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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NURSES OF COLOR:
CHALLENGES NURSES OF COLOR FACE AS BEDSIDE NURSES

DNP Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Nursing Practice

St. Catherine University
St. Paul, Minnesota

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Abstract

With the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of patients of Minnesota, there is a need for equally representative health care providers. In the nursing workforce, nurses of color face additional challenges at the bedside. Due to this, nurses of color have decreased job satisfaction and retention rates, affecting the racial and ethnic representation of health care providers. A Nursing Diversity Collaborative was formed between a northern Midwest university and a metropolitan pediatric hospital to address the need for increased diversity in the nursing workforce. Through the collaborative, nursing faculty were found to play a critical role in the success of nurses of color in their transition from student to nurse. To assess the readiness and comfortability of nursing faculty at a midwestern university in addressing and discussing the additional challenges student nurses of color face, a presentation was created to help nursing faculty develop and identify strategies they can use to help student nurses of color face the unique challenges presented to them in their career as bedside nurses.

Introduction

The impetus of this project developed out of my participation in a Nursing Diversity Collaborative between a northern midwestern university and a metropolitan pediatric hospital that recognized a need to increase racial and ethnic diversity within their nursing workforce.

As the United States becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, both the Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2011) have called on healthcare institutions to increase the diversity of their nursing workforce (Banister, Bowen-Brady, & Winfrey, 2014). Research indicates minority patients who are cared for by racially and ethnically diverse healthcare practitioners (HCPs) have better health outcomes (Xue, 2015). According to recent census data, 48% of the residents living in the northern Midwest city identify as racially and ethnically diverse, but only 9% of all licensed registered nurses identify as racially and ethnically diverse (MN Board of Nursing, 2018; MN State Demographic Center, 2020). Currently, Minnesota ranks in the first quartile for care available, however, they rank in the third quartile for the care of patients of color (Minnesota Department of Health, 2009). An increase in the effort to recruit and retain a racially and ethnically diverse nursing workforce is required to close the gap minority patients face in receiving care and meet the needs of the Minnesota population.

All novice nurses face challenges when beginning their careers. Commonalities between all novice nurses include lateral violence, the concept that “nurses eat their young,” we are all too familiar with (Almada, Carafoli, Flattery, French, & McNamara, 2004). According to Wells-English, Giese, and Price (2019), 20% of new nurses quit their jobs within the first year of employment. Nurses of color face additional challenges like barriers of advancement, denial of privileges, feelings of being overlooked and undervalued, and living with only-ness (Eastland,

Morrow, & Davis, 2018). These additional challenges can affect job satisfaction, and a nurse's job satisfaction is a good predictor of nurse retention (Aurilio, 2017; Doede, 2017). Therefore, a nurse of color that faces additional challenges in their new career may have decreased job satisfaction, which may lead them to leave the profession, lowering retention rates (Silvestre, Ulrich, Johnson, Spector & Blegen, 2017; Williams, Scott, Tyndall, & Swanson, 2018; Xue, 2014). Due to the needs of more racially and ethnically diverse patients in the state of Minnesota, and the additional challenges nurses of color face, the goal of the Nursing Diversity Collaborative is to increase nursing workforce diversity through improvements in institutional climate, recruitment and retention strategies, support, and job satisfaction of nurses of color.

A common theme from nurses of color heard throughout the diversity and inclusion collaborative was how they felt unprepared to handle experiences they have had as bedside nurses of color. As a result, this project focused on the knowledge and readiness of nursing faculty in addressing challenges in the classroom or curriculum that nurses of color uniquely experience at the bedside.

Project Goals and PICO Question

As introduced, the U.S. population is increasing in racial and ethnic diversity, and to meet this demand, there needs to be an increase in racially and ethnically diverse registered nurses. However, nurses of color face additional challenges in the workforce, which decreases their job satisfaction, leading to decreased retention rates. There is insufficient research regarding this topic, but a Nursing Diversity Collaborative conducted at a metropolitan pediatric hospital heard from nurses of color that nursing faculty played a role in their transition to bedside nursing. This project aims to better understand the experiences nurses of color face in the workforce and to identify strategies nursing faculty can employ to help student nurses of color

succeed as bedside nurses. Therefore, this project's desired outcome is to increase the nursing workforce's racial and ethnic diversity by providing a presentation for faculty regarding helping nurses of color succeed in their practice. A PICO question developed to address this outcome is, does a faculty presentation about lived experiences of nurses of color assist faculty in identifying strategies for student nurses of color to succeed in bedside nursing?

Theoretical Framework

Meleis Transition Theory is a middle-range theory that “provides a framework to describe the experience of individuals who are confronting, living with, and coping with an event, a situation, or a stage in growth and development that requires new skills, sentiments, goals, behaviors, or functions” (Kumaran & Carney, 2014; Parker & Smith, 2010, p. 363). This theory applies to student nurses transitioning to their nursing practice because they are stepping into a role with a new set of responsibilities. “Outcomes of the experience of the transition are shaped by the nature of the transition” (Parker & Smith, 2010, p. 363). The nature of the transition of a student nurse to a licensed registered nurse differs per organization. Some organizations have a new graduate registered nurse program or a transition to practice program. Other organizations have peer mentorship programs for novice nurses to participate in. No transition is the same for each novice nurse. This theoretical framework applies to this project because it focuses on how nursing faculty can help student nurses of color overcome additional challenges they face in their transition to bedside nursing.

Review of the Literature

In order to better understand racial and ethnic diversity in the nursing workforce in the state of Minnesota, the impact the lack of diversity has on patient outcomes, the challenges nurses of color face, retention rates of nurses of color, and the strategies nursing faculty can use

to help nurses of color succeed when transitioning from student to nurse, a search of the literature was conducted using the electronic databases CINAHL and Medline via EBSCO. Key search terms included *transition to practice, nurse residency, minority nurses, transition to practice and retention rates, transition to practice and minority nurses, nurse residency and retention rates, minority nurses and retention rates, minority nurses and job satisfaction, strategies for diversity and inclusion in nursing, and diversity education for nursing faculty.*

Duplicate articles were removed, and the following inclusion criteria for articles were used:

- systematic reviews that included qualitative and quantitative assessments that addressed new graduate transition to practice programs, minority nurses, retention rates, or job satisfaction, diversity in the nursing workforce
- literature reviews that addressed new graduate transition to practice programs, minority nurses, retention rates, or job satisfaction
- nursing mentors and mentorships
- transition to practice programs implemented in the U.S.
- published in English

After applying these criteria, 17 articles were identified and appraised using the Johns Hopkins Nursing Evidence-Based Practice Leveling and Quality Guide.

Seven of the 17 articles addressed new graduate registered nurse transition to practice programs. Two of the articles addressed factors influencing job satisfaction of nurses of color, and one of the articles addressed the importance of nurse mentorship programs for nurses of color. Two of the articles were cross-sectional research studies that evaluated minority nurses' job experiences and job satisfaction (Seago & Spetz, 2008; Xue, 2014). Three of the articles analyzed new graduate registered nurses' transition to practice programs and their effects on

retention rates by comparing cohort data with tenure data (Almada et al., 2004; Trepanier, Early, Ulrich & Cherry, 2012; Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). Two articles conducted qualitative studies using job satisfaction surveys with open-ended questions to identify challenges new graduate registered nurses experience in their new roles (Banister et al., 2014; Halfer, Graf, & Sullivan 2008). Three studies were systematic reviews, two with meta-analysis, one without, each reviewed the cost-benefit of new graduate registered nurse transition to practice programs and the return on investment (Lin, Kreider Viscardi, & McHugh, 2014; Trepanier et al., 2012; Van Camp & Chappy, 2017). One study was a secondary data analysis that used a 2008 national sample survey of registered nurses that reviewed job satisfaction, specifically identifying race as a strong predictor of job satisfaction (Doede, 2017). Three of the studies reviewed the importance of implementing a racially and ethnically diverse workforce, impacting both job satisfaction for nurses of color and outcomes of ethnically and racially diverse patients, one was a systematic review, one cross-sectional research study, and one using a qualitative study (Aurilio, 2017; Banister et al., 2014; Eastland et al., 2018). One of the articles addressed the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion training for nursing faculty (O'Connor et al., 2019). The results of the 17 studies suggest that in order to increase the nurse workforce's racial and ethnic diversity, more effort needs to focus on nursing faculty preparation in helping student nurses of color succeed in their transition from student to nurse.

Project Implementation

The first step of this project was to review the literature in order to gather information regarding the racial and ethnic diversity in the nursing workforce, the importance of racial and ethnic diversity of health care providers for racially and ethnically diverse patients, the

challenges nurses of color face, job satisfaction and retention rates of nurses of color, and strategies used to help nurses of color in their transition from student to nurse.

The second step was the project lead's participation in the Nursing Diversity Collaborative at a metropolitan pediatric hospital. The members of this collaborative were the chief nursing officer, human resources personnel, the chief equity and inclusion officer, clinical education specialists, senior talent acquisition consultant, staff nurses, nursing unit managers, and northern Midwest university faculty and administration. Understanding nurses of color job satisfaction is a critical step to inform strategies to increase nurses' retention rates and change institutional climate (Xue, 2015). The members of this collaborative included staff nurses of color who shared their experiences as bedside nurses and the challenges they face. The founder of Rise, stated, "The people who have the solutions to the most pressing problems are the people who live the problem every day" (A. Nguyen, personal communication, April 9, 2019). Discussions in the collaborative included the lack of role models and mentors for novice nurses of color, hidden curriculum, the importance of allies, creating an employee resource group (ERG) and pipeline for nurses of color, and institutional and systemic racism.

Based on the discussions held during the collaborative, the third step of this project was the creation of a presentation for a northern Midwest university faculty to assess their current views on diversity and challenges nurses of color may experience, and their comfort with discussing these challenges with nursing students. Student nurses of color are transitioning into nursing practice and rely heavily on their nursing faculty to launch them from student to nurse (Zenoni, 2017). The presentation's goal was for nursing instructors to have a better understanding of the challenges faced for student nurses of color and learn what they can do as instructors to support student nurses of color. The presentation focused on the statistics,

demographics, and health outcomes of the region to highlight the importance of diversity in the nursing workforce. The presentation shared lived experiences nurses of color in the Nursing Diversity Collaborative experienced in the workforce. The presentation reviewed strategies nursing faculty may use to prepare student nurses of color for bedside nurses. The strategies shared in the presentation for nursing faculty included: 1) encourage nurses of color to join organizations with new graduate registered nursing programs and to select a unit position as opposed to a floating position. 2) encourage students to look at the culture of the organization they are joining, like do they have an ERG for nurses of color, what percent of their nurses are racially and ethnically diverse, and what community partnerships do they have. 3) encourage their participation in formal mentoring programs as a student, and as a nurse, if their school or workplace does not have a formal program, encourage them to identify one.

Evaluation

The fourth step of the project involved a pre- and post-survey nursing faculty completed in order to evaluate the effectiveness and success of the presentation in helping nursing faculty identify strategies they can use to help student nurses of color.

A pre-survey (Appendix 1) was conducted before the presentation in order to assess the preexisting confidence and knowledge of the nursing faculty regarding discussing the challenges nurses of color face and their current impressions of nurses of color in the workforce. The pre-survey included ranges for the nursing faculty to select regarding their age, how long they have been teaching, and how long they have been a nurse. The pre-survey asked four questions: 1) On a scale of one to ten (one being lowest and ten being highest) how important is diversity and inclusion in the workplace? 2) How important is it to discuss the challenges nurses of color may experience as bedside nurses with nursing students? 3) How comfortable are you with discussing

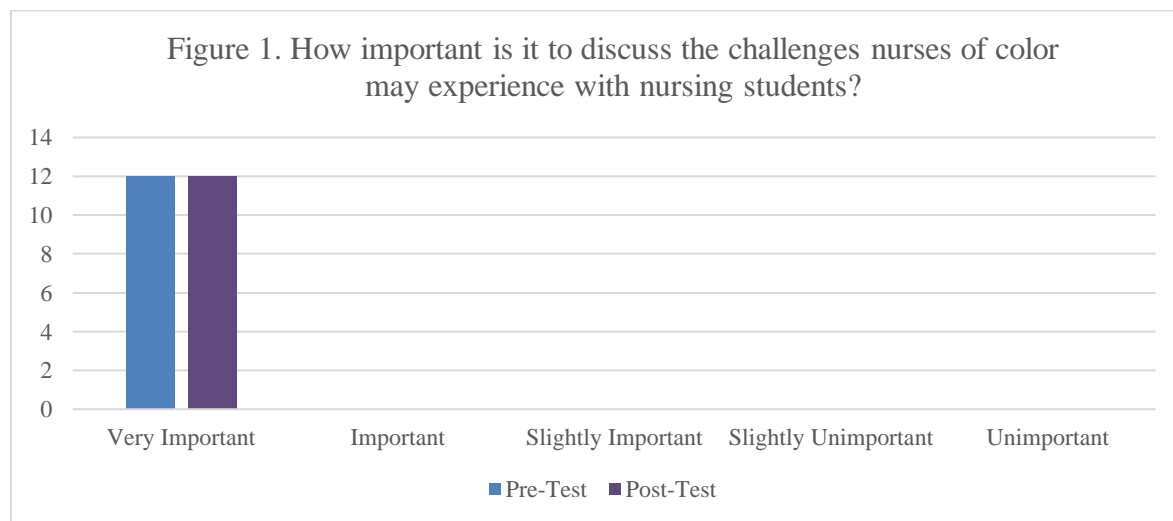
the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students? And, 4) what are your current impressions of what student nurses of color face in the workforce? The last question was an open-ended question for faculty to write in their answers.

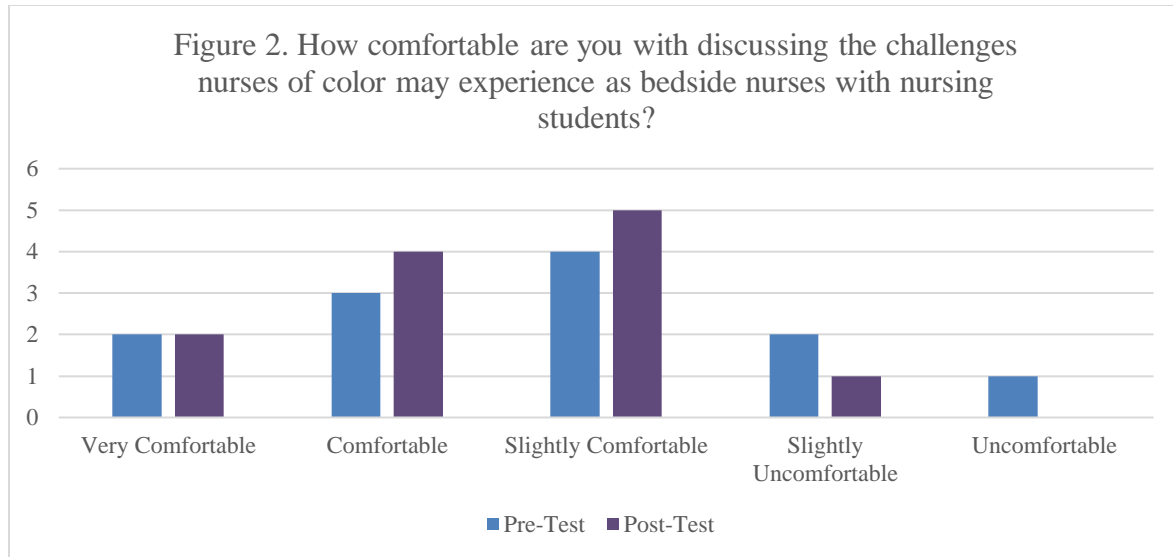
In the pre-survey, the answers to the first question overwhelmingly agreed that diversity and inclusion in the workplace are important. The second question had a similar response, with 12 respondents selecting the option of “very important” regarding discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students (Figure 1). For the third question, two of the nursing faculty said they were very comfortable with discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students, three were comfortable, four were slightly comfortable, two were slightly uncomfortable, and one was uncomfortable (Figure 2). The responses for the fourth question regarding current impressions of what student nurses of color face in the workforce were isolation, judgment, racial bias, covert and overt racism, cultural insensitivity, misunderstanding, not feeling heard, marginalization, discrimination, hostility, negative assumptions, and language barriers.

The post-survey (Appendix 2) was conducted after the presentation to evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation. The questions included in the post-survey were: 1) How important is it to discuss the challenges nurses of color may experience as bedside nurses with nursing students? 2) How comfortable are you with discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience as bedside nurses with nursing students? 3) What strategies will you use in your practice to help student nurses of color succeed in the future? And, 4) what was surprising to learn while taking this seminar?

For the first question, all of the nursing faculty chose that discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students is very important (Figure 1). The second

question saw an increase in the level of comfort of the nursing faculty with discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students. Two of the nursing faculty selected very comfortable, four selected comfortable, five selected slightly comfortable, one selected slightly uncomfortable, and no one selected uncomfortable (Figure 2). The third question allowed the nursing faculty to write in strategies they will use in the future to help support student nurses of color. These strategies included: encourage students to find jobs with mentorship and new graduate programs, encourage students to learn about the work environment culture of the institution they are applying to, take on the role of mentoring students, incorporate diverse topics into their teaching, listen to input from students, and advocate for change at their institution. The final question asked the nursing faculty to share what was surprising to learn. Their responses included: the lack of diversity on some units, institutional racism, simple strategies to use to improve nurses of color’s experiences, the term “only-ness,” assumption nurses of color are support staff, Minnesota’s ranking in providing equal care to racially diverse communities, and the low retention rate of nurses of color. The responses to the pre- and post-survey show nursing faculty increased their level of understanding of the issues nurses of color face and felt more comfortable in discussing this topic with their nursing students.





Discussion

Based on the responses from the pre- and post-survey, it is evident that there is a need for continued nursing faculty training and education regarding challenges nurses of color face and strategies they can use to prepare their student nurses of color as they transition from student to nurse. The nursing faculty's role in assisting student nurses of color is important because their mentorship and guidance can lead to a better experience for the student nurse of color as a bedside nurse and increase their job satisfaction and retention rates. The presentation by the DNP project lead showed how after one educational session, the nursing faculty's level of comfort and understanding of the issue's nurses of color face, and the strategies they can utilize to help student nurses of color, were enhanced.

Limitations

The main limitation of this project was the small number of nursing faculty members who participated in the presentation, pre-, and post-survey. Another limitation of this project was the lack of literature available regarding the topic. There is little research about nurses of color, challenges nurses of color face in the workforce, job satisfaction of nurses of color, and

recommendations for addressing the challenges nurses of color face, including strategies nursing faculty can utilize.

Recommendations

From this project, it is clear that more literature and research is needed surrounding nurses of color, challenges nurses of color face in the workforce, job satisfaction of nurses of color, and recommendations for addressing the challenges nurses of color face. A second recommendation is for colleges and universities to educate and train their nursing faculty regarding the unique challenges nurses of color face and prepare them with strategies to utilize to help their nursing students of color to increase their success and job satisfaction as a bedside nurse. Collaboratives similar to the one created by the metropolitan pediatric hospital could be formed in other colleges and universities and include student nurses of color so their voices can be heard. Strategies can be formed and implemented from these collaboratives. Increasing awareness of mentorship or new graduate programs by the nursing faculty may also assist student nurses of color. Beyond education and training, forming relationships, and focusing on creating a culture of inclusion outside of the classroom with student nurses of color may help with their success.

Conclusions

“We need to be okay with the messiness, through the fog clarity will come,” stated a member of the Nursing Diversity Collaborative (S. Burke Lehman, personal communication, April 9, 2019). The Nursing Diversity Collaborative provided a spotlight into the experience’s nurses of color face as bedside nurses and their unpreparedness for the situations that lie ahead in their careers. This project and its findings show the glaring need for more research, literature, and effort in increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of the nursing workforce by increasing job

satisfaction to improve retention rates. Nursing faculty play a crucial role in the success of their nursing students, and nurses of color face additional challenges that nursing faculty must be prepared to assess and address, in and out of the classroom.

Appendix 1.

Pre-Survey
Lived Experiences of Nurses of Color: Challenges
Nurses of Color Face as Bedside Nurses

1. Select your age range:

25-30 30-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61-65 66 or more

2. Select the range for how long you have been teaching:

0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26 or more

3. Select the range for how long you have been a nurse:

0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26 or more

4. On a scale of 1-10 (one being lowest and ten being highest) how important is diversity and inclusion in the workplace?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. How important is it to discuss the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students?

Very important

Important

Slightly Important

Slightly Unimportant

Unimportant

6. How comfortable are you with discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students?

Very comfortable

Comfortable

Slight Comfortable

Slightly Uncomfortable

Uncomfortable

7. What are your current impressions of what student nurses of color face in the workforce?

Appendix 2.

Post-Survey
Lived Experiences of Nurses of Color: Challenges
Nurses of Color Face as Bedside Nurses

1. Select your age range:

25-30 30-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61-65 66 or more

2. Select the range for how long you have been teaching:

0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26 or more

3. Select the range for how long you have been a nurse:

0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26 or more

4. How important is it to discuss the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students?

Very important

Important

Slightly Important

Slightly Unimportant

Unimportant

5. How comfortable are you with discussing the challenges nurses of color may experience with nursing students?

Very comfortable

Comfortable

Slightly Comfortable

Slightly Uncomfortable

Uncomfortable

6. What strategies will you use in your practice to help student nurses of color succeed in the future?

7. What was surprising to learn while taking this seminar?

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This is to certify that I have examined this
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and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the final examining committee have been made.

Graduate Programs Faculty

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