

# The Experience of Black Students at a Predominantly White Institution

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## Background:

- Currently, racial and ethnic minorities experience higher health disparities with persistent barriers to quality healthcare, poor outcomes, low quality of life and increased mortality rates.
- Despite minority populations constituting up to 38.3% of the population in 2018, only 19.2% of Registered Nurses in 2017 were from minority background.
- Stakeholders have promoted increase recruitment, retention, and graduation of minority nursing students to increase healthcare workforce diversity to decrease health disparities.
- The AACN's report on *2018-2019 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, shows an increased enrollment of minority students in nursing programs. Even though the schools successfully recruit, it does not result in increased graduation rates.

## Purpose:

The purpose of our study was to describe the experiences of black students in a predominantly white institution.

## Methods:

Qualitative study utilizing focus groups

- Study population identified alumni:
  - Members of racial/ethnic minority groups.
  - Studied in Accelerated BSN program (ABSN), or the Masters' level APN program.
  - Graduated between 2010-2015.
- Ethical considerations
  - IRB: Exempt status
  - Consent: oral
  - Confidentiality protected through de-identification of personal data
- Recruitment:
  - Institutional records
  - Snow Ball sampling
  - Group emails and personal outreach from study faculty

## Study Participants:

- 16 alumni participated
  - 10 NP students, 6 ABSN students, all self-identified as Black/African American
  - 3 men
  - 13 women
  - average age 39 yrs
  - On average 1.5 years post graduation

## Focus Group Procedures:

- Focus groups conducted Sept 2015 to March 2016
- Developed and used an interview guide based on the literature.
- Conducted three focus groups:
  - On campus
  - Two hours
  - Food and free parking provided
- Proceedings recorded by court stenographer

## Findings:

### Two major themes emerged

#### A. Microaggressions on Campus and Clinical

##### Peer to peer

"We were given a project, and she was saying, "Oh, all these illegal people, all these Haitians. They just use up our system"

"Like they gave us an assignment. You know, how you say one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, you are going to be in this group, do this assignment. Then behind me they went, and they were going about their assignment. I'm calling, "Oh, when are we going to meet? When are we going to do this?" And they never got back to me"

##### Faculty to students

"My first day of class I never even met this teacher,..... But she walked up to me on the first day at the end of the class and asked me if I have trouble with standardized testing. She was like "Do you have trouble with standardized testing? If you do, let me know, we can go over some things"

##### In the Clinical Setting

".....just to have all the other nurses on the floor look at you like what are you doing here, and it was just a very negative experience, and it made me doubt the field I was going into, which I really didn't like because I had thought from when I was younger this is what I want to do. And then I completely doubted myself until I got into my advanced practice rotations and actually did enjoy pediatrics again"

#### B. Burden of Exclusion and Isolation

"I did most things myself. (It) might have increased my stress in terms of how much energy I used in studying." "I'm going to just stay where I am and I'm going to do it myself."

"And so there were so many times that I discovered the people I used to talk with had formed groups, study groups, and I did not know about them. Like they would call their friends and talk to them, "Hey, we're doing this, we're doing this," but it was hard for them to break that to me"

## Discussion:

- Some of the findings on microaggression in higher education are similar to what is in the literature for nursing students.
- Lack of diversity in the student body and faculty was a major concern.
- Students felt isolated and alienated from classmates.

## Recommendations:

- Create a more inclusive learning environment.
- Recruit and retain more diverse faculty and students.
- Offer intentional, mandatory, and well-designed training every semester for students, faculty, and staff that includes clear and extensive examples of how to prevent and address microaggressions.

## Conclusion:

These findings can be used by nursing faculty and others to design interventions that can enable students from minority backgrounds to have better experiences and succeed in nursing programs.

## References:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2019).

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