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# The Phenomenon of Biculturalism and Stress among Ethnic Minority Nurse Faculty

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## **The Phenomenon of Biculturalism and Stress among Ethnic Minority Nurse Faculty**

### **Abstract**

*This is an interactive presentation of a husband and wife team in which results of a methodological triangulation study that compares and contrasts ethnic minority faculty at both predominantly white and predominately ethnic minority institutions on bicultural and occupational stress are discussed. The investigator-generated, Bicultural System's Conceptual Model, is used to interpret results and derive strategies for achieving a climate more conducive to optimal engagement of all faculty. Seven themes emerge from this study: Appraising, Proving, Fitting-In, Defending, Distancing, Being Invisible, and Mentoring are discussed in light of coping strategies used by ethnic minorities in bicultural settings. Understanding these behaviors is deemed as essential to creation of a positive multicultural work environment. The presentation is designed to evoke discussion which informs of existing strategies used by all faculty. In addition, perceptions of inclusiveness of ethnic faculty in predominantly white institutions will be explored.*

### **Sheila P. Davis**

Professor, University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Nursing

### **Melvin Davis**

Professor, Department of Psychology, Jackson State University

The phenomenon of biculturalism and its relationship to occupational stress among ethnic minority nursing faculty was examined using methodological triangulation. The sample for the quantitative portion of the study was 73 ethnic minority faculty members (71 females and 2 males) in baccalaureate and higher degree programs in the southeastern region of the United States. Ten female respondents were selected from this sample for the qualitative portion of the study. All participants completed the Osipow and Spokane Stress Inventory, the Bicultural Stress Questionnaire (BSQ – an investigator generated instrument) and demographic questionnaire.

The first hypothesis that ethnic minority nursing faculty employed in predominantly white nursing programs report significantly higher occupational stress than those employed in predominantly black nursing programs was rejected. The second hypothesis that ethnic minority nursing faculty employed in predominantly white nursing programs report significantly higher level of bicultural stress than ethnic minority faculty employed in predominantly black nursing programs was supported.

A stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed that the number of minority faculty employed in a program, occupational stress, and faculty size accounted for 59% of the variance in bicultural stress. Qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews revealed that participants' bicultural experiences could be categorized into seven themes: Appraising, Proving, Fitting-in, Defending, Distancing, Being Invisible, and Mentoring. Limitations of the study included: non-random sample, limited support for validity of the

Bicultural Stress Questionnaire, and the possible influence of the investigator's biases in qualitative data analysis.

Implications included a need for continued investigation of the bicultural phenomenon and development of measures to reduce bicultural and occupational stress. Suggested strategies to reduce bicultural stress include open forums that encouraged the free exchange of perceptions among minority faculty, and involvement of ethnic minority faculty in the recruitment and retention of ethnic minorities. Suggestions for reducing occupational stress included recommending that administrators make explicit evaluation criteria and clarify faculty members' roles.

### **Presenters**

**Sheila P. Davis** is a tenured professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Nursing. Her research on the bicultural experience has resulted in a creation of the *Bicultural System's Conceptual Model* and the *Bicultural Stress Inventory* (Instrument). She has been awarded a lifetime associate membership into the National Academy of Sciences for work on the Institute of the Medical Consequences of Uninsurance Committee. Dr. Davis is the founder and editor of the *Online Journal of Health Ethics*.

**Melvin Davis** is a tenured professor at Jackson State University, Department of Psychology. He teaches research and statistics in the Ph.D. Clinical Psychology Program. Drs. Sheila and Melvin Davis' article, *The Experiences of Ethnic Minority Faculty in Predominantly White Nursing Programs* highlights their joint experience in the bicultural experience. The Davises, have been actively involved in collaborative research since he left college administration in 2002.