Clinical Decision Making in Last Semester Senior Baccalaureate Nursing Students: A Mixed Methods Study

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Background and Purpose:

Clinical decision making (CDM) is an integral part of what nurses do. Yet, nursing literature reveals concerns about the lack of preparation of new graduates to engage in effective clinical decision making. What remains unclear is the way in which nursing students perceive they learn to make clinical decisions. The nature of the decisions they make, whether analytical or intuitive, remains unknown but such information is critical to guide development and implementation of educational interventions that enhance student clinical decision-making.

Cognitive Continuum Theory (CCT) Hammond (1981, 1988)
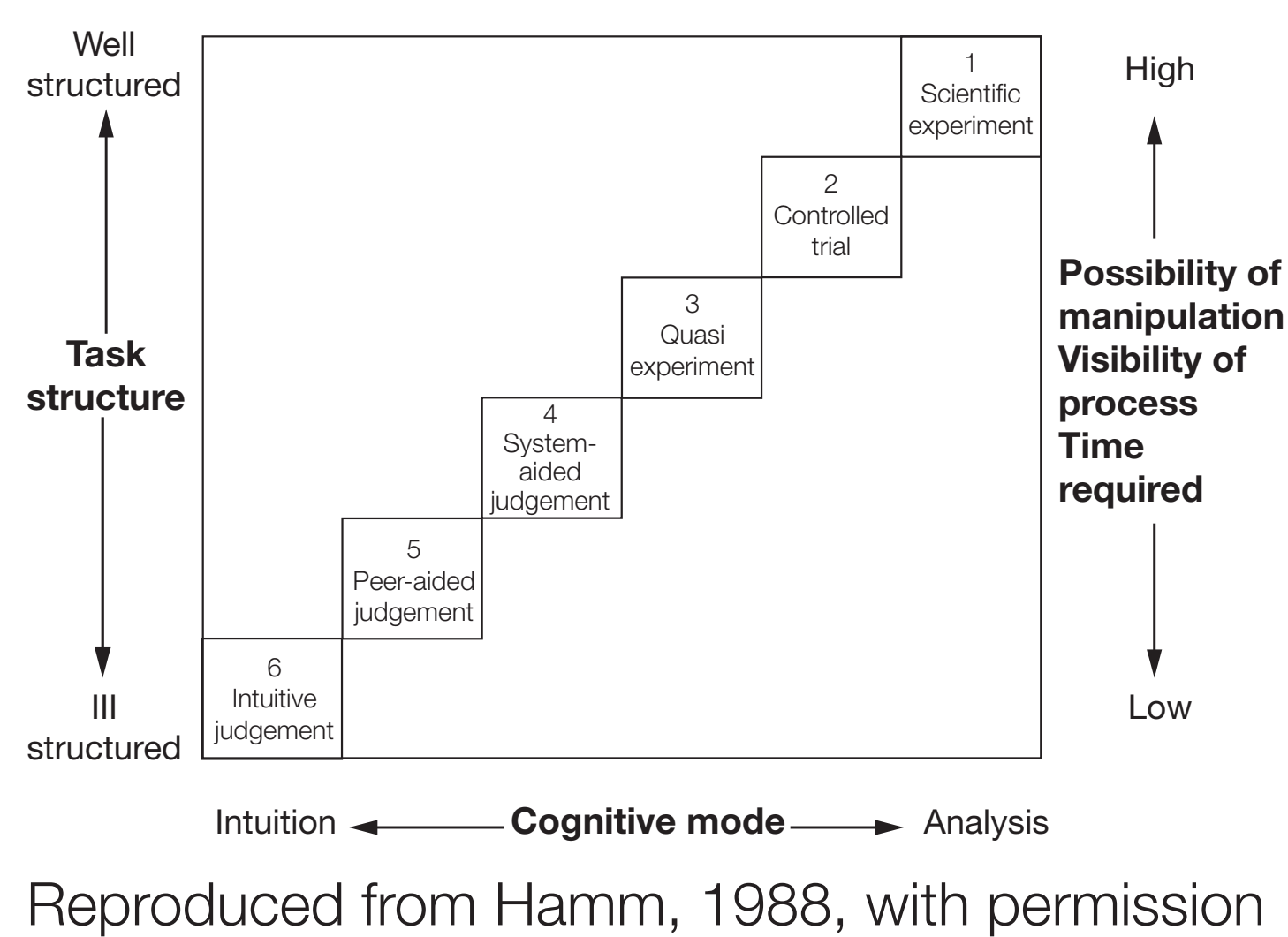
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Research questions:

1) To examine the ways last semester senior baccalaureate nursing students perceived they learn to make clinical decisions

2) To determine the nature of those decisions (analytic vs intuitive)

3) To examine possible relationships between clinical decision making and participants' age, program type, previous degree/s, previous healthcare experience, and minority status

Methods

Design: Embedded Mixed Methods Study

Sample: Last Semester Senior Baccalaureate Nursing Students

Quantitative: 168 participants from 11 schools

Qualitative: Four focus groups (n = 28)

Instruments: a demographic data form, and the Nurse Decision Making Instrument Revised 2014 (NDMI).

Results

RQ1:

Themes emerged from the focus group data:

- Partners in Learning
- Finding One's Voice
- Becoming Confident
- Multiple Sources of Learning
- Patient-Centered Care
- The Turning Point

These six themes were interrelated, leading to a core concept of Coalescing for Action.

RQ3:

There were no statistically significant relationships between clinical decision making and the predictor variables.

RQ2:

Total Scores, Mean and Median of NDMI-14 Based on Categorical Range (N=168)

NDMI - 14 Categories	N (%)	Mean (SD)	Median
Analytically Oriented Low (< 67)	39 (23.2%)	65.18 (2.3)	66
Quasi-rational Moderate (68-78)	**127 (75.6%)**	71.35 (2.5)	71
Intuitive High (>78)	2 (1.2%)	81 (1.4)	81

Coalescing For Action©

Phillips, 2015

Codes & Subthemes Themes Interconnection of Themes > Coalescing
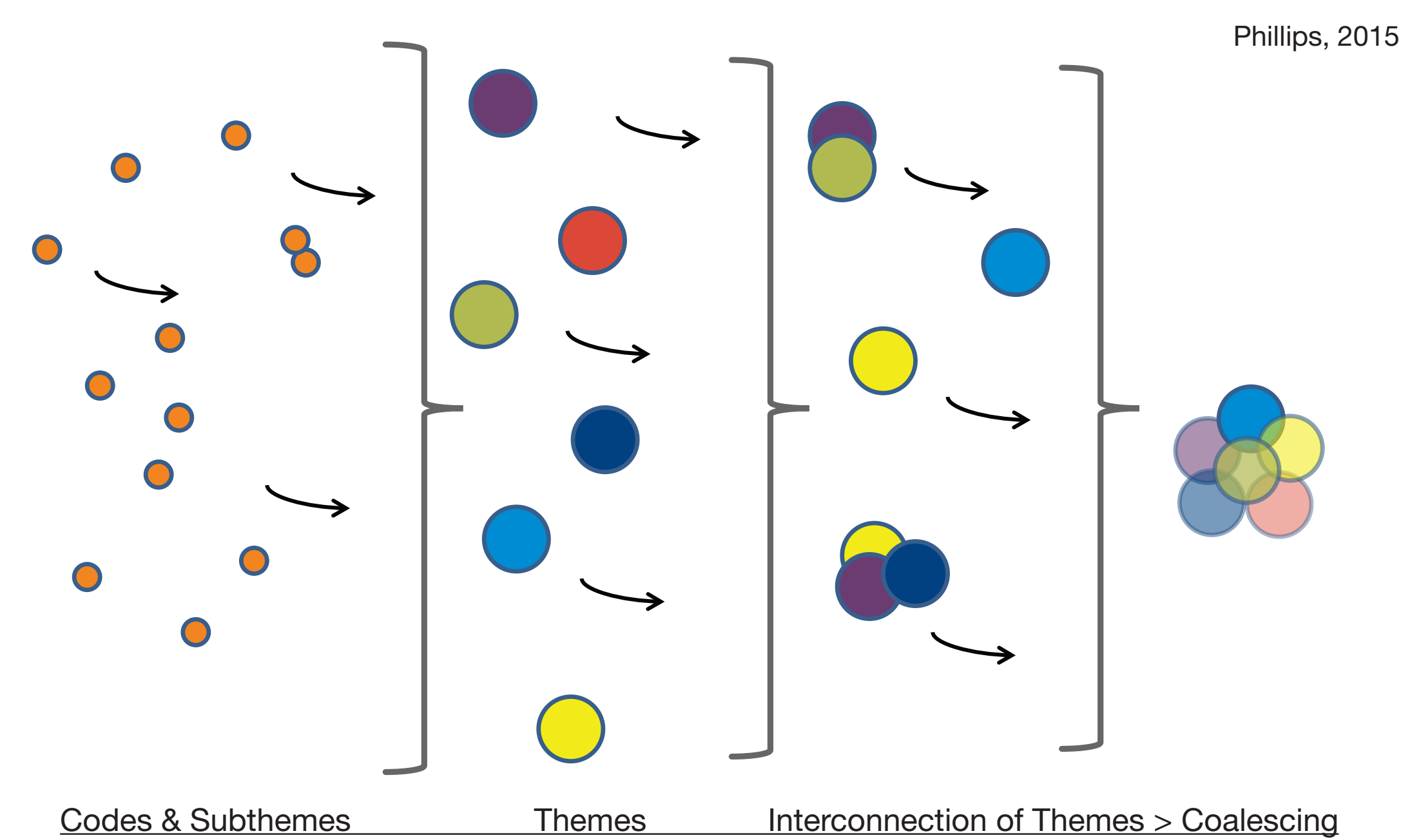
Conclusions

Decision making is dependent on cognition, the cues recognized, and the task at hand.

Findings

- Clinical Faculty play Key Role in CDM
- Importance of Relating Classroom Learning to Clinical Learning
- Knowledge, People, Experiences, And Self-growth
- The Clinical Instructor
- Class > Clinical > Class

Implications

Importance of the Study

- Potential for Development of New Teaching Strategies
- Need to Better Prepare Nurse Educators
- Potential Policy Changes in Nursing Education and Practice
- Potential Redesign of Nursing Education Programs

Limitations include a small sample size, homogeneous focus groups, and the inadvertent omission of gender on the demographic instrument.