The Lived Experience of Incivility in Nursing Education

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Incivility has become a common cultural aspect of the discipline of nursing. Ironically, the very profession built on a foundation of caring is dealing with deleterious un-civil behaviors in clinical practice and the educational setting. Nursing faculty and students alike are falling victim to its devastating effects.
Concept of Incivility

- phenomena disrupting harmony in the teaching-learning experience
- behavior targeted toward human dignity with the intent to inflict psychological or physiological suffering
- unacceptable to social norms

(Altmiller, 2012; Clark, 2008a, 2008b, 2013; Clark, Farnsworth, & Lambrum, 2009; Clark, & Springer, 2010; Gallo, 2016; Hunt, & Marini, 2012; Robertson, 2012)
Purpose

- Describe the lived experiences of nursing faculty who have experienced or witnessed incivility in nursing education.
- Elicit reflection on how these situations might have been defused.
Goal
To shed light on ways to preserve the foundation of this discipline, as well as the humanity of those involved

(Clark, Farnsworth, & Landrum, 2009; Jenkins, Kerber, & Woolf, 2013)
Research Questions

#1 What is the lived experience of nursing faculty that have experienced an uncivil encounter by either faculty or student?

• To gain the lived experience of the participant as they perceived incivility
Research Questions
#2 Are participants able to identify a point in this encounter when there might have been an opportunity to diffuse the situation?

- To reflect on the oppressed lived experience and identify a point or opportunity to defuse the situation to have caused a better outcome
Method

• qualitative study, phenomenological approach
• semi-structured interview guide, data were collected from ten nurse educators teaching in nursing programs located in the Mid-west United States of America
• data analyzed using Giorgi’s phenomenological method
• results indicate common themes consistent to the description of incivility in the literature review
The researchers explored the literature for (Research Question # 1)

- descriptions
- responses
- precipitating factors
- recommendations to defuse, manage, or prevent

(Anthony, & Yastik, 2011; Clark, 2008b; Clark, & Anten, 2012; Clark, & Springer, 2007, 2010; Clark, & Olender, 2014; DalPazzo, & Jett, 2010; Gallo, 2012; Walter, Marchiando, & Marchiando, 2010...
Themes Shown in the Literature for Defusing, Managing, Preventing Incivility (Research Question # 2)

• Relationships
• Leadership
• Education
• Creating the culture of civility
• Self-care

(Anthony, & Yastik, 2011; Clark, & Springer, 2010; Clark, & Olender, 2011)
Descriptions of Incivility:

• range from mild forms of disruptive behaviors to exceedingly dangerous and physical acts of violence
• most prevalent occurrences involve communication, disruptive behaviors, bullying, abuse of power, and ineffective teaching

(Altmiller, 2012; Clark, 2008b, 2008c; Clark, & Springer, 2007; Gallo, 2012; Marchiondo, Marchiondo, & Lasiter, 2009)
Responses:

• when encounters of incivility occur, victims and witnesses will usually respond in one of the following ways

• emotional, physiological, physical, or professional responses
Precipitating Factors:
Ineffective coping mechanisms related to:

- fear
- lack of control
- irrational thought processes
Precipitating Factors (cont.)

Anxiety related to:

- unreasonable workloads
- impossible expectations
- fear of unknown circumstances
- panic related to possible failure
Thematic Analysis

Fear

• “I was scared to stand up for her” (Participant 9)
• “I feel like they’re targeting me” (Participant 3)
Thematic Analysis

Bullying

• “She went off on me” (Participant 1)
• “I have talked to the other faculty members, who refer to these two faculty as bullies” (Participant 1)
• “In my final evaluations, the students got back at me” (Participant 4)
Thematic Analysis

Power Surge

- “I’ll be here long after the rest of you are gone” (Participant 6)
- “I’ll make a test none of you can pass” (Participant 6)
Thematic Analysis
Toxic Personality

• “I don’t understand why she goes at people the way she does” (Participant 8)
• “…hey it’s her…we all deal with it…she’s not going to change…she’s been here forever…” (Participant 9)
Thematic Analysis
Putting out Fires
• “I finally after about two weeks went to her and told her that I would like to have a talk with her and uhm so I did and I I just wanted to be the bigger person and go to her because she apparently wasn’t going to try to make things right” (Participant 8)
• “I could have not bothered to call her” (Participant 1)
Synthesis of the Findings

• Tolerance of the behavior: this leads to perpetuation of the incivility

• Opportunities to defuse: actions taken against the uncivil acts
Preventions/Interventions

• Tolerance

• Opportunities to defuse
Tolerance:

No tolerance for behaviors that are uncivil.

How?

Start to CUS...
Cussing

C = Concerned

U = Uncomfortable

S = Scared

CUS is from Dr. Rumay Alexander and ANA Leadership Institute: Diversity Matters: Create an inclusive nursing culture that leads to better outcomes (2014).
C = CONCERNED
Being concerned about a situation is cause for action…

- Confrontation
- Notification
- Change in behavior
U = UNCOMFORTABLE

Being uncomfortable is an escalation of concern and the behavior has not changed as a result of notification.

• This is the next step of notification and should result in confrontation ALONG with making leadership aware.
S = SCARED

This point in the process there may already be some psychosocial effects to the victim. Incivility should not escalate to this level.

- Confrontation may not be advised
- Leadership is responsible
- Human resources and legal may be involved
Let’s Practice
I need 4 volunteers
Opportunities to Defuse
Research found an opportunity to defuse in every situation…

• Practice behaviors of caring
• The Golden Rule!!
• Communication
• Take advantage of the opportunity
“The lotus is the most beautiful flower, whose petals open one by one. But it will only grow in the mud. In order to grow and gain wisdom, first you must have the mud --- the obstacles of life and its suffering. ... The mud speaks of the common ground that humans share, no matter what our stations in life. ... Whether we have it all or we have nothing, we are all faced with the same obstacles: sadness, loss, illness, dying and death. If we are to strive as human beings to gain more wisdom, more kindness and more compassion, we must have the intention to grow as a lotus and open each petal one by one.” — **Goldie Hawn**

(Altman, 2012; Clark, 2008a, 2008b, 2013; Clark, Farnsworth, & Landrum, 2009; Clark, & Springer, 2010; Gallo, 2012; Hunt, & Marini, 2012; Robertson, 2012)
Questions