized incivility as consisting of, “disrespect for others, the inability or unwillingness to listen to others points of view, and seek common ground, and not appreciating relevance of social discourse.”
The Paradox of Incivility in a Caring Profession


- Statistical evidence of the increasing prevalence of incivility is lacking.

- Descriptive studies cite a wide range of behaviors including inattention in the classroom to verbal and physical violence (Clark & springer, 2007; Lashley & de Meneses, 2001; Luparell, 2007).

- In light of nursing’s position as a profession of humanistic interaction, measures to reduce incivility are of dire need in the academic setting.
Purpose of the Research

- To describe the lived experiences of nursing faculty who have experienced or witnessed incivility in the classroom, and
- To elicit reflection on how these situations might have been defused.
Review of the Literature: Causation

• The most consistently reported expressions of incivility perpetrated by faculty towards students:

• Unprofessional behaviors by faculty- condescending remarks, speaking negatively about students, acting superior or arrogant, publicly criticizing students, retaliation, modeling of incivility; last minute cancellation of class, faculty not prepared for class, unavailable outside of class;

• Poor communication with students- talking down to students or with tone that is interpreted as disrespectful of students; questioning by students leads to attack, not allowing open discussion in class, rude or misinterpreted cyberspace posts and comments;
Review of the Literature: Causation (con’t)

- Implied Power Gradient- feeling targeted, threatening to fail students, embarrassment, feeling less than adequate;
- Inequality- favoritism, different standards for faculty and students, unfair treatment of students, racial/ethnic bias, gender bias; pressuring students to conform, feelings of helplessness or hopelessness.
Review of the Literature: Causation (con’t)

- Perpetrated by students toward faculty:
  - **Unprofessional behaviors by students** - side conversations in class, inattentive in class, facial expressions, such as eye-rolling to faculty requests in class, use of unauthorized media devices during class, arriving late or leaving early, sleeping in class, intimidation (giving attitude), rude nonverbal behaviors (eye-rolling, groaning), dishonesty/lack of integrity
  - **Poor communication with faculty** - demeaning comments, speaking negatively about faculty, sarcastic remarks, and disrespectful retorts.
Review of the Literature: Measures of Prevention and Intervention

- Purposeful development of a culture of civility in classrooms and schools of nursing, including incivility in a zero tolerance Code of Conduct for student and faculty (Clark, Farnsworth, & Landrum, 2009; Clark & Springer, 2007; Clark & Springer, 2010, Hunt & Marini, 2012; Luparell, 2004):
  - Improved communication through critical dialogue, holding forums for education and discussion about incivility,
  - Opportunities for faculty and students to learn conflict and mediation skills,
  - Immediately address issues of incivility when they occur, rather than delaying or avoiding the behavior.
Review of the Literature: Sequelae of Incivility- Effects on Faculty (Luparell, 2007)

- Physical effects- loss of or poor quality sleep;
- Injury to self-esteem and confidence- self-doubt and self-blame;
- Emotional toll and posttraumatic stress- reliving or retriggering of emotions experienced at time of the incivil encounter;
- Time expenditure- time investment for follow-up meetings at all levels and documentation
- Financial costs- personal financial cost for legal fees and attorneys, travel, security measures at home;
- Cost to educational process- modification of grading or evaluation, loss of motivation by faculty;
- Retreat and withdrawal- faculty departure from teaching (resignation).
Review of the Literature: Sequelae of Incivility- Effects on Students (Clark, 2008)

- Feeling traumatized- stress, depression, fear, physical symptoms of sleep disturbance, tearfulness, nausea, and headaches;
- Feeling helpless and powerless- feeling judged, lacking self-confidence, and out of control;
- Anger- towards self for not addressing the incident of incivility, animosity toward faculty, directing anger towards family, friends, or other students.
Research Question

• What is the lived experience of nursing faculty that have experienced an uncivil encounter with either faculty or students?
• Are participants able to identify a point in the described encounter when there might have been an opportunity to defuse the situation?
Method

- Phenomenological Approach
- Research Team of 6 members, 5 interviewers
- IRB approval
- Purposive sampling
- 10 Full-time Nurse Educators
- Consent
- 60 minute interviews
- Data management and analysis was ongoing (Giorgi’s method)
Inclusion Criteria

• Self-identify as having experienced or witnessed incivility as a nurse educator.
• Possess a Master’s degree in nursing and have been employed as a nurse educator for more than 12 months.
Themes Related to Experiencing or Witnessing Incivility- Three Billy Goat’s Gruff
Themes Related to Experiencing or Witnessing Incivility - The Troll (aka Gruff)

Characteristics of the Troll:
- Intimidation tactics
- Targets
- Attacks
- Terrorizes
- Bullies
- Power Trip
- Tolerated by the Victims
Themes Related to Experiencing or Witnessing Incivility- Examples from The Troll

• Intimidation

“It was the first 3 days of clinicals, they were new… so inexperienced. She (student) thought though this professor viewed her as weak, like a weak link, that needs to be weeded out. She would never be able to handle a crisis in nursing. Adult learners….. want to be treated like adults….. and not intimidated.”

• Targets

“(A student) said that (a faculty member) made an announcement in class that there was no place for fats, blacks, or males in nursing.”

• Attacks

“They were sitting towards the back of the room…..and got up and walked towards each other and started to fist fight, throwing punches in the room….. I put on my mom face and I said ‘you two stop’……I knew I needed to get them out of the classroom so nothing else would continue and the other students wouldn’t get involved.”

• Terrorizes

“I’ll make a test none of you can pass…. a voice tone of threatening and the environment was threatening.”
Themes Related to Experiencing or Witnessing Incivility - Examples from The Troll

• Bullies
  “I don’t care what your excuse is, it will not be accepted, it’s either turned in on time or it’s not accepted.” (Paper to be turned in at start of class during major ice storm.)
  “Oh my gosh she went off on me. She said, I am sick and tired of students going to somebody else. Why do they come to you and make you be the be go-between?”

• Power Trip
  “I’ll be here long after the rest of you are gone.”

• Tolerance
  “…hey it’s her…we all deal with it…she’s not going to change…she’s been here forever…”
Themes Related to Diffusing Uncivil Encounters

- Cease & Desist
- Proactive Intervention (Be Courageous)
- Have a Plan
Themes Related to Diffusing Uncivil Encounters

• Cease and Desist

“I wish that it (a conversation) would have had a one-on-one...away from everyone else.”

“I did intervene, I did defuse the situation, I got them to stop fighting and I got them downstairs to the director’s office...... I never put my hands on them, I did yell, I did raise my voice to get their attention so that they would focus on me and not each other.”
Themes Related to Diffusing Uncivil Encounters

• Have a Plan

“Leadership.......and you know, administration, I do believe (the faculty’s behavior was allowed) and admin should have addressed the nurse educator that was (verbally) attacked.”

“A supervisor working with Human Resources within the protocols of that organization, and how do you deal with an employee who’s causing conflict within a department......you certainly don’t want that person role-modeling expected professional behaviors.”

• Proactive Interventions (Be Courageous)

“I could’ve probably been more proactive. Like, do you know what my expectations are......? And have I communicated that to you? I think the outcome would have been different.”

“To have a dialogue..... I guess that the whole problem was that they (the students) already felt intimidated, they weren’t going to approach the instructor. Do I think the outcome would have been different? I think that it would have.”
Next Steps: Discussion in an International Community

US!
References for this Presentation

• Please contact the Presenter for an electronic copy:

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Photos in this Presentation

• Slide 17: 2003 White House Christmas (public access)

• Slide 18: From Billy_Goats_Gruff
  – Permission to use received from Mario Zucca
  – www.mariozucca.com

• Slide 21: Goat with Tongue Sticking Out (free access)
  – http://smile-per-day.com/2015/04/funny-animals-sticking-their-tongues-out/

• Slide 21: Can of Troll Spray (public access)