African American Nurses Speak Out About Trust and Mistrust in Predominately White Nursing Programs

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Acknowledgement

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Research Questions

1. How did nursing school experiences unfold for African American nurses looking back on their recent nursing school experiences in predominately European American pre-licensure schools of nursing?

2. How do African American nurses understand their recent nursing school experiences in predominately European American pre-licensure schools of nursing?
Method

- Constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014)
- 1:1 phone interviews
- 14 Participants (IL, IN, MI, OH, NY, TX)
- Cohorts 1%-18% African American
- Recent African American graduates reflecting on nursing school experiences
- Secondary analysis of previously collected data
  - New research questions
  - New data analysis
  - Grounded theory
1. Please describe what was it like to be a nursing student?
2. What advice would you give an African American student beginning in your program in the next few weeks?
3. What else is important for me to know about your nursing school experiences?
4. Is there anything that I didn’t ask you that I should have?
Data Analysis

- Initial coding
- Focused coding and categorizing
- Theory building using theoretical coding
- Member checking
Mistrusting

AI: At each step of the appeal, the director of nursing was telling me that she agreed with me... She said, “I’ll pass you, so you could graduate.”… I lost the appeal...to me there is nothing worse that telling me one thing and doing another.

Ania: No I didn't talk to my classmates about it [ways she was treated differently]. I didn't want to say. Because you never know what someone would say so I would talk to my [African American] sisters about it but I never talked to any of my classmates. Because never know if they said something and it could just become worse. I would talk to them [administration] about other problems and nothing would really happen. So I didn't feel like talking to them about this would do anything.
White people don’t understand

Vanessa: I couldn’t discuss my real life with the people at the nursing school because they wouldn’t understand. Did I trust them? No. You keep it a secret, you keep quiet and you do your job, you do your work. It’s not like you’re going to be able to help me. You’re going to offer me money? You’re going to offer me your experience and how you made it through this? Your experience does not even come close to my experience. There’s no point of even open up ... with somebody who would never understand.
Subjective grading

AI: I think the class part kind of prevented a lot of opportunities to be subjective in grading...I mean clinical is pure subjectivity...I think that made it the most difficult.

Vivian: It just feels as if it's luck whether you pass or not. It doesn't feel like you have control over that depending on your professor. Not all professors are like that, don't get me wrong. Let's say for a test you're either right or you're wrong. If you're writing a paper the professor can grade it as hard as she wants regardless. It doesn't feel as if there is a certain criteria that you have to do to pass, you just have to hope and pray that the professor likes you in order for you to do well in the class... It's just basically luck.
False Assumptions

Winter: Being black is just difficult in itself sometimes and I feel like sometimes people look at me and make judgments about me right off the bat, right when they first see me. So it's almost like I have to do a dance to show them "Look, I'm not this girl that you think that I am."
Ania: I had a study group and we would just go to the library and be able to study...our classes are a lot of group classes, group activities and so we basically ended up clicking like that and then all of us joined the group activities we started...you had to have a lot to give to the groups.

Erica: I met this one girl, Tonny. She was really nice to me. She was probably thinking of me in the group project, she always volunteered to be in my group so I never felt like I was by myself all the time.
Violet: the semester before I started the nursing program my grandmother passed away and going into our first clinical rotation I had a patient who reminded me a lot of my grandmother. He died from the same illness as she had. I remember going into that clinical day and not really knowing if I could continue the program or nursing was meant for me. I remember my friend Jeremy who was in this hall opposite me, country white boy with cowboy boots, he followed me while I cried at lunch break. That just made me feel like I would be okay because I had people there to support me who I felt really cared about me... Like I said, having someone who’s truly different from me accept me and support me.
Vanessa: That relationship **took time to build**. We were together for years. When I first met her, I didn’t talk to her about stuff. It took time for me to warm up to her and for her to show me that she’s somebody that was trustworthy.

I had a professor tell me, “You know Vanessa, you look like you don’t give a damn but I know that you do based on the quality of your work. you need to speak up in class.” I respected that professor for telling me that because **she took notice of me and she took notice of my work**. She actually went out of her way to tell me, you know what, I want to hear from you. I want you to interact, I want you to be better than what you are.
Gu arded Trust

Carol: You almost feel like you’re obligated to embrace them [white people], but you’re not going to let them in full circle. That’s what it feels like.

Al: She just asked if I was interested in studying with them and we just kind of became friends like that. I mean as far as us being study partners and stuff, it went well. I don’t really speak to them very much anymore...they were kind of a little moral support...they would give me insight on why things were happening...it just help me to better understand...even though I didn’t necessarily feel completely like I had a team supporting
Significance

- **Cultural mistrust** (Terrell & Terrell, 1981)
  - Result of historic and contemporary oppression (Sue and Sue, 2013; Terrell and Terrell, 1981; Whaley, 2001)
  - Historical survival skill (Sue, 2015; Terrell, Taylor, Menzise, and Barrett, 2009)
  - Persists as inequalities persist (Neville and Mobley, 2001; Terrell, Taylor, Menzise & Barrett, 2009)
  - Legacies of racism impede the development of trust

- **Student outcomes**
  - Hinders motivation and academic achievement (Cohen & Steele, 2002)
  - Lower GPAs (Irving and Hudley, 2008; Caldwell & Obasi, 2010)
  - Underperformance of capable students (Steel, 1999; Duren Green, Bischoff, Coleman, Speny & Robinson-Zanartu, 2007).
Significance for Nursing Education

- Compared to previous literature
  - Unfair, unequal treatment, not honoring confidence, not trusting African American students (Kosowski, Grams, Taylor, & Wilson, 2001; Leroy, 2008)
  - Faculty expectations are not always known to them which limits their ability to meet expectations (Payton, Howe, Timmons, and Richardson, 2013)
  - Mistrust hinders bonding and trust with classmates and faculty (Kosowski, Grams, Taylor, and Wilson, 2001)
  - Mistrust results in unwillingness to reach out to classmates and faculty when needing help (Buchanan, 1999; Kosowski, Grams, Taylor, & Wilson, 2001).
  - Trust relationships can be positive and long lasting though difficult and needing more time to form (Coleman, 2008; Dapremont, 2011; Love, 2010).

- New findings
  - African American students perceive White classmates and faculty don’t understand.
  - Trust is spectrum, not duality of trust or mistrust.
Implications

- Trust and mistrust shaped by past and new experiences
  - Faculty self-reflection, implicit bias
  - Listen and acknowledge the student’s story
- “Wise practices”: High standards and personal assurance (Yeager et al., 2013)
- Trust needs time
  - Provide choice to stay with same clinical cohort over time
  - Provide choice of group composition for some projects
  - Provide contact with faculty over the length of the program
- Clear expectations for subjective evaluation
  - Rubrics, skills check-off sheets
  - Peer evaluation
- Act trustworthy
  - Say what you mean and mean what you say
  - Be fair, transparent, and explicit about student expectations
Limitations

- Interviewer was European American
- Phone interviews
- No follow up interviews as categories emerged
Future Research

- African American students who did not succeed
- Further develop how trust is achieved
- Experiences of faculty who teach African American students
- African American nurse experience of transition to practice
- African student experiences
References

References