

Introduction

A student's ability to learn how to communicate through writing is crucial in the nursing profession (Troxler, Vann, & Oermann, 2011). It is important that students understand how to write effectively in the discipline of nursing in order to properly document patient care, create or revise policies, design educational materials, and/or publish guidelines or research (Latham & Ahern, 2013). Nursing faculty often find students ill-prepared to write (Troxler et al., 2011). This study explored former students' perceptions of writing in the discipline of nursing and their experiences writing in nursing practice upon graduation.

Methodology

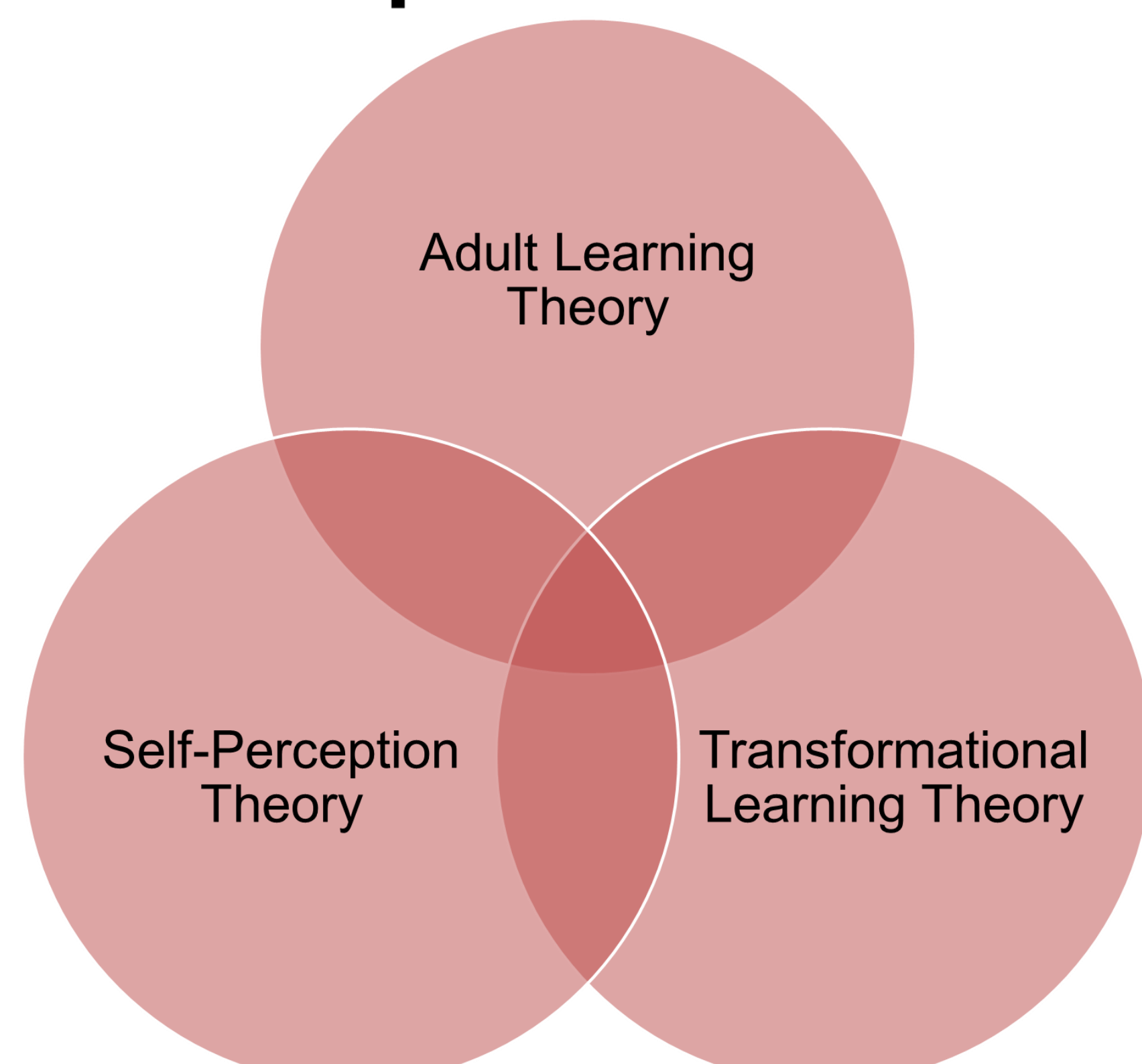
Data Collection:

- IRB approval obtained by Salisbury University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore
- Qualitative, phenomenological approach
- Data triangulated through questionnaires, focus groups, and face-to-face interviews
- 3 focus groups with 3 participants
- 3 follow-up interviews
- 9 participants:
 - graduates from program within previous 3 years
 - 8 females, 1 male
 - 1 participant in doctoral studies
 - 8 in acute care practice, 1 in physician's office
 - all native English speakers
- Researcher served as interviewer

Data Analysis:

- Verbatim transcription of all digital recordings
- Questionnaires collected through Survey Monkey
- Data were coded for themes and descriptions using Tesch's 8 steps in the coding process

Conceptual Framework



Research Questions

- (1) What are former students' expectations of writing in the discipline of nursing prior to beginning in a baccalaureate nursing program?
- (2) What are former students' experiences with writing as practicing nurses?
- (3) What influence does the nursing curriculum have on students' perceptions of writing?
- (4) What influence does nursing instructor involvement have on students' perceptions of writing instruction?

Results



- 1. Preparedness:** The level of writing preparedness prior to beginning in the nursing program varied from feeling well-prepared to under-prepared. With regard to current practice, the findings ranged from feeling adequately prepared for the writing they were currently undertaking to feeling under-prepared for the style of writing they were utilizing in practice.
- 2. Prioritization:** Some of the participants felt that writing was not going to be a high priority in the nursing program, and other key concepts took precedence, while others felt that writing became more of a priority once they were immersed in the program, and they realized the impact on their grades. In practice, most agreed that writing was a low-priority task as the majority of the writing they're involved with relates to documentation (practical writing) and that other tasks take precedent.
- 3. Support:** Most participants felt well supported by the campus services and their faculty.
- 4. Expectations:** Some felt there would be a sufficient amount of writing while others did not anticipate much writing in the program. The participants discussed the consistency of expectations placed upon them by nursing faculty and the assignments. Their responses varied from believing the expectations were greatly consistent to not at all consistent.
- 5. Functionality:** Most participants felt that writing served very little function, aside from documentation, in their current practice. Others felt it served a very important function, despite its small role.

Implications

Nursing Education

- Nurse educators may consider this information as support for the need for further writing preparation for nursing students, perhaps in the way of an elective nursing writing course or an addition to the current mandated nursing courses.

Nursing Practice

- Nurses, particularly those in acute-care hospital settings, should be given more opportunities for professional and personal growth by way of academic writing. Because the literature emphasizes writing as a crucial component of nursing professionalism and communication, more opportunities for writing outside of documentation should be provided to nursing staff by nurse managers, supervisors, and the Chief Nursing Officer.

References

- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Latham, C. L., & Ahern, N. (2013). Professional writing in nursing education: Creating an academic-community writing center. *Journal of Nursing Education, 52*(11), 615-620. doi: 10.3928/01484834-20131014-02
- Troxler, H., Vann, J. C., & Oermann, M. H. (2011). How baccalaureate nursing programs teach writing. *Nursing Forum, 46*(4), 280-288.