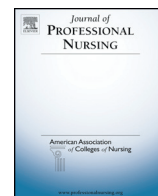




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Navigating unfamiliar waters: Men in nursing academia☆

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Despite small numbers, men in nursing faculty positions provide unique diverse perspectives that are important to the strength of the profession. Nationwide, calls for increased numbers of diverse faculty continue. Despite this, the numbers of male nurses entering academia remain low. The purpose of this study was to identify and describe experiences of male nursing faculty in an effort to better understand what attracts male nurses to a role in academia, and what advice is most important when considering entering academia.

Method: A qualitative descriptive approach was utilized to describe the findings from 12 participant interviews.

Results: The following themes emerged: reasons why men enter into academia, navigation of unfamiliar waters, and being the odd man out.

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Introduction

There is a lack of male nursing faculty. Nationwide, men constitute only 5.5% of nursing faculty (National League for Nursing [NLN], 2016). As of 2014, there were over 1200 nursing faculty positions left unfilled (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2015). Experts at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2015) have estimated a projected shortage of 1.05 million nurses by 2024. Each year almost 80,000 qualified individuals are turned away from nursing schools due to an ongoing dearth of qualified nursing faculty (AACN, 2014; AACN, 2015). This lack of available nurses may have a tremendous impact on the health of society. What also affects society is a general lack of diversity in nursing and in academia.

Review of literature

Diversity in nursing

Nursing organizations including AACN and the National League for Nursing (NLN, 2016) have long called for increasing diversity in nursing. By seeking out members of traditionally underrepresented groups in nursing, there can be a pipeline of potential nursing candidates and future faculty created. In its breakthrough report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) suggests multiple methods to enhance nursing diversity (IOM, 2010). Similarly, other organizations including the American Hospital Association,

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Joint Commission have pointed to the need of increasing diverse nurse numbers in order to decrease the nursing shortage.

Unfortunately, increased diversity has not occurred. As of 2013, 83% of nurses are Caucasian, 6% African American, 6% Asian, 3% Hispanic, 1% American Indian, and 1% Pacific Islander, and only 7% of nurses are male (Budden, Zhong, Moulton, & Cimiotti, 2013). Over the last decade, the number of men in nursing has grown by approximately 2%. At this rate, it will be approximately 400 years before men equal 50% of the nursing workforce.

Increasing the number of diverse students is an excellent method to increase the number of diverse faculty members. However, it is recognized that this may be difficult because many male nursing students feel isolated in nursing, desiring more male role models to assist them in navigating the profession (MacWilliams, Schmidt, & Bleich, 2013). Role modeling has been defined as the most “effective tool that nurses can use to strengthen the profession” (Coleman, 2013, p.116).

Barriers and strategies for increasing diversity

Recruitment and retention of minorities into nursing has been explored in limited fashion in previous literature (Coleman, 2013; Cottingham, 2013; Nnedu, 2009; Nowell, Norris, Mrklas, & White, 2016; Rochelle, 2002). However, there have been no specific strategies to recruit minority or males into the nursing faculty role. There has been previous literature; however, related to men in nursing school and how to effectively recruit and retain male nursing students (Coleman, 2013; Cottingham, 2013; Nnedu, 2009; Rochelle, 2002). There has also been research conducted to barriers male nursing students face (Kelly, Shoemaker, & Steele, 1996; Kippenbrock, 1990; O'Lynn, 2004). These

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barriers include feelings of isolation, sexual stereotyping, sense of not feeling masculine, as well as negative media portrayal of male nurses.

Communication differences

Communication differences between men and women have been demonstrated in the literature, with women tending to focus more on rapport building; using relationships to communicate, whereas men focus more on report building; looking for the information and facts (O'Lynn & Tranbarger, 2007). Women also tend to be better at non-verbal communication (O'Lynn & Tranbarger, 2007). It is important to note that no style is better than any other. However, since men's non-verbal communication style is different, they are often perceived as lacking caring (MacWilliams et al., 2013).

Gaps in the literature

While there is literature related to men in nursing, there is limited research on male faculty in academic positions. It is unknown if men in academic settings face the challenges of gender discrimination and role perception, stereotyping, or if they experience the faculty role differently than women. It is also unknown what draws men into the academic setting and keeps them there.

Design

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative investigation was to identify what attracts male nurses to a role in academia, as well as what the role has been like for them. The study was designed to answer the question "what draws and keeps males in the nurse faculty role?"

Research design

This study was conducted utilizing descriptive qualitative methodology. Descriptive qualitative methods are grounded in many other qualitative methods. Sandelowski (2010) describes the method as interpretative in nature, but keeping closer to the data as given. Interpretation of the data provides a thematic survey of the data.

Method

After gaining approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) at the researchers' universities as well as approval from the American Assembly for Men in Nursing (AAMN), an email solicitation of participation was sent to AAMN members. In this email, the researchers requested interested male faculty members to access an email account created specifically for the research project. The researchers then responded to interested individuals to set up a time to conduct a telephone interview.

Telephone interviews were conducted utilizing the questions in Appendix A. These questions were developed with the assistance of two faculty members who have vast experience in conducting qualitative research. The questions were developed by asking what the researchers hoped to gain from the study and how to get that information. After obtaining informed consent from the participants, the interviews were conducted and audio recorded for accuracy. Following the interview, a snowball approach was used to find additional research participants. This led to the recruitment and use of an additional seven participants, for a total sample size of twelve participants.

Interviews were conducted until data saturation occurred. There was saturation of the data after 12 interviews were completed. Other respondents obtained from snowball sampling were not interviewed or included in the study.

Sample

Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants. Inclusion criteria included being a male in nursing academia as well as wanting to participate. Exclusion criteria included not being a male in nursing academia and not wanting to participate in the study. Initially, five male nursing faculty members expressed interest in the study. The researchers set up times with the participants to conduct telephone interviews. The participants had a wide range of experiences working in nursing academia. They were located throughout the United States. Participant ages ranged from mid 20s to late 60s. Academic experience ranged from a few months to thirty-five years. The participants functioned in the role of clinical/theory faculty as well as administrative positions.

Analysis

After the completion of each interview, the audio recording of that interview was transcribed utilizing Dragon Naturally speaking software. Transcription occurred before conducting the next interview. Following transcription, the transcripts were coded and themed utilizing Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis. The coding process required the researchers to become immersed in the data. This was completed by multiple readings of the transcripts by the two researchers. Bracketing was also completed to minimize bias. For this study, bracketing included: male nursing faculty are different than female nursing faculty, men often face difficulties in the academic role, and the researchers are both male nursing faculty, which could produce bias.

After full immersion in the data, coding began. The codes were developed by the primary researcher with input from the secondary researcher. The codes were then organized into themes. Themes were defined as repeating patterns of the data. The themes developed after several discussions between the researchers. Finally, member-checking was conducted, increasing credibility in the process. Dependability was established by providing transcripts and interpretations to one independent qualitative researcher, who read the transcripts with identifying information removed as well as the researchers' interpretations. Transcripts were returned to the primary researcher and kept locked in the researcher's office. Pseudonyms were provided to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Results

After conducting thematic development, the following themes emerged from the data. The first theme from participants was the reasons that they entered into academia, as well as why they choose to stay in academia. The second theme that emerged was that of needing to navigate unfamiliar waters. The academic setting was very different than the practice setting for most of the participants. They needed assistance in navigating the academic waters. After becoming comfortable, the participants can now act as navigators for others. The third theme that arose was that of feeling like the odd man out in a setting where they were the minority. Discussion of each of these themes now follows.

Reasons for entering into academia

Increasing the number of males entering the academic practice setting requires knowledge of what draws men into the setting. Participants came into the teaching role through a variety of routes. Some knew they always wanted to teach. Craig said "I have always enjoyed teaching. I liked having students with me in my clinical role. So I decided to pursue my master's degree and start teaching." Mike echoed this by stating "I think from my early years of college, maybe even before, I wanted to be a teacher of some sort." Adam said that the "intellectual side of academia has always been attractive to me."

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