

Considering Body Art in Dress Code Policies in Colleges of Nursing

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Background

- Despite the commonality of body art or self-expression such as tattoos, piercings, and even hair color modifications (Mercer, 2017), stigma remains (Broussard & Harton, 2018), especially for health care providers (Johnson. et al, 2016).
- Vision for diversity in colleges of nursing may be incongruent with dress code policies governing student appearance such as tattoos, piercings, and hair color.
- Current policies warrant evaluation for inclusivity and respect for diversity.

Purpose

- To describe current research and policies related to body art in nursing in development of recommendations related to enhancing inclusion and diversity within the dress code policy.

Methods

- Scoping review of literature guided by the question:

What does current literature evidence suggest regarding body art in nursing practice and education in the provision of safe and effective care?

- Searches were conducted in several databases, from 2010-2020, including CINAHL, PubMed, PsycInfo, ERIC, and Sociofile.
- Keywords “body art”, “dress code*”, and “pierc*” were pooled with the controlled vocabulary term “Tattooing”, then combined with the exploded subject headings and MeSH terms “Students, Nursing” and “Education, Nursing”, as well as “nurs*” as a keyword. The “Similar Articles” function was applied to relevant articles.
- Two reviewers verified the articles. Articles were sorted by empirical and non-empirical evidence. Independent review and then collaborative analysis was conducted for themes in the literature.

Results

- Sixty-one articles were screened; 9 were excluded as “not usable”.
- Thirty were included in the final set with 8 research articles and 22 non-research literature. Themes emerged related to three distinct perspectives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

- Colleges of nursing are urged to update policies concerning body art.
- Professionalism should be encapsulated by knowledge, behavior, and attitudes versus appearance (Caldeira et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2019).
- Open discussion and more research about perceptions of body art in nursing programs and health care settings is encouraged as the profession continues to explore the definition of professional appearance and behavior and how they are incorporated into the nursing role while promoting diversity and self-expression.
- Minimal empirical studies related to body exist.
- Evidence-informed policies for nursing education are needed that also reflect diversity and inclusion not only of the population served, but of the students as well.

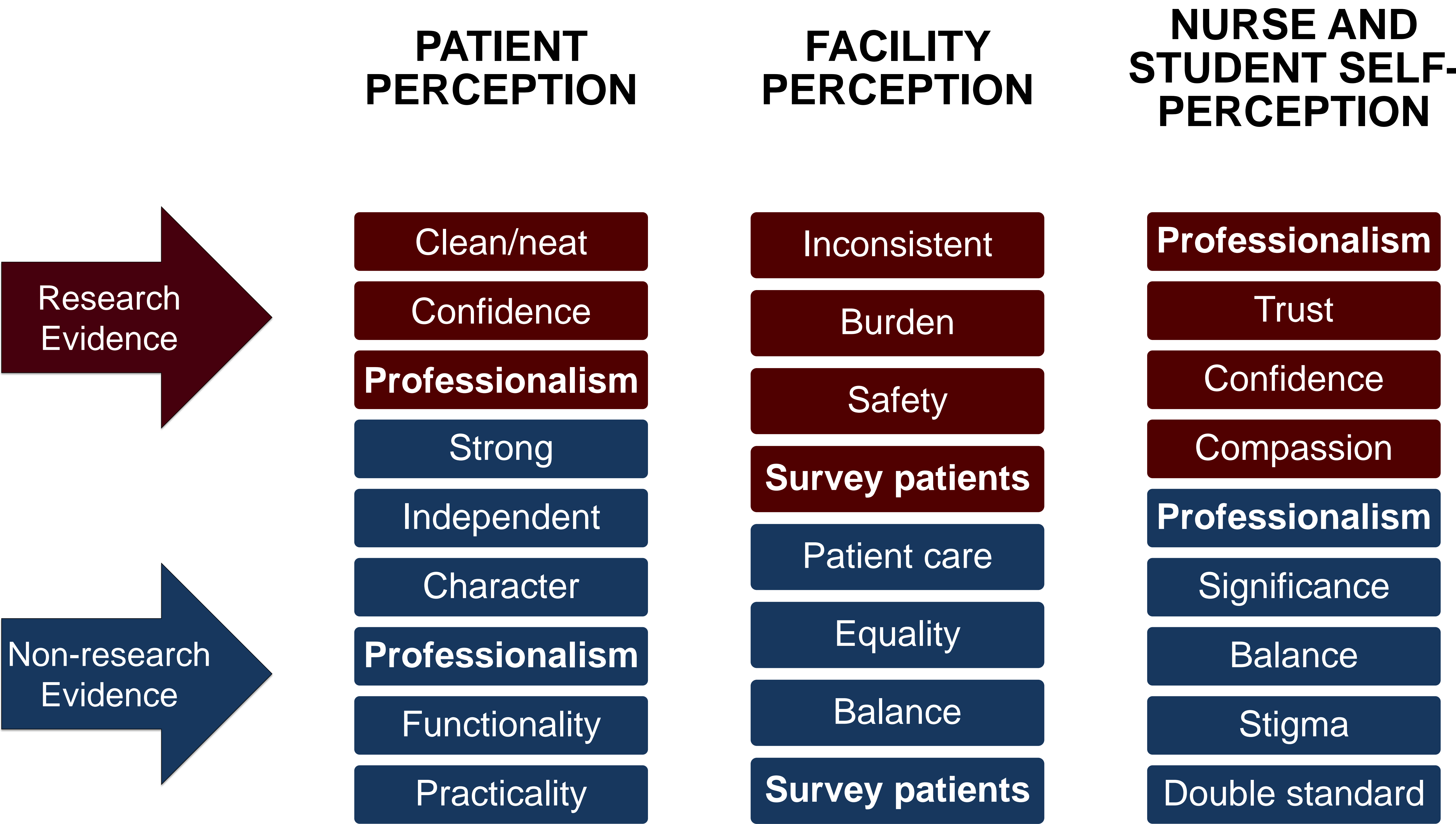
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Themes from literature: Body art and dress codes in nursing



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