Finessing Incivility:

How Student nurses respond to issues concerning their status and learning during practice: A grounded theory

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This presentation reports a substantive grounded theory….

How undergraduate adult field student nurses respond to prevailing concerns regarding their student status & learning opportunities and...

Experience a lack of professional benevolence during their practice placement, an enduring legacy… (Thomas et al 2012)
Background & aim of the study:

- General expectations of undergraduate students have intellectual, social, emotional and cultural aspects.

- Under-graduate student nurses are pursuing a professional identity.

- Initial exposure to practice continues to be stressful (Admi 1997, Andrew et al 2009).

- To explore the impact of the first clinical experience on the professional socialisation of Adult field pre-registration under-graduate student nurses.

- ‘Tell me what it is like to be a first year student nurse on a first clinical placement.’
Research deliberations

A classic grounded theory approach:
Generate a theory that ‘accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved’
(Glaser 1978:97)

26 under-graduate student nurses (Adult Field) kept an unstructured daily diary: 6 weeks

4 consecutive intakes:
Sept 08, April 09, Sept 09, April 10

7 key informants from intakes 1&2 – interviewed at the beginning of 2nd and 3rd year
Diary’s used to glean the perspectives of events deemed important to participants (O’Brien and Clark 2012). Transpositions yielded 67,182 words of rich, dense & contextually relevant data.

Unstructured interviews – were theoretical in nature to ‘check’ the emergent conceptual framework (Glaser 1978).
Developing Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser 1978)

What is the main concern of participants?

How do they resolve their main concern?

- Data collection
- Coding/labeling
- Making Notes
- Constantly comparing
- Keeping Memos
- Sorting
- Writing
I did enjoy my first day but I did feel well out of my league and felt like a spare part at times. I'm a little nervous about going back tomorrow for 3 reasons: - I'm not on again with my mentor until Sunday, the staff make me feel incompetent and the smell on the ward….

I'm sure it will be ok - there was plenty of nurses who smiled at me, made eye contact or took the time to talk to me but there was also an equal amount who looked right through me. Roll on Day 2!

Rationalising
Admitting inadequacy
acknowledging limitations
Anticipatory anxiety
Feeling Insecure, minus mentor/ needing benevolence

Admitting revulsion

Keeping up-beat/ acknowledging support

Professional discourtesy

Ironic humour
The mire of open coding

Initial analysis - resulted in multiple codes

Many rapidly patterned into the substantive code (category) of ‘disillusionment with role’

Often, certain codes were difficult to categorise, yet their density and frequency indicated they were relevant

Examples of such codes were; ‘being a HCA’, ‘righteous indignation’ and in particular ‘polite irritation’

The following table illustrates this and also links the early codes in their development to form tentative substantive codes (categories)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data extraction</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gerund code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling grey, wanting yellow</td>
<td>Needing benevolence</td>
<td>Stressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was left on my own again today</td>
<td>Being a HCA (health care assistant)</td>
<td>Dislocating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to get out of the valley, you have to climb the hill</td>
<td>Being ‘galvanised’</td>
<td>Coping, relocating, recanting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well hello, I’m here to learn the nurse role. I don’t mind helping out but I am there to learn</td>
<td>Polite irritation, Needing to learn</td>
<td>Rationalising, negotiating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m here to make a difference</td>
<td>Making a difference, being altruistic</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I need to talk to my mentor again and see if I can be involved in more things</td>
<td>Being a student, recanting position</td>
<td>Negotiating, positioning, relocating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data extraction</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Substantive code</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt uncomfortable with the way I was spoken to today - I felt like a school child. I know they are busy but I’m a mature responsible adult.</td>
<td>Polite irritation</td>
<td>Disillusionment with role</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Experiencing incivility</td>
<td>Being benevolent</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Righteous indignation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It has been pointed out to me today, that maybe they are not talking to me but merely the uniform – I guess I can live with that…. but left to get on with things all day</td>
<td>Polite irritation</td>
<td>Being altruistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being invisible</td>
<td>Dealing with incivility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resignation</td>
<td>Disillusionment with role (dislocation of status)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being a HCA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A HCA absorbed in the computer, kept her back to me as I introduced myself!</td>
<td>Experiencing incivility</td>
<td>Disillusionment with role (dislocation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being polite</td>
<td>Keeping the faith – being altruistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt a bit left to it, decided to follow a second year around, although everyone seems organised, I feel it is a bit chaotic.. It will become clear!</td>
<td>Polite irritation</td>
<td>Disillusionment with role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Significant other</td>
<td>Being benevolent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role discrepancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Memo example

• At first, the students make sense of their experiences and they often referred to people and incidences as "nice". Frequently, the word nice is followed by the word ‘but’. I think the code ‘polite irritation’ is a good ‘fit’ for the pattern that is emerging..

• The students aren't without awareness of how busy and how demanding the labour of nursing can be for the nurses working and caring on the wards, their own values and caring principles, in fact their altruism does allow them to see things from the perspective of others…. 

• However, the students are very aware of their status and learning needs and the fact that they have supernumerary status, a status that they use time and time again to push themselves forward to see and do nursing activities. They appear ‘desperate’ and intent on changing their status back to a student nurse from HCA....
• There appears to be an element of **role conflict** between working and learning within the ward social structure, which the students appear to be **navigating** daily. This conflict is in part due to a general ward atmosphere that at times lacks civility…

• There is a **righteous indignation** in the students’ response as they expect civility to be structural to the ward social environment. Being spoken to badly and ignored, they are aware of a discourtesy and disrespect to their student status which is rather bewildering as it happens in a so-called climate of caring…

• The students don't appear or want to fit in to this environment. I’m becoming sensitised to the notion that the student nurses are actually dealing with horizontal violence and incivility is a concept that absolutely ties the other concepts together. I am now searching the literature regarding ‘**incivility**’ and beginning to understand the notion of Glaser’s (1978) ‘All is data’…
They appear resentful of being treated as a HCA and of being left on their own, although many of them used to be a HCA (health care worker).

They appear to be in a state of ‘flux’ and ‘between a rock and a hard place’. I sense that the students are trying to move from one place to another – ordinal movement? Place value? They want to move out of the line of fire….

However, they appear to be trying to do this with good grace and not cause ‘waves’, they are navigating the ‘turbulence’ and handling things carefully.

I’m conscious of conflict becoming important and read some conflict theory that tells me without conflict there can be no resolution.

The place of ‘negotiation’ seems important.
Memo development

• I have accessed literature on negotiating and found the work of (Fisher et al 1991) ‘Negotiating Agreement without giving In’ Getting to Yes’ extremely relevant and I’ve become sensitised to these concepts…. 

• More interestingly, Ury (1991) precedes ‘Getting to Yes with the phrase ‘Getting past No’. I’m getting the sense that the students need to ‘get past HCA and get to Student Nurse’…. 

• This definitely fits in with other memos and wanting to change their status. I’m realising that this is really important to the students and that they are prepared to negotiate for what they need – being ‘savvy’ - adroit maybe? ….
Incivility – main concern of participants

- Refers to: *a range of social behaviour lacking in good manners or civility and also describes rudeness, discourtesy, impoliteness and disrespect* (Oxford English Dictionary 2006)

- It is referred to in a professional context & describes how the student nurse is on occasions spoken to rudely, unkindly, treated indifferently or ignored, is ridiculed, made to feel useless and left alone for long periods of time

- In essence, the student nurse is expected to carry out a myriad range of nursing tasks and procedures without support or guidance from qualified nursing staff

- To resolve their main concern…. the student nurses engage in a process of using finesse and engaging in *finessing techniques*
As a concept **finessing** has been defined as:

- *Using tact in handling or manipulating people during difficult situations or to diplomatically manoeuvre: to be subtle and to bring about something by adroit and careful management* (Soanes and Stevenson 2008:533)

- By displaying **finesse** and using **finessing** strategies, the student nurses are negating the incivilities they experience…. They are being **diplomatic**…
Conceptual framework (theory) - the psycho-social processes used by student nurses during practice and the stages and properties of ‘Finessing Incivility’

- **Stage of status dislocation**
  - Disillusionment with role
  - Needing benevolence
  - Being altruistic

- **Stage of status negotiation**
  - Significant others
  - Seeking recompense
  - Brokering for learning

- **Stage of status relocation**
  - Being benevolent
  - Maintaining values
  - Recanting status
Implications & Recommendations for Practice

- **Cultural expectations** to support and supervise student nurses alongside clinical workload could foster the pervading incivilities.

- **Failed mentorship** is problematic for students and disempowering for registered nurses.

- **Effective leadership** - set behaviour standards & expectations – empower staff, make visible abilities & achievements.

- A better understanding of what constitutes a **mentoring relationship** is vital in providing viable educational preparation & experiences in practice areas.

- There needs to be a **robust arrangement** between **University** link lecturers, **practice** education facilitators and **mentors**.
Recommendations for education
–Vicarious learning

• Further research to explore how educational & curricula interventions can assist the student in dealing with incivilities e.g. **Reflective digital stories** (Stacy & Hardy 2011) - newly qualified staff relate events they found challenging - student nurses consider ways that they may respond

• Prepare **future nurses** to adapt to difficult job conditions – teach assertive responses, ‘**direct coping’ strategies** such as problem solving in order to avoid ‘emotional coping’ strategies such as hostility

• Use of role play, reflective journals (the students ‘spoke’ to their diaries and talked about what they would do or say the next time something happened – **cognitive rehearsal**)

• **Clinical forums** to give the students ‘a voice’ and **de-briefing** after clinical placement

•
In conclusion

• Comparisons can be made between the works of others and the concepts used in this study i.e.

• Stressful transition *into* the clinical environment

• Stress, distress, bad attitudes of staff, role disillusionment and challenges facing student nurses once there

• Mature females entering nursing experience stressful changes concerning their personal and social roles

• Dysfunctional mentorship is also mirrored in this study

• But there are several *key differences*..
In conclusion

- Melia’s (1984) concept of ‘fitting in’ has served as a thematic artery for investigations suggesting student nurses want to ‘fit in’ at all costs despite role ambiguities, hazing rituals and observing inappropriate practices.

- However, the student nurses in this study wanted to belong in practice as a student nurse, which is not quite the same thing.

- Sustaining a student identity, overcoming disillusionment, seeking out others and negotiating for their learning, maintaining values and being benevolent, ultimately mirrors the social nature of the practice community.

- The noted concept of ‘galvanisation’ as displayed by the students in this study is tantamount to behavioral resilience – essential for surviving a chaotic practice world (Hodges et al 2005, Jackson et al 2007).


