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Participatory Visual Thinking Strategies in Baccalaureate Nursing Education: Impact of Using Art to Define Family

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Purpose:

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) in baccalaureate nursing education on observational and communication skills in a didactic upper level course. VTS has been used in medical and nursing education to increase observational skills and improve communication, as well as change the way students see and think (Chin, 2017; Moorman et al, 2017; and Klugman et al, 2011). As nurse educators work to bridge student connections from classroom to practice, teaching about caring for families is an increasingly important construct for students to understand on a multitude of levels. The definition of family varies according to the person being cared for and among caregivers and is deeply personal.

Methods:

In this multisite study, 144 students who were in their upper level of undergraduate baccalaureate courses studying the care of families were asked to participate in a graded homework assignment as part of their course. As a way to demonstrate the various ways people define family, this study called on students to create a work of art that symbolized family to them. The student who created the work of art observed while the rest of the class discussed their creation in the classroom. The faculty member used VTS to discuss the student's creation. In this study, VTS included a student-centered discussion that asked 3 questions about each work of art; 1. *What is going on here?* 2. *What are you seeing that makes you say that?* And 3. *What more can you find?* Students engaged in discussions about each work of art during class. After all the students finished the experience, they were asked to complete 6 questions in an anonymous Qualtrics survey about their experience. Survey questions included: 1. *Were you aware of visual thinking strategies before this class?* 2. *What did you think of creating a visual representation family?* 3. *What was the impact on your observational skills?* 4. *What was the impact on your communication skills?* 5. *Would you participate in a similar activity in the future?* And 6. *What impact will VTS have, if any, on your clinical skills in the future?* Data analysis was completed determining qualitative content analysis and results obtained. The goal of content analysis is to establish frequencies and categories within data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). IRB approval was obtained prior to data collection from the Northwestern University and was deemed exempt in the Midwestern University. No incentives were provided for participation. Demographic data was not collected on participants.

Results:

Of the eligible 144 students, 92 students (63.8%) completed the study. Twenty-four students from the Midwestern University and 72 students from the Northwestern University (NU) started the study (N=96). Final profile of students who completed the study: 24 from the Midwestern University (MU) and 68 from the Northwestern University (n=92). Results from the first question found that less than half of the student were aware of Visual Thinking Strategies before the class activity (n=41, 30 from NU, 11 from MU). Over half of the students (57.6%; n=53) reported that VTS aided them in learning about people's different perception on what family is and how they differ from one's own views (n= 27), enabled them to think about their own families and how much they mean (n=21), and enabled them to think about families in a

novel way or outside the box (n=5). About 3.3% (n=3), felt that VTS was a waste of time. Over 57.8% of nursing students reported thinking deeper and more abstractly or had increased evidence to back up their observations (n=52). Regarding the impact of VTS on communication skills, 66.3% of students thought that VTS was either beneficial, increased ability to give reasoning behind thoughts, or allowed students to be open in their communications (n=61). When asked if they would be interested in participating in a similar activity in the future, 81.5% (n=75) stated yes. Regarding VTS impact on future clinical skills, 66.3% of students (n=61) reported that VTS either increased their awareness and understanding of family, increased their ability to be considerate and nonjudgmental, or increased understanding that every family is different.

Conclusion:

Baccalaureate nursing education benefits with the inclusion of VTS to increase observational and communication skills (De Santis et al, 2016; Moorman, 2015). This multisite study impacts nursing education and provides baccalaureate nursing student with increased skills vital to safe and effective patient care. This assignment also allows students an opportunity to explore definitions of family and to express how these relationships vary from person to person. This experience gives students the opportunity to discuss and explore personal ways that one defines family and to express what meaning family has for them. Knowledge gained from this study aligns with implementation of evidence-based practice and promotion of healthy communities by increasing insight into how one defines and works with families.

Title:

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Keywords:

Visual Thinking Strategies, defining families and nursing education

References:

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Abstract Summary:

To determine the impact Visual Thinking Strategies on defining family, baccalaureate nursing students completed an assignment creating a visual representation of family. Over half of students reported that VTS augmented their learning about differing perceptions of family. The majority found that VTS augmented their observational and communication skills.

Content Outline:

Content Outline Step:

Introduction:

VTS interactive session with audience and brief definition

Study background and methods

Results:

Main Point #1

VTS positively impacts visual skills

Supporting point #1

Over 57.8% of nursing students reported thinking deeper and more abstractly or had increased evidence to back up their observations

Main Point #2

VTS positively impacts communication skills

Supporting point #1

Results showed that 66.3% of students thought that VTS was either beneficial, increased ability to give reasoning behind thoughts, or allowed students to be open in their communications (n=61)

Main Point #3.

Increased or changed understanding and awareness of family.

Supporting point #1

Increased ability to give reasoning behind thoughts.

Conclusion

Baccalaureate nursing education benefits with the inclusion of VTS to increase observational and communication skills.

First Primary Presenting Author

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Professional Experience: Dr. Vermeesch has been a practicing Family Nurse Practitioner for over 10 years. She completed her master's in nursing at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing and earned her PhD in Nursing Science from the University of Miami in 2011 where she focused on the reduction of healthcare disparities among Latino populations using multiple research methodologies including participatory photography. She joined the University of Portland as an Associate Professor in 2014 teaching in both graduate and undergraduate programs. She became a Certified Nurse Educator in 2017.

Author Summary: Dr. Vermeesch is a family nurse practitioner and an associate professor of nursing at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon. She has spent the majority of her practice serving underinsured and vulnerable populations. Her overall area of expertise is wellness, both physical and emotional. Her investigations use multiple research methodologies, including visual, and have concentrated on increasing physical activity, stress reduction and health promotion among nursing students as well as faculty and staff.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

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Professional Experience: Dr. Moorman has been a nurse for 30 years, working in labor and delivery, women's health, surgery, and gynecology. She has been a Women's Health NP for 20 years. She has focused the last 10 years on obtaining her PhD in Nursing from the University of Nevada Las Vegas and researching in nursing education. She is the Coordinator of the MSN in Nursing Education Program at Indiana University and has received several teaching awards, including the Alpha Chapter STTI Educator of the Year award in 2017. She is a Senior Mosaic Fellow at Indiana University and works with faculty campus-wide on active learning strategies.

Author Summary: Dr. Moorman has focused the majority of her nursing education research on the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). She has written and published extensively on VTS and has been invited to speak in several countries about her research findings, including Hong Kong, South Africa, and Ireland. She recently presented VTS findings to the National Nurse Ethics Conference in Los Angeles, California.

Third Author

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Professional Experience: Dr. Joane T. Mocerri is the dean of the University of Portland School of Nursing. As a nurse educator and administrator, she has a scholarly interest in supporting nursing students from diverse backgrounds for success in nursing. She has implemented novel teaching and mentoring strategies to support culturally relevant nursing education.

Author Summary: Dr. Joane T. Mocerri has been a nurse educator for the past 17 years and has expertise in using teaching modalities such as film, art, and music.

Fourth Author

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Professional Experience: Ms. Stragnell has devoted her nursing practice to caring for the pediatric population and their families for more than 40 years. She earned her MS in Child, Adolescent, and Family Nursing and a Post-Masters Certificate Option in Nursing Education at Oregon Health & Science University and has been teaching at the University of Portland since 2005.

Author Summary: Ms. Stragnell has collaborated on a few nursing education research projects as well as educational innovations. Areas of interest have included using guided reflection with the clinical judgment model, clinical evaluation tools and processes, and the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) in the classroom.